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# Authentic Religious Education: A Question of Language?

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**Abstract:** There is much emphasis today on inclusion and diversity in educational systems. As the place of religious belief remains a significant factor in such debates, there is a need for shared understanding of the language and purpose of Religious Education in schools. Given the substantial international footprint of Catholic schools, the conceptual framework of Religious Education in Catholic schools merits serious scrutiny. The Catholic Church's written teaching on education has a strong focus on the contemporary school as a site of intercultural dialogue. The related teaching on Religious Education in schools, however, remains underdeveloped, with strong voices debating the desirability, or otherwise, of a strong focus on 'faith formation and practice' as an outcome of Religious Education. Problematically, terms like 'Religious Education' have inconsistent translations in the official documents of the Catholic Church, leading to a plurality of understandings internationally of the ultimate aim of the subject. A presentation of the linguistic inconsistency between English and Italian translations of documents of the Holy See reveals the scale of the challenge. This unsatisfactory arrangement needs reform. Rooted in a close critical study of Catholic teaching on education, the article presents two arguments designed to initiate the reform process: (a) the Catholic Church's settled teaching on Religious Education must develop greater internal cohesion before it can make a meaningful contribution to intercultural dialogue, and (b) an International Directory of Religious Education, written collegially by qualified lay people and clergy, will build stronger foundations for shared understanding of the aims and scope of Religious Education among key stakeholders in Catholic schools. This shift in direction will harmonise Religious Education expectations in Catholic schools, and offer firmer ground for dialogue with those who manage and teach Religious Education in so-called 'non-denominational' schools.

**Keywords:** religious education; intercultural dialogue; catechesis; inclusion

## 1. Introduction

Catholic school systems operate in multiple educational jurisdictions. As such, they are in the front line of important international discussions on the cultural implications arising from the intersection of religion and education. This important sociocultural phenomenon is recognised in high-level international documentation, such as the *United Nations Declaration on Human Rights* (United Nations 1948, Article 26), UNESCO's *Convention Against Discrimination in Education* (UNESCO 1960), and the *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools* (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe 2007).

Religious Education in Catholic schools (henceforth Religious Education), understood as the unique and prized curricular space where rich theological traditions encounter oft-contested educational theories, offers, inter alia, the core knowledge at the heart of the Catholic school's wider faith mission. Consequently, it is a prime site for study of how the Catholic Church's educational mission addresses complex sociocultural issues viz. secularism, cultural pluralism, and religious diversity (Franchi 2016). The study of such important themes is crucial for the advance of social

inclusion and interreligious dialogue. Given (a) the ongoing influence of religious cultures and worldviews on the current educational climate and (b) the substantial international footprint of Catholic educational institutions, how the Catholic school addresses and articulates its understanding of such matters is of universal interest. The Religious Education curriculum will hence, in fruitful and ongoing partnership with the wider curriculum, serve as the front-door of the Catholic school's mission.

'Authentic Religious Education', as highlighted in the title of the article, is necessarily *religious* and *educational*. It is much more than an aggregation of worthy catechetical initiatives, but aligns a robust intellectual commitment to the Church's theological and cultural traditions with a firm grounding in the critical and analytical processes which should inform any worthwhile educational endeavour. In the Catholic school, it is natural that the curricular focus will be on Catholic traditions, but with an openness to wider philosophical ideas. More broadly, it is where teachers and researchers combine their respective spheres of interest in search of good practice (Stern 2018), with a view to offering the best experience to students and the wider community. Given this high level of expectation, and bearing in mind that 'good practice' is, so to speak, a moveable feast, the Church's own understanding of Religious Education needs to combine flexibility and consistency: a universally shared understanding of the aims and scope of Religious Education would, ideally, energise the Catholic School's commitment to meaningful exploration of the implications of religious and cultural pluralism in a variety of settings.

The principal argument of the present article is that Religious Education is hindered by a degree of conceptual inconsistency regarding its agreed sphere of influence. This lacuna is particularly problematic when we study Church teaching on Religious Education in different languages, finding, therein, a challenging mosaic of definitions and terms which seems to defy attempts at harmony. For Religious Education to be a focus for meaningful intercultural dialogue, there needs, first, to be a shared understanding of the aims and scope of the subject allied to consistency in how such agreed definitions are communicated.

