

PEDAGOGY *and the* CATHOLIC EDUCATOR

*Nurturing Hearts,
Transforming Possibilities*

by
Jim & Therese D'Orsa

BBI - THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF
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MISSION AND EDUCATION SERIES





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There are some expeditions that should only be undertaken by the most experienced explorers. Therese and Jim D'Orsa's deep educational experience is on display as they travel through pedagogical territory that is vast and diverse. They stay close to their compass bearings grounding Catholic pedagogy in the spirituality of John Baptist De La Salle and Ignatius of Loyola, as they survey scholarship as diverse as Longerganian epistemology and philosophical hermeneutics and as they engage with developmental theory and the more recent empirical research of John Hattie. Their compass bearings are true and they provide sure and accessible guidance for any Catholic educator who wishes to reflect a little more deeply on sources that will illuminate and enlarge their educational vision and practice.

***Dr Paul Sharkey, Director of Catholic Leadership and Governance,
Catholic Education Archdiocese of Melbourne***

The need to develop an imagination and worldview that is open to faith and to engaging with the world we inhabit is an urgent matter for Catholic educators today. How we do this depends on our pedagogy. This book shares a rich vision and understanding for what it means to talk about a Catholic pedagogy. Rooted in both the historical faith tradition and the changing contemporary contexts of church and society, the book offers original insight and valuable scholarship for Catholic educators in the Australian context but internationally as well. Rooted in a variety of discourses, pedagogy is considered through wide-ranging dialogue with education theory and practice alongside the theological legacy of the faith tradition and the heritage of spiritual giants. Questions and actions are posed for the reader, seen as teachers in Catholic schools, but such prompts invite all involved in Catholic education to deeply consider the pedagogy they bring to their work. The book presents pedagogy as that which goes beyond the technical or instrumental to seek a missional imagination and a relational and ethical practice. This is an exciting and inspiring vision for a Catholic pedagogy, one that can indeed nurture hearts and transform possibilities.

***Dr Ros Stuart-Buttle, Senior Lecturer in Theology & Education,
Director of the Centre for Christian Education, School of Humanities,
Liverpool Hope University***

Pedagogy and the Catholic Educator: Nurturing Hearts, Transforming Possibilities, by Therese and Jim D'Orsa builds on their earlier work, *Catholic Curriculum*. It applies the same approach and method as in their earlier text, namely to explore the field in question, in this case pedagogy, firstly by expounding on seminal work in the wider world of education and then focussing on ramifications and practice in the Catholic school context. In doing the latter, it draws on some of the deeper and most distinctive educational paradigms in Catholic history, including the ground-breaking works of Loyola and De La Salle. It is a most comprehensive, almost encyclopaedic, work that will no doubt take its place in the long list of contributions to Catholic education by the authors.

***Emeritus Professor Terry Lovat,
Faculty of Education and Arts, University of Newcastle Australia***

Once again, Jim and Therese D'Orsa take us below the surface of a crucial issue confronting Catholic Education in today's Australian context. Drawing on a range of perspectives from the human sciences and education theory, the authors underline the urgent need for a new awareness on the part of Catholic teachers. They argue for an authentically Catholic pedagogy that is both critical and transformative, informed by Jesus' vision of God's kingdom, and fully engaged with the multiple worldviews of Australia today.

***Rev Dr Kevin Lenehan, Master of Catholic Theological College,
Senior lecturer in theology, Archdiocese of Melbourne***

In this comprehensive examination of the complex relationship between teaching and learning in the religious education domain, Therese and Jim D'Orsa have once again helped Catholic educators in understanding and gauging the effectiveness of their work, not just through the vital lens of student learning outcomes, but also through a conceptualisation of their work as an intricate component of the mission to make real the Kingdom of God for their students. This is a must-read book for leaders and teachers in Catholic education.

***Mr Dominic Ryan,
Manager Catholic Identity and Religious Education,
Diocese of Sale***

Pedagogy and the Catholic Educator: Nurturing Hearts, Transforming Possibilities is an exciting contribution to the exploration of questions that exist about learning and teaching. Therese and Jim D'Orsa's deep knowledge and expertise is evident throughout the book as they engage with theory, theology, scripture, scholarship and research in the development of an authentically Catholic pedagogy, that helps students to develop an imagination and worldview that is both contextualised and open to faith so as to ensure human flourishing. Crucially, the authors remind us that a Catholic pedagogy of possibility results in actions, not just the transmission or consumption of content. The text offers many possibilities for individuals, schools and systems to re-contextualise their own current practices.

Dr Sandra Harvey, Assistant Director System Improvement, Catholic Education, Diocese of Ballarat

As with all their works, Therese and Jim D'Orsa's latest offering in the Mission and Education space provides Catholic educators with an excellent balance of theory, history and practicality. The study allows teachers to understand the theological foundations on which they build, invites them to consider their teaching as part of a continuing community of practitioners in the hermeneutical tradition and encourages them to make pedagogical choices for their specific context.

Ms Audrey Brown Director of Catholic Education, Diocese of Ballarat

For all who seek to awaken a pedagogical consciousness within a comprehensive examination of relevant disciplines and philosophies: look no further. This resource is extraordinary. It is foundational to undergraduate studies; refreshing and important for continuous learning; and, a rich source of inquiry for researchers. Underpinning a spectrum of relevance: *Pedagogy and the Catholic Educator: Nurturing Hearts, Transforming Possibilities* is eminently readable; outstanding in clarity and presentation of relevant, accessible and connected chapters. The work from start to finish engages and seeks engagement, develops understanding, reaches the heart and invites authenticity. The text is bountiful in insights: a scholarly, reflective, practical, and much-valued contribution to pedagogy for mission in Christian faith-based educational settings.

***Dr Bill Sultmann, Associate Professor, Deputy Dean La Salle Academy,
Office of the Vice-President, Australian Catholic University***



BBI – THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION MISSION AND EDUCATION SERIES

The Mission and Education Project seeks to bring together, in the one conversation, the light that human experience, culture, and faith each throw on particular topics now central to Catholic education.

It also seeks to honour the significant efforts that Catholic educators make on behalf of young people to address contemporary mission agendas within the total process of education. It provides a forum designed to stimulate further conversation about the ‘why’, the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ of Catholic education as a work of the Gospel in our complex society and culture.

