Chapter 18

The centrality of the concept 'faith development' in Catholic school religious education

> The development of pupils' religious faith within the context of the Catholic faith tradition has long been, and rightly remains, a fundamental aim of Catholic school religious education. However, interpretations of what this means in practice have been problematic, especially with reference to use of the construct 'faith development'. After a brief introduction to show how the construct entered into Catholic religious education, the chapter will consider how it enhanced religious education while at the same time creating difficulties for theory and practice.

18.1 Faith development: Coming to prominence in Catholic religious education

In 1976, Dove Communications in Melbourne published *Will our children have faith?* by the United States Episcopalian religious educator John H Westerhoff III.[1] It became the first major vehicle for publicising James Fowler's structural-developmental theory of *faith development*. It caused chagrin for Fowler, because Westerhoff presented a summary of Fowler's stage theory (with some simplified names for the stages) before Fowler himself had published his own book on it.[2] While 'faith' had always been an important word for Catholic religious educators, from this time, 'faith development' became prominent; arguably, it became a dominant metaphor that would have an enduring influence on the thinking and language of Catholic religious education.

While there is no need to duplicate already available descriptions of Fowler's theory,[3] it is summarised below in Table 18.1 to show how it relates to other developmental theories such as those of Piaget, Kohlberg and Erikson.

Table 18.1 **Fowler's theory of faith development compared with other developmental theories**

AGE	PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT (Erikson)			COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT (Piaget)	MORAL DEVELOPMENT (Kohlberg)	FAITH DEVELOPMENT (Fowler)
Infancy	1 Oral sensory	Trust vs Mistrust	(Hope)	Sensory motor		
Childhood 3–6	2 Anal muscular	Autonomy vs Shame/doubt	(Will)	Intuitive or pre-logical (pre-operational)	0 Instinctive self-centred orientation; Good is simply what is liked and wanted	1 Imitative faith
	3 Genital locomotive	Initiative vs Guilt	(Purpose)			
Pre Adolescence 7–11	4 Latency	Industry vs Inferiority	(Competence)	Concrete operations	1 Punishment and obedience orientation; follows rules to avoid trouble	2 Affiliative faith
Adolescence 12–15					2 Personal usefulness orientation; conforms to obtain rewards	3 Conventional faith
Young Adulthood 15–18	5 Puberty and Adolescence	Identity vs Role Confusion	(Fidelity)	Formal operations	3 Approval seeking orientation; interpersonal concordance or 'good boy-nice girl' orientation; avoids disapproval	(Searching faith)
					4 Law and Order orientation; respect for authority and social order	
Adulthood 19–30	6 Early Adulthood	Intimacy vs Isolation	(Love)		5 Social Contract, utilitarian orientation	4 Personal faith
Middle Age 30–	7 Adulthood	Generativity vs Stagnation	(Care)		6 Universal ethical principle orientation	5 Community faith
Aged 60–	8 Maturity	Ego-integrity vs Despair	(Wisdom)			6 Universal faith

Moral Development bracket labels (Kohlberg): Pre-conventional Morality, Conventional Morality, Autonomous Morality.

Faith Development bracket labels (Fowler): Dependent faith, Independent faith, Inter-dependent faith, Faith with no bounds.

[Text for this table supplied in a separate file]

Fowler's theory of faith development refined and extended earlier understandings of spiritual development across the life cycle in terms of the dynamics of the believing process. It showed different patterns of psychological operation at different stages of faith. Like the other developmental theories, it highlighted the stage progression from more self-centred awareness and behaviour, through interpersonal and then community- and institution-centredness, and finally towards a more universalist orientation. Along with other theories, it provided a model for personal and spiritual development.

Some would argue that Fowler's theory was principally concerned with adult development, even though the early stages were characteristic of children and adolescents (for example mythic literal or imitative faith and conventional faith, and its transition through a searching faith to the next stage). While the theory showed how different faith 'competencies' developed, there still remains a question of whether a 'higher' stage of faith development necessarily means being closer to God and a better, more sensitive human being.

The next chapter will consider how the theory was applied to research on the spiritual development of adolescents together with implications for the 'sponsoring' of young people's faith.

18.2 Problematic use of the construct 'faith development' in religious education

We consider that the term 'faith development' became so prominent and influential that it resulted in unrealistic interpretations of what Catholic religious education was about and of what it should achieve. As its popularity increased, so did vagueness about its meaning. As it became an accepted part of the culture of Catholic religious education, it was used in school mission and vision statements, and was included or implied in diocesan religious education documents and school programs. While there is no real difficulty in proposing faith as a key long-term goal for religious education, use of faith development language did not help clarify the complex links between faith and educational processes. These problems will be explained under the following headings.

