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Volume 6 | Issue 2

Article 7

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12-1-2002

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### Recommended Citation

Coll, R. (2002). Examination of the Consultation and Development Process for the Scottish Catholic Religious Education Guidelines. *Journal of Catholic Education*, 6 (2). <http://dx.doi.org/10.15365/joce.0602072013>

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## EXAMINATION OF THE CONSULTATION AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS FOR THE SCOTTISH CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION GUIDELINES

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*This paper examines the construction of the Religious and Moral Education 5-14 Draft Guidelines in Scotland and the Catholic Church's response to these guidelines. The content and background of this document are explored by examining the process followed by the Review and Development Group for religious education. The reasons for the rejection of this document and the process by which a new document was created are also investigated. Particular attention is paid to the roles played in this process by the laity and the clergy within the Catholic Church through an examination of the perceptions held by individuals involved in the process.*

The British government introduced the 5-14 initiative in the 1980s. It sought to improve the quality of education in Scottish schools by clarifying the aims of the curriculum, addressing the progress of children from one stage to the next, and enhancing the information given to parents. The aim was to bridge the primary-secondary transition gap by offering a balanced progressive curriculum in all Scottish schools for children from primary one (the first year of primary education) to the second year of secondary school. The documents initially covered five curricular areas: language, mathematics, environmental studies, expressive arts, and religious and moral education. There were also documents for reporting and assessing.

To create these documents, Review and Development Groups were set up for each curricular area. Their remit was to review their particular area and produce a draft document that would be sent out for feedback. A final document would then be created.

The initial process of creating the religious and moral education document was identical to that of the other curricular areas. The draft document was sent to a broad audience concerned with education in general and with religious and moral education in particular, including the Catholic Church.



However, the Catholic Church rejected the document outright and, due to the Catholic Church's unique position within the Scottish education system, the government agreed to produce jointly with the Church a new document for use in Catholic schools. This turn of events resulted in the first national policy document implemented across all Catholic schools in Scotland.

This paper examines one aspect of a much larger study (Coll, 1999) that analyzed the process involved prior to the publication of the Religious Education Guidelines for Catholic schools. The larger study compared and contrasted the content of religious education (RE) in nondenominational and Catholic schools in Scotland and ascertained the differences in approach to RE in both sectors. It discussed if the aim for creating common RE guidelines—which were to introduce a new, strong religious and moral education element to the curriculum—was applicable to Catholic schools since this element was already in place in these schools. This research also entered the philosophical and theological debate regarding whether the study of other world religions (which is included in the 5-14 program for both Catholic and nondenominational schools) can actually foster spirituality in children and develop their faith.

## BACKGROUND

The Catholic Church's position within the Scottish education system is unique. Its schools are fully maintained by the state, yet the Church has control over the appointment of teachers *and* the religious curriculum. It is distinctive not only in Britain, but also throughout the world. The Catholic Church identifies The Netherlands, Quebec, Scotland, and Ireland as the only locations in the world where the school system is "satisfactory," according to the Church (Whyte, 1980).

In the early 20th century, the schools provided by the Catholic Church were very poorly resourced; the majority of staff were underpaid and not qualified to teach. The schools had been invited to transfer from Church control to state, and individual schools could have determined their religious nature if they so wished. This was unacceptable to the Catholic Church. It believed that the conditions put forth did not safeguard the denominational nature of its schools. The Church realized that its schools were of a low standard, yet it balanced this with the fact that Catholic children were being given the faith element of education about which their parents felt so strongly.

Eventually, the government recognized that the Catholic minority was being treated unfairly since it was unable to share the facilities of state education for which it was expected to pay. It was well known in educational circles that the quality of education provided for Catholic children was of an inferior standard to that of other schools (Scotch Education Department, 1891). The amount of debt the Catholic Church faced as a result of providing

Catholic education was even discussed in the media (Editorial, 1917). The government's intention to establish a broadly based national education system meant that the Catholic situation needed to be addressed. After much controversy, the Scotland Act of 1918 was passed which gave children in Catholic schools the same educational opportunities as those in other schools. In addition, Catholic teachers under Catholic control would teach religion to Catholic children.