I begin by identifying some challenges to a robust and academically authentic Religious Education. I then offer a comparative study of the conceptual framework and associated language of Religious Education using primary source texts, in both English and Italian, as examples of important inconsistencies in the approach between the 'Latinate' and Anglophone milieu. Finally, I propose an International Directory of Religious Education as a means of harmonising the aims and scope of Religious Education.

## 2. Identifying Challenges to Authentic Religious Education

Meaningful discussion on the factors which should encourage the contemporary school to be a knowledge-rich, inclusive, and supportive educational environments must recognise the important, if contested, role of organised religion in educational provision worldwide (Hand 2004; Jackson et al. 2007). While we are living through a period of diminishing religious awareness in parts of the industrialised west (Gardner et al. 2017), much ink continues to be spilt on discussion, often fraught, of the many politically sensitive issues arising from the interface between religion and education. Such changing social and cultural mores continue to have an impact on Catholic thinking on education in general, and on Religious Education in particular.

The challenge facing Religious Education can be summarised as follows: a shift in the Church's own understanding of Religious Education, from an explicit focus on 'faith formation' in favour of a wider 'knowledge' of the Christian tradition (Congregation for Catholic Education 2009), has not been successfully explained. In addition, there have been wider developments in the field leading to the situation whereby the Catholic school is now proposed, perhaps controversially, as a site of intercultural dialogue (Congregation for Catholic Education 2013).

The much-debated relationship between catechesis and Religious Education is the ideal space in which to explore how the Catholic school can address its dual commitment to (a) faith formation of the baptised and (b) dialogue with people from other religious and philosophical traditions

(Franchi 2017; Whittle 2015; Rymarz 2011; Congregation for Catholic Education 1988; Rossiter 1982). In brief, the contours of the debate are as follows:

a.　if Religious Education is explicitly catechetical in intention (i.e., it has a clear and explicit focus on the faith-formation of the Catholic pupils), how can it be inclusive of those who belong to other (or no) religious traditions?

b.　Given the range of religious traditions which currently co-exist in the Catholic school, it is important to ask to how a Catholic school can look *ad extra* (outwards) to people of all traditions, as well as *ad intra* (inwards) to the needs of the members of the Catholic community?

A response to the conceptual *conundrum* posed above must begin with a return to the foundational documents of Catholic education, beginning with the Second Vatican Council's *Declaration on Christian Education—Gravissimum Educationis* (Second Vatican Council 1965).

Although *Gravissimum Educationis* is a relatively concise document and does not obviously have the cultural and political footprint of UN/UNESCO literature, it surely reflects the prevalent hope-filled post-war commitment to educational expansion and reform. *Gravissimum Educationis* positions the Church at the forefront of international educational providers, referring explicitly to the UN Declaration of 1948 in Endnote 3.

Significantly, *Gravissimum Educationis* had some important things to say about the aims and purposes of Catholic education in a world in which the tectonic plates of societal and cultural attitudes towards religion's place in education were slowly moving towards a greater openness (*Gravissimum Educationis* Second Vatican Council 1965, Section 1). In broad terms, *Gravissimum Educationis* is a religiously conditioned filling-out of the ideals of the UN *Declaration* of 1948 and the UNESCO *Convention* of 1960, with due attention paid to ongoing and meaningful dialogue with the 'world'. Subsequent documentation on education from the Holy See gradually explored various themes emerging from the commitment *ad extra* (to the outside word). This crucial shift in emphasis found comprehensive expression in *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilisation of Love* (Congregation for Catholic Education 2013), an important (and lengthy) document which set out the lines of engagement for Catholic schools' approach to engaging positively with the cultural variations which often emanate from the co-existence of religious traditions in society.

It is worth bearing in mind, however, that *Gravissimum Educationis* still provokes different reactions in Catholic educational circles. This includes optimism at the possibilities offered by the document vis-à-vis educational reform and disappointment at its perceived lack of ambition (Cf. Whittle 2015). Furthermore, *Gravissimum Educationis* had nothing specific to say about the nature of Religious Education. This suggests either a lack of awareness of the dynamics of the subject, or a 'wishful thinking' that was content to leave things as they were. We consider below how the conceptual framework and 'language' of Religious Education were slowly reshaped by the Congregation for Catholic Education in the years following the Second Vatican Council, and what this significant move means for authenticity and consistency.