> 18.2.1 Metaphors for spiritual development
> 18.2.2 Faith development as a 'hope' for religious education
> 18.2.3 The association of emotionality with faith development
> 18.2.4 Use of the concept 'faith development' to differentiate activities in religious education
> 18.2.5 Use of the term 'Faith Development Coordinator'
> 18.2.6 Religious education and faith development outcomes
> 18.2.7 Faith formation and religious education
> 18.2.8 Faith development and 'transformative education'
> 18.2.9 Expansion of the notion of 'knowing'
> [Box not styled]

The chapter considers that there is a need to revise the way that faith development language is used in Catholic religious education. It argues that religious knowledge and understanding, together with evaluative skills, are the aspects of faith development that are most naturally and effectively promoted by school religious education. There are parallels with issues considered in **13.5** about education for personal learning. While looking at relationships between pedagogy and faith, this chapter will not include a comprehensive review of the nature of religious faith.

18.2.1 Metaphors for spiritual development

While educators can usually explain at length what they understand by 'faith', when asked about 'faith development', they have difficulty with what 'developing' or 'growing' faith actually means, as well as ambiguity about how teaching activities bring about such change. Some responses indicate that it has to do with Fowler's stage theory – facilitating pupils' transition from one Fowler faith stage to the next. Others make use of metaphors like 'growth' of faith, and 'deeper', 'stronger' or 'more committed' faith, all of which give the impression that faith is quantitative. Surprisingly, what is commonly absent from such replies is reference to the knowledge dimension to faith.

Difficulties with faith development seem to arise from the connotation of the metaphor 'development'. As used in psychology in terms like 'personal growth and

development', and also with reference to the spiritual life, the word 'development' carries meaning derived from Western economic thinking – it is interpreted as a psychological 'increase', not unlike growth in individual wealth or in the national economy. Moran explained the problem in his book *Religious Education Development*, in which he questioned the relevance of the metaphor 'development' with reference to personal and spiritual life.[4] He drew attention to the popularity of developmental theories that have stages of improvement or 'success' – questioning the appropriateness and utility of notions of personal development that imply that it must be an 'increase', or 'bigger', 'better', 'more advanced'. Having steps or scores for measuring progress gives tangible indications of achievement. It could have been expected that EQ (emotional intelligence) and SQ (spiritual intelligence) would inevitably be follow-ups to IQ (intelligence quotient).[5] This sort of thinking could affect ideas about how faith is to be changed – like improving one's IQ and becoming spiritually successful. It would be inaccurate and unfair to propose that this interpretation is the main meaning that educators ascribe to the term 'faith development'. However, these problematic undercurrents need to be identified, even if their presence and influence are minimal.

Moran's remedy for the influence of economic thinking was to increase the breadth and diversity of the metaphors for describing spiritual development; variety in metaphor was needed to account for the range of spiritual changes that occur across the life cycle. For example, the Gospel of Mark and other Christian writings suggest that spiritual growth usually involves suffering. 'Gethsemane' experiences and a 'theology of the cross' can be important phases in the Christian spiritual life; these images do not fit comfortably with the idea of moving further up the ladder of perfection; rather, they give the impression that some spiritual progress may well appear to be 'downhill' and painful.

Another remedy for the problem is to acknowledge the many dimensions to the Christian notion of faith.[6] Of special significance is people's relationship with God and the quality of their interaction with others. The transcendent and interpersonal dimensions are not something that can be readily changed intentionally by educational processes.

18.2.2 Faith development as a 'hope' for religious education

How faith development is understood affects the statement of aims and objectives for religious education, and it influences teaching strategies and student resources.
As for any key learning area, religion needs achievable outcomes; that is, tangible goals towards which teachers can direct their endeavours. But if their goals are expressed more or less exclusively in terms of faith development, which involves high order, personal change that is not open to scrutiny by observers, then teachers will be planning lessons on a day-to-day basis while their objectives are 'over the horizon', and not able to give immediate practical guidance. Elsewhere in the curriculum, the equivalent would be writing the outcomes for English or History in terms of 'committed citizenship'. Faith development is too distant from classroom activities to serve as a useful, immediate, functional goal; and because it is so strongly influenced by personal and social factors, teachers would be unrealistic if they thought that their lessons were the principal means of fostering it. Teachers caught up in such thinking can neglect the sorts of purposes and learning opportunities that are most appropriate for the classroom.

