



The Evolution of Anglican Religious Education in an Era of Education Revolutions (1999-2015)

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After World War II there was a push to reinvigorate the economies and industries of Western Europe, and to find methods to avoid the outbreak of more wars in the region. As a result, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was founded in 1952 (European Coal and Steel Community, 2016) an important step towards the full European Union (EU), led by the French bureaucrat and diplomat Jean Monnet (Jean Monnet, 2016). On the initiative of the officials of the ESCS, the European Schools (ES) system was established in Luxembourg in 1953 as a means of providing their children with an education in their mother tongue and with a similar curriculum to their home countries (Savvides, 2006b), leading to a European Baccalaureate which was recognized by all of the member states. Since that time, a total of 14 ES have been established in 7 different countries, financed and administered by the EU, and since 2005, a further 11 Accredited European Schools have been established which offer the same curricula and accreditation, but who are administered by the host nation (Schola Europea, n.d. a)

Introduction

The belief that education systems across Australia can and should be standardised through the application of scientific administration ‘from above’ dominated education policy at both a national and

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state level between 1999 and 2015.¹ That resulted in several top-down ‘revolutionary’ ideas being applied to education policy development. While religious education in Anglican schools remained outside the boundaries of what followed from the government led reforms key personnel in the Anglican Church sought to model Anglican religious education curricula on the government reforms applied to the mandated curriculum areas. Specifically, in Anglican Schools in Western Australia the curriculum orientation in religious education shifted to an approach more focused than previously on outcomes. It considered new narratives and identities that extended beyond the doctrine of the Church as being relevant to students’ lives. The study of world religions too was explicitly introduced.

Overall, then, while the period under review in this article aligns with ‘the Education Revolution’ and there were many revolutionary ideas that influenced curriculum in Western Australia, the changes to religious education for Anglicans in the State could be better described as an evolution of reforms. That is detailed in relation to the three hypotheses which were used to stimulate research on religious education for Anglican students in Western Australia. That research is part of a larger study undertaken by the author that considered the history of how religious education as a subject area for Anglicans in both Anglican and State schools in Western Australia from 1829 to the 2015 was constructed.

The first of these hypotheses was that “curricula, both whole curricula and subject specific curricula including religious education for Anglican students in Western Australia, have been influenced by international trends, nation-wide developments, and State developments.” The second hypothesis held that “the subject religious education for Anglican students in Western Australia has been influenced by shifting sets of sub-groups all pursuing different objectives.” The third hypothesis claimed that “the teacher of religious education to Anglican students in Western Australia was

¹ Savage, G. C. *The Quest for Revolution in Australian Schooling Policy* (London: Routledge, 2021).

well trained and well educated and the growth in the quality of the subject reflected an increased focus on “teaching for meaning”.²

The Broad Historical Context

Over the period under consideration, the conservative Howard government sought recognition of Australia’s Christian heritage in public policy. They set up such faith-based initiatives as a Commonwealth-funded school chaplaincy programme for government and independent schools and enabled the delegation of many government services such as schools to faith-based organisations.³

The Anglican Church in Australia expressed an increased commitment to Anglican schooling. Reflecting that position the Anglican Archbishop of Perth stated in 2005 that “it may well be that the time has come for clergy, very intentionally and as a priority to re-connect with local schools, and consciously re-commit to the ministry of ‘pastor and teacher’ and certainly to be more actively involved in recruiting more lay helpers for that work.”⁴ Moreover, Anglican schools in Perth, were seen by some key local Anglican personnel as providing “an important bridge” between the Church and “the wider community.”⁵

² This includes teaching where meaning and understanding are stressed; a wide curriculum, the availability of a variety of subjects and teaching methods; the provision for students’ individual differences; a focus on problem solving and creativity in pedagogy; and a relaxed and positive approach to discipline. C. E Beeby (1966), *The Quality of Education in Developing Countries*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

³S. Chavura, J. Gascoigne and I. Tregenza, *Reason, Religion and the Australian Polity: A Secular State? Reason, Religion and the Australian Polity*, (Milton: Routledge, 2019)

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429467059..>

⁴ Perth Anglican Diocese Yearbook (2005), 82, Diocesan Archives, Anglican Church, Dioceses of Perth, Australia.

⁵ Perth Anglican Diocese Yearbook (2004), 78, Diocesan Archives, Anglican Church, Dioceses of Perth, Australia.

