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The role of experiential content knowledge in the formation of beginning RE teachers

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Abstract

This article discusses the role of experiential content knowledge as an essential component to the formation of beginning RE teachers. The article initially outlines the meaning and parameters of experiential content knowledge and its relationship to the teaching of Religious Education in Catholic schools. An exploration of how this experiential content knowledge may be recognised is described with reference to the perceptions of a purposive sample of beginning RE teachers in Catholic secondary schools in Western Australia. The article then discusses the links between experiential content knowledge and developing a sense of vocation towards teaching Religious Education.

Introduction

The formation of Religious Education teachers is a crucial component of the quality of Religious Education taught in the classroom (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982). RE teachers in Western Australia are expected to possess mandatory professional qualifications and a manner of life to convey Catholic Church teaching to school students (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2004b). Such a requirement means that RE teachers are able to relate the curriculum content in appropriate ways to the needs of students which includes teachers offering their own example or lived experience (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2009, para. 6; Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1983, Can. 804.2). Such a combination of developing professional competence and personal faith witness could be construed as teacher formation. This article discusses the role of experiential content knowledge in the context of the formation of beginning secondary RE teachers. The article firstly reviews the nature of experiential content knowledge in the context of teaching and its importance to Religious Education. Secondly, the article describes the experiences of beginning RE teachers with teaching RE in Catholic secondary schools, especially about their perceptions of a faithful Catholic model to students. Thirdly, the article considers the links between experiential content knowledge and commitment towards RE teaching. Lastly, suggestions are made about recognising how experiential content knowledge may be developed.

Literature Review

The literature review outlines the types of teacher knowledge beginning teachers need to possess and how such knowledge is required in Religious Education. Next, the review discusses how one of these knowledge types called 'experiential content knowledge' may be developed as part of the formation of teachers. From there, the review turns its attention to the relationship between experiential content knowledge and personal integrity.

There are at least three key understandings that teachers are required to possess: content knowledge (to know their subject matter), general pedagogical knowledge (know how to teach) and pedagogical content knowledge (know how to integrate these two domains) (Shulman 1986). There are four components to pedagogical content knowledge: an understanding and appreciation for the purpose of the learning area, an understanding and appreciation for the perceptions students have about the learning area, an understanding of curriculum principles, and knowledge of a wide range of teaching strategies (Grossman 1990). The role of content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge in Religious Education has been explored by religious educators previously (Engebretson, 1997; Malone, 1997; Rymarz, 1999). The Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (CECWA, 2004a) requires that RE teachers in Catholic schools complete an accreditation program to teach RE that consists of tertiary study and pedagogical inservicing. It is assumed these teachers are practising Catholics. This accreditation is considered to be the minimal requirement for RE teaching. RE teachers are expected to continue their involvement in professional development over five years to renew their accreditation.

In the case of beginning teachers, professional development is focused on ensuring effective instruction and classroom management. These teachers begin with a "limited repertoire of instructional strategies" (Freiberg 2002, p. 56). However, given time, a positive teaching culture and support by more experienced teachers (Feiman-Nemser 2003), beginning teachers turn their attention to the needs of their students and the quality of their teaching (Anderson, 1997; Fuller, 1969; Kallery, 2004). Increasingly, these teachers focus on the ways in which they engage their students by the positive rapport they establish and maintain in their classrooms. Jacobs (1996) suggests that:

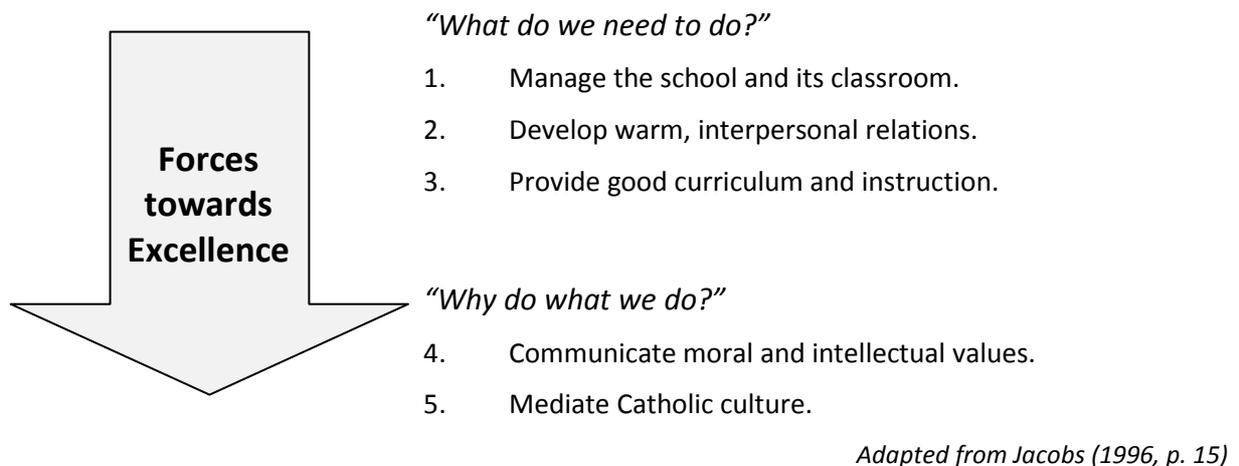
For the most part, the greater majority of [beginning] teachers need to develop competence in at least three skills: classroom management, human relations, as well as the pedagogical

skills associated with good curriculum and effective instruction. Throughout the course of their first five years on the job, neophyte teachers spend much of their time and energy focusing upon and developing competence in these important skills as they struggle through their successes and failures to become good teachers (p. 5).

The experience of teaching plays a significant part in the professional formation of the teacher (Littleton and Littleton, 2005). The day-to-day experience of teaching is a challenging one and, if teachers approach the challenges in the right perspective, can lead to professional growth. On the other hand, experiences may lead to frustration and resentment causing stress and disenchantment in the teacher. Prolonged disenchantment may cause the teacher to leave the profession or become bitter or cynical about teaching. Flores (2003) found that most teachers experienced a loss of idealism within two years of teaching. However, she also found that while these teachers had become compliant and negative, other teachers were dedicated and keen. These differences seemed to be focused upon personal dispositions towards teaching, the support the teachers received both personally and professionally and the nature of the teaching experience (Flores, 2003, pp. 23-24).

Jacobs (1996) proposed that teachers progressed from being competent (to become good classroom teachers) to excellent (to become authentic, purpose-minded teachers) when they moved from asking the question 'What do we need to do?' to 'Why do what we do?' (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Five Forces of Catholic Educational Excellence



The latter question suggests a sense of calling or vocation as part of the necessary inspiration for teaching. Such a calling resonates with the Congregation for Catholic Education (CCE, 1982, para. 24) that RE teachers should aspire to possess a vocation with an “apostolic intention inspired by faith”. RE teachers are expected to follow:

Everything that has to do with their own theological and pedagogical formation, and also in the course syllabi; and they should remember that, in this area above all, life witness and an intensely lived spirituality have an especially great importance (CCE, 1982, para. 59).

The implication here is that RE teachers should present an example of a faithful Catholic person, a “total commitment of one’s whole being to the Person of Christ” (CCE, 1977, para. 50). That is, the teacher possesses knowledge about what it means to be a practising Catholic because they

demonstrate this commitment in their daily lives. From a Catholic Church’s perspective, an RE teacher is a person who affirms a devotion towards “both personal sanctification and apostolic mission, for these are two inseparable elements in a Christian vocation” (CCE, 1982, para. 65). This affirmation constitutes another form of teaching knowledge along with content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, called ‘experiential content knowledge’. Table 1 illustrates the relationships between content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and experiential content knowledge.