The Act produced numerous benefits for Catholic schools. Catholic education was able to expand since the Catholic Church's financial burden of having to provide teachers, resources, and schools had been lifted. The civic status of Catholic young people had been raised. The number of Catholics proceeding to tertiary education increased a hundredfold, resulting in Catholics contributing fully in civic and national life (O'Hagan, 1996). They became professionals in education, law, and medicine and obtained technical and managerial posts in industry and commerce (Cooney, 1982). Catholic schools were now able to offer a full range of academic courses to children up to age 18, and this encouraged them to get good jobs or go to university (Devine, 2000).

The role of the Catholic school has changed significantly since 1918. Catholic schools now operate within a competitive society and are fully accountable for all they do. The Catholic school is no longer an automatic first choice for some Catholic parents; rather, they will look for the best education they can find. Catholic schools must achieve educational excellence across the board if they are to flourish in this new, competitive era.

## METHODOLOGY

This research was qualitative in nature and allowed the researcher to gather information from people and files that outlined the development of religious education within the 5-14 framework for Roman Catholic schools. From this information could be determined who was involved, the mechanisms used by the Catholic Church to influence this document, any opposition to the document, and who actually influences and constructs the religious education curriculum for use in Catholic schools.

The research was a focused, systematic inquiry that went beyond generally available knowledge to acquire specialized, detailed information about the Catholic Church's involvement in the 5-14 development and its relationship with the Scottish Office. Some of the data relied upon was only available to a restricted audience, namely those in the Catholic Education Commission, and was under the control of particular individuals. This research took an analytical approach to information already in the public domain and combined it with less readily available data. This provided a basis for elucidatory comment on this topic.



Two main methods of gathering data were used in this educational research. These data were then used as a basis for interpretation, explanation, and prediction. The methods included examining the Catholic Education Commission's files and documents regarding the 5-14 Guidelines and conducting interviews with key individuals identified in the files.

## **GAINING ACCESS TO THE CEC FILES**

The Catholic Education Commission (CEC) is the principal organization responsible for education within the Church. It was established in 1971 with the intention of improving staffing levels in Catholic schools and acting as a forum for promoting Catholic education. Prior to its establishment, educational issues were dealt with more informally within the hierarchy itself.

The CEC is comprised of 30 members, including people from Catholic dioceses, head teachers, and the Faculty of Education of the University of Glasgow. It is the main link between the Scottish Office and the Catholic educational community and meets regularly with the schools' Inspectorate on a formal and informal basis.

The CEC is the official arm of the Catholic Church in education, but it operates as part of a much broader institutional framework that includes the Catholic Head Teachers' Association and the National Association of Catholic Primary Head Teachers. The Church is also involved in the CEC's work through the Bishops' Conference, which regularly discusses the educational issues of the CEC and supports the CEC's work on the policy process, usually with the involvement of the current CEC president (Lynch, 1998).

The CEC had most of the correspondence between the Scottish Office Education Department (SOED) and itself. This was extremely helpful and allowed the researcher to determine whom to interview and about what. The files contained the information on which the interviews were to be based.

The majority of the information was in the form of letters from the Scottish Office and the CEC contesting the appropriateness of the original 5-14 Religious and Moral Education document. The files also contained the minutes from meetings between the two bodies where a possible agreement or solution was discussed as well as correspondence between Her Majesty's Inspectorate and the CEC regarding the creation and publication of the Catholic document. These data are open to the public.

The other source of data was the confidential responses of the teachers and other interested parties within the Catholic Church to the RE document for Catholic schools.

## **THE PROCESS**

The methodology for this research was carefully considered since the order in which it was carried out was important. Initially, the CEC was contacted and access was given to the documents. The correspondence and minutes in

the file were arranged chronologically, which enabled the researcher to piece together a detailed picture of the course of events. The responses to the Catholic draft document (from 56 secondary schools and 81 primary schools) were read in detail and all negative and positive comments were summarized.

The involved parties were identified:

- Review and Development Group 5, the group set up by the Scottish Office to discuss, debate, and create draft 5-14 Guidelines for all Scottish schools
- Scottish Office Education Department (SOED), the government body overseeing the process
- Catholic representatives who created the Catholic document
- Catholic Education Commission (CEC)

Key individuals involved in the process were identified for interviewing: two from Review and Development Group 5 (one of whom became the creator of the Catholic draft document), one from the SOED, and one from the CEC. They were interviewed according to the order in which they were involved. The questions were constructed in order to clarify points found in the data from the CEC file. They were also used to clarify any points previous interviewees had mentioned. (The full interviews were transcribed and sent to each person to read and then to give permission for use by the researcher).