Hence it would be better to regard faith development more as a *hope* than an aim. Hope that the classroom experience will, over time, enhance the development of pupils' faith complements the more immediate aims and objectives. It is important to have such hopes because they give a valuable orientation to the process, but a preoccupation with these hopes can confuse teachers' purposes and create unrealistic expectations.

One way of addressing the problem is to identify the aspects of faith development that are most pertinent to the classroom. This steers teachers away from vague purposes like 'more faith', 'deeper faith', 'more ready to believe', 'committed faith' while directing attention to the cognitive dimension. Pupils need good knowledge and understanding of their religious tradition, as well as an understanding of what faith is in all its aspects. Teachers should to be concerned with the aspects that are 'educatable'; in other words, the purpose of religious education is to help young people acquire an *educated* personal faith.

If reference is made to the more personal dimensions of faith, then the meaning should be made clear enough to avoid ambiguity. For example, the idea of promoting a 'deeper' faith means the hope that young people will develop a stronger sense of personal and emotional attachment to God, paralleling the way one would talk about enhancing a personal relationship – with it becoming more personal, more exclusive, more faithful and more communicative.

The idea of faith development as becoming 'more committed' needs further consideration. Commitment is a key dimension to religious faith, and so is committed social action. However, the scope for the school, and especially its religion curriculum, to bring about change in commitment is limited. Such change is a long-term process affected by many factors and is unlikely to be caused exclusively by classroom teaching. Also, it would be difficult, as well as unethical, to try to measure changes in faith commitment as a result of such teaching. How would one know if an individual was more committed or not? How would one get an indication or a measure of commitment? Perhaps by observation of behaviour both inside and outside school over a period? Individuals who are more committed would go to greater lengths to honour their commitments. The further one ventures into this thinking the more it becomes obvious that trying to measure or assess its development is inappropriate. Nevertheless, it remains important for the school to try to model committed social action, and to use community engagement and social service activities to give young people practical experience in these areas. The school's own value commitments need to be evident in its organisational and social life – hopefully with impact on the students.

These sections suggest that if religious educators are to use the term 'faith development', they need to think through the metaphors that will make the concept more realistic and useful both for themselves and their pupils.

18.2.3 The association of emotionality with faith development

A strong but usually unacknowledged emotional component affects the way faith development is interpreted by religious educators. It relates back to the 1970s influence of humanistic psychology and existential thinking on understandings of spiritual development (see Chapter 8). Humanistic psychology, as evident in the work of Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, Rollo May and others, highlighted the importance of interpersonal relationships for personal change and maturity.[7] Developing

'sensitivity' came to be regarded as an important part of spiritual development. In turn, there was a tendency to think that faith development implied improved human relationships and communication, and that it would occur best within an intimate group – or in one-to-one relationships. And because in these contexts emotion and euphoria were prominent, they too became notionally associated with spiritual development; to become more emotionally expressive was considered to be a goal for maturity. Hence in community-oriented retreats and then in classroom religion lessons, group discussion was increasingly regarded as the main process for promoting spiritual development. Talk about feelings and revealing comments about the self became the measures of success. Ever since, evidence that pupils liked or enjoyed religion lessons was interpreted as an indication of 'effective' religious education. The tendency to associate faith development with emotionality was like 'baptising' the quest for personalism and relevance. The association had two consequences – first, for implied views of the nature of faith, and second for classroom teaching and learning.

Nature of faith: Linking of emotionality with faith tended to distract attention from other dimensions to faith like knowledge and commitment. Emotion, euphoria and the sharing of personal views were regarded as 'faith responses'. This implied a false dualism, as if religious knowledge and faith were more distinct and separate than they need be.

Teaching/learning: The dualism also presumed that different processes were required to enhance knowledge and faith. The spiritual 'results' from personal discussions and expressions of feelings were overrated. Consequently, the spiritual potential of knowledge acquisition, understanding and evaluative skills were underrated.

Educators need to be cautious when talking about what they think is 'faith-effective' religious education. It would be more accurate and realistic to refer to emotion, euphoria and personal conversations for what they are in their own right, without implicitly labelling them as indicators of faith development. Also, there is a need for further clarification of the important emotional component of spiritual development.