Table 1 Three Forms of Teacher Knowledge in Religious Education

Content Knowledge <i>(Knowledge of the Faith Tradition)</i>	Pedagogical Content Knowledge <i>(Competence in teaching about the Faith Tradition)</i>	Experiential Content Knowledge <i>(Personal experience of living the Faith Tradition)</i>
• Revelation	• How people find God	• To experience God’s presence
• Christology (Jesus)	• How people know Jesus	• To be a Christian person
• Scripture (Word)	• How people interpret Scripture	• To reflect on the Word
• Social Teachings	• How people work for justice	• To live justly
• Sacraments	• How people worship God	• To worship God
• Morality	• How people live moral lives	• To live a moral life
• Christian Prayer	• How people pray	• To pray

Experiential content knowledge is intrinsically related to the teacher’s identity and personal integrity (Palmer, 1998). What is taught; how it is taught; and why it is taught is connected to the teacher’s persona. For RE teachers working in Catholic schools, teaching:

depends not so much on subject matter or methodology as on the people who work there. The extent to which the Christian message is transmitted through education depends to a very great extent on the teachers. The integration of culture and faith is mediated by the other integration of faith and life in the person of the teacher. The nobility of the task to which teachers are called demands that, in imitation of Christ, the only Teacher, they reveal the Christian message not only by word but also by every gesture of their behaviour. This is what makes the difference between a school whose education is permeated by the Christian spirit and one in which religion is only regarded as an academic subject like any other (CCE, 1977, para. 43).

As Palmer (1998, p. 10) puts it: “good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher.” Experiential content knowledge, however, is not meant to be used to proselytise students, that is, for teachers to enforce their beliefs upon students (CCE, 2009, para. 16; Crawford & Rossiter 1985). Rather, they are to use a stance of “committed impartiality” (Hill, 1982, pp. 29-30), to respect the religious freedom of the students (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994, para. 1738) by proposing the content, but at the same time posing as an example of an expression of that content lived out daily (Benedict XVI, 2009, para. 7). Pope Paul VI (1975, para. 41) expressed this approach in this way: “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.”

Almost all RE teachers in WA are lay Catholics (CECWA, 2008) so the example these teachers offer to students reflects a faithful lay response to living out the Gospels in complex and sometimes difficult socio-cultural circumstances (CCE, 1982, para. 9, 57). For an RE teacher to be confident in reflecting

a faithful response to living out the Gospels, the Congregation for Catholic Education (1982, para. 65) believes that:

religious formation does not come to an end with the completion of basic education; it must be a part of and a complement to one's professional formation, and so be proportionate to adult faith, human culture, and the specific lay vocation.

While such an expectation being placed on RE teachers may be desired, for beginning RE teachers the situation can be distressing (Bezzina, Stanyer & Bezzina 2005, pp. 19-20), especially if experiential content knowledge is lacking. Beginning RE teachers from 'Generation Y' do not generally value religious institutional involvement (Mason, Singleton & Webber, 2007). Just as Ryan, Brennan and Wilmett (1997, p. 11) found that parish membership did not suffice to teach the content knowledge in RE, it is possible that a lack of adult religious practice can also pose problems for beginning RE teachers in demonstrating an adequate experiential content knowledge. Quillinan (2001, p. 4) argues there is a need for teachers to develop a "practical and relevant spirituality" to complement their content knowledge. There is also the danger of creating "religious relativism or indifferentism" in students (CCE, 2009, para. 12). One of the aspects to emerge in the research study described in the next section was how beginning secondary RE teachers felt about the personal example they presented to students in Religious Education.

Research Study

The research study focused on beginning RE teachers in Catholic secondary schools in WA who had recently been assigned to teaching the learning area. In earlier articles in the *Journal of Religious Education* (Hackett, 2008; 2009), the research was described regarding the perceptions of beginning RE teachers about implementing RE Units of Work as well as their outlook towards teaching Religious Education. Initially, a survey was completed by 122 teachers with a focus on their perceptions about the curriculum materials, teaching approach and understanding of RE curriculum principles. From this survey, a purposive sample of 28 beginning RE teachers was selected. These teachers were interviewed twice over two school years. The interviews indicated changes in teacher concerns about how the RE Units were taught to students and a deepening sense of calling to teach Religious Education.

