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From the Vatican to the classroom: Examining intertextuality and alignment among Church, local diocesan and school religious education documents – PART 1

Abstract

This is Part 1 of a paper that examines this subject.

"Contemporary educational practice is saturated with texts… " (Freebody, 2003, p. 204) They inform, guide and shape policy, procedures and practices within schools both systemically and locally. Religious education is filled with such texts: Church and diocesan policy documents, curriculum documents and classroom religion programs. But to what extent are these documents aligned with each other? Does the classroom religion program reflect diocesan curriculum documents and policy and in turn, do diocesan policies and curriculum documents authentically translate official Church policy? This presentation demonstrates how an analysis of the crafted language in educational texts can reveal how that text both reflects and constructs a particular reality. What messages are conveyed? Do the documents in fact say what the authors intend? Do they relate to, and support, other relevant documents? Systemic Functional Linguistics is a rigorous analytic tool that affords clear insights into the crafted language of educational texts. As one way of portraying the usefulness of such a tool in gaining insights into how language constructs particular messages, this presentation will exemplify what it reveals about the conveyed experiences and realities among Church, diocesan and school religious education documents.

Introduction

Religious education is central to the Catholic school, both in its educational and religious life dimensions. Essential to a school's educational dimension is the classroom religion program. However, this document is not an isolated one, which stands alone, owned by a particular school community. It is related to, and ideally reflects, a number of other key policies and documents both from the wider universal Church and local diocese.

> Documents refer – however tangentially or at one removed - to other realities and domains. They also refer to *other* documents… It is important to recognise that, like any system of signs and messages, documents make sense because they have relationships with other documents. (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004, p. 67)

It is the *nature of those relationships* with which this paper is concerned. To what extent are diocesan and school documents and policies aligned with Church documents from the Vatican? Ideally there is a relationship in the first instance between Church and diocesan documents, and then secondly between diocesan and school documents. The nature of these relationships is revealed in the crafted language of the documents.

The language of texts provides critical starting points for analysis in terms of how the language functions (Freebody, 2003; Halliday, 1994) in the texts to present a particular document's reality (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004). Text is not an incidental representation of a person's or persons' viewpoint/s - the language chosen is intentional. Ball (1994) argues that words are ordered and combined in particular ways and other combinations are displaced or excluded; and that discourses are not only about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority (pp. 21-22). Indeed, Gill (1996) rejects the notion that "language is simply a neutral means of reflecting or describing the world" and argues that discourse has a "central importance in constructing social

life" (p. 141). She goes on to suggest, "discourse is involved in establishing one version of the world in the face of competing versions" (p. 143). The version of the world to be established is confined within a particular context and is constructed with specific reader/s in mind (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004). It is the *particular versions* conveyed by religious education policies and documents, within the specific context of the Catholic school, which are of interest to this paper.

In order to understand how language functions to construct *particular versions* or meanings of religious education, extracts from key Church documents that are significant to religious education, particularly to the classroom religion program are analysed. This analysis affords insights into the nature and purpose of religious education as constructed by the universal Church. Following this analysis and discussion, Part 2 of this topic suggests a process (adapted from the analysis) that could evaluate to what extent diocesan and school documents convey clear and unambiguous messages

and meanings as intended by their authors [1]. In other words, to what extent do Catholic school policies and documents concerning religious education reflect key universal Church policy, and second, to what extent do they convey clear and unambiguous messages to the key stakeholders?

Analysis of Extracts from Church Documents
To facilitate an understanding of how religious education is constructed at the universal Church level, extracts specific to religious education in the Catholic school context, are drawn from the two key Church documents, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988) and the *General Directory for Catechesis* (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997). The analysis of these extracts utilises the analytic method, Systemic Functional Linguistics (henceforth, SFL). SFL as proposed by Halliday (1975) is a way of analysing text that affords insights into how language functions in crafted texts; it is concerned with how people use language to produce meaning. SFL, with its focus on the function of grammar, affords insights into how the ideational function, which describes the human activity involved, the interpersonal function describing the roles and relationships of the people involved and the tone of the language used, as well as the textual function, are constructed in these documents (Collerson, 1994; Eggins, 1994; Halliday, 1975, 1994; Titscher, Meyer, Wodak, & Vetter, 2000).