## **KIND AND CONTEXT OF INTERVIEW**

Many forms of interview were considered; however the specialized interview was deemed the most appropriate for this research. The specialized interview (Johnson, 1994) must have some structure; otherwise it would become a free-floating conversation. Questions were composed, but were open-ended to allow the respondent freedom. It is important to note that the real tool in this research was not the actual structure of the interview itself, but rather the researcher as interviewer (Oppenheim, 1992).

## **CONSTRUCTING 5-14 GUIDELINES FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

In producing National Guidelines for Scotland in the form of the 5-14 documents, the SOED requested that review and development groups be set up for individual subject areas in order to ascertain good practice in these areas, develop this further, and produce appropriate guidelines for teachers in Scotland. In May 1991, the Review and Development Group 5 (from now on referred to as the Review Group) set up by the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum (SCCC) produced a draft document called Working Paper No. 7 (WP7), entitled "Religious and Moral Education 5-14." This document



was the first stage in giving RE parity of status with other areas of the curriculum. Although a compulsory element of the curriculum in Scotland, RE had never held such a high priority at the national level.

The Review Group consisted of 21 members from a cross section of educational backgrounds, all making personal contributions to the document. Some members of the group were Catholic. In the document it was explained that all education authorities in Scotland including the Church of Scotland; representatives of the Chinese, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, and Sikh communities; and the Humanist Society had been consulted to ascertain existing RE policies. The CEC had also been contacted.

On June 15, 1992, the Deputy Chief HMI (Her Majesty's Inspectorate) received a letter from the Chairman of the CEC stating that "WP7 is unacceptable to us as it stands, as the basis or even as guidelines for the presentation of RE in our Catholic schools."

The following will reveal the problems that arose for the Catholic Church in Scotland, outlining why it rejected this document and the result of this rejection.

## **CREATING THE DRAFT DOCUMENT**

On August 18, 1989, a letter was sent by the SCCC to the CEC inviting it to a liaison meeting. The agenda would include the review of the approved syllabus for religious education for Catholic schools (i.e., the National Syllabus used in secondary schools and the Veritas program used in elementary schools) and its relationship with the 5-14 Development Program. At the meeting on September 15, 1989, the SCCC outlined its work and explained that the 5-14 program was a bridge between primary and secondary schools. The SCCC gave a full account of the Review Group's charge in establishing guidelines for RE. The importance of the involvement of all interested parties was stressed.

The members of the CEC were particularly enthusiastic about the proposed work of the Review Group (Minutes, September 15, 1989). They determined that the current Catholic syllabus was in need of review. One crucial point made by the chairman of the CEC, was: "the content of the syllabuses was the responsibility of the Church." This had been the case since the 1918 (Scotland) Act. However, during this meeting the chairman indicated that this need not be a barrier to the creation of a 5-14 document for religious education.

It is important to note that the next stage of formal contact between the CEC and the SCCC did not occur until just before the publication of the draft document in 1991. The Review Group had carried out its work; a draft document had been created; and the CEC, along with many others, was invited to respond. With Catholics on the Review Group, it was perhaps presumed that

the draft document would represent the Catholic Church's viewpoint; however, the members of the group were not officially representing the CEC. As the chairman of the CEC noted, "RDG5 was set up with its remit and personnel without prior consultation with the CEC. The Catholic members could not speak for the CEC and its remit to produce a scheme for all schools was unrealistic without such consultation" (Letter to Deputy Chief HMI, February 4, 1993).

There were grave concerns regarding the draft document. It was, however, sent to a number of Catholic primary and secondary schools and clergy for their feedback. The researcher summarized responses and noted that although the majority of responses were negative, there were also positive responses, for example, "The structure and vision of the document on professional terms provide a useful platform for future development and have added a dimension to Religious Education which has heretofore been lacking." Another supportive comment relayed:

The document is welcomed as a move towards a coherent and reflective strategy for Religious Education in Scotland including the inherent recognition that we live in a pluralist society with all that such living entails. This is a document which will enhance the importance of Religious Education in Scottish schools.