## 3. Religious Education: Conceptual Framework and Language

### 3.1. The Work of the Congregation for Catholic Education

In seeking the sources of authority regarding definitions of policy in Catholic educational matters, we encounter, unsurprisingly, wider (and ecclesiologically rooted) tensions between the 'centre' and the 'local'. The centre–local dynamic is not, in itself, a negative phenomenon: it can indeed lead to fruitful dialogue and an appreciation of other perspectives, not least, in how particular nation states and Bishops' Conferences approach Religious Education in schools.

The term 'Church teaching on education' (including Religious Education) refers to the work of the Congregation of Catholic Education, the organ of the Roman Curia charged with overseeing the operation of Catholic schools, colleges, seminaries, and universities. Alongside the publications of the

Congregation are the vital 'local' contributions from Bishops' Conferences and their respective national education agencies. In parallel to the dialogue between the local and universal Church reflected therein, there is a substantial corpus of academic thought on Catholic education which informs, to a greater or lesser extent, some aspects of contemporary debates. While this academic debate is a necessary part of the Church's engagement with the world of ideas, it does tend to be language-specific and, thus, presents a particular challenge to a Church, which makes a claim to universality. In other words, there is no great crossover between scholars in the Anglophone world and scholars in the 'Latin' cultures. (There are exceptions: the seminal work of Charles Taylor is often referred to positively by 'Latin' academics.)

Church documents are translated 'in-house' in the Roman Curia before worldwide circulation in print and on the Vatican website. Nonetheless, it should come as no surprise that conceptual and linguistic inconsistencies should arise when ideas are translated into other languages. Accuracy, both linguistic and conceptual, is essential for faithful communication of key ideas across cultures. For example, important terms in 'sacred texts' in one language might not have the same currency in other languages. To use the language of translation theory, the original 'source text' might be subject to a degree of conceptual orientation for use in different cultural contexts (Tymoczko 2014). As Long explains, "Their (sacred texts) sacredness comes from the holiness in which they are held by the followers of the faith to which they are relevant" (Long 2013, p. 464). While no claim is made here that that Catholic Church teaching on education is anything like a 'sacred text', a case could be made that such teaching does have an impact on perceived 'sacred things' like, for example, the interpretation of Scripture and the pedagogical foundations of faith formation processes. Church documents hence needs translators who are linguistically fluent, conceptually nuanced, and theologically literate, thus eschewing a mechanistic translation process.

Therein lies the nub of the challenge we face: the official English translations of Church teaching on Religious Education reveal (a) a lack of conceptual consistency (in English) regarding key terms, and (b) a second level of inconsistency when other language versions of the documents are studied. This is not a new concern. American delegates at a catechetical congress in 1971 wished to translate the Italian term *catechesi* (equivalent to *catechesis* in English) as *Religious Education* (Rummery 2001). This revealed a lack of knowledge of the gradual development in understandings of the school subject of Religious Education which had emerged in the 1960s, particularly in the Anglophone world. Much of this was inspired by scholarship from early 20th century America and published in the journal *Religious Education* (Franchi 2017). More concretely, the work of the British educational theorist, Ninian Smart (1987), was the catalyst for reform of Religious Education (in all contexts) in the later years of the twentieth century in the Anglophone world.

Such historical ideas are seeds of a profound debate within the Catholic community on the aims of Religious Education (Franchi 2013; Rymarz 2011). The issue is crystallised when we compare the English and Italian versions of important documents in the field of Religious Education. Italian, as the 'working language' of the Roman Curia, offers us ample scope for exploration of how the Curia addresses the nature of Religious Education.