Freebody (2003) offers a procedure involving working through a set of steps as a means of applying SFL to the analysis of text:

1. Who or what is in it? Who or what are the participants? We start here by looking at the nouns or nominal functions. Who or what are the active or working subjects or objects – the participants – in the text. What kinds of work do they do? What is done to them? This initial step explores how the text builds its field.
2. What gets done? What are the verbal processes that the text shows 'getting done?'
3. Are some of the 'doings' … the processes… shown here as nouns, as things, rather than processes?
4. What participants are shown to act in the text – who does the 'doings'? In other words, what participants

are in the foregrounded agent position of active verbs or processes? (pp. 188-189)

The above method of analysis is utilised with extracts from *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988) and the *General Directory for Catechesis* (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997).

Church Document 1: *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*
The relevant section of the document *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988) includes paragraphs 68, 69 and 70 from "Part IV: Religious Instruction in the Classroom and the Religious Dimension Formation", as outlined in Table 1.

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[1] Because of the nature and length of these explorations, this topic is divided into two papers:
- Part 1 analyses the language of the extracts taken from Church documents;
- Part 2 (to be published in a later issue of the *Journal of Religious Education*) suggests a process that can be implemented to assist in constructing and evaluating the meanings conveyed in local school documents concerned with religious education.

Table 1: *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School.*

Part IV: Religious Instruction in the Classroom and the Religious Dimension Formation

68. There is a close connection, and at the same time a clear distinction, between religious instruction and catechesis, or the handing on of the Gospel message. The close connection makes it possible for a school to remain a school and still integrate culture with the message of Christianity. The distinction comes from the fact that, unlike religious instruction, catechesis takes place within a community living out its faith at a level of space and time not available to a school: a whole lifetime.

69. The aim of catechesis, or handing on the Gospel message, is maturity: spiritual, liturgical, sacramental and apostolic; this happens most especially in a local church community. The aim of the school, however, is knowledge. While it uses the same elements of the Gospel message, it tries to convey a sense of the nature of Christianity and of how Christians are trying to live their lives. It is evident, of course, that religious instruction cannot help but strengthen the faith of a believing student, just as catechesis cannot help but increase one's knowledge of the Christian message.

The distinction between religious instruction and catechesis does not change the fact that a school can and must play its specific role in the work of catechesis. Since its educational goals are rooted in Christian principles, the school as a whole is inserted into the evangelical function of the church. It assists in and promotes faith education.

70 Recent Church teaching has added an essential note: 'The basic principle which must guide us in our commitment to this sensitive area of pastoral activity is that religious instruction and catechesis are at the same time distinct and complementary. A school has as its purpose the students' integral formation. Religious instruction, therefore, should be integrated into the objectives and criteria which characterise a modern school.' School directors should keep this directive of the Magisterium in mind, and they should respect the distinctive characteristics of religious instruction. It should have a place in the weekly order alongside the other classes, for example: it should have its own syllabus, approved by those in authority; it should seek appropriate interdisciplinary links with other course material so that there is a coordination between human learning and religious awareness. Like other course work, it should promote culture, and it should make use of the best educational methods available to schools today. In some countries, the results of examinations in religious knowledge are included within the overall measure of student progress.

Finally, religious instruction in the school needs to be coordinated with the catechesis offered in the parishes, in the family, and in youth associations. (pp. 61-63)

An initial approach to explore how a text builds its 'field', is "to examine who or what it is that are the active or working subjects or objects – the participants - in the text" (Freebody, 2003, p. 188). What do they do? What is done to them? We can begin the analysis of this document by asking such questions as who or what are doing things: "what participants are in the foregrounded agent position of verbs or processes" (Freebody, 2003, p. 189). The foregrounded agents and their associated processes from the relevant paragraphs are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Foregrounded Agents & their Associated Processes.