Summarizing the responses, the researcher noted that all respondents had concerns about the rationale, which was considered inappropriate for a Catholic school. Consequently, all else in the draft document would be inappropriate. In the eyes of the Church, Catholic schools are Christocentric and Trinitarian and are concerned with the faith development of children. It was felt that the draft document took none of these into consideration. For the Church, this was the fundamental weakness in the document and made it irrelevant. Areas of perceived weakness included the religious commitment of teachers, moral education, Christianity, and curriculum. For example, at no point did WP7 make reference to the religious commitment of teachers. In a Catholic school the teacher is viewed by the Church not only as a professional educator, but also as a companion on a pilgrim journey of faith.

In addition, Catholic schools view moral education as an integral part of RE. They assert that it comes from Scripture, tradition, and the teachings of the Church; that it has specific values related to Christ, who is a model. WP7 promoted values formed from consensus and has general principles, codes, and rules. This stance in relation to moral development of pupils was not acceptable to the Church.

The Christianity section did not embody the content which adherents claim as the essential elements of their faith. The Church felt that the document's guidelines would be easily met by the Catholic schools and at that



time they were actually doing much more. This document did not offer anything new.

There was also concern regarding the area of the curriculum devoted to other world religions. The majority of those responding felt that WP7 was inordinately focused in this area and they also felt that other world religions should only be tackled at the later stages in primary school. The Catholic Church agreed that it was important to look at other world religions. However, it was important to note that, "The Catholic school will retain its right and obligation to PROCLAIM the Christian message and all that that entails in the Christian faith tradition" (CEC, 1992).

In conclusion, the Catholic Church acknowledged that its response was very different from that of other religious bodies responding. For example, the Education Convener of the Church of Scotland believed that WP7 offered a great advance in RE. The minutes of an Action of Churches Together in Scotland (December 1992) meeting states, "Children would be experiencing a scope of Religious Education that far exceeds most recent practice and a quality of delivery that is far superior in educational terms than anything in the past."

The Catholic Church could not agree with this. According to it, schools already had a very strong RE syllabus in place; and, although the professionalism and status of the new document would be a welcome enrichment, the content and underlying philosophy had nothing new to offer, and, in fact, would be detrimental to the whole notion of RE in a Catholic school.

In a letter of June 15, 1992, the CEC strongly stated that the "entire direction of WP7 is at odds with the RE program approved by the Church for presentation in our schools." The CEC requested a separate document that would embrace the good points of WP7 but that would also be appropriate for Catholic schools. For the Catholic Church, this was the only way ahead.

On August 17, 1992, every head teacher in Scotland received a letter signed by an Archbishop and the Chairman of the CEC. The letter explained that the CEC in cooperation with the SOED would develop a set of guidelines for use in Catholic schools. It would be based on Veritas and the National RE program and "reflect the positive elements of WP7." The National Guidelines "Religious and Moral Education 5-14" for nondenominational schools were published in November 1992.

The fact that the Catholic Church rejected the guidelines soon became common knowledge. It caused great debate for many weeks among educators and indeed some unrest within the Catholic sector. *The Times Educational Supplement* published many articles and letters about this area, including some written by people who were on the Review Group. One member of the group showed concern toward the Church's decision. He wrote, "It is not too late for a rethink of this matter by both the SOED and the Catholic Education Commission. The SOED should refuse to endorse anything other than the

mainstream 5-14 Guidelines" (CEC file, 1993).

However, a Catholic member of the group was less surprised with the decision, "As a Catholic understanding the difference in rationale, I was probably less surprised than those in the nondenominational sector" (Review Group member, Interview, May 26, 1998).

Some Catholic teachers were also concerned about the decision. Mark Chater, a principal teacher of RE in a Scottish school, published an article that highlighted concern about the fact that the opportunity to combine with other religious groups had been abandoned. He believed that the CEC had made the "wrong decision" and had passed up the chance to combine with others to fight the "real enemy," that is, those in opposition to all religious education. He wrote, "Our leaders have just muffed a chance to begin" (Chater, 1993, p. 9).

