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A Framework for Professional and Pedagogical, Relational, Formational and Evangelistic Education for P-16 Students (PROFEss)

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It is critical that educators have explicit opportunities to understand and apply Catholic Social Teaching in both educating, forming, and evangelizing PK-16 students. To enhance Catholic identity in the school environment, this action research study describes a model developed to assist school leaders and educators in reflecting upon the dimensions and application of Catholic teaching on education. Specifically, the study addresses the question: what opportunities could enhance school leaders' and educators' knowledge related to the pedagogical and professional, relational, formational and evangelistic education (PROFEss) dimensions of learning. Knowledge of these (PROFEss) dimensions afford educators and school leaders the ability to articulate and implement their Catholic identity in myriads of school types, including private, public, virtual, and homeschool environments.

Purpose

The purpose of this action research study is to reflect, review, and evaluate components critical to aspects of Catholic identity recognized by the Magisterium and Church teachings. The use of the word relationship throughout this paper will refer to the emphasis on developing an intimate relationship with the living God as a means of transforming the human person. In reviewing aspects of Catholic identity, it was discovered that the components of PROFEss, Professionalism, Pedagogy, Relationship, Formation and Evangelization, could universally be applied to educators and school leaders. Research gleaned from the PROFEss model may assist schools in reflecting upon leadership practices related to explicit Catholic identity. As the Body of Christ, we strive for holiness together to develop into the vocation the Lord has called us to, that of authentic Catholic educators. This action research seeks to answer the question: What can educators and school leaders do to enhance their Catholic identity in their school environment?

Catholic Teachings on Education

This action research study began with an annotation of literature related to authentic Catholic teaching on education written by Leonard Franchi in his *Anthology of Catholic Teaching on Education* (2007). As Franchi's work emphasizes, the importance of education cannot be understated. Its influence on the community and social progress in defining and refining the dignity and activity of the human person is paramount.

Beginning with *Gravissimum Educationis* (Paul VI, 1965), the universal right to education is apparent. The authors stress that all individuals have a right to an education, with the goal of forming the human person and fostering unity and goodwill toward all societies. Approaching instruction as a sacred right, educators must include opportunities for children and youth to develop and reflect on their own morals and values as they deepen their knowledge and love of God. Additionally, the Church has an obligation to offer aid, such as catechetical instruction, to enlighten and motivate active participation in apostolic activity, groups and schools designed to develop individuals, and communication media which influences the formation of souls. Finally, the vocation of those educators, administrators, and community members who assist the Church in preparing our children in values and professional life are revered. "This vocation demands special qualities of mind and heart, very careful preparation, and continuing readiness to renew and to adapt" (p. 113).

Secondly, the Congregation for Catholic Education focuses attention on specific characteristics of Catholic schools in *The Catholic School* (1977). The educational work of Catholic schools includes building character, integrating faith and culture, religious teaching, community, and education, all of which are foundational to accomplishing the goal of the Catholic school. Character development is focused on the concept of "life centered on Jesus Christ" (p.130). The Christian spirit permeates everything accomplished in the school, and not solely in a religion class. The school culture integrates faith and reason with the person of Christ at the center of all that is done. Establishing a Catholic identity is of utmost importance to the Catholic School. This building of the Church should include providing students opportunities for a personal integration of Catholic culture, the faith, and living the faith in present day reality.

Next, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School: Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal* (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988) draws attention to the physical environment and its effects on school climate.

The school climate consist of a place for apostolate and pastoral action in which faith, culture, and life work in a harmonic balance with human formation. This includes the integration of civic goals aligned with the challenges of the local community, both nationally and internationally. Religion should be integrated, whenever possible, into academic content. Those responsible for creating school climate include educators, school administrators, families, and community.

Finally, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997) stresses the importance and mission of integrating faith, culture, life, and evangelistic goals into content subjects. Individuals in Catholic schools understand the inalienable right to religious freedom, respect for life, free choice of schooling, and fundamental rights of the human person. These ideals are to be realized in collaboration with the entire community, the Church, and the parent, but a huge responsibility rests upon educators, “for the teacher does not write on inanimate material, but on the very spirits of human beings” (p. 500).