General Developments in Teaching, Schooling and Curriculum in Australia

A reform agenda focused on the implementation of outcomes-based education that had begun several years earlier continued.⁶ A national commitment to outcomes-based education too was further advanced when as part of the *The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* a declaration was made to develop national *Statements of Learning* in four curriculum areas.⁷ In tandem with that, more formal methods of teaching, competitive assessment and a focus on disciplines gave way to curricula where the development of dispositions and attitudes were given priority and an intention that teachers would “facilitate” students who were seen as “knowledge navigators” was made clear.⁸

The structures supporting education in the State were changed to bring conformity both within the State and with other state systems of education. The first Western Australian comprehensive K-Year 10 curricula that applied to both government and independent schools was implemented from 1999. It was developed by the Curriculum Council and launched as the Western Australian Curriculum Framework for K-Year 10 (4-15 year old students, approximately).⁹ The framework established specific outcomes in eight learning areas and established five core values.¹⁰ Full

⁶ K. Donnelly, “Australian’s Adoption of Outcomes-based Education: A Critique,” *Issues in Educational Research*, Vol. 17, (2007); online recourse, <http://www.iier.org.au/iier17/donnelly.html>, accessed 4 February 2021.

⁷ *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*. Melbourne: Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

implementation was required by the Curriculum Council in all systems and sectors before 2004.¹¹

The Federal Rudd Government called for an “education revolution” in 2007. In 2008 the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) was established by an act of the Commonwealth Parliament with the mandate of establishing a national curriculum.¹² In 2009 ACARA launched its first federal plan for education. It proposed a national curriculum following a staged approach and involving phases of subject development.¹³ In addition to discipline-based learning the proposed curriculum included a set of seven capabilities encompassing ‘twenty-first century skills’ and three cross curriculum priorities.¹⁴ The latter were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, sustainability, and Asian and Australia’s engagement with Asia.¹⁵ The seven capabilities were literacy, numeracy, information and communication, critical and creative thinking, personal and social capability, ethical understanding and intercultural understanding.¹⁶ Key personnel argued that overall what was proposed was “future oriented,” “Australia-centric” and based on “universal values.”¹⁷

Concurrently, there was a standardisation focus in Australian schools and a focus also on measuring education effectiveness in

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² K. Gleeson, “Curriculum Change in Australia and Ireland: A Comparative Study of Recent Reforms,” *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 52, no. 4 (July 3, 2020): 478–97, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2019.1704064>.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ D. Benson, “Curriculum Visions: The Australian Curriculum, Assessment, and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and Dwayne Huebner discuss civics and citizenship,” *International journal of Christianity and Education*, 19(1) (2015): 38-56.

terms of student learning.¹⁸ Such an approach to education based on ‘certainty’ rejected much that could not be quantified or measured.¹⁹ The associated movement had a number of common features, including a high stakes testing regime that narrowed the range of subjects in schools and how they were taught, the promotion of competition between schools in an education market, and publicly naming and shaming schools to drive improvement.²⁰

The allure of order and the application of scientific administration also influenced reforms at a State level in Western Australia. In 2015, the Schools in Western Australia were required by the Schools’ Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA) to implement Phase 1 of the National curriculum.²¹ Change to the learning areas of English, mathematics, science and history followed.²² After Phase 1 Phases 2 and 3 of the National Curriculum were implemented in the State through the Western Australian National Curriculum.²³ That contained an altered version of the curriculum produced by ACARA for the remaining learning areas.

The impact of changes brought about as a result as well as earlier changes to education policy in the State led to powerful new forms of order and disorder as Australian schooling policy was reassembled at a national scale. On that, Savage *et al* argued that the rearranging of diverse people, ideas and practices with a set of common national policies and procedures in areas including

¹⁸ A. Reid, *Changing Australian Education: How Policy Is Taking Us Backwards and What Can Be Done About It*, (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2020).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ “Implementation Requirements,” School Curriculum and Standards Authority, accessed 3 February 2021, <https://k10outline.scsa.wa.edu.au/home/principles/background/implementation-requirements>

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

curriculum, assessment, funding, reporting and teaching resulted.²⁴ He argued too that policy privileged “similarity over difference”, “sharing over contestation”, “smoothness over disjuncture,” and “standardisation over diversity.”²⁵ Concurrently, scientific and so called universal or technical knowledge was favoured over practical and local knowledge.²⁶

Developments in Anglican Schooling

While government policy makers sought to re-order social relations through reforms to curriculum and the structure of schooling at both a national and state level, the number of low-fee charging Anglican schools in the State continued to grow. In 2002, the Anglican Archbishop of Perth stated that “never before have we been so intentionally involved” in seeking to make Anglican Schools available to those who wish to have access to them.²⁷ These low-fee charging schools sat under the authority of the Anglican Schools Commission Inc (ASC) and existed alongside the more established high-fee charging Anglican schools.