*3.2. Analysis of Source Texts on Religious Education*

In this section, I analyse the different translations of Religious Education both as a term and as an educational concept. To do this, I will compare the English and Italian versions of important sections of key documents. This will reveal a level of inconsistency which requires urgent attention. The four documents in question are:

- Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesi Tradendae—On Catechesis in our Time*, 1979; (Pope John Paul II 1979)
- Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, 1988;
- Congregation for Catholic Education, *Circular Letter to Presidents of Bishops' Conferences on Religious Education in Schools*, 2009;

- Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilisation of Love*, 2013.

I set out, in a table below, the specific paragraph numbers in each document which refer to Religious Education in schools. I then comment on issues arising from the selected translations.

**Source Text 1** (Table 1): Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 1979.

The Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesi Tradendae*, written by Pope John Paul II in 1979 after an Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on catechesis, makes explicit mention of Religious Education (which *Gravissimum Educationis* did not) in paragraph 69.

**Table 1.** Source Text 1.

| Example | Italian | English |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | L'educazione propriamente religiosa | Strictly Religious Education |
| 2 | L'insegnamento religioso | Religious Instruction |
| 3 | Una formazione religiosa | Religious Training |

**Comment**

- **Example 1.** This is a consistent translation with *strictly/propriamente* focussing on the actual subject parameters as opposed to the wider educational climate of the Catholic school.
- **Example 2.** The Italian *insegnamento* is best translated as *teaching*; the English *instruction* seem to be harder-edged, and not well aligned to the developing mode of Religious Education, especially in wake of the wider liberal reforms to the field.
- **Example 3.** We now have *formazione* (*formation* in English) whereas earlier in the paragraph *educazione* was used. Both terms have similar meanings in Italian, but the English *religious training* was not in common use at the time of writing in 1979. Furthermore, *training* again seems to harder-edged, and less pastoral than a word like *formation* and is, for Anglophone educators, anachronistic.

The selected examples illustrate the depth of the challenge facing those who wish to clarify terms in this debate. The centre–local dynamic is stretched to the limits: the translations are inconsistent and lend themselves easily to a range of interpretations. Indeed, there are three different English terms used in one paragraph to translate what is, essentially, the same concept: the religious formation of the child in the Catholic school. The use of *Religious Instruction* and *Religious Training*, both of which seem to have hard instrumentalist ends, does not correspond to the softer tone of *formazione* but, crucially, is somewhat distant from how the subject was understood in the Catholic school at that time.

**Source Text 2** (Table 2): Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, 1988.

This is an important text for discussion of the Religious Education/catechesis link. Rossiter's introduction of the term 'creative divorce' (Rossiter 1982), to describe how catechesis and Religious Education's relationship should evolve, had been a radical contribution to the field of Catholic education at the time. In this document, the Roman Curia has seemingly accepted this now famous distinction, although is not clear at all how the radical ideas floated by Rossiter found their way into the mindset of the Roman Curia.

The relevant examples in Paragraphs 67–69 exemplify the extent of the conceptual challenge facing Religious Education.

**Table 2.** Source Text 2.

| Example | Italian | English |
|---------|---------|---------|
| 1 Para' 67 | L'insegnamento della religione nella scuola Cattolica | Religious Formation in a Catholic School |
| 2 Para' 68 | L'insegnamento della religione | Religious Instruction |
| 3 Para' 68 | L'insegnamento religioso scolastico | Religious Instruction |
| 4 Para' 69 | L'insegnamento religioso | Religious Instruction |
| 5 Para' 69 | L'insegnamento della religione | Religious Instruction |

**Comment**

- **Example 1.** *Insegnamento*, meaning *teaching,* is not equivalent to the English *formation*. The literal translation is *teaching*.

- **Examples 2–5.** The English *Religious Instruction* has four different Italian translations, each of which includes *insegnamento* (teaching). In examples 2 and 4, the literal English translation is *the teaching of religion.* This is a phrase which, while common in Ireland, is less prevalent elsewhere in the English-speaking world.

While this document is often referred to as the primary source for reflection on the relationship between catechesis and Religious Education, the English version continues to use a term—*Religious Instruction*—which would not have been part of the lexicon of Catholic education at the time.

**Source Text 3** (Table 3): Congregation for Catholic Education, *Circular Letter to Presidents of Bishops' Conferences on Religious Education in Schools*, 2009.