Findings

Over the two years of research, beginning RE teachers were being informed and formed by the experience of teaching Religious Education. Their enthusiasm to become good RE teachers developed into a search for authenticity, integrity and motivation. There were changes in the ways these teachers used the curriculum materials, in their teaching approach and in their beliefs about their role as an RE teacher (Fullan, 2007). Beginning RE teachers reached a point of asking themselves, "Why am I doing this?" Table 2 summarises the changes in concerns and dispositions which occurred based on conceptual frameworks by Fuller (1969), Palmer (1998) and Korthagen & Vasalos (2005). The possible changes in concern and disposition reflect deepening layers of efficacy and commitment. These layers need not be sequential or completely developed; the layers are interrelated and dynamic. They reflect an increasing interaction between the professional persona (identity) and the core of the person (integrity).

Table 2 Changes in Concerns and Dispositions by Beginning RE Teachers

<i>Layer</i>	<i>Key Concerns</i>	<i>Formative Experiences</i>	<i>Key Dispositions</i>
1	<p><i>Instruction</i></p> <p>Concerns for self (survival): due to demands of getting ready, finding resources and meeting expectations.</p>	<p><i>initial content knowledge with prior training and background & developing content knowledge</i></p>	<p><i>Surety</i></p> <p>Changes in perceptions about the use of curriculum materials to cope with these demands.</p>
2	<p><i>Prowess</i></p> <p>Concerns for the tasks: due to demands of organising lessons, covering the content and developing repertoire of strategies.</p>	<p>↓</p> <p><i>ongoing content knowledge & developing pedagogical content knowledge</i></p>	<p><i>Confidence</i></p> <p>Changes in perceptions about the use of teaching strategies to cope with these demands.</p>
3	<p><i>Empathy</i></p> <p>Concerns for impact of teaching on students: due to demands of evaluating outcomes, rapport with students and growing awareness of students' learning needs.</p>	<p>↓</p> <p><i>ongoing content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge & developing experiential content knowledge</i></p>	<p><i>Insight</i></p> <p>Changes in beliefs or understandings about the nature and purpose of the curriculum to cope with these demands.</p>
4	<p><i>Modelling</i></p> <p>Concerns for efficacy: due to demands for authenticity, commitment, example, and integrity.</p>	<p>↓</p> <p><i>ongoing content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge & experiential content knowledge</i></p>	<p><i>Vocation</i></p> <p>Changes in professional character and deepening reflection of personal beliefs, values, and spirituality to cope with these demands.</p>

For each layer a brief summary is given of the key findings. The quotations which follow represent a common response from the participants. The name of the participants is a pseudonym and further information about particular participants can be found in Hackett (2009).

Instruction and Surety: In the beginning, the teachers were very concerned about their preparation for RE teaching. They planned what they were going to teach by becoming familiar with the content, strategies and resources available in the Teacher's Manuals. The focus was on familiarity with as much of the content as possible and to ensure there were enough activities and materials to keep the students occupied. In large measure, this involved the frequent use of Mastersheets (photocopied class worksheets) and Student Resource Books.

I think teachers use the Mastersheets and the Student Book because they often save time that I know I do not get to do lesson research and preparation (Darla).

After a year of teaching the Units, teachers felt more secure about the structure and sequence of the RE program. As a sense of surety developed, they began to re-assess the quality of the curriculum materials that were offered to them by the Catholic Education Office. This reassessment was based on how teachers perceived the reactions of their students to the language and relevance of these materials.

Prowess and Confidence: The sense of frustration with the shortcomings of the Mastersheets and Student Books forced beginning RE teachers to rethink what they were doing. They felt they had to accommodate the learning needs of their students more closely with a wider variety of relevant resources and strategies.

I believe that mostly teachers or teachers teaching a particular year group for the first time would be more reliant on Mastersheets and the Student Books—I was! Mainly because they are concentrating on content and effective delivery. After about a term, confidence with the content grows and I tended to rely on my own resources (Clare).