Anglican schools’ authorities in the State became preoccupied with their purpose. In particular, they sought to articulate that both for schools as a group and at the individual school level. On that, an appendix on the purpose of Anglican schools in Perth was attached to the Perth Anglican Church Synod Proceedings in 1999. The first part of the document is outlined here:

²⁴ G. Savage, C, Elisa Di Gregorio, and B. Lingard, “Practices of Scalecraft and the Reassembling of Political Boundaries: The Contested Nature of National Schooling Reform in the Australian Federation,” *Policy Studies*, 2021, 1–22.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01442872.2021.1885640>; G. Savage, *The Quest for Revolution in Australian Schooling Policy* (London: Routledge, 2021).

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Perth Anglican Diocese Yearbook (2002), 91, Diocesan Archives, Anglican Church, Dioceses of Perth, Australia.

The Christian Purposes of Anglican Schools in the Diocese of Perth

Anglican Schools:

- Engage in the mission of the Church by bearing witness to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
- Offer young people opportunities to explore, come to and develop Christian faith;
- Provide education which is founded upon Christian beliefs, values and attitudes in the context of a community of faith and worship.²⁸

Overall, the document aligned the mission of Anglican schools with the mission of the Church and suggested that a core part of an Anglican school's mission was to engage in proselytising with students by bearing "witness to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit," focusing on students developing "Christian faith" and providing education on "Christian beliefs, values and attitudes." Later in the period key personnel sought to differentiate between the mission of Anglican schools and the Anglican Church in the State.

In 2004, the formation of the Western Australian Anglican Schools Association (WAASA) was initiated.²⁹ That was an attempt to create a body that represented all Anglican schools in the State.³⁰ A Chaplaincy and Religious Studies Committee was placed under the auspices of WAASA. Moreover, the establishment of WAASA allowed key personnel in the Anglican Church to bring together and offer support to all Anglican schools. Increased networking between key personnel focused on Anglican identity in schools following the establishment of WAASA took place.³¹ From 2008, there was reference to the chaplains in Anglican schools coming

²⁸ Perth Anglican Diocese Yearbook (1999), Appendix 1, Diocesan Archives, Anglican Church, Dioceses of Perth, Australia.

²⁹ Perth Anglican Diocese Yearbook (2004).

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

together for a day with the Anglican Archbishop of Perth. That involved participation in a Eucharist service and group discussion.³²

In return for Commonwealth government funding Anglican Schools were required also to meet the requirements of accountability measures outlined under the *Australia Education Act 2013*. Those measures included implementing particular teacher development and performance frameworks, meeting requirements on the amount and type of professional development provided to staff, implementing the Australian Curriculum, participating in the National Assessment Program, providing school performance data, and producing student reports and public financial reports in accord with set templates. On all of that, the chairperson at Hale School reported in 2010 that “the Australian Curriculum became a key driver in the curriculum development process throughout the school” and that “a great deal of time” had been spent “researching, developing and discussing the Australian Curriculum and its implications.”³³

Religious Education in Anglican Schools in Western Australia

During the period under consideration there was a perception by key personnel in the Anglican Church that religious education in Anglican schools should be an academic subject informed by education theory.³⁴ The approach adopted in Anglican schools in Western Australia was significantly influenced by Doctor Peter Vardy. Many of the Chaplains from the independent Anglican schools attended a session conducted by him on ‘religious and values education’ at Geelong Grammar School in Victoria in

³² Perth Anglican Diocese Yearbook (2008), Diocesan Archives, Anglican Church, Dioceses of Perth, Australia.

³³ Perth Anglican Diocese Yearbook (2011), Diocesan Archives, Anglican Church, Dioceses of Perth, Australia.

³⁴ J. McGrath, “Changing Framework for Learning in Religious Education,” *Religious Education Journal of Australia* 21, no. 2 (2005): 13–21.