The Mission and Education publishing project is currently divided into two series. The Exploratory Studies are designed to serve leaders in Catholic education. They explore aspects of contemporary Catholic education in the light of the Church’s official teaching on mission, and the experience of those who attempt to embrace this missional challenge in their personal and professional lives. The Educator’s Guides are introductory texts prepared specifically for teachers in Catholic schools and for those for whom such a text might be helpful, for example parents, board members and others who serve Catholic education.

The mission-based resources now at the disposal of those who seek to explore Catholic education theologically are rich and deep. Because the faith held by the Catholic community is a living faith, Catholic Church teaching on mission has developed, and continues to develop, in the light of contemporary societal and cultural changes. Similarly, Scripture continues to yield its treasures. Only now, for example, is the Bible being widely recognised as a witness to God’s purpose or mission in the created universe, and as an account of human response to the unfolding of that mission.

We live in a period of rapid cultural change driven by global dynamics. This has its impact on how we understand what knowledge is, how it is acquired, and how schools are best led and organised so as to maximise student learning, and facilitate the social and economic benefits that are assumed to flow from sound educational policies. Very often the emphasis in such policies shifts from ‘the learning student’ to the more abstract ‘student learning’. This sits uneasily with the concept of a Catholic education.

A consequence of rapid societal change is that, in our time, new areas of mission present themselves with real urgency. It is now clearly necessary

to include within the mission agenda both the processes of knowledge construction and of meaning-making, as well as the modes of Christian participation in the new public space created by both globalisation and the communications media. These new areas of mission take their place alongside those fields already familiar to the faith community.

It is the hope of the Mission and Education Editorial Board that Catholic educators, both in Australia and beyond, will view the series as an invitation to contribute their own creativity to this vital conversation.

Therese D’Orsa, Professor of Mission and Culture
BBI – TAITE (The Australian Institute of Theological Education)

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- *Australian Capital Territory – the Catholic Education Office of Canberra-Goulburn.*
- *Victoria – the Catholic Education Offices of Ballarat, Melbourne, Sale and Sandhurst.*
- *South Australia – Catholic Education South Australia (Archdiocese of Adelaide and Diocese of Port Pirie).*
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- *Northern Territory – the Catholic Education Office of Darwin.*
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Educator’s Guide to Mission in Practice: Discipleship in Action in Catholic Schools

This volume is dedicated to those teachers who, in the spirit of Jesus the teacher, guide young people, in good times and bad, to grow in their capacity to co-create a better world for themselves, and for their communities.

*The authors would like to acknowledge the assistance of
Br Ben Boonen cfc in preparing the diagrams
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FOREWORD

The Mission and Education series of exploratory studies aims to open up conversation about various elements of the educational process. This conversation explores how each contributes to the mission of Jesus within the context of the ministry of education in schools. Over the years, various authors have contributed to this conversation focusing on such areas as curriculum, formation, leadership, and charism.

A few years ago (2012), we authored a study in the Mission and Education series entitled *Catholic Curriculum: a Mission to the Heart of Young People*. This study was well received, and at that time and since, people have asked us whether we might turn our attention to pedagogy and Catholic schooling. We indicated that we hoped we might do so, but have always been unsure as to when this might be possible. Thus *Pedagogy and the Catholic Educator* has been some years in the making, having been delayed by other writing and teaching priorities. Finally, the latest offering in the Mission and Education invitations to conversation has been completed.

Every day teachers make decisions about how they intend ‘to make a difference’ for the students they teach, and so realise the hopes they had in becoming teachers. Most of these decisions are not made consciously, but ‘on the run’. They are often dictated by the culture of the society, or the culture of the school or school system, in which teachers are employed.

How teachers make pedagogical decisions is also shaped by how they construe their role as teachers. It is our contention that cultural changes now underway mean that the role of the teacher is being reformulated and this has an important impact on what is considered to be ‘good teaching’, and how teachers in Catholic schools design learning and make pedagogical choices. Teachers are called upon to play a number of roles in the classroom and this complicates the process of making pedagogical choices. Added to this, the advent of the Coronavirus has tended to emphasise the indispensable role that teachers play in the lives of children and young people.

This book aims to bring to consciousness the considerations that inform pedagogical choices, or perhaps should inform them, in order that they become more open to critique. It also invites teachers to become more aware of the changes that are taking place in church and society, as various approaches and movements gain ground and then wane in importance. This may often be for no reason other than a shift in political orientation. While

the educational and cultural changes underway affect all schools, they have a particular relevance for Catholic schools where teaching practices are grounded in long-standing traditions. It is these traditions which are the carriers of, not only important values, but shared understandings of what those values demand in terms of life and action.

There are a number of issues to be explored in working towards an understanding of what a 'Catholic pedagogy' might look like. A principal challenge lies in the term 'pedagogy' and what it actually encompasses. Literature and research in the English-speaking world has an orientation in Australia that is different from that to be accessed in Europe. In Australia we tend to interpret 'pedagogy' in quite pragmatic terms – 'what works well in the classroom' – whereas in Europe it is interpreted in more philosophical and phenomenological terms – 'how we make sense of the experience of teaching in a classroom'. A central issue, we believe, is to find an approach which is faithful to the best insights of both our faith and our culture.

When teachers face their new classes each year, they bring with them a number of assumptions about how students learn, how they develop, and what learning is all about. These assumptions are sourced in their culture, their pre-service training (now many years in the past in some cases), their own experience of schooling, and their experience of working with students. Their conception of their role as teacher and what constitutes 'good teaching' is predicated on these assumptions, but the assumptions themselves, because they are beyond awareness, are not open to critique or challenge. The result is that much teaching happens on the basis of what is termed 'common sense', without clear theoretical underpinnings that explain why certain approaches are better than others.

As we proceeded with this study, we were very surprised to find that the pragmatic approach to pedagogy, in either its quantitative or qualitative form, is not underpinned by an explicit theory of learning or of what constitutes knowledge. Nor does 'brain science' provide such a theory.

