



LIFE SKILLS AND LIFE ORIENTATION

The CIE is concerned that CAPS fails to acknowledge the National Policy on Religion and Education. Section 1 of this policy spells out the reasons for its development:

The objective is to influence and shape this relationship, in a manner that is in accordance with the values of our South African Constitution. In recognizing the particular value of the rich and diverse religious heritage of our country, we identify the distinctive contribution that religion can make to education, and that education can make to teaching and learning about religion, and we therefore promote the role of religion in education. In doing so we work from the premise that the public school has an educational responsibility for teaching and learning about religion and religions, and for promoting these, but that it should do so in ways that are different from the religious instruction and religious nurture provided by the home, family, and religious community.

General Comments

The proposed Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements for Life Skills and Life Orientation are, in our opinion, no improvement on the RNCS (2002) which was consistent in its treatment of religion in Life Orientation, even though it was lacking in depth and appeal to the spiritual dimension of the human person.

The treatment of religion in the National Curriculum needs a clearly articulated rationale and coherent progression through the phases.

Religion receives a very mixed but, on the whole, marginal treatment in CAPS. In addition, there is little consistency and coherence in the way it is presented in the documents. The following table illustrates these observations.

| PHASE | TREATMENT | TIME ALLOCATED |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Foundation | no specific reference to religious realities | none |
| Intermediate | a detailed programme of Religion Education | 1 hour per week |
| Senior | random religious topics under the rubric 'Constitutional rights and responsibilities' | 1 hour per year |
| Further Education and Training | random religious topics under the rubric 'Democracy and human rights' | 1, 2, or 3 hours in the year depending on grade |

Foundation Phase

There is no specific reference to religious realities in Foundation Phase Life Skills. There are themes in a newly named area, Beginning Knowledge that could lend themselves to integration with religion in the hands of a skilled, sensitive and committed teacher. However, to all intents and purposes, religion is not addressed.

Intermediate Phase

This phase, in contrast to the previous one, proposed a detailed programme of Religion Education of one hour per week. The agenda as reflected in the topics is more political than religious. Relevant experts should be part of the development of this topic.

Health issues have disappeared in this phase and have been lumped under religion. In addition there seems to be confusion between body language and religious ritual.

Senior Phase

Religion retreats again almost entirely into the shadows. One hour per year, is given to random religious topics under the rubric 'Constitutional rights and responsibilities'. Children's' rights and religion in Grade 7 get a mere 2 hours in a year.

In Grade 8, religion gains 1 hour but is lumped together with fair play in sport.

Grade 9 allows for the central teaching of major religions in South Africa to be explored in one hour, the other hour has to deal with sports ethics.

This is a disservice to serious topics that are integral to learners' lives.

Further Education and Training

As in Senior Phase, religion gets a small look in of 1, 2, or 3 hours in the year depending on grade, this time under the rubric 'Democracy and human rights' in Life Orientation.

Conclusion

it is clear that once again Life Orientation becomes the poor relation in the curriculum. While masquerading as a subject it has none of the academic rigor nor careful development that such an important aspect deserves.