1999.³⁵ Following that session, the authorities at Hale School and Guildford Grammar School hosted an evening with him for governors and head teachers in Anglican schools in the State, while the Anglican Schools Commission Inc (ASC) also engaged him to speak at a weekend conference for chaplains and key personnel.³⁶

The views of key personnel in Anglican schools in the State at the time is reflected in the report presented to the Perth Anglican Synod from the authorities of Hale School in 2001. In it, the chairman stated:

Staff have provided a dynamic introduction for our students to the Peter Vardy programme over the past two years. That background is then complemented by the work undertaken by Patrick Wallace the coordinator of values education.³⁷

Likewise, the Guildford Grammar School chairman stated in his 2004 report to the Perth Anglican Synod that

After consultation with staff, the preparatory school has integrated aspects of the Peter Vardy Religious and Values Education Program into the existing virtues program in order to make the Chapel services and religious education more relevant to students. The objective is to provide a Christian environment and curriculum conducive to spiritual and pastoral development through religious practices and values education.³⁸

The *Christian/Religious Education Learning Area Statement (Learning Statement)*, published by the ASC, was developed in response to State curriculum reforms and the emerging work of Vardy.³⁹ That document was republished in 2004 as the *Christian*

³⁵ Perth Anglican Diocese Yearbook (1999).

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 70.

³⁸ Perth Anglican Diocese Yearbook (2001), 66 Diocesan Archives, Anglican Church, Dioceses of Perth, Australia.

³⁹ T. Wallace, *Christian/Religious Learning Area Statement*, (Perth: Anglican Schools Commission Inc, 1999).

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Religious Education Progress Map (Progress Map).⁴⁰ That edition was distributed to all Western Australian Anglican Schools Association (WAASA) schools in a printed format in a ring binder.⁴¹ It was revised again in 2008 and re-launched online along with sample teaching and learning units and sample activity sheets.⁴² The curriculum sought to “keep pace” with the National Profiles for ‘the eight key learning areas’ and the development of the Curriculum Framework for K-12 Education in Western Australia focused on student outcomes .⁴³ It was a 32-page document containing a religious education curriculum for students in Anglican schools from Kindergarten to Year 12. It included a statement of rationale, learning outcomes, information on phases of development and teaching, and information on learning and assessment. It was written and edited by the Reverend Doctor Tom Wallace in response to feedback received from Chaplains and Religious Education Teachers in Western Australian Anglican Schools.⁴⁴ In particular, guidance was received from a group of 10 teachers, four of whom were employed in Anglican Schools Commission schools and the other six worked in autonomous Anglican schools in the State.⁴⁵

The adoption of a spiral curriculum approach assumed that students would re-visit concepts year after year at higher and higher levels of sophistication yet would never achieve full understanding.⁴⁶ In that vein, the major learning outcomes for the subject were divided into six content areas. These were the Bible, the Story of the Church, Philosophy and Beliefs, World Religions, Meditation,

⁴⁰ Christian/Religious Studies Progress Map Working Version, Anglican Schools Commission Inc, 2004.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Christian/Religious Studies Progress Map, Anglican Schools Commission Inc, 2008.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ J.S. Bruner, *The Process of Education* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1960).

Prayer and Worship, Ethical Decision Making and Living.⁴⁷ The associated recognition of different types of knowledge and the unpredictable nature of students' spiritual development was hard to reconcile with the outcomes-based approach that mirrored that of the Curriculum Framework in which it was assumed that all achievement could be predicted and measured.⁴⁸

Vardy's spiral curriculum was merged within the curriculum with Fowler's Faith Development Theory.⁴⁹ The learning statement outlining four stages of development or content outcomes.⁵⁰ Those were Early Childhood (Kindergarten - Years 2/3), Middle Childhood (Years 2/3-Years 6/7), Early Adolescence (Year 6/7-Year 9/10) and Late Adolescence or Young Adulthood (Years 10-12). The appropriate content for each outcome was listed in a paragraph of dot points for each of the four stages. Knowledge thus was evaluated in terms of its usefulness to the child at each level of development, thus promoting religious culture from being the starting point for guiding students' understanding of spiritual experience. Instead, it was held, they should be encouraged to look inwards to find meaning and purpose. As a result, the way that religious education lessons were structured was changed. Flexibility for teachers to try new and innovative pedagogies became available.

The curricula explicitly adopted a constructivist and developmental approach to learning, placing greater emphasis than was the case in previous curricula on student dispositions and attitudes. It provided student learning outcomes to be demonstrated. The *Learning*

⁴⁷ Wallace, *Christian/Religious Learning Area Statement*.