Curriculum

Educators in PK-16 education and school leaders must reflect on best practices related to curriculum. Each may reflect on the myriad of opportunities using the Professional and Pedagogical, Relational, Formational and Evangelistic (PROFEss) model as a framework. Developed by the authors, this framework serves as a tool to examine best practices related to the explicit development of Catholic identity in the school environment, embedded into schoolwide practices and curriculum.

Professional and Pedagogical

The most obvious indication of professional and pedagogical aspects of Catholic identity may be found in the implementation of best practices and standards for learning. Examples of standards and benchmarks include National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools (NSBECS) (Ozar & Weitzel-O’Neill, 2012), Common Core State Standards (CCSS), International Society for Technology in Education standards (ISTE) and State standards. Some of these national standards are offered as school effectiveness standards, rather than content standards.

Relational

Resources such as the seven themes of Catholic social teaching—life and dignity of the human person; call to family, community and participation; rights and responsibilities; option for the poor and vulnerable; the dignity of work and the rights of workers; solidarity; and care for God’s creation—are critical for integration of the relational aspect of Catholic identity (USCCB, 2005). Select readings from documents of Church history can provide middle to upper level students a glimpse of the truths and wisdom handed down from Church tradition as connections are made to modern society and global perspectives.

The Salesian system and philosophy relates well to Catholic identity when integrated as a classroom management model. Don Bosco believed the relationship between the educator and the child is a model of how Jesus loves, therefore the educator is trained to treat the whole child as a human person. The application of the system is based on scripture, 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7, love endures all things. This is lived out in the classroom by avoiding harsh punishment, advising, nurturing, influencing, counseling, correcting, serving as a positive role model, and preparing desired rules and procedures for children. Providing opportunities for play, physical activity, music, religious activity, participation and practice of the holy sacraments, conversation about values, right and wrong, frequent communication about life choices, all within the context of life lessons integrated with faith and reason are expectations of the educator.¹

One final review of curriculum in support of the relational aspect of Catholic identity, particularly in early childhood is the Montessori philosophy.² Dr. Maria Montessori believed in serving the needs of the whole child, particularly in formation of the child as an individual, a human person. This philosophy is exhibited in a program called Catechesis of the Good Shepherd,³ whose method supports the integration of faith formation, including integration of the religious life of the child into daily activity. The parent’s and educators’ roles are to share in these religious experiences, and while at school, this is enhanced by particular environments created for daily participation in an “atrium.” Atriums are a place of discovery, a place for students to discover and develop their relationship with Jesus Christ, to celebrate liturgical themes, and to prepare for and celebrate holy communion.

1 <http://www.donboscowest.org/pedagogy/preventive-system>

2 <https://montessori-nw.org>

3 <https://www.cgsusa.org>

Formational and Evangelistic

The Diocese of Manchester has implemented a *School Catholic Identity Review, A Synthesis of Faith, Culture, and School Life to Prepare Students for This World and the Next* (2017-18 Edition). In collaboration with the Congregation for Catholic Education, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Manchester and numerous family and community members, benchmarks and standards have been created to align programs and curriculum with mission, school culture, academics, faith formation and sacramental life, professionalism, operational vitality, community, culture, and climate; all integrated with regard to the formational and evangelistic aspects of Catholic identity.

Various Catholic schools integrate the assessment of religious knowledge and personal beliefs, attitudes, practices, and perceptions.⁴ Curriculum decisions align to knowledge of the faith, liturgical life, moral formation, prayer, communal life, and missionary spirit. The interpretation manual provides examples of academic vocabulary related to the Bible and Church history, also known as Catholic literacy.

While a review of assorted Diocesan curriculum, standards, and objectives relative to the teachings of the Church yields multiple perspectives, it is important that the context and charisms of individual schools not be overlooked in relation to decisions made regarding curriculum. After all, it is the students we are serving!