Agent	Process
catechesis	takes place
aim of catechesis	is
this (catechesis)	happens
the aim (of the school)	is
it (the school)	uses
it (the school)	tries to convey
religious instruction	cannot help but strengthen
catechesis	cannot help but increase
a school	can and must play
its (school's) educational goals	are rooted
the school	is inserted
it (the school)	assists in and promotes
recent Church teaching	has added
religious instruction and	are
catechesis	has
a school	should be integrated
religious instruction	should keep
school directors	should respect
they (school directors)	should have a place in
it (religious instruction)	should have its own syllabus
it (religious instruction)	should seek appropriate interdisciplinary
it (religious instruction)	links
it (religious instruction)	should promote culture and make use of
religious instruction	needs to be coordinated

A noticeable aspect of these paragraphs is that direct human activity is significantly limited. Of the twenty-two foregrounded agents only one is a human participant, *school director*s. All other foregrounded agents are abstractions and nominalisations, thus promoting it as formal and authoritative (Collerson, 1994, p. 182) specifically directed to Catholic school educators.

Noting the frequency of the foregrounded agents provides further insights into the specific subject matter of these paragraphs (Freebody, 2003). The key participants in this section of the document, as outlined in Table 3, are the school, including school directors, accounting for 40% of all foregrounded agents; religious instruction for 36%; together accounting for 76% of the total. Catechesis, referred to only 20% of the time, is a minor element of this section.

Table 3: Frequency of Foregrounded Agents

Agent	Numerical Frequency	Percentage Frequency
School	8	32% ⎫
School directors	2	8% ⎬ 40% ⎫
Religious instruction	9	36% ⎬ 76%
Catechesis	5	20% ⎭
Recent church teaching	1	4%
TOTAL	25	100%

The prominent elements in these paragraphs are first, the school and school directors and then religious instruction, clearly indicating the focus of these paragraphs is the school in relation to religious instruction. In order to examine this focus more closely the school and school directors' roles are analysed. What do they do? What is done to them? Table 4 provides an overview of these participants and the processes with which they are associated.

Table 4: The *School* and *School Directors'* Associated Processes & Circumstances.

Participants	Processes	PROCESS TYPE	CIRCUMSTANCES
The aim of the **school**	is	*Relational - attributive*	knowledge.
(While) **it** (the school)	uses	*Material - action*	the same elements of the Gospel message,
it	tries to convey	*Mental – thinking*	a sense of the nature of Christianity, and of how Christians are trying to live their lives.
A school	can and must play	*Material – action*	its specific role in the work of catechesis.
(Since) **its** (the school's) **educational goals**	are rooted	*Material - action*	in Christian principles
the **school**	is inserted	*Material – action*	into the evangelical function of the church.
It (the school)	assists in and promotes	*Material – action*	faith education.
A **school**	has	*Relational– possessive*	as its purpose the students' integral formation.
School directors	should keep	*Material – action*	this directive of the Magisterium in mind and
they	should respect	*Mental – feeling*	the distinctive characteristics of religious instruction.

The school's role is clearly stated in paragraph 69, "The aim of the school, however, is knowledge". Knowledge, as an assigned attribute to the school's aim, is significant, because other attributes such as faith development or religious formation were not explicitly assigned. Although the school's aim was not stated as catechesis, it is however, expected to play its role in catechesis: "A school can and must play its specific role in the work of catechesis." However, this role is not elaborated in any way.

The statement then went on to expand the school's goals associating them with the active process, "are rooted in Christian principles". So in addition to the quality of knowledge, the school's goals stem from Christian principles. The school is recognised as an arm of the Church by the inclusion of the active process "is inserted" with the circumstances "into the evangelical function of the church", but its role in faith education is described only as "assists in and promotes faith education".