Irrespective of how we construe 'pedagogy', it is directed to helping students learn. 'Learning' is often regarded as being a self-evident good. However, if teachers are not sure what 'learning' is, then they have a problem. The same applies to knowledge. Too often educators operate from an implied understanding of these terms, and this needs to be brought to consciousness and critiqued. In developing a theory of learning we ask ourselves: Do we look to psychology, neuroscience, theology, or philosophy? How do 'mind' and 'brain' come together in such a theory?

Some teachers see learning in instrumental terms – as actions performed to reach a goal. They seek to help students learn to 'make a difference' of

some kind, which raises the question: What is the goal of our pedagogy? Is it better scores in testing regimes? Intuitively, most teachers would balk at such a limited answer, and if pushed would indicate, however inchoately, that their goal relates to the human flourishing of the student. How then does the teacher understand what is involved in human flourishing? Here two factors become important – culture and one's faith tradition. Both contain understandings of 'human flourishing' based on different worldviews. How do teachers understand these worldviews, and which of them ultimately underpins the teacher's own personal worldview? This is a key issue, as it is a person's worldview which shapes their pedagogy. These are just some of the issues explored in the chapters that follow.

STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

Orientations

This Foreword is followed by Chapters 1 and 2 which orient the study. Chapter 1 aims to provide an overarching framework, and poses conversation-starters to act as key questions that are pursued within the text. Chapter 2 focuses on the issue of mission and how changes in the way this is understood are beginning to impact on our understanding of the worldview of faith, which is one of the major resources open to teachers and young people in making sense of their lives.

Part A: Confidence Built on Firm Foundations

This section sets pedagogy in Catholic schools in its historical context by examining the foundational contribution of pioneering Catholic educators in developing the notion of 'pedagogy', and giving this a home within the Catholic tradition.

Part B: Key tools in Analysing the Pedagogical Landscape

The meaning of important human endeavours such as pedagogy is open to interpretation, and consequently it depends on the perspective that people bring to this endeavour. In trying to understand what 'pedagogy' might mean, it is necessary to develop conceptual categories appropriate to the task. This is the aim of Part B where key concepts such as 'culture', 'worldview', 'mission' 'faith' and 'values' are addressed, drawing on insights from cultural anthropology, mission anthropology, missiology, theology and phenomenology.

Part C: Contemporary Perspectives on Pedagogy

As an area of study, pedagogy is relatively new. Like many other human sciences, it has had to develop its own methods and ways of validating what it knows. This has resulted in two broad approaches:

- *the phenomenological approach where the focus is on harnessing insights that flow from the lived experiences of teachers in the classroom as these are subjectively understood*
- *the pragmatic approach that is concerned with insights that derive from observing teachers in action and reflecting on the significance of what is happening in light of the theoretical model guiding the research. This approach has two strands: insights drawn from quantitative research studies and insights drawn from qualitative studies.*

In this section we explore the contributions that Van Manen, Starratt, Hattie and Fullan have made to an understanding of pedagogy and related concepts. The section includes discussion of ‘deep learning’, the ‘new pedagogy’, and values pedagogy, including the ECSI critique of ‘values education’.

Part D: Learning and Pedagogy: Essential Voices

One of the surprises encountered in this study is that contemporary approaches to pedagogy seem to lack a coherent or well-developed theory of learning. This seems to be a consequence of the fact that pedagogy sits in the middle space between ‘mind’ and ‘brain’, neither of which are, in our view, well connected at this point in time.

In Part D we consider the contribution philosophy can make to a theory of learning, the implications this has for assessing the assumptions that teachers hold about what constitutes learning, and, by extension, ‘good’ pedagogy and its place in the development of the student. Such an assessment has implications for how teachers define the pedagogical relationship, and for their role. The philosophical tradition includes discussion of critical pedagogy.

Part E: Pedagogies for the Kingdom

The final section brings together themes that have surfaced in previous sections. It proposes that pedagogy is an inherently ethical endeavour that centres on the ‘good’ that a teacher seeks to achieve within her or his pedagogical relationship with students, and how this ‘good’ is conceptualised and pursued when insights from faith and culture are ‘befriended’ and brought into ‘dialogue’. We argue that the result is a ‘transformation of possibilities’ that allows teachers to understand pedagogy, their relationship

with students, and their role as teachers in the classroom in new ways, ways that ‘nurture hearts’. Such a transformation of possibility for the teacher is also transformative for students: they in turn are empowered to develop the type of imagination that is necessary to be Catholic and make a positive contribution to the world as co-creators of the Kingdom of God.

Since the worldviews of faith and culture change over time, and can be interpreted by teachers in a number of authentic ways, a pedagogy that is ‘Catholic’ can take a number of forms. The question educators face today is: What form best suits the situation of this student, and this group of students, growing up in a postsecular culture?

SAMPLE



ORIENTATIONS

SAMPLE

Catholic pedagogy is a shared understanding that provides teachers with guidelines in their decision-making as to how best to advance the learning and development of their students.

This shared understanding is nourished by a community of educators striving to be faithful to the mission of Jesus in their time and place.

Enriched by the wisdom of both faith and culture, Catholic pedagogy advances the mission of the Catholic school community, and seeks the 'good' of each child.

Catholic pedagogy assumes sound analysis of the student's situation, and adequate understanding of what constitutes learning, including the conditions under which this occurs.

Catholic pedagogy engenders responsiveness to God's invitation to be co-creators of a more just and loving society and a flourishing natural world.

Catholic pedagogy is a profoundly ethical endeavour.





1

OPENING UP A CONVERSATION

As an evangelizer, Christ first of all proclaims a kingdom, the kingdom of God; and this is so important that, by comparison, everything else becomes “the rest,” which is “given in addition.”[16] ‘Only the kingdom therefore is absolute and it makes everything else relative.’

(Pope Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi, # 8).¹

In this book, the starting assumption is that a person can deal with issues or challenges only if she or he can articulate them clearly, so early in our work we identify some of these and present them in question form. Given our continuing role as teachers over many years, we occasionally take the liberty of using the pronoun ‘we’ when posing questions for the consideration of educators. The questions below are among those which must be explored by teachers and educating communities in choosing, and where necessary creating, pedagogies which help young people to grow as co-creators of what Jesus, attuned to his people’s hopes and expectations, termed the Kingdom of God. His was a vision of radical newness leading people beyond their religious and political expectations, and into a qualitatively new and different place. The pedagogies that Catholic educators choose can do no less.