Could this have been avoided? Would a different process have allowed the Catholic Church to accept the document? There may have been an opportunity to amend or improve the draft document so that all could have accepted it, including the Catholic Church. Then again, the Catholic Church may have had a "hands off" attitude and did not want to concede the responsibility for RE in Catholic schools to the SOED.

To explore these issues, a member of the Review Group was interviewed. She was able to give an account of events and provide insight into the thoughts and work of the Review Group as well as the issues she recalled being brought up by the Catholic involvement. The following is derived from her interview.

The first and most important point arising from the interview was the selection of people for the Review Group and its charge. Prior to this document, other RE documents had been produced by the Scottish Central Committee on Religious Education (SCCORE) during the 1970s and 1980s. Those involved presumed that the same process would be pursued in creating this document. People were chosen to be on the working party, but they were there as individuals. As the interviewee noted, "We all brought with us our different backgrounds, interests, and concerns and we shouldn't feel that we were there with a kind of mandate to represent another bigger organization."

The remit set for this group is particularly interesting. The working party was chosen to produce a document for both religious and moral education (RME) and personal and social development (PSD). Therefore, some of the members of the group came from a PSD background and others from an RE background. In fact, there was a slight imbalance of those on the group in favor of PSD. There were two advisers in Guidance, but no RE adviser; and initially there wasn't even an RE principal in the group, but one was added later.

The group eventually realized that creating one document covering both areas was too big a challenge and it was decided to produce two documents,



one for religious and moral education and one for personal and social development. The same group produced both documents. The interviewee noted,

The Guidance lobby on the group if you like, were always looking out for PSD and it was really very strong, a very powerful group and they wanted to get their point across and so there was a slight imbalance in that sense since the RE folk were made up of a mixture of people but with no one carrying the kind of adviser title. So part of the way in which the rationale came was with a flavor of this Guidance input with a very strong view on Moral Education but not particularly supportive of Religious Education.

The document, Working Paper 7, was influenced greatly by people who had no real interest in RE but were members of the group that was looking at this curricular area and whose thoughts and views had to be taken into consideration. The interviewee commented that if the SCCC had set up an RE group made up of RE professionals to consider this area, the outcome might have been different.

Related to this point was the debate surrounding moral education. In the draft document it was explained that moral education naturally follows religious education. However, moral education does not require religious education. The people concerned with PSD emphasized this point, which is evident in the rationale. Therefore, if the focus of the document had been on RE alone, then the Catholic Church might have been happier with the result.

Another area that could have been changed was the amount of communication between the CEC and the Review Group. The minutes of the meeting in 1989 convey that the CEC welcomed involvement and communication with the Review Group. However, the anticipated involvement and communication did not take place. In fact, after the 1989 meeting, the next formal communication with the CEC was in 1991, just prior to the publication of Working Paper 7.

The interviewee believes that both organizations could have assisted with the process. The CEC was aware that the group was working and, according to the interviewee, could have kept in contact with the group or even with the Catholic members of the party. However, this would have changed the position of the Catholic professionals on the group from individual contributors to Catholic Church contributors. The group had not been set up by the SCCC with this in mind. Alternatively, she mentions that perhaps the hierarchy should have been more involved by the group organizing frequent meetings. If the SCCC had included religious groups on the Review Group as well as educators with an RE background, then the result of this may have been different.

This member understands why the Catholic Church took issue with the document and why a separate document was agreed to. She explains that the strength of RE in denominational schools was never in question; "The real

issue was in nondenominational schools.” The purpose of creating the document was to find and build on good practice and to help teachers feel at ease with teaching RE in schools. It seemed that the document would be of more benefit to the nondenominational sector. The interviewee goes on to explain that if the Catholic viewpoint had been included in the final document, it would have been diluted and weak.

Although the Catholic Church was denounced for rejecting the document and for missing the opportunity to combine with other denominations, the way in which the document was created does seem to be open for discussion and perhaps criticism. It appears to have been presumed that the 5-14 Guidelines for RE would affect all Scotland’s schools in the same way.

Since Catholic schools are denominational, their RE program and structure are likely to be, in their own terms, much more focused and coherent than others; and therefore apprehension toward a national nondenominational document would be expected to some extent. However, it has become apparent that the resistance expressed need not have been so extreme if issues such as the remit of Working Paper 7 and the composition of the Review Group had been discussed and agreed to by all interested parties.