18.2.4 Use of the concept 'faith development' to differentiate activities in religious education

The problematic view of faith development described above led to an artificial dichotomy in teaching and learning activities. Some activities (such as liturgy, prayer, retreats, discussion groups) were linked with faith development; ordinary classroom religious education was concerned just with knowledge and understanding – and so not with faith.[8] Activities in religious education were being differentiated according to the perceived strength of their connection with faith development. This thinking presumed the classroom was *less* faith-intensive than a retreat, and it tended to conflate the words 'emotional' and 'personal' with faith. The retreat may well be more personally and emotionally intensive, but not necessarily more faith-intensive. Another way of putting it is that faith might be given a more emotional and personal expression during a retreat. In 'peak' or 'mountain top' experiences (as used by Maslow),[9] the emotional aspect of faith could be intensified, and felt more palpably. But the idea that emotionality itself should be regarded as constituting faith development needs to be questioned.

In addition, this problematic thinking led to the misunderstandings associated with use of the descriptive terms 'education in faith' and 'education in religion'.[10]

From the 1970s onwards, the problems described above were evident in diocesan documents, school programs and in the language teachers used to describe religious education, as well as in journal articles and texts for teachers. The following is a typical example. In the *Guidelines for Religious Education* in the Archdiocese of Brisbane, the educational aim of promoting religious literacy was emphasised as the principal concern of the formal religion curriculum, while other contexts and activities (retreats, school life, parish groups, and so on) were said to have a 'faith development focus'.[11] In another example, some books on religious education used the words 'faith-forming' or 'enfaithing' to distinguish denominational approaches from others like the phenomenological – which were presumed to be non faith-forming or non-enfaithing.[12] Such problematical language inevitably leads to equally problematical pedagogy. It gives the impression that by intention teachers can change gears during lessons, moving at will from non faith-forming instruction to active faith-forming activities. As well as implying a simplistic view of religious faith, this thinking seems to presume supernatural powers on the part of teachers; the links between education and changes in young people's faith are much more complex than it admits.

Distinctions between different types of teaching and learning activity, as well as the differentiation of contexts, are important in religious education. But the terminology used here implies an artificial division between religious education and faith development. It is too narrow in its dependence on psychological processes as the core of faith development and it neglects the significance that formal classroom religious education has for faith development. The contrast is also inappropriate because the two nouns are of a different logical order. *Religious education* is an intentional educational activity; *Faith development* is a change in the believing activity of the individual.

Faith development is a personal process of great complexity, most of which is not open to scrutiny by others; it is influenced by a variety of factors, only one of which is religious education. Hence it is an inappropriate criterion for differentiating types of educational activities – as if one sort does not affect faith while another does. Classifying activities according to the presence or absence of faith gives the impression that religion teachers would need an inbuilt faith meter!

It is more realistic and less presumptuous to acknowledge that all types of activities in religious education, as well as the religious and social life of the school, have potential to contribute to the development of pupils' religious faith. Some of these activities are more formal and instructional. Others may be more informal, more personal, emotional, silent, and reflective. This description is a more appropriate and precise way of talking about different activities than presuming that one can know which type is more effective in producing faith development.

There is also another reason for questioning the use of faith development language to differentiate processes. The Christian interpretation of faith presumes that the Holy Spirit is involved in any invitation to a response in personal faith. If the image of teachers needing faith meters highlights the problem of presumption, then the incongruous image of teachers requiring Holy Spirit detectors should make the inappropriateness of such language even more obvious.

18.2.5 Use of the term 'Faith Development Coordinator'

It has long been recognised that the educator charged with the responsibility of coordinating religious education in the Catholic school has been overloaded with responsibilities. Hence it has been valuable to divide the role so that two or more people might share the workload. For example, in some instances a liturgy coordinator has taken on the role of promoting better liturgy, relieving the religion coordinator of a very time-consuming task; also, such a division acknowledged the need for specialist skills in liturgy and music. In other situations, responsibility for the organisation and planning of retreats through the school has been devolved to year coordinators or others. Another arrangement involves a campus minister with responsibility for pastorally oriented tasks, leaving the religion coordinator with more time for attending to the classroom religion program.

In some dioceses, the religious education coordinator is named Assistant Principal Religious Education (APRE), and the position carries membership of the school executive. The pros and cons of the arrangement need more consideration than will be given here. But one thing is clear: while it enhances the status of the position, it increases responsibilities and adds new administrative tasks that are not necessarily connected with the religious mission of the school.