⁴⁸ Donnelly, "Australian's Adoption of Outcomes-based Education."

⁴⁹ J.W. Fowler and M.L. Dell, "Stages of Faith from Infancy Through Adolescence: Reflections on Three Decades of Faith Development Theory" in *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood Adolescence*, Ed. by E.C. Roehlkepartain, P.E. King, L. Wagener and P.L. Benson (Online: Sage Publications).
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412976657.n3>

⁵⁰ Wallace, *Christian/Religious Learning Area Statement*.

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Statement sought the development of “thoughtful understanding and appreciation of the beliefs, values, rites and ceremonies of Christianity and other major world religions.”⁵¹ As well as emphasising developing students’ understanding of “key issues in the philosophy of religion, ethical discernment, (and) spiritual awareness” it stressed the need to help students grow in their “ability to care for others in need and act justly.”⁵²

The focus of the Church’s stated mission also shifted in the period under consideration. It now was focused on developing students into particular ‘types’ of people.⁵³ The *Learning Statement* was designed to establish a link between the curriculum and that mission. On that, Perth Anglican Archbishop, Peter Carnley, asserted that “Anglican schools form a significant part of the Church’s mission in the community” and offered students the opportunity to “develop the spiritual dimension of their lives and to explore the relevance of the Christian faith.”⁵⁴ Having that position required unity and agreement between the Church and Anglican schools around a result rather than a process, and handed control to the teacher who was responsible through effective teaching and learning techniques to ensure that students met the agreed outcomes thus reducing the control Church stakeholders had over the content of the curriculum.

The study of world religions was introduced as a focus. That could not have occurred previously when the Church’s mission was centered on sharing knowledge important to the Anglican Communion. A shift, however, in the Church’s mission towards emphasising the development of particular ‘types’ of people created space for students to take account of others’ interpretations. The focus also shifted away from trying to increase the membership of the Anglican communion and towards developing religiously

⁵¹ Wallace, *Christian/Religious Learning Area Statement*, 9.

⁵² *Ibid.*, cover page.

⁵³ T. Wallace, *Christian/Religious Learning Area Statement*.

⁵⁴ P. Carnley as cited in T. Wallace, *Christian/Religious Learning Area Statement*, (Perth: Anglican Schools Commission Inc, 1999):3.

educated students and bringing about a decrease in the significance of Anglican formulary.

The *Progress Map* detailed statements that linked achievement in ‘Christian/Religious education’ to overarching curriculum outcomes developed by the Curriculum Council of Western Australia as well as links with each of the other learning areas identified by the Council.⁵⁵ Those links are likely to have been significant for teachers who taught other subject areas as they affirmed the relevance of their teacher training to religious education. It is likely too that their teaching of religious education was influenced by the policy context that prevailed in relation to other areas of the curriculum. As already articulated, those policies surrounding curriculum development in Western Australia during that period, arose out of a complex political process that involved contesting the meaning of and re-ordering the values of equity, democracy, efficiency, accountability, and autonomy to align with a global, national and state trend towards a neoliberal imaginary and a focus on human capital theory.⁵⁶

The Major Learning Outcomes detailed for Christian/Religious education are outlined below.

BIBLE	STORY OF THE CHURCH	PHILOSOPHY OF BELIEFS
Students acquire a basic understanding and appreciation of the content, history, structure and	Students acquire a basic understanding and appreciation of the story of the Church and of	Students acquire a basic understanding of key issues in the philosophy of religion and of

⁵⁵ Christian/Religious Studies Progress Map Working Version, Anglican Schools Commission Inc, 2004; Christian/Religious Studies Progress Map, Anglican Schools Commission Inc, 2008.

⁵⁶ F. Rizvi and B. Lingard, *Globalizing Education Policy*, (London: Routledge, 2010).