For those of us who stand in the Judeo-Christian tradition, each person is made in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:27). In order to appreciate this, we need to consider how God revealed Godself to our ancestors in the faith, as the One who is at work in creation, and in history. Thus, for the faithful within this tradition, within creation and history, to be human is to share in God’s creative processes in the world, and act to move creation forward positively as the circumstances of human life unfold. For a person of faith within the Judeo-Christian tradition, to be the image and likeness of God is to assume, within the limits of our humanness, God’s vision for creation, and God’s saving and reconciling work within history.

1 Pope Paul VI. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 1974, # 8. http://www.vatican.va/content/paulvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html

In the fullness of time Jesus, the ‘perfect image of the invisible God’ (Col 1:15) showed us very clearly what this looks like in practice. By entering human history in a particular time, place, and culture, he demonstrated the central importance of time, place and culture in personal and communal involvement in God’s creating and redeeming action in our world.

As teacher par excellence, Jesus utilised many methods. He taught by example, and also by means of direct instruction in which he used words, images, and imaginative stories that people understood. He also taught by involvement with people followed by reflection on the experience, and by his choice of relationships, especially those that were personally demanding. He clarified that creation and human life are heading towards a ‘new creation’² and he called this, as both goal and process, ‘the Kingdom of God’, a kingdom that is both partially present and yet to come in its fullness only in God’s time.

*The Kingdom is a gracious gift from God, who comes with unconditional love to seek out humankind and to offer ultimate salvation to all ... It is a gift from God which people can only receive in gratitude and awe. God is coming toward us as unconditional love, seeking communion and intimacy. Since it is a gift of love, the only concrete description can be in terms of symbols and images.*³

Jesus modelled what must be the kind of values and actions which can move the present situation towards the ‘not yet’ direction of God’s Kingdom. Most tellingly of all, he demonstrated in his own life and death that a creative, redeeming, and faithful life is very costly in personal terms. Leaving no room for an ‘arm’s length’ or purely ‘academic’ view of the Kingdom of God, Pope John Paul II, in a famous passage, speaks of Jesus as the incarnation of the Kingdom of God:

*The Kingdom of God is not a concept, a doctrine, or a program subject to free interpretation, but it is before all else a person with the face and name of Jesus of Nazareth, the image of the invisible God.*⁴

In the introduction to his seminal work on the Kingdom of God, John Fuellenbach raises the question that, in substance, many scholars and other Christians also confront. The question is: Can *we* see the focal issues

2 In his own teaching Paul, who was attuned to the cultures in which he was working, used the phrase the ‘kingdom of God’ quite sparingly in comparison to the writers of the synoptic gospels. He also used the phrase ‘new creation’ with much the same meaning, e.g. Rom 8:14–17; Gal 4:1–7.

3 John Fuellenbach, *The Kingdom of God: The Message of Jesus Today*. Maryknoll N.Y: Orbis, 1995, 97.

4 Pope John Paul II *Redemptoris Missio* 1990, # 18.

addressed by Jesus' teaching, or are our interpretations and teachings so encrusted with traditions and secondary concerns that we can hardly see the real issues addressed by his preaching?⁵ In fact, today's Christians have privileged access to a vast body of scholarship devoted to understanding Jesus in his historical-cultural setting, work which throws light on this important question. Such scholarship, when pursued within a community of faith, enables the faithful to fuse their own horizons with that of Jesus as he, in his time and place, opened up God's vision and mission to his followers through his involvement in the Kingdom of God.⁶ As a result, we can appreciate that Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom dealt with the immediate issues of one's relationship with God, and the authentication of that by the quality of relationship with others, the more marginalised being singled out as of central importance in the determination of authenticity.

Considerations of the Kingdom of God and our part in making it present in today's world frame the pedagogical choices confronting Christian educators. They help us shape the goals of Christian education and the pedagogical choices that will facilitate the achievement of those goals.

- *How confident and competent are we as educators in articulating the goals of Catholic education in terms of Jesus' project of the Kingdom of God?*

I. CONFRONTING QUESTIONS

1.1 The world of the student

The process by which students learn and develop unfolds in a particular cultural context, and the way teachers understand and relate to that context shapes many of the decisions they make about how to teach and how to present materials to students.

Every day the readers of this book make decisions about how 'to make a difference' to the lives of their students in the context of a Catholic school, at a time when Western societies are caught up in an era of unprecedented instability and rapid cultural change.

The speed and extent of change leaves many people today wondering not only if the 'goalposts have moved', but whether they may have been stolen! Leaders of institutions that people once thought they could rely on, such

⁵ Fuellenbach, 1.

⁶ The legacy of 'giants' like the distinguished US scholar Raymond Brown, (1928–1998), who worked in a pioneering way with the historical-critical method, stands out and has opened the way for a host of other scholars. In recent times, the hugely popular work by the Spaniard Jose Pagola, *Jesus: an Historical Approximation*. Revised Edition. Convivium Press, 2014, demonstrates the appreciation scholars and educated 'laity' alike have for work which they regard as authentically opening up Jesus' life and teaching within his social and historical context, thus allowing them and their communities to bring their own lives and issues into 'conversation' with Jesus' teaching and example.

as the churches and major financial institutions, have been exposed as less than honourable, leaving many wondering what is going on. US Protestant theologian, pastor and Church leader, Alan Roxburgh, is accurate when he talks about ‘the great unravelling’⁷ occurring in the West as traditions that once held society together, and which were taken for granted, lose their power as anchors.

Today both teachers and their students learn in a challenging context, but with an important difference in terms of experience. Teachers have more experience to compare current events than do students. They can more easily reflect on what is happening, whereas their students are ‘native’ to this new environment. For them it constitutes ‘normal’, and this makes them vulnerable.

- *How do teachers understand this situation and how do they seek to ‘bridge the cultural gap’ that separates them from their students?*
- *How does the vulnerability of students shape pedagogical thinking?*

Teachers also formulate their moral purpose by implicitly or explicitly assessing students’ needs in a changing context in which technology now plays an increasing role. In recent decades teachers have found themselves playing ‘catch-up’ because they are not ‘native’ to the technological world as inhabited by their students.