## **WHO DETERMINES THE CATHOLIC RE SYLLABUS?**

On September 28, 1992, the SOED met the CEC to discuss the production of a 5-14 program suitable for Catholic schools. The result of this meeting was that the CEC and SOED would jointly produce a 5-14 document that would be drafted under the supervision of the CEC and HMI. The CEC agreed to approach the hierarchy to get support for the proposal.

The Cardinal accepted the proposal. He wrote to the SOED indicating that, without prejudice to the hierarchy’s responsibility for RE in Catholic schools, the Catholic Church wished to operate within the national 5-14 framework with regard to religious education (Letter, October 21, 1992). For the CEC, this task would be relatively simple. However, the funding of the secondees and the costs of publication of the document had to be arranged. The status of the document also needed to be discussed. The Catholic Church was determined to ensure that this document was recognized as being as official as the Religious and Moral Education 5-14 document (SOED, 1992) that had now been published for nondenominational schools. After much negotiation, the CEC received from the Scottish Office a proposal for the production of the 5-14 RE document. The supplement (as it was referred to then) was to have the following components: an enhanced rationale; an extension of the attainment targets for Christianity to include formation, spirituality, community, and chaplaincy; a re-expression into the format of the programs of study currently recommended for Catholic schools, including elements of personal and social development; and the development of a scheme for assessment and reporting (Letter, November 1992).



The CEC agreed to this and a proposal was made to the Ministers in the SOED. All head teachers were informed of this (Letter, May 6, 1993) and were told that the document would have "equal status" with any other document issued by the SOED (Letter, May 1993). Seconded to draft 5-14 Religious and Moral Education for Catholic Schools were a lecturer in religious education at a Catholic initial teacher education college who was heavily involved in primary school RE and two principal secondary teachers of RE. The secondees worked under the guidance of one of Her Majesty's Chief Inspectors.

In an interview, one of the secondees discussed how this document was created:

In terms of what we were asked to rewrite we were told very specifically to use the structures, to use the outcomes, to use the targets, but to use the responses of the Catholic teachers to the consultation document [nondenominational original draft document] I had seen every consultation that had come back and so I knew what was needed.

The Catholic Church wanted the working party to look at the 5-14 document for nondenominational schools and keep the same structures. It seems that the Church invited the group to base the Catholic document on the responses of the Catholic teachers to the original document, rather than start from scratch.

The Church quickly realized that this was a mistake. The draft Catholic document was sent out for widespread consultation. Individuals, groups, and dioceses responded, and the CEC produced a detailed response booklet (Catholic Education Commission, n.d.).

Many head teachers, particularly in the primary sector, submitted a group response, as did secondary RE teachers. Of the 81 primary responses, 51 were from groups and the rest from individuals. Of the 56 secondary responses, 42 were from groups and the rest from individuals. Some responses were from parents and from clergy. It is worth noting that there are only 64 Catholic secondary schools in Scotland and 56 responses were received. These responses expressed concern regarding the draft Catholic document.

A repeated concern was that the document was a replica of the nondenominational document (which had originally been rejected) with just a few "Catholic words" thrown in.

The document has been prepared in the light of the existing 5-14 document for nondenominational schools. Its structures and content have a very high degree of concordance with that document. We felt that this was not the appropriate way to construct a document for use in the Catholic sector. (Response from Primary School "A," Catholic Education Commission, n.d.)

We do not need to apologize for being Catholic nor do we need to fit into a secular humanist straitjacket just to fit in with current political correctness. We cannot deny the theological, faith-based nature of Catholic RE (Response from Secondary School “A,” Catholic Education Commission, n.d.).

The main issues that repeatedly arose in the responses were the Catholicity of the document, other world religions, the assessment of RE, and moral education. First, the Catholicity of the document was in question since it appeared to be too similar to the consultation document. Second, the amount of time devoted to other world religions was considered excessive. Third, the assessment of RE appeared to be ambiguous and treated RE like another curricular subject; and fourth, moral education was seen as separate from RE. These four areas caused the majority of the controversy.