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principles of interpretation of the Bible and the skills needed to locate relevant information.	Anglicanism in particular, its significant festivals, rites and ceremonies.	Christian beliefs about God revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They learn to identify and understand those beliefs which make up a Christian world view.
WORLD RELIGIONS	MEDITATION PRAYER AND WORSHIP	ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING AND LIVING
Students acquire a basic understanding and appreciation of the beliefs, values, rites and ceremonies of other major world religions.	Students develop a capacity for spiritual sensitivity and growth. They acquire an understanding and appreciation of the value of silence, meditation, worship and prayer.	Students explore Christian values and ethical decision making in relation to relevant personal and social concerns and develop growing capacity to “love tenderly and act justly”. ⁵⁷

The *Learning Statement*⁵⁸ reflected a widespread change in the main paradigm of education, that shifted the focus of education processes from the transmission of content to the acquisition of knowledge skills and attitudes.⁵⁹ ‘Good’ teaching and learning,

⁵⁷ Wallace, *Christian/Religious Learning Area Statement*, 6.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ P. Schreiner, “A European Perspective: How Educational Reforms Influence the Place and Image of RE,” in *We Need to Talk About Religious Education: manifestos for the future of RE* Ed. Castelli, M and

according to it, was focused on “student outcomes”. That reflected a shift away from previous curricula that largely focused on teacher input.

The new approach linked knowledge and understanding to specific observable behaviours and was focused on skills and capabilities. Four of the six outcomes centered on students developing a ‘basic understanding’ of an area of Christian knowledge. For example, the Bible Outcome Statement states that students should “acquire a basic understanding and appreciation of the content, history, structures and principles of the Bible and the skills needed to locate relevant information.”⁶⁰ The final two Strands required a change in what students’ value. For example, they were expected to “acquire an understanding and appreciation of the value of silence” in the Meditation, Prayer and Worship strand.⁶¹

The desired impact of students achieving the stated learning outcomes was that they would “discover the meaning and relevance” for their lives of Christian teachings as well as a “set of values and ethical principles by which they might live.”⁶² The stress on ‘meaning’ in contrast to ‘truth’ reflected the increasing impact of a postmodern epistemology on prevailing education theory, that led to changes in religious education.⁶³ That impact was also demonstrated by the increased encouragement to use constructivist or enquiry-based approaches in the classroom. On that, student dialogue was a key method encouraged while several principles of teaching, learning and assessment identified were “student participation and responsibility, collaboration and community, meaning and relevance, action and reflection and thinking and reasoning.”⁶⁴

M. Charter (London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2018), 37-52.

⁶⁰ Wallace, *Christian/Religious Learning Area Statement*, 6.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*, 4.

⁶³ Schreiner, “A European Perspective.”

⁶⁴ Wallace, *Christian/Religious Learning Area Statement*, 23-25.

The curriculum also held in tension outcome statements grounded in a constructivist approach to learning and a belief that knowledge of God is “mediated through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.”⁶⁵ That is demonstrated explicitly in the discussion over the name of the learning area offered in the ‘rationale’.⁶⁶ The options discussed are: ‘Christian Studies’, ‘Religious Education’, ‘Beliefs and Values’ and ‘Christian/Religious education’ which was the chosen title. The discussion too highlighted tension between the focus on Christian content and the stakeholders’ desire to make the subject relevant and child-centered in an increasingly secular society. That reflected a transition or a paradigm shift that had been underway since the 1960s and was indicative of an education system that was focused on meaning.⁶⁷

Reflecting the influence of Piagetian theories at the time, the *Learning Statement* also promoted the notion of individualization rather than class-based pedagogy and cast the teacher’s role as a guide to enable individual growth.⁶⁸ ‘Relevance was also emphasised. By nature it is subjective and varies depending on student interests, motivation, post-school aspirations, home background, state, national and global policy context, teacher quality and classroom environment. On that, the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills associated with the subject assumed students and teachers came with an initial commitment to the relevance of the Christian faith. Where no shared commitment existed, the approach is likely to have created a conflict with the learning outcomes students were expected to achieve.

Following the publication of *Progress Map, a Religious Studies Curriculum for Anglican Schools* (The Curriculum), published in

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 4.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*.

⁶⁷ C. Beeby, *The Quality of Education in Developing Countries*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966).

⁶⁸ P. Murphy and C. V. Gipps. “Equity in the Classroom Towards Effective Pedagogy for Girls and Boys” (London: Falmer Press, 1996).