Most teachers grew in confidence when they chose to follow this path. The more familiar teachers felt they became with the content and strategies, the more assured they were in dealing with diverse backgrounds of their students. Some beginning RE teachers continued to be challenged by their students and felt frustrated in not being able to teach the way they believed RE should be taught.

From my own personal experience I used the Student Book because I was confident the material covered was in accordance with Catholic teaching. ... I liked using the Student Book because often it would explain things in a way I couldn't (Amber).

Empathy and Insight: A significant development for beginning RE teachers was the realisation that a direct pastoral rapport with their students was a key ingredient in successfully teaching the RE Units. Teachers became more engaged in dialogue with their students. This approach helped them to gain further insights into the learning needs of their students.

I have found so far that there is a different relationship with students I have taught RE than with students from other subjects. I have been able to get to know them better than students from other subjects. RE lends itself to that closer relationship and I value that. I believe students see me in a softer more available way (Anne).

Teachers became more concerned about the personal spiritual and religious formation of their students. For some, there was a growing turmoil about their personal integrity in relation to the beliefs and values presented.

Like I believe in the Catholic religion and I believe in a lot of the principles but there are a lot of things, flaws I feel I'm very critical. And when the kids ask me and tackle me about some of these things, it's hard for me to stand back and give them the proper view, the Catholic view when I've got my own view (Kate).

Modelling and Vocation: By the second round of interviews, beginning RE teachers related their belief that it was important to be a model person to their students. This modelling was not only in terms of the human qualities they possessed but also in the faith witness they presented.

I think if you've got a teacher who's been thrown into teaching religion when really they haven't thought deeply about how do you integrate it into your own life then for them it's

still textbook material and it's still a series of questions and answers in a penny catechism. And to try and integrate Church teaching into somebody else's life is impossible if you aren't actively seeking that in your own (Diana).

For most of these teachers, it was this strong faith commitment that was significant to continuing their RE teaching. For some teachers, their perceptions of the nature of faith commitment portrayed by the curriculum materials proved too challenging to their sense of identity and integrity.

With teaching experience and direct pastoral rapport with their students, beginning RE teachers were able to develop their pedagogical content knowledge. They were able to recognise and develop the links between the concepts and values of the RE Units and the personal and spiritual values of their students. In doing so, the teachers drew upon a wider range of curriculum materials (content knowledge) that conveyed a sense of what it was to be human (like Jesus) and how to live a meaningful and responsible life. At the same time, the teachers saw that their own example was significant in the lives of their students (experiential content knowledge). These three aspects were integrated together in a balanced way. As one participant commented about her RE teaching:

Needs balance, you need information, facts and traditions and you need personal witness and you need the warm fuzzy you know – self esteem type things and making them feel they're unique and special. It's all together you can't put it into compartments I don't think (Anne).

Increasingly, they evaluated their own identity and sense of spiritual balance. The teachers understood that good RE teachers were the ones who were able to broaden their skills and understandings and who lived as authentic and balanced adults with a strong faith commitment.

It's the personal qualities and the commitment and believing in what you're doing. I think they're the people who probably end up staying in RE because if you didn't like it or weren't committed to it, it'd be hard work and it'd be very frustrating I think. You need to believe in what you're doing. It's not just a job, otherwise it would be awful (Gwen).

A change in teaching practices focused on ascertaining and accommodating the academic and spiritual learning needs of their students. It was not just enough to provide a warm, friendly learning environment but also to be a sincere and balanced model to students. Beginning RE teachers believed that a direct pastoral rapport with their students was paramount in assisting the spiritual and religious development of their students. As the teacher interacted with the class and took a keen interest in individual students, the students were influenced by the example of the teacher as a person with admirable human qualities. In the process of acting as a mentor or role model to their students, the teachers were confronted by the worth of their own sense of identity as a person of faith.