Devolving the religious education coordinator's role has been valuable. But the division in some schools into the positions of *religion coordinator* and *faith development coordinator* creates misunderstandings of the nature and purposes of religious education as well as a dubious, dualistic notion of faith. While the division of labour is not in question, the named roles are in effect a structural endorsement of the problems described above in sections **18.2.3** and **18.2.4**. The division is based on the supposed 'varying faith intensity' of different aspects of religious education – as if activated in the more expressive personal activities, and absent in the classroom study of religion. It reinforces a false dichotomy between the cognitive and personal aspects of spiritual development, as if religious education and faith development are different processes, requiring separate responsibilities; and it undervalues knowledge and understanding as the main focus of religious education and as the 'natural channel' for the classroom in promoting pupils' spiritual development.

18.2.6 Religious education and faith development outcomes

As noted in sections **12.2.4**, **13.9** and **16.2.3**, over the last two decades the outcomes movement has impacted strongly on curricula, teaching and assessment in Australian schools. The emphasis has been on measurable outcomes and on benchmarked performance to assess effectiveness and provide accountability. The system works better for knowledge and skill outcomes, but it is problematic as regards outcomes in the personal and values areas.[13]

The idea of documenting religious education in the same way as state education authorities document key learning areas is significant for the public recognition of religion as an important learning area in Catholic schools. The outcomes format has been adopted in a number of diocesan religion curricula.[14] The use of knowledge and skills outcomes should be beneficial by drawing attention to achievable goals which may have been neglected. But reference to values and faith outcomes remains ambiguous, especially where they are couched in the same language as for knowledge and skills.

Paralleling what was said earlier, it is proposed that a language of *hopes* (or hoped-for long-term outcomes) be used rather than outcomes written in faith development language. This has implications for assessment and reporting.[15]

18.2.7 Faith formation and religious education

Some educators prefer to use the term 'faith formation' to describe religious education. When this happens, an impression is given that they are emphasising actual changes in faith; formation sounds more effective and forceful than education. Use of the word 'formation' in this context echoes its traditional connotation from the process of *forming* new members of religious orders and new priests. What was done in the 'houses of formation' (juniorates, novitiates, seminaries and scholasticates) was renowned for its effectiveness in changing behaviour and piety and in producing uniformity.

So when the words 'spiritual' or 'faith *formation*' are used, one gets an impression that what is implied is more than just religious education (perhaps an industrial strength version). The emphasis is directly on personal change – especially in attitudes and behaviour. It was illustrated by the comment of one diocesan director who stated: 'What we want is not just a religious education but a faith formation.' Similar thinking underpins the naming of departments and projects in Catholic Education Offices where faith formation and spiritual formation have been chosen in preference to religious education.

Formation language is specifically concerned with increasing faith; and like the use of the term 'faith development coordinator', it implies a narrow understanding of faith that tends to overrate the affective, and undervalue knowledge and understanding.

Trainor, in his book *Nurturing the Spirit: Faith Education within Australian Catholicism*,[16] exemplified Catholic religious education's preoccupation with the construct faith development. He preferred the term 'faith education' to religious education. While his main interest was in parish religious education, he did not distinguish the important difference that context makes. He talked about school religious education as if it was identical with parish education; and misinterpreted theory about relationships between 'education in religion' and 'education in faith' as described in note 10.

The concept of faith formation, like other terms (evangelisation, catechesis, ministry, witness, mission, inculturation) can be used as a lens for analysing the processes of church ministry and religious education. When used in this way, it takes a particular viewpoint on the activity being analysed: the possible ways in which teaching and learning processes occasion change in religious faith.

While it is legitimate and useful to look at religious education from this point of view, it gets out of perspective if given excessive attention at the expense of other dimensions. Talk about how activities are intended to change the level of students' faith development is often no different from that used to describe gains in knowledge and cognitive skills. This is to fail to acknowledge the complexity in spiritual development while creating unrealistic expectations.

In his book *What is This Thing Called Religious Education?*,[17] Lovat used the descriptor 'faith-forming approaches' (involving what he called 'enfaithing' processes) to differentiate denominational religious education from the phenomenological, multi-faith versions. It helped him articulate an 'educational

identity' for religion studies (in both state and religious schools) according to 'intentions' – where the aim of promoting personal faith in a particular religious tradition was said to be inappropriate. But by claiming that religion studies were not faith-forming, Lovat still participated in the problem described above where it was presumed that there were distinct faith-forming and non-faith-forming approaches, and that these could be chosen by teachers and implemented with consequences for the religious faith of pupils. Similar to Lovat, Moore (also an influential figure in the development of religion studies courses in Australia) in his classification of denominational religious education, used the descriptor 'faith development approaches'.[18] The issue will be revisited in section **22.2** when discussing relationships between denominational religious education and religion studies. While in the Catholic sector there is a tendency to overrate the influence of religious education on personal faith, in state-based religion studies, the tendency has been to underrate the potential for personal influence.[19] As explained in Part V, this has to do with the political need to differentiate state courses from denominational religious education. But the fact that the schools in Australia that offer religion studies are almost exclusively religious schools creates an interesting twist to the argument.