- *What role does technology play in shaping teaching practice and the relationship between teacher and student in the process of learning?*
- *How is technology shaping decisions about pedagogical practice?*

As part of the cultural shift underway, there has been a profound change in how traditions are viewed and how they can be handed on. Parents find their children are resistant to accepting traditions that they themselves take for granted. This is certainly the case in matters of religion, and is increasingly the case in how students form their view of the world.

- *How do teachers understand and work with students in an era of change that is quite unprecedented, and in which ‘business as normal’ does not work, because what is taken as ‘normal’ is being rapidly redefined?*

7 In spoken and written texts Roxburgh uses a phrase made famous by Paul Krugman (US economist, Nobel prize winner and popular columnist for the New York Times) in his 2003 bestselling work *The Great Unravelling: From Boom to Bust in Three Scandalous Years*. Roxburgh’s own ministry focuses on the refounding of Christian communities in our time, made necessary by discontinuity and radical newness. See for example Alan Roxburgh, *Joining God, Remaking Church, and Changing the World: The new shape of the church in our time*. New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2015. Part 1.1.

1.2 The world of the teacher

A great dignity of the teaching profession flows from the fact that, in a very complex cultural and religious situation, *teachers consciously choose to make a difference through working with students*. They do so believing that their work has benefit for the students themselves and through them for society and culture. Many do so knowing that the financial rewards associated with teaching will rarely, if ever, be commensurate with the challenges to be faced in making teaching one's career. More so than is generally the case, the profession of teaching forces teachers to develop an orientation towards the future that is unique in its sensibility. *Teachers see the future through the eyes and through the hopes of their students*. This is a privileged position, and one that gives them pause to stop and think when planning the processes of learning:

- *What is 'the difference' that teachers seek to make, and how does this impinge on their day-to-day decisions in teaching students native to the new and unfamiliar world educators share with them?*

Not only are teaching decisions shaped by context, they are also shaped by the assumptions the teacher holds about how students learn in general, and how a particular group learns. Teachers are invited to probe:

- *What are my assumptions about learning and how it occurs, and how do these help or hinder me in making pedagogical decisions?*

The world of the teacher is unique. Schooling is the source of a bewildering volume of research, much of which focuses on 'what works in the classroom'. In many disciplines, researchers conduct meta-studies pulling together insights drawn from numerous previous research studies on a particular topic. In education, researchers in New Zealand now conduct mega-studies developing insights based on meta-study data! John Hattie's *Visible Learning* is an example of this approach,⁸ as is Timperley et al's, *Teacher Professional Development and Learning*.⁹

Yet the results of these mega-studies seem to have little influence on teacher decision-making. John Hattie suggests that we have created a profession based on the principle: 'Just leave me alone as I have the evidence that what I do enhances learning and achievement'. He goes on to ask rhetorically:

8 John Hattie, *Visible Learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. London: Routledge, 2009.

9 H. Timperley, A. Wilson, H. Barrar, & I. Fung, *Teacher Professional Learning and Development: Best Evidence Iteration*. Auckland: New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2007.

*How can there be so many published articles, so many reports providing direction, so many professional development sessions advocating this or that method, so many parents and politicians inventing new and better answers, while classrooms are hardly different from 200 years ago? Why does this bounty of research have such little impact?*¹⁰

For the students, learning and personal development are complex activities influenced by many variables. These variables are operating in-school and out-of-school so as to render most attempts to isolate *cause and effect* in learning futile. A question for the teacher to ponder is:

- *What attitude do I have towards the empirical tradition in education and how does it shape my teaching practice?*

A teacher's moral purpose is determined in large part by their assumptions about how students learn and make sense of life. For the most part, these assumptions are *culturally acquired* and so rarely explored. This situation becomes dangerous in a change of era when cultural understandings undergo major shifts. We currently live at the confluence of three cultural traditions: modernity, postmodernity and postsecularism. People today cherry-pick from each of these and so have a fragmented grasp of their culture (in much the same way as they have a fragmented grasp of their faith). This impacts on how they construe learning and knowledge.

- *What are my assumptions about how students learn and about what constitutes knowledge?*

Every teacher has a working hermeneutical theory that is largely unexamined, and a working epistemology, similarly unexamined, that shape her or his understanding of how students learn. In later chapters we will open up these issues.

Teaching decisions have to be made with respect to the learning and development needs of particular students by teachers with a 'feel' for what is happening *relationally* in the classroom. Having this type of sensibility enables teachers to create a social ambience in which students feel safe and in which learning and human flourishing become possible.

- *How do teachers develop this 'feel'?*
- *Do we construe teaching as an art in which judgment is the key, or can teaching be regarded as a science where fixed norms apply, or some combination of both?*

¹⁰ Hattie, 3.

How a teacher constructs the *social ambience* in his or her classroom shapes whether collaborative learning can occur, and how this may be co-opted in the service of learning.

- *How does shaping the relational environment figure in your classroom practice?*
- *How does collaborative learning figure in this practice?*

A classroom is more than a context in which things learnt in the past are passed on. The class itself can become *a source of new knowledge*. This will be *local knowledge* and will include knowledge about *how this group works together*. It also includes knowledge of what the experience of teaching this class is like for me, the teacher.

- *How does the teacher value and deal with local knowledge?*

Every class has the possibility of becoming a learning community in which new things are tried, some of which succeed and some of which do not, but by reflecting on the experience, the group including the teacher, learns.

- *What attitude might a teacher take to such a possibility? Does she or he encourage this form of learning?*
- *How does collaborative learning sit with the teacher's moral purpose in regard to students and the decisions that flow from it?*

In making decisions about how students learn and develop, teachers consciously and subconsciously operate from an understanding of 'what it means to be human', what therefore is considered to be 'natural', and what constitutes 'human flourishing'. For most teachers, 'making a difference' is interpreted as widening their students' perspective about possibilities in regard to 'human flourishing'. However, in a pluralist, postmodern and postsecular society there is increasing disagreement about what is 'natural' and, ready or not, teachers find themselves, caught up into these debates. They have to develop *a functional anthropology* that values both the present and the past.