School directors' roles have been acknowledged as critical elements within the work of the school. They are referred to twice in the section and in both instances given agency directly over the work of religious instruction: "School directors should keep this directive of the Magisterium in mind, and they should respect the distinctive characteristics of religious instruction". The directive of the Magisterium to which this statement refers is that made by Pope John Paul II in 1981: "Religious instruction, therefore, should be integrated into the objectives and criteria which characterise a modern school"[4]. School directors are responsible for both integrating religious instruction into the school's curricula and maintaining it as a distinctive curriculum area. Significantly, they are not charged with any responsibilities related to catechesis.

To understand more fully the nature of religious instruction in schools, its place as a foregrounded agent together with its associated processes and circumstances can be examined as outlined in Table 5.

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[4] Address of John Paul II to the priests of the diocese of Rome, March 5, 1981, *Insegnamenti,* IV/I, pp. 629 f.

Table 5: *Religious Instruction's* Associated Processes & Circumstances.

Participants	Processes	PROCESS TYPE	CIRCUMSTANCES
Religious instruction	cannot help but strengthen	*Material - action*	the faith of a believing student,
Religious instruction (and catechesis)	are	*Relational - identifying*	at the same time distinct and complementary.
Religious instruction	should be integrated	*Material - action*	into the objectives and criteria which characterise a modern school
it (religious instruction)	should have	*Relational – attributive possession*	a place in the weekly order alongside the other classes
it (religious instruction)	should have	*Relational - attributive possession*	its own syllabus, approved by those in authority
it (religious instruction)	should seek	*Mental - perceiving*	appropriate interdisciplinary links with other course material
it (religious instruction)	should promote	*Material - action*	culture
it (" ")	should make use	*Material - action*	of best educational methods available to the schools today
Religious instruction in the school	needs to be coordinated	*Material - action*	with the catechesis offered in parishes, in the family, and in youth associations.

Religious instruction in its foregrounded agency position is associated with mostly material processes of action indicating its active - rather than passive – role, and is directly linked to circumstances related to the school in the following ways:

- should be integrated into the objectives and criteria which characterise a modern school;
- should have a place in the weekly order alongside the other classes;
- should have its own syllabus, approved by those in authority;
- should seek appropriate interdisciplinary links with other course material;
- should promote culture;
- should make use of best educational methods available to schools today. (¶70).

A noteworthy point is that seven of the nine processes have been modified by the modal adjuncts, *should* and *needs to*. Halliday (1985) explains that modal adjuncts serve to "express the speaker's (author's) judgement regarding the relevance of the message" (p. 50), while Derewianka (2000) argues that, "someone with a high degree of authority, status, power or expertise may choose to use high modality in order to convince someone to do something or to believe something" (p. 66). The modal adjuncts *should* and *needs to* express medium degrees of modality (*must, ought to* and *has to* are the stronger degrees expressing high modality). These statements regarding religious instruction are in

fact commands, proposals of obligation (Halliday, 1985). The authors clearly outline the place of religious instruction within the school, and in using the modal adjuncts *should* and *needs to*, have expressed their judgement regarding the degree of obligation with which these commands are to be enacted. Without exception, these commands are focused on education; not one is concerned with catechesis, referred to only in a minor way at the end of the section, when it is noted that religious instruction needs to be coordinated with catechesis.

Religious instruction has been described by quite specific processes and expectations, which are directly linked to the school and its curriculum. Clearly it is an educational enterprise that has not been linked with students' faith development. The Congregation for Catholic Education (1988) has stated that religious instruction is the work of the school. The references to a syllabus and other disciplines indicate that it is a curriculum area.

SFL has revealed several critical points regarding the process of religious instruction in this section of the document *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988). First, the aim of the school is knowledge and religious instruction is the school's core role. School directors have been charged with the responsibility of implementing religious instruction into the school curriculum. The school is also obliged to play its role in

catechesis. However, the matter of who is directly responsible for seeing that catechesis is part of the school's role is not addressed and nor is it made clear as to how this should occur.