Discussion

The curriculum and personal demands placed on beginning RE teachers to teach RE meant that they had to consider seriously whether they wished to continue to teach RE after a few years. The teachers had approached a crossroad about their commitment to teaching RE, asking themselves, "Am I a good enough person of faith to deal with the ongoing demands of instructing and reaching out to my students?" Their focus shifted from "How and what do I teach in RE?" to "Why should I teach RE?" and a personal search intensified for an integrated rationale for wanting to continue to teach Religious Education.

This change in focus seemed to have begun for many beginning RE teachers over the duration of the study. This moment of insight about their own experiential content knowledge sustained their

enthusiasm to teach RE and defined them personally as passionate, committed RE teachers. As Edward reflected about his RE teaching and his faith commitment:

A calling? It's more a deliberate action to make, to give evidence that I'm living a Christian life on earth. Having all the faith in the world is good but also you've got to make use of it. So that's what my RE teaching is, making use of my faith for God's service (Edward).

In this study, many RE teachers were in agreement with Edward. They too believed they were making use of their 'faith for God's service'. It was the development towards such a disposition that energised and sustained them through the rigours of the personal and professional demands placed on them. They were able to share their personal experiences of living the faith (experiential content knowledge). In this respect, this research indicates that beginning RE teachers saw their witness more significantly than their teaching. The significance of such a disposition is affirmed in the study by Cook (2001) on the factors that help retain teachers in RE teaching.

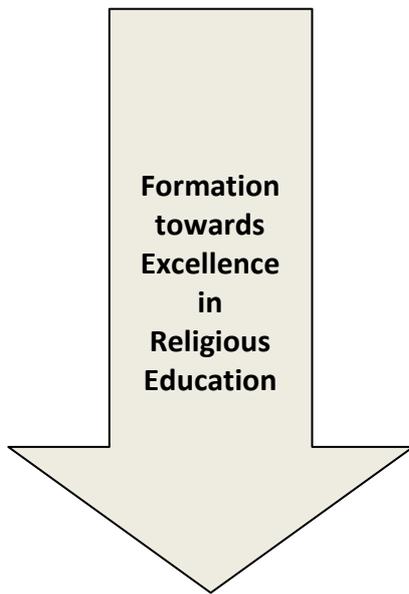
The teachers who had made the decision that their RE teaching was a vocation reflected the exhortation of an "apostolic intention inspired by faith" (CCE, 1982, para. 24). As one participant reflected:

I think God has called me to love and to bring other people to an awareness of [God's] reality and [God's] love for them. At the moment, my life has led me to be teaching RE and I have to say that I think that I'd find few positions more fulfilling. That's not to say I won't in time move on but for now I couldn't imagine anything I'd rather be doing (Diana).

This disposition toward teaching RE as a vocation helped these teachers, as faith witnesses, to articulate a deeper understanding of Catholic beliefs and practices (experiential content knowledge), to relate the RE Units to the personal, spiritual and religious development of their students (pedagogical content knowledge) and to impart the content of the RE Units (content knowledge). While the faith witness or experiential content knowledge, content knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge of teachers were identified, the comments from the beginning RE teachers suggested that these aspects were interrelated and operated concurrently with each other.

The concurrence of these knowledge forms may be deemed as the formation of RE teachers with a vision towards excellence in RE teaching. An excellent RE teacher requires personal authenticity, spiritual integrity with an apostolic zeal to teach the 'Good News' and a commitment to ongoing professional development and faith formation in teaching Religious Education as a vocation (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Forces of Excellence in Religious Education



“What do we need to do?”

An assimilation of:

- Managing the RE classroom.
- Providing the designated curriculum (RE Units of work) and instruction in personal, religious and spiritual formation.
- Developing warm, interpersonal relations in the RE classroom for human formation.

“Why do what we do?”