- *How do teachers do this?*
- *How does this functional anthropology shape the assumptions teachers hold about what constitutes good teaching?*
- *What notion of human flourishing does this functional anthropology embrace?*

Each teacher has a *worldview* shaped by what they have learned up to the present. Such historical experiences are usually interpreted within a *narrative conception* of what it means to be human, what is considered ‘natural’ and ‘correct’. The problem is that, for the most part, this worldview and its associated narrative operate out-of-awareness and are taken for granted; only rarely are they brought to consciousness. They work away in the background shaping the teacher’s conception of what is ‘right’ and ‘proper’ in learning, in classroom behaviour, in extra-curricular activities, in the use of technology, in individualised instruction, and in how they interpret their role as teacher. How teachers interpret their role as teacher is most important.

- *What do teachers know about their own worldview?*
- *How do they explore it?*
- *How does it shape the way they understand their role as teacher?*
- *How can they assume responsibility, and be supported, in the formation of a personal worldview aligned with that of Jesus?*

1.3 The world of the school

School life provides an important social context for human flourishing. There is often a tendency among teachers to interpret schooling as a preparation for life in the future, almost as if the present were not important. Students do not see the matter this way. For many, the present is all that there is, so they often interpret their needs in a more immediate way than do their teachers. This can create problems for both groups, particularly when it comes to understanding a student’s motivation to learn and his or her willingness to engage in learning.

- *How do teachers construe the life situation of their students?*
- *What expectations do they hold about students’ motivations?*
- *In what ways do these expectations shape the way teachers structure learning?*

In a learning community¹¹, as the phrase has more recently come to be understood, the notions of ‘teacher’ and ‘learner’ now have a degree of

11 Peter Senge popularised the concept of a ‘*learning organisation*’ in his 1990 book (subsequently revised 2006), *The Fifth Discipline*, and in a number of follow-up publications. People utilising his ideas in education (schools and school systems), or in other settings such as parishes, generally use the phrase ‘learning community’. In the view of the writers of this book, Senge’s emphasis on communities engaging, *as communities*, in transformative learning, as opposed to individuals pursuing their own learning without much reference to the learning of the whole community, has much to recommend it in terms of the pedagogical goal of making a positive difference in the lives of students.

fluidity not found in more traditional school structures. This impacts on the design of learning as it creates options that did not previously exist.

- *How does the teacher make use of these options in designing learning?*

1.4 The world of the Church

Catholic schools exist within an educational tradition that precedes the institution of education as a public service in the 18th and 19th centuries. This tradition has evolved over time. The form in which we know it today dates from the 16th century as the Renaissance impacted on human consciousness, and teaching congregations were founded to provide a basic education for young people from the rising middle classes (boys first, and later girls), and in due course from the lower classes. A multitude of religious congregations would be founded across Europe in subsequent centuries as the Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions created vast social upheaval and people flooded from the countryside into the towns in search of a livelihood. The members of these groups saw education as a way to assist vulnerable children who otherwise could be readily exploited in factories. As the Catholic educational tradition unfolded, 'the faith' was handed on in the process of creating life chances for students.

- *What trajectory does the Catholic education tradition provide for Catholic schooling today?*

Schools now play only an intermediate role in creating life chances for students. In addition to a change in this traditional role, in Catholic schools today 'the faith' cannot be passed on in the way it once was, and this has a bearing on the purpose, place and process of Religious Education in the school curriculum. The function of Catholic schools within the Church and within society is being reformulated.

- *What roles are teachers playing in the reformulations that are underway?*
- *How does this impact on the way they teach in Religious Education? In other learning areas?*

The Catholic school tradition has a narrative that has shaped the culture of Catholic schools. This narrative is broadly coherent, but varies in the telling from country to country, and in its emphasis. In Australia today the narrative owes much to the religious congregations who were indispensable in establishing Catholic school systems in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Prior to this, lay people and diocesan priests established the first 'schools for Catholics', so creating a foundation on which the religious

would later build. The early lay teachers were generally people who had a limited grasp of their faith in terms of ‘book knowledge’, but their authority as religious leaders and educators was strongly supported by the Catholic community in which they worked, and so they effectively shared their precious faith heritage.

Many Catholic educators today also share something of the early teachers’ situation in regard to their religious knowledge base. Although they have the advantage of opportunities to deal with any deficit in knowledge, they operate without the support provided by the strong Catholic culture that their forebears enjoyed. They and their leaders have to work out how to address the challenges this presents. The strength of the local school community, parish, and educational system is obviously a crucial factor. In our experience, many teachers in Catholic schools are largely ignorant of the educational narrative in which their schools stand, and are unaware of how far back in time it extends. The narrative of Catholic schooling affirms a number of *important values* that stand behind the culture of Australian Catholic schools. However, like all cultural values, these are largely taken for granted and work out of sight, at least as long as they remain unchallenged. In the present era of profound societal change, however, the values and traditions that have made Catholic schools ‘Catholic’ are being challenged. Hence, it is important that teachers begin to learn what these are, and how they affect what is happening in their particular schools. This involves greater familiarity with the narrative of Catholic schooling so that the *pedagogical significance* of its core values is understood.

- *What are the values that characterise your school’s participation in the Catholic school narrative?*
- *How do these play out in the goals the school seeks to achieve?*
- *How do they play out in teaching practice?*

Schools associated with religious congregations undertake this project under the rubric of *charism*. It is easy for a teacher to assume that, if their school is not associated with a religious congregation, then it has no charism. However, every Catholic school has its own charism as each school community provides its *own graced witness to the Gospel*. The challenge is to discover what this charism is, to celebrate it, and determine how the values central to it shape school life and influence pedagogical choices.

Many schools now interpret their charism in terms of important values drawn from Catholic social teaching. One of these values is expressed as ‘exercising a preferential option for the poor and marginalised’. This emphasis in school life brings Catholic schools into the ambit of what is

known as ‘critical pedagogy’ pioneered by Paulo Freire and the liberation theologians in Latin America, and developed in the US by educators such as Henry Giroux, Joe Kincheloe, and in the US Catholic sector by Thomas Oldenski. These people ask:

- *Who is being left behind or marginalised by the way in which teaching and learning function in schools today, and how are we going to address this issue?*

It is not possible for a Catholic school community to achieve its mission to make present God’s Kingdom without thinking through the implications of such questions as:

- *How are marginalised students taught in this school?*
- *How are they taught in my classroom?*
- *In what ways do our school structures, including teaching methods, marginalise students or compound their situation?*

Critical pedagogy highlights the moral dimension of the Catholic school tradition.

