

Tapu

Religious Studies Teachers Association
of Aotearoa New Zealand



Newsletter 3: April 2013

God is a circle
whose center is
everywhere
and
circumference
nowhere.

Voltaire

Dear colleagues

I hope the first term has gone well for you. Happy Easter (even if belatedly). In this office items relating to RSTA have been a mixture of steps forward and backward.

At the end of 2012 Br Kevin Wanden moved on from his position as the Director of the National Centre for Religious Studies. While the position was vacant, former Director of NCRS Gary Findlay was available to fill the role in a part time position, which was very fortunate. However, Gary has had to relinquish this role, so at the moment we have a gap. As the non-expert half of the team, I'm feeling a little adrift!

We have had contact with the Ministry of Education curriculum staff who are leading the work on the review of the Religious Studies Achievement Standards. The purpose of the review is to ensure that the Standards are fit for purpose, and that there is a progression of levels from 1 to 3. Submissions will be called for in due course, and you will be advised in plenty of time. Meantime please think about what you might wish to say in your submission.

Until we have something more concrete to work on, and while we have no one to fill the NCRS role, I do not intend to call a teleconference of the leadership group of the association. I would, of course, be delighted to circulate any information you wish to share.

I am looking for suggestions for really interesting quotes for the left hand side of this page. Please send me your suggestions.

One other thought: teachers of Religious Education/Religious Studies really need to be well qualified to teach the subject. The subject's academic excellence depends on the qualification levels of teachers.

Instead of the usual page 2, there is an interesting extract on spirituality and religion, provided by NCRS.

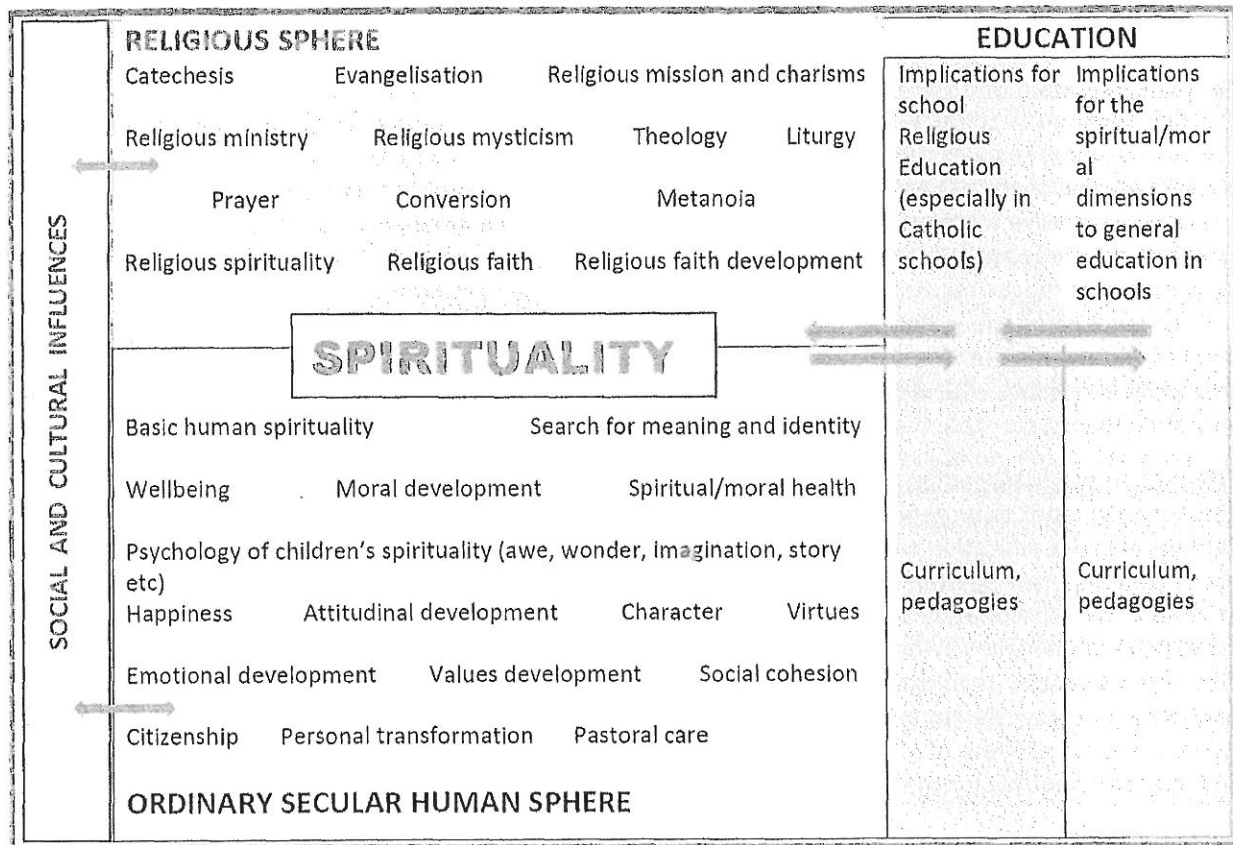
Meantime, all the best

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dimension of the religious sphere, and for those concerned with the spiritual dimension to the secular sphere – hopefully to promote mutual interest in both spheres. This mediating function is becoming increasingly evident in contemporary writing on spirituality and education.

Diagram illustrating the strategic place of SPIRITUALITY as a ‘bridge’ between the religious and non-religious spheres, together with links to education and socio-cultural influences.



The lower half of the diagram (covering what might be called the *basic human spirituality* sphere) lists a range of psychological and social constructs that are being used in public discourse (especially in education) to interpret personal development in ways that are not necessarily religious, even though individuals may remain open to being informed by the religious dimension. For religious educators based within a religious school, there is a critical need to become literate in these constructs. They help explore the emergence and function of non-religious spiritualities, which now characterise the majority of students in religious schools. They also provide a common language for re-interpreting and applying traditional religious wisdoms and theology that may have become inaccessible to modern people. This is essentially the task of *recontextualising* the religious tradition which is at the heart of the writings of theologian Lieven Boeve; and this, in turn, is central to the current Catholic Schools Identity Research in Victoria conducted by Didier Pollefeyt. The diagram also shows where contemporary writing on children's spirituality fits in the scheme – it explores and interprets the psychological dimensions to basic human spirituality in children.

The diagrammatic scheme is also useful for giving perspective to religious education research. What is valuable is its multiple focus. It has strong theological elements – but is not focused exclusively on theology; it attends to constructs such as faith and religious development. But it also addresses the psychological dimensions to personal, spiritual and moral development, and this can be used as a way of talking about religion today that can be more relevant to people than much theological/ecclesial language. It is not focusing just on personal/corporate spirituality, but on socio-cultural influences and on implications for religious education as well as implications for spiritual/moral dimension to general education.

Graham Rossiter, Australian Catholic University