This short text is the first document of the Congregation, since the Council, to have Religious Education as its focus. Its genre as *Circular Letter* is not unimportant: it suggests that the Curia's understanding of Religious Education is a 'work in progress', and some way from being recognised as a theme worthy of a more substantial document.

**Table 3.** Source Text 3.

| Example | Italian | English |
|---------|---------|---------|
| 1 Title | L'insegnamento della religione nella scuola | Religious Education in Schools |
| 2 Preamble | L'insegnamento della religione | Religious Education |
| 3 Para' 13 | L'insegnamento della religione cattolica | Teaching the Catholic Religion |
| 4 Para' 17 | L'insegnamento scolastico della religione | Religious Education in Schools |

**Comment**

- **Examples 1–4.** All contain *insegnamento* (teaching) and only Example 3 has *teaching* as the correct literal translation

- **Examples 2 and 4.** The English *Religious Education* has two different (although connected) translations viz. *L'insegnamento della religione* and *L'insegnamento scolastico della religione.* The addition of *scolastico* (*scholastic*) in the second translation does not diminish the sense of confusion.

We note the following: *Religious Instruction* has been dropped from the English translations; *Teaching the Catholic Religion* has now appeared, although this is not a term that English-language educators would have used. It is hard to work out the provenance of the term beyond a decontextualised and mechanistic translation process.

**Source Text 4** (Table 4): Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Educating in Hope for a Civilisation of Love*, 2013.

This long document proposes Catholic education as a means of intercultural dialogue. While seeking to break new ground with an explicit invitation to dialogue, it draws on previous documents' separation between catechesis and Religious Education.

**Table 4.** Source text 4.

| Example | Italian | English |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 Para' 73 | L'educazione religiosa | Religious Education |
| 2 Para' 75 | L'insegnamento confessionale della religione | Religious Education |

In both examples (above) from neighbouring paragraphs, *Religious Education* has two different translations. We now have the direct translation of *educazione religiosa* followed by a new version, *insegnamento confessionale della religione*. This shows a more common acceptance of Religious Education as an important title in English; the direct translation of *educazione religiosa* shows the possible acceptance by the Congregation for Catholic Education of the English-language conceptual framework.

*3.3. Overall Comment on the Source Texts*

This schema above lays out the difficulties in finding aims for Religious Education which, potentially, have universal relevance. If we assume that the Italian versions precede the English texts in the drafting process (a reasonable assumption), what do we make of this rather complex picture? Four points come to mind.

First, the array of Italian terms used to describe the Religious Education curriculum in the school shows a substantial element of confusion and, perhaps, a degree of lexical carelessness. The need for precision in Church documents goes without saying but, here, we find a wide variety of headline terms grouped around the straightforward Italian word *insegnamento* (*teaching*).

Second, it also seems clear that the translation processes veered between literal renditions and attempts to capture the wider 'sense' of the Italian. What has not happened, however, is any attempt to translate specific words/concepts in the context of the wider debates which have gripped the (albeit small) Anglophone Religious Education academic community. Nonetheless, the distinction proposed by Rossiter between Religious Education and Catechesis in 1982 had seeped into the Congregation's 1988 document, although the actual term used in the English translation was *Religious Instruction*, a term not used by Rossiter in his seminal article.

Third, added spice is found in the introduction of terms like *insegnamento confessionale della religione* (2013), in the document on intercultural dialogue: this has the wholly inaccurate translation of *Religious Education*. Nonetheless, is the use of the standard English term (*Religious Education*) an opening to the idea that the changing religious demography of Italy as the result of immigration, was having some effect on how the Curia envisioned the Religious Education curriculum of the school?

Finally, issues arising from multiple authorship merit further consideration. The *Congregation for Catholic Education* is the corporate 'author' of Church teaching on education over the years. It is not clear, however, in what manner the changing personnel (and related expertise) of the Congregation for Catholic Education over the years has affected the content and style of the documents. Furthermore, there is no indication in the final text of the documents of the process of writing and of the level of consultation, if any, with wider stakeholders in the world of Catholic education, especially those charged with overseeing and teaching the curriculum in schools.

If authentic Religious Education requires a degree of conceptual fluency within and across cultures, it is important now to ensure that this important debate can move forward constructively.

