

# A Harmonious Marriage

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND LIFE ORIENTATION

### INTRODUCTION

In an ongoing attempt to find a sound and practicable solution to a difficult issue, this article follows two others that have appeared in *Catholic Education News: RE, Life Orientation and the Catholic School* (May 2003), and *A Marriage of Convenience* (September 2003). In both articles we explored the issue of finding a right relationship between Religious Education and Life Orientation that would both affirm the nature of the Catholic School and respect the integrity of the National Curriculum.

### AN OUTCOMES-BASED SOLUTION

The key to the relationship we seek can be found in a comparison of outcomes for the two areas. Those for Life Orientation are given in the National Curriculum, but Religious Education programmes do not typically specify outcomes. The first thing we will do, then, is propose a set of outcomes that gives a comprehensive picture of what Religious Education can achieve. These outcomes are listed in the right hand column of Table 1<sup>1</sup>. We remember of course that Religious Education acknowledges other outcomes that cannot and should not be assessed.

**Table 1: Comparison of Outcomes**

A COMPARISON OF OUTCOMES	
LIFE ORIENTATION	RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
<b>LO1 Health Promotion:</b> The learner is able to make informed decisions regarding personal, community and environmental health.	
	<b>RE1 Spiritual Awareness:</b> The learner shows understanding and appreciation of the spiritual dimension of life, and of the ability of religion to answer deeper questions and needs.
<b>LO2 Social Development:</b> The learner is able to demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to constitutional rights and responsibilities and show an understanding of diverse cultures and religions.	<b>RE2 Social Development:</b> The learner shows respect for the dignity of self, others, and the whole creation, and reaches out in compassionate service.
<b>LO3 Personal Development:</b> The learner is able to use acquired life skills to achieve and extend personal potential to respond effectively to challenges in his/her world.	<b>RE3 Personal Development:</b> The learner demonstrates growth in personal identity and relationships, and makes appropriate religious and moral decisions
	<b>RE4 Religious Tradition:</b> The learner demonstrates a knowledge and understanding of sacred writings, beliefs, teachings, and traditions of his/her faith community, and puts them into practice.
<b>LO4 Physical Development and Movement:</b> The learner will be able to demonstrate an understanding of, and participate in, activities that promote movement and physical development.	
<b>LO5 Orientation to the World of Work:</b> The learner will be able to make informed decisions about further study and career choices.	

<sup>1</sup> *A Marriage of Convenience* outlined five outcomes for RE. Here we have reduced the number to four, combining Personal Conscience and Personal Identity, and naming the combination Personal Development.

The outcomes for Religious Education are linked to the processes identified in the *Lifebound* and *CORD* curricula, as follows:

**Table 2: Links to Processes**

<b>1 Spiritual Awareness</b>	3 Spiritual Education, 4 Prayer Education, 6 Education by Arts, 7 Education by Story
<b>2 Social Development</b>	9 Education by Models, 12 Education in Structural Morality
<b>3 Personal Development</b>	9 Education by Models, 10 Philosophical Education, 11 Personal Moral Education, 13 Education for Personal Growth and Relationships
<b>4 Religious Tradition</b>	2 Theological Education, 5 Sacramental/Liturgical Education, 8 Scriptural Education, 14 Education for Religious Community

The above links make it easy for the teacher to target the outcomes for assessment from lesson to lesson, provided he/she is familiar with the processes that make up the curriculum.

### PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS

How does the above comparison provide a solution?

It is clear, in the first place that there is a direct overlap between the outcomes of Religious Education and those of Life Orientation in the areas of Personal and Social Development. RE2 and RE3 correspond to LO2 and LO3. In these instances, the Religious Education outcomes cover similar ground as the Life Orientation ones, but from a richer and deeper perspective. Furthermore, these areas in RE could be developed to ensure inclusion of the assessment standards for these outcomes in Life Orientation. There would then be no need to offer this material twice.

Considering this overlap, the Life Orientation learning area could be served by three learning programmes, much as in the past. The programmes would be Religious Education, Guidance, and Physical Education. Each programme would carry the main, but not exclusive, responsibility for certain outcomes, as in Table 3.

**Table 3: Life Orientation Programmes**

<b>Religious Education</b>	RE1, RE2 (LO2), RE3 (LO3), RE4
<b>Guidance</b>	LO1, LO5
<b>Physical Education</b>	LO4

This arrangement would mean that the Life Orientation learning area would be enriched and expanded. Outcomes LO2 and LO3 would be enriched as explained above, and the whole learning area would be expanded by the addition of outcomes RE1 and RE4. To ensure the integrity of the Life Orientation area, we suggest that the area of Guidance be part of the responsibility of the RE Coordinator, or that the Guidance teacher(s) be part of the RE team. This would not necessarily mean offering outcomes LO1 and LO5 from a religious perspective, but it would allow links to be made, and a consonance of values to be achieved in the learning area.

### ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING

What consequences would the above arrangement have for assessment and reporting practices? Religious Education, seen as part of an enriched National Curriculum would merit the same attention as any other area. The proposal sketched above is an attempt to raise the professional status of RE so that it can hold its own with other programmes in the school.

With regard to reporting, we strongly suggest that Religious Education not be lost under the learning area, Life Orientation, but receive a clearly visible recognition as a distinctive mark of the Catholic school curriculum.

## CONCLUSION

In the above discussion we have concentrated our thoughts on the General Education and Training Band (GET, Gr R-9). The same strategies can easily be applied to the FET Band (Gr 10-12), where the four outcomes for Life Orientation are similarly named:

- ❖ LO1:Personal Well-being (Personal Development)
- ❖ LO2:Citizenship Education (Social Development)
- ❖ LO3:Recreation and Physical Well-being (Health Promotion & Physical Development and Movement)
- ❖ LO4:Career and Career Choices (Orientation to the World of Work)

In order to make the assessment of Religious Education a practical reality, we foresee the need for the following developments:

- ❖ Agreement on RE outcomes (2004)
- ❖ Assessment standards for the RE outcomes (2005-6)
- ❖ Assessment instruments (2005-6)
- ❖ Redevelopment of Lifebound, Gr R-6 (2007-2008), and CORD, Gr 7-12 (2009-10) in line with these outcomes and assessment standards.

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