An integration of:

- Communicating the Catholic religious culture and tradition.
- Mediating the Catholic religious dimension of moral and intellectual values with the students’ lived experience.
- Becoming an authentic person with spiritual integrity and an ‘apostolic intention inspired by faith’*

Adapted from Jacobs (1996, p.15)

** (Congregation for Catholic Education 1982, para. 24)*

These ‘forces’ of assimilation and integration are a part of the formation of beginning RE teachers, as initially competent RE teachers, to later becoming excellent RE teachers. The process is ongoing and these teachers need an ongoing or “permanent formation” (CCE, 1982, para. 68) in content, pedagogy and witness to teach Religious Education (CCE, 1988, para. 96; 2007, para. 26). It is the latter which Palmer (2008, IV A Concluding Scientific Postscript, para. 1) believes is the key to quality teaching:

If you educate teachers’ hearts and souls, they deepen their relations with students, restore community with colleagues, embrace new leadership roles on behalf of authentic educational reform, and renew their sense of vocation instead of dropping out.

Without a focus on experiential content knowledge there is also a danger that students will receive a religious education in a Catholic school based on abstraction rather than an invitation to commitment (CCE, 1977, para. 50).

Conclusion

Beginning RE teachers face a difficult time in teaching Religious Education. Like the students they teach, they have come from diverse personal backgrounds with regard to Church affiliation and practice. Such a situation does not necessarily mean an abdication by beginning RE teachers to teach RE because they are ‘not good enough’. On the contrary, beginning RE teachers have much to offer their students as pilgrims in faith. They may still be on a journey towards adult maturation in faith that cannot be rushed but they can rely on the work of the Holy Spirit to operate in their lives (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, para. 142). The Holy Spirit works:

in accordance with each one’s spiritual capacity. And sets their hearts aflame with greater desire according as each one progresses in the charity that makes him [or her] love what he [or she] already knows and desire what he [or she] has yet to know (John Paul II, 1979, para. 72).

This formation acknowledges the role of the divine other, the “Teacher within” or Holy Spirit (John Paul II, 1979, para. 72). Appreciating the significance of the Holy Spirit in their RE teaching could be a fundamental cornerstone in the formation of beginning RE teachers. The RE teacher has the potential to be like St Paul, a “humble and faithful disciple, the courageous herald, the gifted mediator of Revelation” (Benedict XVI, 2009, para. 5). Such qualities may be drawn from experience (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, para. 152c) and critical reflection (Quillinan, 2001, p. 5). Perhaps the presence of suitable consecrated persons and priests within the school community would be invaluable to beginning RE teachers as models of living witness (CCE, 2007). The personal example of the principal and other experienced staff members would also be important to these teachers (Flynn & Mok, 2002).

The experience of teaching itself has a profound effect upon beginning RE teachers both professionally and personally. By its very nature, teaching opens a person to the emotional stress (Hargreaves, 1997) created by the tension between identity and integrity. Teachers need time to adjust cognitively and emotionally to the new tasks set upon them. Their pre-conceived ideas about how to teach need to be married with the new curriculum principles presented to them (Evans 1996, p. 60). This adjustment period is crucial because:

When we seek genuine commitment and changes in belief, the people doing the changing...are in control of the transformation. This is particularly true when the ultimate goal...is to affect not just teachers’ behaviour but the very ways they think (Evans, 1996, p. 61).

Experiential content knowledge takes time to develop. Such development operates with a particular set of assumptions when considering the religious formation of beginning RE teachers, many of whom are young adults. They may need to rediscover a sense of the sacred through the approach of New Evangelisation (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, para. 25). The Church community has an obligation to assist beginning RE teachers in their formation and expand their experiential content knowledge (CCE, 1982, para. 71). Catholic schools, universities and Catholic Education Offices (CEO) may need to consider further how to provide a range of formative experiences to assist beginning RE teachers (CCE, 1977, para. 52). There are positive initiatives taking place such as the CEO support given to these teachers to attend last year’s World Youth Day in Sydney (and hopefully, to Madrid in 2011). Another initiative could be to provide Christian service-learning opportunities to pre-service teachers (Lavery, 2007). Such initiatives provide the sort of profound experiences teachers can draw upon to share with their students. Developing systematic, planned initiatives is important because quality RE teachers are integral to quality RE teaching.

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