The problem with using faith development language for differentiating purpose revolves around a number of issues, one of which is the relationship between educational *intentions*, *processes* and *outcomes*. At the level of intentions there are grounds for distinguishing between purposes, especially with respect to long-term hopes. Catholic religious education hopes to enhance faith development; state religion studies does not. But the distinction at the intentional level breaks down or becomes blurred at the level of practice. When students are engaged in learning activities, the potential consequences for personal faith are so distant (and shrouded in mystery) that it is not possible for the teacher to know whether or not the activity will affect them – either there and then or in the long term; in both denominational and religion studies contexts, there is the potential to affect students' faith – or not. As noted in Chapter 13, there is an inherent uncertainty about personal outcomes that is natural because of the very complexity of personal development. The religion studies teacher (in state or religious schools) may not have faith development intentions, but this does not stop the educational process from having unintended consequences over the long term. Teachers in both camps need to acknowledge the potential for catalysing personal change through their teaching, even if modest; they are making an *educational* contribution *towards personal change*. They need to acknowledge that as regards promoting spiritual and moral development in students, there is not the same order of causality in relationships between intentions, processes and outcomes as there are for educating in knowledge and skills. This applies to any education intended to bring about personal change. For example: the chain of causality between processes that teach children mathematics and the outcomes of such teaching can be mapped with logical precision and this can be demonstrated with empirical measures. But personal and spiritual change are of a different order, and potential causal links with educational treatments will be overshadowed by a network of other factors, not the least of which is the freedom of individuals to determine to some extent their own beliefs and values. The empirical and ethical problems in trying to measure faith development outcomes were noted in **16.2.3**.

The interpretation above was confirmed in an interesting, and eventually humorous discussion by young student teachers. They were quick to bristle at the terminology because they were conscious that the purpose of faith development meant trying to

change people personally. They sensed the agenda – it was not just about education, but about 'getting the "right stuff"', 'becoming devout Catholics'; they felt that an institutional intention was predominant. One complained: 'They should be more honest, and call it "faith conformity" rather than "faith development".' Another who disliked the word 'enfaithing' preferred to call it 'enforcing'. From here the group proposed the phrase 'faith enforcement' as an indication of the problem. Finally, emphasising concerns about potential manipulation, the group wit suggested that there should be a new Arnold Schwarzenegger movie to be called 'The Enfaithinator: Being on the right side at Judgment Day'.

18.2.7 Faith development and 'transformative education'

The notions of 'effectiveness' and 'capacity to actually bring about personal change' that have been associated with the word 'formation' have been carried over into the use of 'transformative' as an adjective describing education. When these words are used, one gets an impression that it is a new educational recipe that 'really works' – by contrast with a more mundane pedagogy that must be non-transformative. We have already registered at length our suspicion about such language because it fails to acknowledge complexity in either personal development or in the links between teaching and personal change (see above and Chapters 13 and 14). And it undermines rather than enhances education designed to resource personal change. Another element that is prominent in thinking about transformative education is the presumption of a high level of personal interaction in the teaching and learning process, and that the interaction itself brings about change in values and attitudes.

Transformative education talks about the dynamics of personal change as if teachers were in control of the variables – rather than seeing teaching strategies as laying down infrastructure for potential change in the future. At best, the classroom works with 'precursors' and 'preconditions' for personal change.

Even if the words 'transformative education' were not used, such thinking has long been problematic in religious education, as explained in the previous sections. Below we refer to a scheme presented to religion teachers in a professional development program that illustrates the problem. We refer to the scheme, which at the time seemed attractive to religion teachers, because of its emphasis on fostering students' faith development and its use of the word 'transformation' to describe pedagogy. It shows the tendency to oversimplify expectations of how teacher interventions in the classroom affect young people's spiritual development. It was disconcerting that there seemed to be a relatively unquestioning teacher acceptance that the processes suggested in the scheme were uncomplicated, easy to identify and implement.

