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Editorial Introduction

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Editorial

Welcome to the first edition of the *E-journal of Catholic Education in Australia*. The publication online of the e-journal represents a significant step for The University of Notre Dame Australia, especially for academic staff in the School of Education. With the support of the University, we have seen the development of a broadening research base at the School. We hope that the e-journal will provide a platform for Catholic educators and researchers to share and reflect on their aspirations and understandings of Catholic education. For our first issue, we have invited the authors to reflect on the theme of the 'challenges of Catholic education into the 21st century'.

The first article by Tom O'Donoghue and David Byrne outlines the importance of understanding the historical development of the Religious Education Learning Area. As the adage states, "Those who don't know history are doomed to repeat it" (Edmund Burke). Religious Education, like other curricula, is experiencing significant change; but, do religious educators understand what constitutes the content and pedagogy of the discipline? Are the changes a well-considered improvement on past decisions or simply following fads in education? Perhaps an historical analysis of Religious Education in Australia since 1929 will assist in addressing these questions.

In the second article by Mark Potterton and Cullen Mackenzie, attention is drawn towards the challenges of Catholic educators trying to improve the quality of leadership in a developing Catholic education system in South Africa. Using feedback from professional development seminars and conferences, a picture is painted outlining the challenges for school leaders, especially when they are confronted with a workforce that is generally unfamiliar with the Catholic culture of the schooling system.

The third article by Anthony Holter, James Frabutt, and Ronald Nuzzi discusses the importance of problem-based learning strategies as part of effective school leadership preparation programs. Preparation for leadership is now the hallmark of much that happens in improving Catholic education. Through a longitudinal mixed-method research design, the authors were able to suggest that action research was a significant tool for school leaders to use, especially within a culture that promotes "a mission driven and data informed leader".

The last article by Michael Buchanan discusses the role of religious education leadership since Vatican II. He highlights the lack of clarity with the role around leadership for Catholic identity and mission as opposed to leadership for coordinating the RE curriculum. In turn, this vagueness has led to RE leaders experiencing "disconnectedness". Rather than opposing dimensions, the author suggests there should be an interplay of the two and encouragement given to develop the leadership capacity of RE leaders in similar ways to other significant leaders in a Catholic school.

The four articles published here represent only a small proportion of the many challenges facing Catholic schools and other educational institutions today. We invite potential authors to submit their perspectives on 21st century challenges in Catholic education in the second issue to broaden the discussion.

Chris Hackett
Managing Editor