In 1977 the Vatican’s Congregation for Catholic Education¹² published *The Catholic School*. Since then, this body has consistently attempted to chart, promote, and clarify thinking about what is important in Catholic schooling. Given that Catholic schools operate in widely different political and cultural situations, this is not an easy task. As a consequence, the *normative documentation* on Catholic schooling tends to be fairly general, and dioceses are encouraged to interpret it while taking local contexts into account. This task usually falls to Catholic Education Offices and leaders of religious congregations.

The major emphasis in the normative documents has been on the goals of Catholic schooling, rather than on pedagogy. Consequently, these documents do not feature a consistent focus on pedagogy either conceptually or practically. However, across time they have continued to highlight important aspects of pedagogy. These range from an exhortation to embrace ‘pedagogical excellence’ in the Second Vatican Council document on Christian education¹³ through reference to the responsibilities of teachers

12 A division of the administrative apparatus of the Holy See responsible for education in schools, universities and seminaries.

13 The document on Catholic education from the Second Vatican Council (*Gravissimum Educationis*) concludes by urging educators to ‘excel in pedagogy’, an exhortation repeated towards the end of *The Catholic School* (1977), the document which provided the post-Council comprehensive treatment foreshadowed in *Gravissimum Educationis*.

of ‘pedagogical science’ in the 1980s¹⁴, to the pedagogy of ‘intercultural learning’ today¹⁵.

As the foregoing makes clear, there are a multitude of questions to consider in attempting to make links between ‘Catholic’, on the one hand, and ‘pedagogy’ on the other. We hope this book will help do this by opening up conversation about what these links are, and how they can be made in the context of a particular school.

Catholic bishops in many parts of Australia have recognised that traditional approaches to Religious Education have become ineffective in educating students native to the emerging cultural environment. Consequently, the purpose and function of Religious Education is being re-conceptualised and translated in terms of classroom practice.

In the emerging thinking, as well as its religious purpose as traditionally understood, Religious Education has both a social and a cultural purpose. The analysis of the situation provided by Belgian theologian and educator Lieven Boeve has been influential, as has the work of his colleagues at Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KUL) in establishing the *Enhancing Catholic School Identity* (ECSI) project in which many Australian dioceses are participating. Boeve suggests that, in the face of the current pluralism in belief and the devaluing of traditions that once held society together, the purpose and practice of Religious Education needs to be reformulated. Furthermore, he suggests that the Catholic tradition itself needs to be ‘re-contextualised’ if it is going to be meaningful to students and help them live in a pluralised, multi-faith, and de-traditionalised world.

‘Re-contextualisation’ involves developing a contextualised critical consciousness so that students are able to evaluate the many options open to them, including belief or unbelief, in making important life choices. Boeve’s position shares much in common with the advocates of critical pedagogy. His suggestions for reformulating and re-contextualising Catholic education, when taken up, have an important bearing on how teachers construe their moral purpose and the ‘difference’ they seek to make through their teaching. The development also impacts on how Religious Education, as a specific area of study, is approached. The development also has much to offer other areas of study in terms of teaching methodology, given that our culture as a whole faces the same problem in regard to context.

14 Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* 1988, 62.

15 Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love* (2013). All normative documents on Catholic education are downloadable from the Vatican website.

- *What does 're-contextualisation' mean for teachers and how does it shape their pedagogy?*

An important argument of this book is that the role of the teacher in a Catholic school is being transformed. This is driven by changes in the context in which these schools now operate, and this impacts the meaning that 'mission', as a religious goal pursued through Catholic education, has for many. Some of the changes underway reflect changes in the wider culture; others reflect changes in the way members of the Catholic Church now see the world, understand their place in it, and understand their relationship to traditional sources of authority in the Church. Whereas once social conditions were such that teachers understood their role as *knowledge experts and creators of life chances*, today they act more as *designers of learning, models of learning, and mediators of meaning* for the young people in their care. All three roles have a particular orientation in the context of a Catholic school and its mission to the young, and to society and culture.

In school education there has been a shift in pedagogical emphasis from *what the teacher does* to *how well the student learns*. The role of the teacher seems to be moving closer to that of the *accompaniment* that characterised the role of the original pedagogues.¹⁶

2. WHAT IS PEDAGOGY?

While we have used the term many times already, one of the biggest challenges in researching this book has been giving a precise meaning to the term 'pedagogy'. Understandings of pedagogy seem to lie along a spectrum of meanings. At one end of this spectrum the meaning is narrowly *technical*. In this understanding, pedagogy is *what the teacher does in the classroom to promote effective and measurable student learning*. At the other end of the spectrum the understanding of pedagogy is framed in *ethical terms*. *Pedagogy is a particular form of relationship between an adult and a vulnerable child or young person in which the former accepts responsibility for the care, growth and development of that vulnerable child or young person*. The narrow definition of pedagogy is specific to teaching. The broader definition covers parenting, as well as

16 In ancient Greece pedagogues were slaves who accompanied the children (boys only) of the wealthy to school, carrying their books. It was a menial role that developed over time. In Roman times pedagogues were well-educated slaves who stood *in loco parentis* and were responsible for ensuring that their charges (boys or girls) actually learned from their teachers. They became the supervisors of learning. This is the role of modern social pedagogues in Europe who accompany troubled young people and help them negotiate the social challenges associated with growing up in a pluralist society. The notion of 'accompaniment' is also prominent in Pope Francis' approach to young people.

teaching, counselling and other services devoted to the proper development of the child.