Church Document 2: *General Directory for Catechesis*

In the same manner that relevant paragraphs of the previous document, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988) were analysed, the relevant paragraphs of the document (as shown in Table 6), the *General Directory for Catechesis* (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997) is also analysed using SFL.

Table 6: *General Directory for Catechesis.*

Catechesis and Religious Instruction in Schools.

The proper character of religious instruction in schools

73. Within the ministry of the word, the character proper to religious instruction in schools and its relationship with the catechesis of children and of young people merit special consideration.

The relationship between religious instruction in schools and catechesis is one of distinction and complementarity: "there is an absolute necessity to distinguish clearly between religious instruction and catechesis". (220)

What confers on religious instruction in schools its proper evangelising character is the fact that it is called to penetrate a particular area of culture and to relate with other areas of knowledge. As an original form of the ministry of the word, it makes present the Gospel in a personal process of cultural, systematic and critical assimilation. (221)

In the cultural universe, which is assimilated by students and which is defined by knowledge and values offered by other scholastic disciplines, religious instruction in schools sows the dynamic seed of the Gospel and seeks to "keep in touch with the other elements of the student's knowledge and education; thus the Gospel will impregnate the mentality of the students in the field of their learning, and the harmonization of their culture will be achieved in the light of faith". (222)

It is necessary, therefore, that religious instruction in schools appear [*sic*] as a scholastic discipline with the same systematic demands and the same rigour as other disciplines. It must present the Christian message and the Christian event with the same seriousness and the same depth with which other disciplines present their knowledge. It should not be an accessory alongside of these disciplines, but rather it should engage in a necessary inter-disciplinary dialogue. This dialogue should take place above all at that level at which every discipline forms the personality of students. In this way the presentation of the Christian message influences the way in which the origins of the world, the sense of history, the basis of ethical values, the function of religion in culture, the destiny of man and his relationship with nature, are understood. Through inter-disciplinary dialogue religious instruction in schools underpins, activates, develops and completes the educational activity of the school. (223)

The school context and those to whom religious instruction in schools is directed

74. Religious instruction in schools is developed in diverse scholastic contexts, while always maintaining its proper character, to acquire different emphases. These depend on legal and organizational circumstances, educational theories, personal outlook of individual teachers and students as well as the relationship between religious instruction in the schools and family or parish catechesis.

It is not possible to reduce the various forms of religious instruction in schools, which have developed as a result of accords between individual states and Episcopal Conferences. It is, however, necessary that efforts be made so that religious instruction in schools respond [*sic*] to its objectives and its own characteristics. (224)

Students "have the right to learn with truth and certainty the religion to which they belong. This right to know Christ, and the salvific message proclaimed by Him cannot be neglected. The confessional character of religious instruction in schools, in its various focuses, given by the Church in different countries is an indispensable guarantee offered to families and students who choose such education". (225)

When given in the context of the Catholic school, religious instruction is part of and completed by other forms of the ministry of the word (catechesis, homilies, liturgical celebration, etc.). It is indispensable to their pedagogical function and the basis for their existence. (226)

In the context of state schools or non-confessional schools where the civil authorities or other circumstances impose the teaching of religion common to both Catholics and non Catholics (227) it will have a more ecumenical character and have a more inter-religious awareness.

In other circumstances religious instruction will have an extensively cultural character and teach a knowledge of religions including the Catholic religion. In this case too and especially if presented by teachers with a sincere respect for the Christian religion, religious instruction maintains a true dimension of "evangelic preparation".(228)

75. The life and faith of students who receive religious instruction in school are characterized by continuous change. Religious instruction should be cognizant of that fact if it is to accomplish its own ends. In the case of students who are believers, religious instruction assists them to understand better the Christian message, by relating it to the great existential concerns common to all religions and to every human being, to the various visions of life particularly evident in culture and to those major moral questions which confront humanity today.

Those students who are searching, or who have religious doubts, can also find in religious instruction the possibility of discovering what exactly faith in Jesus Christ is, what response the Church makes to their questions, and gives them the opportunity to examine their own choice more deeply.