The first point concerned the vocabulary used in the draft document. Important Catholic concepts were considered missing, for example, the sacraments, prayer, liturgy, Gospel, faith, the risen Christ, and so on. It was felt that the rationale was, therefore, inappropriate. The nondenominational document did not reflect the Church’s view of RE and this document still did not reflect the Catholic philosophy. Respondents from a primary school noted, “It is vital that we do not accept a document that will become the future of RE in Catholic schools that does not start with the premise of faith in Jesus and end with that premise” (Primary School “B”).

There were also strongly expressed views regarding the amount of time dedicated to other world religions in Catholic schools. Most respondents saw the need to include this but it was felt that it should be to a minimum and only where appropriate. In addition, it was highlighted by many that, “the whole reason for the existence of Catholic schools is that the parents of these children have already made an option on behalf of their children to be brought up in the Catholic faith” (Response from Primary School “C,” Catholic Education Commission, n.d.).

A small group of respondents viewed inclusion of other world religions as completely unsuitable. Those who saw the need to include it felt that only a certain amount, at a certain stage, should be taught. One teacher noted: “I feel that some children in this sector are too young to do parallel studies of other religions while still undergoing formation in their knowledge and understanding of Catholicism, the tradition their parents have expressively opted for” (Response from Primary School “D,” Catholic Education Commission, n.d.).

The third point concerned the assessment of RE in Catholic schools. Those responding negatively were dissatisfied since the document did not outline what to assess and also seemed to indicate that children’s attitudes should be assessed. Additionally, respondents believed that the document



demoted RE to another academic subject, which is not how RE is viewed in Catholic schools.

The word "presentation" used frequently throughout the Rationale devalues religious education and puts it on the level of being just another subject to the timetable. RE is not presented, it is witnessed to, by someone who believes and practices what it upholds. (Response from Secondary School "B," Catholic Education Commission, n.d.)

The final issue that caused concern was the title: *Religious and Moral Education*. Those responding negatively explained that moral education (ME) should be viewed as a part of religious education and not seen as an adjunct of RE. "We believe that the separation between RE and ME is an artificial separation" (Response from Secondary School "C," Catholic Education Commission, n.d.).

It is important to note that a small group of people within the Catholic Church thought the document was acceptable. "This is an excellent document and will undoubtedly be of great benefit in the provision of a coherent and progressive RE curriculum" (Response from Secondary School "D," Catholic Education Commission, n.d.).

In general, respondents did not want to accept the draft Catholic document; and those responding negatively did not believe that the draft document represented the Catholic Church's philosophy of religious education. A member of the clergy wrote: "It is essential that we produce a sound professional statement which takes into account the very considerable experience and magisterial authority of the Catholic Church in the field of RE" (Clergy response "A," Catholic Education Commission, n.d.).

One of those seconded to write the document explained that he knew that changes and amendments would be made after the consultation period since, "it would be a rare document that could go out and not be changed." He highlighted just how important the consultation period was and how it did not undermine his professionalism or that of his colleagues.

He realized that a few people could not determine the views and feelings of the wider Church, and therefore the consultation process was vital in accommodating this. During this process, teachers were given the freedom to comment in the way they wished. He noted,

The teachers could ask for quite specific things, and it was important for the strands and targets but it was vital for the Rationale because there, people were able to have their say...and that was crucial. If they wished to take advantage of the opportunity, schools could actually influence what went in.

It was clear that most respondents wanted the Catholic draft document rewritten. Their views on various issues and suggested amendments were taken into consideration and used to determine the nature of the official guidelines for Roman Catholic schools. This is evident when comparing the draft Catholic document to the amended, official Catholic document published a year later.

From this comparison one can see that all the main concerns, highlighted previously, were taken into consideration and changed. The rationale was rewritten using the Catholic vocabulary that was missing from the draft Catholic document. The most obvious example of this is the difference between the aims in the draft Catholic document and the aims in the published Catholic document. In the draft Catholic document, the aims of RE in Catholic schools were as follows: To

- develop a knowledge and understanding of the Roman Catholic tradition, gain insights into non-Catholic Christianity and Other World Religions, and recognize religion as an important expression of human experience;
- appreciate moral values such as honesty, liberty, justice, fairness, concern for others, and respect for human dignity;
- investigate and understand the questions and answers offered by the Roman Catholic tradition, and, to a lesser extent, by the Reformed tradition and by Other World Religions, about the nature and meaning of life;
- develop their own personal beliefs, attitudes, moral values, and practices through a process of personal search, discovery, and critical evaluation. (Scottish Office Education Department, 1993, p. 3)