2013, was built on its foundation. Its stated rationale was to provide students

...with the opportunity to think deeply, critically and meaningfully about the world in which we live. It is an academically rigorous subject which challenges students to reflect critically on themselves, their beliefs and the beliefs of others [...] their capacity for spiritual growth is nurtured throughout [...] attitudes of acceptance, sensitivity and respect may be fostered as well as a sense of curiosity about the nature of religion and religious traditions⁶⁹

Those objectives were to be achieved ‘within’ the ‘Anglican ethos’ of the school.⁷⁰

The previous hard line that was seen to exist between subjective and objective truth was softened slightly. The curriculum also reflected a more sensitised interpretation of human knowledge, construction and meaning making. The content of *the Curriculum* was presented in seven strands. Those consisted of the previous six outcome statements and a new strand called ‘Faith in Action, and Actions Leading to Faith’. There was also a move away from a purely cognitive focus on pupils forming their own systems of ideas. Instead, the experiential and identity forming aspects of human experience were emphasised.

The introduction to the Bible and Christian Belief strand stated:

In order that students have a full understanding of the content of the Bible and Christian belief that are contained within it, they should first understand the historical and theological context within which its books were written and address important questions about the reliability of the text. That provides the platform for meaningful, academic engagement with key Christian concepts such as Repentance and Trinity as students begin to relate Christian

⁶⁹ A Religious Studies Curriculum for Anglican Schools, Anglican Schools Commission Inc, 2013, 1.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

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beliefs to their source; it is the beliefs that give students access to a deep understanding of what it means to be Christian (Anglican Schools Commission, 2013, p. 15).

That demonstrated a continuing shift towards a hermeneutical approach to religious education that sought to help students interpret rather than just accept Christian beliefs. To that end, academic study and reflection, as well as an openness to transformation were to be encouraged.⁷¹

The Curriculum also gave an explanation of five recommended religious studies skills or approaches. They included: critical thinking, community of inquiry, concept cracking, an approach to world religions and mediation practices.⁷² It identified the purpose of critical thinking as being to enable students to “come to a deeper and richer understanding of their own truth claims about God, the universe and their place in it, through subjecting these claims to a process of structured and clear thinking.”⁷³ That, it was stated, should involve teachers in helping students to “take the three basic elements of an argument, the reasons, the inference and the conclusion or truth claim” and subjecting those elements to scrutiny.⁷⁴

The suggested teaching and learning strategies were based on a notion of the teacher’s role as facilitating the development of certain skills and values in students.⁷⁵ Learners who thought critically and independently, listened to others and explored their own sense of spirituality were sought.⁷⁶ That was demonstrated in the statement that teachers of religious studies did not have to have a personal affiliation to one particular faith but rather should model an

⁷¹ A Religious Studies Curriculum for Anglican Schools, Anglican Schools Commission Inc, 2013.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

“authentic worldview.”⁷⁷ In contrast to earlier positions, that seemed to imply that maintaining the Anglican ethos was dependent on staff’s cognitive knowledge of Anglicanism as opposed to their lived experience of their faith. Thus significant room was available for teachers in individual Anglican schools to design, develop and facilitate a religious studies curriculum that reflected their school’s Anglican tradition and the individual school context.

Notwithstanding the influence of all outlined above, the adopted curriculum in Anglican schools was not externally regulated from school to school. On that, the chairperson at John Wollaston Anglican Community School reported in 2012 that “The Schools Religious education and Values Education program follows the Anglican Schools Commission’s Christian and Religious Studies Progress Map and incorporates exploration of important life issues such as coping with loss and grief, developing resilience and making informed choices.”⁷⁸ The same year the authorities at Christ Church Grammar School renamed religious education as Personal and Spiritual Development and increased the focus on socio-emotional education.⁷⁹ In like manner, at Guildford Grammar School in 2004, the chairperson reported to the Perth Anglican Synod that after “consultation with staff, the Preparatory school has integrated aspects of Peter Vardy’s Religious and values education program into the existing Virtues Program in order to make the chapel services and religious education more relevant to students.”⁸⁰

Religious education in some Anglican schools in the State eventually came to be presented as a continuous process of symbol interpretation and, of uncovering new layers of meaning in symbolical interrelation to God, a process in which critical reason

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 5.

⁷⁸ Perth Anglican Diocese Yearbook (2012), 76 Diocesan Archives, Anglican Church, Dioceses of Perth, Australia.

⁷⁹ Perth Anglican Diocese Yearbook (2013), Diocesan Archives, Anglican Church, Dioceses of Perth, Australia.

⁸⁰ Perth Anglican Diocese Yearbook (2004), 66.

played a vital role. In other Anglican schools in the State the subject was linked with the more vocational subjects with a focus enabling students' individual growth.