In the case of students who are non-believers, religious instruction assumes the character of a missionary proclamation of the Gospel and is ordered to a decision of faith, which catechesis, in its turn, will nurture and mature.

In order to determine the field built by these paragraphs the SFL analysis commences with listing the key foregrounded agents with their associated processes as in Table 7.

Table 7: Foregrounded Agents & their Associated Processes.

Agent	Process
The relationship	Is one of distinction and complementarity
it (religious instruction)	is called to penetrate and to relate
it (religious instruction)	makes present
religious instruction	sows and seeks to
the Gospel	will impregnate
religious instruction	appear [*sic*]
It (religious instruction)	must present
it (religious instruction)	should (not) be
it (religious instruction)	should engage
this dialogue	should take place
The presentation of the Christian message	influences
religious instruction	underpins, activates, develops and completes
religious instruction	is developed
These (different emphases)	depend
religious instruction	respond [*sic*]
students	have the right
this right	to know
The confessional character of religious instruction	cannot be neglected
	is
Religious instruction	is part of and complemented by
It (religious instruction)	is indispensable
It	will have
Religious instruction	will have and teach
Religious instruction	maintains
The life and faith of students	are characterized
Religious instruction	should be cognizant
religious instruction	assists
Those students	can also find
religious instruction	assumes and is ordered

From the above table, it can be seen that *Religious instruction* is clearly the focus of these paragraphs, accounting for 18 of the 28 foregrounded agents or 64% as shown in Table 4.10. Students are referred to three times whilst other agents including gospel, rights, different emphases and so on, account for 7 of the foregrounded agents or 25%.

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Table 8: Frequency of Foregrounded Agents

Agent	Numerical Frequency	Percentage Frequency
Religious Instruction	18	64%
Students	3	11%
Others	7	25%
TOTAL	28	100%

In light of its central place in these paragraphs, only *religious instruction*, as a foregrounded agent is examined in the SFL analysis. To understand how religious instruction functions in these paragraphs, the processes and circumstances with which it is associated when in the foregrounded agent position are listed in Table 9.

Table 9: *Religious Instruction's* Associated Processes & Circumstances.

Participants	Processes	Process Type	Circumstances
it (religious instruction)	is called to penetrate	*Material - action*	a particular area of culture and
	to relate		with other areas of knowledge.
it (religious instruction)	makes present	*Material - action*	the Gospel in a personal process of cultural, systematic and critical assimilation.
religious instruction in schools	sows	*Material – action*	the dynamic seed of the Gospel and
	seeks to "keep in touch	*Material - action*	with the other elements of the student's knowledge and education
It	is	*Existential*	necessary therefore that
religious instruction in schools	appear [*sic*]	*Mental - perception*	as a scholastic discipline with the same systematic demands and the same rigour as other disciplines.
It (religious instruction)	must present	*Material – action*	the Christian message and the Christian event with the same seriousness and the same depth with which other disciplines present their knowledge.
It (religious instruction)	should (not) be	*Relational – attributive*	an accessory alongside of these disciplines but rather
it	should engage	*Material - action*	in a necessary inter-disciplinary dialogue.
(Through inter-disciplinary dialogue) **religious instruction** in schools	underpins, activates, develops and completes	*Material – action*	the educational activity of the school.
Religious instruction in schools	is developed	*Material - action*	in diverse scholastic contexts, while always maintaining its proper character, to acquire different emphases.
It	is	*Existential*	however, necessary that efforts be made so that
religious instruction in schools	respond [*sic*]	*Material - action*	to its objectives and its own characteristics.
(When given in the context of the Catholic school,) **religious instruction**	is part of and completed by	*Relational - attributive*	other forms of the ministry of the word (catechesis, homilies, liturgical celebration, etc.).
It (religious instruction)	is indispensable	*Relational - attributive*	to their pedagogical function and the basis for their existence.
Religious instruction	should be cognizant	*Mental - cognition*	of that fact (the life and faith of students are characterised by