The aims in the new Catholic document, the official one, were significantly different from those above. They were much more “confessional,” therefore highlighting the distinctive nature of the Catholic school. These aims are to

- know, love and worship God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and to know and love Jesus Christ and his Gospel;
- know and understand the doctrinal and moral teachings of the Catholic Church which flow from the revelation of Jesus Christ;
- develop their faith in the light of Scripture, Tradition, and the teaching of the Church;
- accept Christian moral values and live according to them;
- investigate and understand the meaning and purpose of life, with the guidance of the Scriptures and the Tradition of the Catholic Church;
- acquire an appreciation of other Christian traditions;
- acquire an appreciation of some other World Faiths through an appropriate knowledge of their principal beliefs, spiritual values, and traditions. (Scottish Office Education Department, 1994, p. 3)



Those who responded in the Catholic community had also expressed major concern regarding the amount of time allocated to other world religions. This was considerably reduced in the published document. The phrase "where appropriate" was included in the rationale which allows the teacher to determine when and where this section of the 5-14 program may be implemented.

The section on assessment was rewritten explaining exactly what the position of the Catholic Church is.

Since attitudes, beliefs, and moral stances are areas of personal and private concern to the individual, assessment of these is inappropriate in RE in Catholic schools. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that the fostering of Christian attitudes is at the heart of the mission of the Catholic school and at the core of the Religious Education program. (Scottish Office Education Department, 1994, p. 85)

Teachers were being alerted to the fact that the nonassessable aspect of RE is the core of the program. What was to be assessed was made clear. "Knowledge and understanding of the targets in Christianity and Other World Religions can be assessed by the normal means which teachers use" (Scottish Office Education Department, 1994, p. 85).

The title of the document was also changed, acknowledging the view regarding moral education as an integral part of religious education. The draft Catholic document was entitled *Religious and Moral Education 5-14 (Catholic Schools)*. The published official document is *Religious Education 5-14 Roman Catholic Schools* (Scottish Office Education Department, 1994).

## CONCLUSION

Historically in the Catholic Church in Scotland, the bishops have the right and duty to ensure the provision of RE appropriate for Catholic children, and along with the clergy, they have exercised this right. This study suggests that more recently, Catholic teachers and parents have played the principal role in determining the curriculum for Catholic RE.

The Catholic hierarchy in Scotland has been viewed as an elite group that makes decisions regarding education that all are expected to follow. The reality is more complex. The guidelines used by the bishops come from the international context of the Church (Vatican II, Papal Letters) as well as from the Scottish context. Education professionals have increasingly insisted that their voices be heard in the Church. And the Church has acceded. Opinion on education within the Catholic Church is therefore from a wider base than might be supposed. From the responses to the consultation 5-14 document, it is obvious that the majority of the Catholic community involved in education supports the Church and vice versa.

On examining the production of the 5-14 guidelines for RE in Catholic schools, it is evident that it was not just the Church hierarchy who was in opposition to the original nondenominational document, but rather the majority of the Catholic community concerned with RE. Their highly charged responses indicating concern regarding the draft Catholic document show that they were determined to ensure that children within their schools receive what they viewed as proper Catholic religious education.

This research documents the effectiveness of the Catholic Church acting as a well-organized lobby group. In a matter such as the provision of RE in schools, seen as central to the identity of the group, members of the Church at all levels were able to articulate a common vision and agree on a common strategy to achieve it. Though different strands of opinion were expressed, sufficient unity existed to achieve the result sought.

This study suggests that much time and energy could have been saved if the Catholic Church had been represented on the Review Group. If this had been the case, its position regarding the RE syllabus would have been clear immediately. The Review Group consisted only of individuals contributing their individual opinions, which is normal for such groups. However, because the Catholic Church is responsible for RE in Catholic schools, representatives from the Catholic Church should have been on board from the start.

This case is significant because at no other time has a consultation process regarding the curriculum in Scottish schools resulted in abolishing one document and creating another. It clearly indicates that parents, students, teachers, and clergy can exert a powerful influence on educational policy-making.

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