In addition, with religion being pushed out of the State and Commonwealth mandated curriculum taught in Anglican schools there was the development of a renewed focus on the provision of school chaplains, student clubs and other co-curricular activities. The schools continued to look to the Anglican tradition to provide structure and significance to school celebrations. Music and art in Anglican schools continued to be important to the schools' identities and closely connected to the Christian tradition. For example, Handel's *Messiah* was performed by students from St Hilda's Anglican School for Girls and Christ Church Grammar School students.⁸¹ Christ Church Grammar School students also performed the Tony Nicholls play called 'The Passion' in the Perth cathedral and on tour overseas in 1999⁸² and on another occasion they performed a play titled *Miracles* in the grounds of the Western Australian Government House at Easter time,⁸³ Hale School continued to focus on sacred music in its music program.⁸⁴ Further, at St Hilda's Anglican School for Girls, students' engagement with their own art was seen as an opportunity for them to demonstrate "the meaning they have found in their lives."⁸⁵ In 2012 the chairperson stated that she was sure the school's new performing arts' centre would enable girls to "catch glimpses of the divine" as it was through dance, drama and music that students begin to "make meaning of human experience."⁸⁶

⁸¹ Perth Anglican Diocese Yearbook (1999).

⁸² Perth Anglican Diocese Yearbook (2000), Diocesan Archives, Anglican Church, Dioceses of Perth, Australia; Perth Anglican Diocese Yearbook (2001).

⁸³ Perth Anglican Diocese Yearbook (2003), Diocesan Archives, Anglican Church, Dioceses of Perth, Australia.

⁸⁴ Perth Anglican Diocese Yearbook (1999).

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 38.

⁸⁶ Perth Anglican Diocese Yearbook (2012), 90.

There was increased structural provision and recognition of voluntary religious groups within Anglican Schools. St Mary's Anglican girls School started a 'prayer/discussion group' in 1999.⁸⁷ While the group was open to all students, it was formed out of a desire to provide "committed Christian" students with a place within the school that they could call "home."⁸⁸ In 2001 at St Hilda's Anglican School for Girls, students conducted a lunchtime club called "re-enchantment".⁸⁹ In contrast to the voluntary religious groups established in the other schools, students engaged in "reflexology, Taizé chants, silence, sacred stories, yoga, mandala painting and discussed such topics as voluntarily and simplicity."⁹⁰ In 2009, St Mark's Anglican Community School started "voluntary prayer groups" where staff and students could "encourage each other" in their faith.⁹¹ A separate group also established for staff and students whose members met regularly to "read the Bible and discuss what it means."⁹² The overall purpose was that the participants would "grow and mature in Christ."⁹³ In addition in 2010, a theological society was established at Guildford Grammar School for students to listen to "visiting speakers across a range of contemporary topics."⁹⁴

Conclusion

During the period 1999 to 2015 the teaching of religion for Anglicans in Anglican schools was influenced by State and Commonwealth led curriculum reforms. Religious education in Anglican schools remained outside the boundaries of the

⁸⁷ Perth Anglican Diocese Yearbook (1999).

⁸⁸ Perth Anglican Diocese Yearbook (1999), 90.

⁸⁹ Perth Anglican Diocese Yearbook (2001).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁹¹ Perth Anglican Diocese Yearbook (2009), 75 Diocesan Archives, Anglican Church, Dioceses of Perth, Australia.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Perth Anglican Diocese Yearbook (2010), Diocesan Archives, Anglican Church, Dioceses of Perth, Australia.

government led reforms. Despite that, key personnel in the Anglican Church sought to model Anglican religious education curricula on the government reforms to the mandated curriculum areas. While the period under review in that chapter aligns with ‘the Education Revolution’ and there were many revolutionary ideas that influenced curriculum in Western Australia the changes to religious education in Anglican schools could be better described as an evolution of reforms.

Three conclusions can be drawn about religious education in Anglican schools during the period considered.

- a. ‘Curricula, both whole curricula and subject specific curricula including religious education for Anglican school children in Western Australia, have been influenced by international trends, nation-wide developments and State developments. Moreover, as part of the process religious education for Anglican students in Western Australia moved fluidly between the academic curriculum and other aspects of school life in response to those developments.’
- b. The subject religious education has been influenced over-time by shifting sets of sub-groups all pursuing different objectives.
- c. As the meaning of religion became contested in the public sphere there was less space available in the curriculum for exploring meaning outside of the empirically-based subjects. As a result, the curriculum was not always discrete and easily defined.