As an ethical activity, pedagogy focuses on *what is 'good' for the child* (Van Manen 2016).¹⁷ Teachers will have their own understandings of what 'good' means in the context of Catholic education. There are normative Catholic understandings that grow out of the experience of Catholic education worldwide that provide helpful resources in expanding understanding, and these play their part in pre-service education for teachers and in the formative programs which system leaders provide.¹⁸

By exploring 'the good' teachers seek to achieve and the way in which this plays out, *Pedagogy and the Catholic Educator: Nurturing Hearts, Transforming Possibilities* seeks to address the questions raised above and the changing role of the teacher in:

- *how they teach*
- *how they interact with students in helping them learn and develop*
- *how they define their role.*

The book uses a multi-disciplinary approach in exploring these issues.

3. CATHOLIC PEDAGOGY

For those who understand pedagogy as narrowly defined, 'Catholic' may seem an unusual adjective to juxtapose with it. The juxtaposition will seem more appropriate for those who interpret pedagogy in a broader way.

In this book we interpret 'Catholic' as embracing *a constellation of values* that are used to justify the 'good' that pedagogy seeks to achieve. The primary Catholic values are those contained in Jesus' message about the Kingdom of God as exemplified in the way Jesus lived his life and engaged in his mission. We call these *Kingdom values*. They apply to human life, to societal arrangements, and to the earth itself.

Jesus' Kingdom values do not exist in some absolute, ahistorical, acultural form. They have to be contextualised. As cultures and times change, they must be *re-contextualised* if they are to remain meaningful and maintain their role in playing a part in ushering in changes that can inaugurate a better future. When this process of re-contextualisation is not carried out effectively, a warping occurs in the fabric of Christian life. We are witnessing

17 A key theme in *Pedagogical Tact*. Routledge: London, 2016. See for example 'The Nature of Pedagogy' (chapter 3), 33–48.

18 Readers are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the normative tradition of Catholic education as contained in the magisterial documents which have been issued by the Congregation for Catholic Education since the Second Vatican Council (1962–5). These are listed and downloadable from the Vatican website.

the consequence of this at the present time, and it is a malady that Pope Francis, along with recent popes, is seeking to address. The Kingdom value of 'mission' is, therefore, complex, since the specific demands of God's mission as we learn these from the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus, also change in response to changing historical and societal circumstances.

The word 'mission' is widely used today. In general usage, 'mission' means 'purpose'. In Christian life, the term also refers to the 'purpose' or 'raison d'être' of the community which is *to continue the salvific ministry of Jesus, the teacher, healer, and reconciler, in the here and now*. Christian churches including the Catholic Church have been through much serious reflection on mission in recent decades. The normative teaching on mission is now rich and extensive. It will be discussed further as we proceed. The mission or goal that Jesus saw as the focus of all his endeavours was to make present and very concrete God's own vision and ongoing work in creation. Jesus called this project 'the Kingdom of God'. For him the Kingdom of God was very clear and concrete, even if fundamentally different from the political triumph his followers were expecting vis-à-vis the Roman occupation. As we have noted, Jesus made the Kingdom of God very real through his down-to-earth teaching, including his arresting parables, his personal choices of relationships, his usage of time and energy, and his prayerful communication with the one he called 'Father'.

As the demands of mission shift, so too does our conception of 'Catholic identity' and our understanding of our role as Christians – 'what it is that expresses who we are', 'what is right for us'. A consequence is that the 'good' that a Catholic pedagogy seeks to achieve has to be re-conceptualised. For example, mission and pedagogy in a postmodern, postsecular society have different emphases and pursue different directions from those appropriately taken in modernity.

A constant temptation for Church leaders has been to take a particular contextualisation of Jesus' Kingdom values as being definitive of Christian life for all cultures and all times. However, *Christian life can have no such definitive form in human history*, for it is always *in process*. This understanding is integral to Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom of God *which was cast in process terms* and included an orientation to the future, God's future. We will open up this important element of pedagogical vision in our final section.

The privilege and challenge of re-contextualising mission is to honour the God who, in Jesus, both entered human history in a particular time and place, and continues through the Holy Spirit to quicken and empower us through the particularities of histories and cultures. Thus there is, or should be, always a fluidity and newness in the concept 'Catholic'.

Jesus' Kingdom values, discernible from how he engaged in his teaching, healing, and reconciling mission, provide teachers with *essential criteria in both making sound pedagogical choices and in re-defining their own roles*. As the diagram below makes clear, conceptualising a Catholic pedagogy is no easy task. This is because a Catholic pedagogy sits at the confluence of a number of historically developed traditions, each of which has some impact in shaping the pedagogical choices open to teachers today.

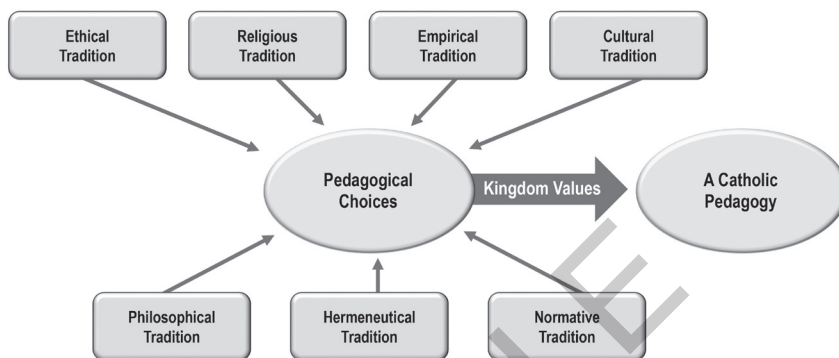


FIGURE 1.1: TRADITIONS IMPACTING ON PEDAGOGY IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

In concluding this chapter, we portray our working description – ‘definition’ being too constraining a term – of ‘Catholic pedagogy’ as follows:

Catholic pedagogy is a shared understanding that provides teachers with guidelines in their decision-making as to how best to advance the learning and development of their students.

This shared understanding is nourished by a community of educators striving to be faithful to the mission of Jesus in their time and place.

Enriched by the wisdom of both faith and culture, Catholic pedagogy advances the mission of the Catholic school community, and seeks the ‘good’ of each child.

Catholic pedagogy assumes sound analysis of the student's situation, and adequate understanding of what constitutes learning, including the conditions under which this occurs.

Catholic pedagogy engenders responsiveness to God's invitation to be co-creators of a more just and loving society and a flourishing natural world.

Catholic pedagogy is a profoundly ethical endeavour.