*3.4. Looking Ahead*

To conclude this section, I consider how study of the linguistic and conceptual difficulties arising from how *Religious Education* (and translations) is understood can facilitate a shared understanding of the subject. Before making concrete suggestions, some general points merit expressing.

First, it is necessary to appreciate the importance of local contexts, in this case, the cultural differences between Italy and the Anglophone world. The 'footprint' of Catholicism extends over all aspects of Italian society, despite the documented impact of recent immigration on its religious

demography (McKenna 2016; Garelli 2010, 2007). The use of a range of theologically conditioned terms to describe a school subject would be less problematic in Italy than in most Anglophone countries. It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that any disjuncture between so-called Catholic formation and the wider concept of 'religious studies' (or similar term) would not be as pronounced in Italy as in Anglophone countries, at least in the short-term.

Second, the question of Catholicism as a minority or majority culture is a significant factor in how Religious Education is framed. In most Anglophone countries (except the Republic of Ireland), Catholicism is a minority religious culture. This might have had an impact on how insights from the tradition of liberal Religious Education scholarship, conducted mainly in English-language journals, have not been fully addressed by those responsible for the writing of Curial documents on education. Does this say anything about the Church's apparent rootedness in particular local cultures, and the difficulty in promoting cross-border traffic in educational ideas? Wider study of this phenomenon is necessary.

## 4. Harmonising Religious Education: Towards a Universal Directory of Religious Education

I offer now some underpinning principles for a *Universal Directory of Religious Education* as a suitable partner to the *General Directory for Catechesis,* published by the (Congregation for the Clergy 1997). The latter document, which underpins the Church's catechetical work, is a complex document which needs careful reading. The proposed *Directory* would offer a simpler framework for the writing of local Religious Education syllabi and put in place a solid structure to underpin discussion at an international and national level (Franchi 2017).

### 4.1. Purpose of the Directory

A *Directory*, as here proposed, would focus on the best way to articulate the Church's understanding of Religious Education in light of recent scholarly and sociocultural developments. It is intended to be an important stepping-stone towards addressing the challenges outlined in the present article, and putting in place flexible and supportive guidance for Religious educators.

The *Directory* would reflect, as far as possible, the many cultural and religious traditions which inform current Religious Education practices, while setting down important conceptual boundaries regarding the nature of the subject and its relationship to catechesis and wider theological study. As such, it would necessarily allow space for local adaptations and developments to respond to fluid international, political, and cultural demands.

An initial priority would be to review the question of subject titles, bearing in mind that *Religious Education*, as a title, might not be the best option in English, given the existence of multiple 'partner' titles like *Religious Studies*, *Religious and Moral Education*, *Religious, Moral and Philosophical Education*. Indeed, a recent report in the United Kingdom, *A New Settlement Revised: Religion and Belief in Schools*, explicitly recommends a move away from *Religious Education* to *Religion, Belief and Values* (Clarke and Woodhead 2018, p. 21). Whatever our view of this proposal, it is clear that each title has a related conceptual field and shares a broad commitment to (a) the study of the phenomenon of religion; (b) a critical engagement of the claims made by a variety of world religions; and (c) the exploration of ethical issues (Moran 2003). I would add to this list the possibilities offered by other titles like *Theology*, *Theological Studies* and *Catholic Studies*. Consistency in how these titles are conceptualised and translated is a necessary part of the way ahead.

A *Directory*, like any other form of guidance in Religious Education, needs to address the issue of religious nurture in the public space of the school, bearing in mind Ninian Smart's famous assertion that teachers are called to teach, not preach (Smart 1987). I suggest that a commitment in Religious Education to developing all pupils' knowledge of Christianity, and other religious traditions, is consistent with the obligation to offer religious nurture for the Catholic pupils in the school.

*4.2. Inclusive Pedagogy: A Framework for Reforming Religious Education*

The Directory must address satisfactorily the competing demands arising from faith-nurture and intercultural dialogue. How can this be done?

I suggest that Inclusive Pedagogy potentially offers a degree of intellectual and pastoral energy to underpin reform in Religious Education and, thus, facilitate the conceptual and linguistic cohesion which Religious Education urgently requires.