			continuous change) if it is to accomplish its own ends.
(In the case of students who are believers) **religious instruction**	assists (them) to understand	*Mental - cognition*	better the Christian message, by relating it to the great existential concerns common to all religions and to every human being, to the various visions of life particularly evident in culture and to those major moral questions which confront humanity today/
Those students (who are searching, or who have religious doubts)	can also find	*Material - action*	in **religious instruction** the possibility of discovering what exactly faith in Jesus Christ is, what response the Church makes to their questions, and gives them the opportunity to examine their own choice more deeply.
(In the case of students who are non-believers,) **religious instruction**	assumes	*Relational – attributive*	the character of a missionary proclamation of the Gospel and
	is ordered		to a decision of faith, which catechesis, in its turn, will nurture and mature.

In this document, religious instruction in its foregrounded agent position is mostly associated with material actions, clearly indicating it is to play an active part in the school's core business of education rather than a passive one. Other processes include relational attributes identifying characteristics of religious instruction, thus clarifying its nature more explicitly, and mental processes of perception and cognition indicating its intellectual function. A further critical observation is that most of the processes are modulated by the adjunct modals, "should" and "must" signifying these processes as proposals of obligation (Derewianka, 2000; Halliday, 1985).

Paragraph 73, entitled "The proper character of religious instruction in schools", begins by stating that the nature of religious instruction in schools and its relationship with catechesis, "merit special consideration". This relationship, described as "one of distinction and complementarity", is further qualified in the next sentence by an existential process, "there is an absolute necessity to distinguish clearly between religious instruction and catechesis." So from the outset of this section, the authors have left no doubt that while complementing catechesis, religious instruction is to be distinguished from it; it is a distinct, separate process. The paragraph then goes on to outline the character of religious instruction in more specific ways.

The second part of paragraph 73 clearly articulates the role of religious instruction in schools in specific and highly obligatory language. The section opens with another existential statement of obligation "It is necessary therefore, that religious instruction should…" and the list of what it is to achieve is explicitly stated through material active processes that are modulated with obligatory modals in most cases:

- appear [*sic*] as a scholastic discipline with the same systematic demand and the same rigour as other disciplines;
- must present the Christian message and the Christian event with the same seriousness and the same depth with which other disciplines present their knowledge;
- should not be an accessory alongside of these disciplines;
- should engage in necessary interdisciplinary dialogue;
- underpins, activates, develops and completes the educational activity of the school.

Without exception, all of these processes emphasise both the academic nature of religious instruction and the active role it is to take in schools. It is to be planned, prepared, and taught in the same way as other academic key learning areas in the school's curriculum. It is not simply to be "an accessory alongside of these disciplines." In addition, religious instruction is to "engage in necessary interdisciplinary dialogue", and it

is through this dialogue that religious instruction "underpins, activates, develops and completes the educational activity of the school." In this section of the document, the Congregation for the Clergy has unambiguously stated that religious instruction is not only to exhibit all the necessary attributes associated with any school discipline, but equally critical is the statement that religious instruction, "underpins, activates, develops and completes" all other disciplines. In other words, not only is religious instruction to be an educational subject in similar ways as other subject areas are educational, but also that other subjects are defined in terms of religious instruction.

An element described in this document but not in the previous is its references to students. Paragraph 75 focuses on the students who receive religious instruction and notes that they "are characterised by continuous change". The authors point out that religious instruction "should be cognizant of that fact if it is to accomplish its own ends". This is a critical statement for teachers of religion, as it endorses the right of religious instruction programs to consider, acknowledge, and cater for students' diverse backgrounds. Students are described as believers, searchers and non-believers. For believers, religious instruction "assists them to understand better the Christian message". The use of the mental process, "understand," outlines the cognitive characteristic of religious instruction given in the school context. Implied here is that these believing students who have already received the Christian message in a faith context through other forms of the ministry of the word, will now be able to understand this message better because of the educational function of religious instruction. In the case of those students who are searching, the text does not give religious instruction agency; rather it gives the students agency:

> Those students who are searching, or who have religious doubts, can also find in religious instruction the possibility of discovering what exactly faith in Jesus Christ is, what response the Church makes to their questions, and gives them [*sic*] the opportunity to examine their own choice more deeply. (¶ 75)

Paragraph 75 acknowledges that religious instruction cannot impose faith; it does not have that function. It acknowledges that students' faith formation is a personal choice. It has been left to the students themselves: "Those students who are searching, or who have religious doubts," to find or not find faith in the program, "Those students … can also find in religious instruction the possibility of discovering what exactly faith in Jesus Christ is, what response the Church makes to their questions, and gives them the opportunity to examine their own choice more deeply". And finally, for those students who are non-believers, religious instruction "assumes the character of a missionary proclamation of the Gospel and is ordered to a decision of faith, which catechesis, in its turn, will

nurture and mature ". Here again, no specific task is assigned to religious instruction, as it is simply described as "assuming the character". Nothing explicit is expected of religious instruction and it appears that again it is left to these students themselves to take from it what they need, and if they decide to seek faith it is left to the role of catechesis, not religious instruction, to nurture and mature such faith. The reference to catechesis in this section of the document is significant, as it is the one and only time it is referred to, and the reference is to faith not knowledge, thus the text further strengthens the distinct natures of both religious instruction and catechesis.

Insights gained from the SFL analysis of paragraphs 73, 74 and 75 of the document *General Directory for Catechesis* (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997) centre on the nature and roles of religious instruction in schools, its place in the context of the Catholic school and its effects on students. Religious instruction as the dominant foregrounded agent in these paragraphs is associated with mainly material action processes, which serve to clearly outline its active task in schools, the main one being, that, as a "scholastic discipline" it presents the Christian message. Its characteristics described through the use of attribution processes of identification, are academic and educational. Within the context of the Catholic school, religious instruction is shown to provide the educational function for other aspects of the Church including catechesis, homilies, and liturgical celebrations. Finally, it is acknowledged that the level of religious instruction's impact on students' faith development is left to them. In other words, religious instruction cannot be held accountable for students' faith development and commitment.

Discussion of Findings - Church Documents
Both Church documents state that religious education in the Catholic school comprises two processes: (1) religious instruction, and (2) catechesis. However, both also emphasise these two processes distinct but at the same time complement each other. Two further aspects are also made clear in both documents: first, religious instruction is the work of the school, as it is not linked to either the family or the parish; and second, religious instruction for the most part is an academic, educational process. In saying this though, the *General Directory for Catechesis* (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997) presents a clearer understanding of religious instruction than was presented in the earlier 1988 document *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (Congregation for Catholic Education), as it directly assigns agency to religious instruction. It explicitly describes and qualifies its nature and purpose by linking academic and educational attributes directly with religious instruction.

The relationship between catechesis and religious instruction is articulated explicitly in both documents: they are each distinct but at the same time complementary. *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (Congregation for Catholic

Education, 1988) refers to this complementarity in terms of students' own faith, indicating that for believing students religious instruction will strengthen their faith, just as at the same time their knowledge of the faith is increased by catechesis. The *General Directory for Catechesis* (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997) goes further than this, suggesting that religious instruction's confessional character (¶74) is dependent on how the message is received and responded to by students. To educate is clearly the role of the school. However, the school is also required to play its part in the work of catechesis, but how it is to achieve this remains ambiguous. Overall though, according to both documents, religious instruction is the prime responsibility of the school, and catechesis the prime responsibility of the parish.

Conclusion
Once the nature and purpose of religious education in the specific context of the Catholic school as it is constructed in the Church documents is known, it can then be determined to what extent such understandings are conveyed in diocesan and school religious education documents. Part 2 of this topic will go on to investigate the nature of the intertextuality and alignment between Church and local Catholic school documents and suggests a process to assist in both the construction of the text, and how to evaluate its clarity of meaning during such document formulation.

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