The scheme proposed that teachers of religion should operate at three different levels – informational, formational and transformational – and it indicated the proportion of time that should ideally be devoted to each. It also suggested pedagogical characteristics for each level.

Table 18.2 An example scheme illustrating the notion of transformative pedagogy[20]

Level	Focus	Approach	Content of lessons	Desired % of teaching time
Informational (fact)	mind (scientist)	impersonal (objective)	cognitive (grade)	30
Formational	heart	personal	affective	30

| (value) | (poet) | (subjective) | (clarify) | |
| Transformational (faith) | soul (prophet) | interpersonal (inter-subjective) | volitional (invite) | 40 |

- The scheme is based on a number of questionable assumptions:

- that teachers can achieve a recognisable degree of religious conversion in students in the classroom;

- that a very personal atmosphere can readily be created in the classroom;

- that eliciting student testimonies of personal faith and values is a principal activity in religious education;

- that mentoring or counselling like activities are appropriate in classroom religious education (see Chapter 19).

The problem with schemes like this, and with talk about transformative education generally, is the impression it reinforces in teachers that they have, or are expected to have, the *power to change at will* the level of student personal or spiritual engagement in a lesson. It seems to presume that it is primarily the teacher's intentions that change the nature of the classroom interactions, and that there are simple pathways between pedagogy and personal change in pupils. It suggests also that personal change will then flow into the transformation of society (contrast this with the conceptualisation of education for personal change in Part III).

18.2.9 Expansion of the notion of 'knowing'

The attractiveness of faith development as the dominant metaphor for religious education was in its rich meaning; it was multifaceted. Educators could feel unhappy with a description of their role as teaching *just* knowledge and skills. Faith development was thought to be connected with the affective domain, religious experience, beliefs, values, the aesthetic, prayerfulness, sensitivity to social justice, and committed action. But excessive reliance on this metaphor ran the risk of the problems described in sections **18.2.1–18.2.8** above.

One way of addressing the dilemma is to expand the notion of 'knowing' as the principal goal for religious education by drawing on theory from theology, the social sciences and education. For example, the theology of Bernard Lonergan developed the idea of 'authentic knowing'.[21] Paulo Freire elaborated on the liberational component to knowledge;[22] critical literacy and freedom from oppression were linked. Knowledge, particularly about values issues, ideology and power was crucial to the individual's interpretation of social reality and thus it had consequences for judgments about social justice. Knowledge could become a fundamental part of convictions that motivated individuals and groups to social action. Freire proposed a *praxis* way of knowing. This theme was taken up by Groome in his writings about shared Christian praxis.[23]

Boys (in *Educating in Faith*)[24] also considered an 'enlarged' interpretation of knowledge and understanding. She referred to Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences as a way of expanding the notion of knowing; it enriched the variety of teaching strategies to meet the diverse needs of learners. Boys also argued the case for a feminist way of knowing. It is, however, interesting to note that both Groome and

Boys, as evident in titles and chapter headings in their books, gave a priority to faith development language.

Another key dimension to knowing that needs further exploration is the aesthetic. It includes a prominent role for the imagination in personal learning.[25]

18.3 Summary

This chapter considered that the quest for a religious education that is 'faith-effective' is problematic, particularly since the notion of 'faith development' has become something of a holy Grail in Catholic education circles. Excessive and non-discriminating use of the term has led to ambiguities in both expectations and practice, especially as regards its relationship with emotionality. The problems can be addressed by giving more attention to the aspects of faith that can be most appropriately enhanced in the classroom, and they are mainly in the cognitive domain. Writers and curriculum developers in Catholic religious education need to provide leadership in the ongoing endeavour to clarify purposes; a review of its language should begin in theory and in diocesan guidelines, and thence move into school programs and teaching. Perhaps a more balanced use of faith development language will come when complementary attention is given to 'hope development', 'love development' and 'justice development'.

Because the handing on of the faith tradition and the development of personal faith remain such central purposes in Catholic education, the next chapter will explore these purposes further.

Notes

1   JH Westerhoff 1976, *Will our children have faith?*

2   JE Fowler. 1980, *Stages of faith: The psychology of human development and the quest for meaning*; 1986, *Becoming adult, becoming Christian*; 1986, Faith and the structure of meaning. in C Dykstra & S Parks (eds) *Faith development and Fowler*; JE Fowler et al. 1993, *Stages of Faith and Religious Development: Implications for church education and society*.