Inclusive Pedagogy, rooted in the concept of engaging positively with specific emotional and physical needs of pupils, has evolved to become a field of study which explores how best to serve the needs of the wider school community. Inclusive Pedagogy, at its best, shows an awareness of individual pupil differences while recognising the importance of integration into the common life of the school (Loriman 2017).

An appropriate theological starting-point for our discussion is to re-present Inclusive Pedagogy as an expression of Christian anthropology in education: if the human person is truly made in the 'image and likeness of God', it follows that meeting the specific needs of each person is a theological and pastoral obligation for Catholic educators. To do this successfully demands recognition of the diverse educational and social needs of the pupils in school, not just in the question of attainment, but in how they respond reflexively to the Religious Education curriculum. This requires a nuanced understanding of how differentiation of expectation can move the debate forward.

Differentiation in education, commonly understood as the use of various teaching strategies to meet the needs of individual pupils (Tomlinson 2014; Cash 2017), reflects the aspirations of Inclusive Pedagogy. Pupils in the Religious Education class will, of course, exhibit a range of 'faith response' outcomes in Religious Education, ranging from disbelief to acceptance. To be clear, differentiation in Religious Education offers the core subject knowledge to all, but recognises pupil plurality in the degree of reflexivity manifested in response to this body of knowledge.

To offer an example, the same set of lessons on the Catholic understanding of Revelation could be a form of catechesis (faith formation) for students who practise the Catholic faith or a form of evangelisation (initial proclamation) for those with limited or no Catholic religious practice. For all pupils, however, it would be an opportunity to engage critically with a range of contested ideas and, hence, provide a valuable opportunity to inform and develop their broader religious knowledge and cultural awareness (Franchi 2014).

A Religious Education curriculum rooted in one religious tradition is always going to cause some degree of friction with state educational authorities. Yet, this should also engender considered reflection on contested issues: dealing with religious diversity, the meaning of intercultural dialogue, and possible tension between religious and secular worldviews. A Religious Education curriculum which encourages a reflective engagement with a rich body of knowledge offers substantial scope for strengthened religious understanding for all pupils. In this way, pupils can both learn 'from' and 'about' religion (Fancourt 2012). Opportunities for implicit faith-formation (catechesis) for Catholic pupils in the wider life of the school (retreats, sacramental celebrations, etc.) will develop and complement the content of the Religious Education curriculum and help to ensure authenticity.

The *Directory* would ensure such important issues remain at the forefront of the mind of policymakers. It would not be a closed set of explicit directions on *what* and *how* to teach but offer, instead, considered guidance on topics of importance for intercultural dialogue, cultural enrichment, and appropriate faith-formation.

Finally, the question of linguistic and conceptual fluency needs addressing satisfactorily. The translation of the document needs a corps of translators who have both a sufficiently rigorous training in both Catholic theological and educational thinking, alongside highly developed language skills. This high-tariff might require the Congregation for Catholic Education to widen its pool of collaborators and, in tandem with the wider curial bodies, make a commitment to reviewing how such important work as translation is carried out.

## 5. Concluding Comments

Religious Education in all schools remains a form of advocacy for the importance of religion as a major factor in history and contemporary culture. In Catholic schools, this commitment is mediated, unsurprisingly, through the Catholic theological tradition. I have argued here that a greater degree of consistency in approaches to Religious Education internationally should harmonise curricula and help to improve the teaching of the subject, making it hence a worthy contributor to intercultural dialogue.

Is this a viable way ahead? The United Kingdom's *National Secular Society* admits that it would be prepared to support a reformed Religious Education so as to 'provide students with a comprehensive and reflective framework through which to analyse and discuss a wide range of normative theories and ethical codes' (National Secular Society 2013, online). This position opens, arguably, a window for further dialogue on the roots of ethical codes and such, like such a debate would need to take seriously the influence of religion on moral norms. To do this successfully, deep knowledge and understanding of religious traditions is necessary.

Authentic Religious Education in Catholic schools is, therefore, a valuable means of ensuring that intercultural dialogue can be advanced. To do this, the international network of Catholic schools needs clear and consistent guidance from the centre in order to enrich its locally produced curricula.

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