3   The references in note 2 give Fowler's own account of his theory. Useful summaries are available in the following. Hill's recent summary is succinct, also illustrating other developmental views of personal development. BV Hill 2004, *Exploring religion in school: A national priority*; GM Rossiter 1981, The beliefs of young people. In *Religious education in Australian schools*; MF Flynn 1979, *Catholic schools and the communication of faith*.

4   G Moran 1980, *Religious education development*; see also G Moran 1990, *No ladder to the sky*.

5   D Goleman 1996, Emotional intelligence; D Zohar & I Marshall 2000, *SQ: Spiritual intelligence, the ultimate intelligence*.

6   See for example the detailed summary of thinking about faith in A Dulles 1994, *The assurance of things hoped for*, especially the chapter on the Development of Faith.

7   One prominent example is in Carl Rogers' book, which also proposed educational implications: CR Rogers 1969, *Freedom to Learn: What education might become*.

8   GM Rossiter 1986, The place of faith in classroom religious education.

9   A Maslow 1970, *Religions, values, and peak experiences*.

10   GM Rossiter 1994, Religious education and the spiritual development of young people: A reply to Gideon Goosen. In 1981, in *Religious Education in Australian Schools*, Rossiter sought to promote more exchange between denominational religious education and the new state Religion Studies courses designed for teaching by state school teachers in the government schools. He proposed that any school religious education needed to be interpreted from both of two different perspectives, a *faith-oriented* one and an *educational* one, to show that both dimensions were important. However, the terms he used to do this – *Education in Faith* and *Education in Religion* – were widely misinterpreted as actual approaches for classifying different types of religious education, rather than perspectives that were closely related. Unfortunately, this reinforced divisions rather than prompting greater understanding of how the two dimensions were interwoven. In hindsight, it would have been better to use less ambiguous terms such as *faith-oriented perspective* and *educational perspective* and avoid problems where educators described some approaches as education in faith, and presumably others that did not educate faith; such usage implied a misunderstanding of faith – it could not be 'added' to or 'subtracted' from religious education by the teacher.

11   Archdiocese of Brisbane, 1997, *Guidelines for Religious Education* (consisting of curriculum *Statement, Profile* and *Syllabus*). See also G Barry 1997, Religious Education.

12   TJ Lovat 1989, *What is this thing called religious education*; BS Moore 1991, *Religion education: Issues and methods in curriculum design* (*Texts in Humanities*).

13   ML Crawford & GM Rossiter 1993, The future of holistic education: The recession we had to have?

14   Barry 1997.

15   Over the years, articles in the journals *Word in Life* (now *Journal of Religious Education*) and *Catholic School Studies* have considered assessment and reporting in religious education, including the contentions issue of assessing spiritual development. While in practice most religious educators do not try to assess spiritual outcomes, there remains some ambiguity about these issues in Catholic religious education. Chapter 12 in Hill's 2004 book *Exploring religion in school: A national priority* considers the relevant issues.

16   M Trainor 1991, *Nurturing the spirit: Faith education within Australian Catholicism*.

17   TJ Lovat 1989, *What is this thing called Religious Education?*, pp. 1–13. See also Moore 1991.

18   Moore 1991.

19   This difference is evident in the evolution of religious studies in government schools in the United Kingdom (1950–90) as will be described in Part V of this book, as well as in the evolution of such courses in Australia where developments closely followed the British pattern. Part of the process of establishing an *educational* identity for religious studies was to make it look different from denominational religious education – hence the claim that it was not concerned with the promotion of personal faith in a particular faith tradition. The fundamental question to be clarified here is the way in which any education (denominational or non-denominational) can promote or catalyse changes in pupils' beliefs.

20   Seminar conducted in Sydney, 1990, by Fr Mark Link SJ, a visiting lecturer and author from the United States.

21   Some introductory ideas on Lonergan's authentic knowing and its implications for religious education were presented in T Jones 1987, Authentic Knowing and Religious Education.

22   P Freire 1971, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*; 1980, *Education for Critical Consciousness*. See also the comments on Freire and critical pedagogy in Chapter 12.

23   TH Groome 1980, *Christian religious education: sharing our story and vision*; 1990, *Sharing our faith*.

24   MC Boys 1989, *Educating in faith*.

25   Some preliminary ideas on these issues can be found in the following: M Harris 1987, *Teaching and Religious Imagination*; G Durka & J Smith (eds) 1979, *Aesthetic dimensions of religious education*; G English 1989, Imagination: The past and the future of religious education. See also the comments on education and imagination in Chapters 13 and 15.