Methodology

The methodology used for this study is considered Action Research. After a thorough review of relevant literature of Catholic teaching on education, this research sought to identify dimensions of Catholic identity and asked the research question: What can educators and school leaders do to enhance Catholic identity in their school environment? A key revelation is the need for reflection by educators and school leaders to identify the explicit Catholic identity experiences in the school environment. Additionally, the researchers sought to identify specific strategies for enhancing Catholic identity, both personally and professionally.

Findings

After a review of data and in correlation with the literature of Catholic Teaching on Education, a framework for thinking about the best practices in preparing Christian and Catholic educators was established (Figure 1).

4 see <https://www.nceaifg.com>

This framework is identified by key dimensions which must hold primary importance for developing effective educators. These dimensions include professionalism and pedagogy, relationship, formation and evangelization dimensions of education for PK-16 students. We call this framework PROFESs.

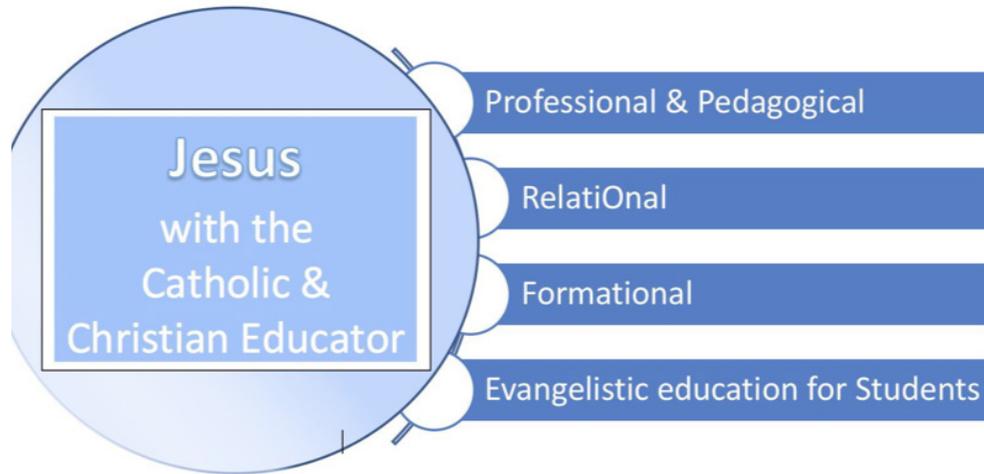


Figure 1. PROFESs Framework for Catholic identity

This framework has as its core the synergy of the living God through Jesus and the educator, both Catholic and Christian. This intersection must permeate to and through the dimensions identified by this framework to contribute to the mission of the church through the education of her people.

The five dimensions of the PROFESs framework are identified here and expanded upon in succeeding sections of this paper.

- **Professional and Pedagogical:** The Church recognizes the need for Catholic educators to be professionally trained and holds a special place in her heart for those who choose the profession as their vocation. The Church supports professional certification processes and encourages contemporary pedagogy.
- **Relational:** The Church also recognizes the need for educators to pursue relationship and collaborate in providing youth with religious education. This religious education involves content and curriculum associated with virtues and values, Saints, and developing a relationship with the living God through experience with the Holy Spirit, sacred scripture and faculty testimony.

- **Formational:** The vocation of educator includes the call and obligation to assist in the formation of individuals with a distinct dignity whose origin is the living God.
- **Evangelistic:** The Church regards education of our young as a true apostolate mission, one in which educators must bear witness to the Truth and evangelize in order to promote perfection for the good of the society.
- **Students:** The Church recognizes through the dignity of the human person, the right to an education, particularly one that enables the student to recognize and apply the gift of faith and foster a new or existing personal relationship with Christ.

There are explicit strategies for enhancing Catholic identity in the school environment. In partnership with a myriad of PK-16 Catholic schools, the researchers had multiple opportunities to engage in conversation regarding how PK-16 schools assist students in their personal formation and evangelization. One conversation led to the identification of five strategies one Catholic school uses to evangelize their students. According to Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted (2017), Catholic schools exist to be “a place of encounter with the living Jesus Christ, places of Spirit-filled community, a place where imparting a Catholic worldview through the curriculum occurs, assisting students in becoming free, and sending students out as disciples to transform culture” (n.p.)

Another example of enhancing our Catholic identity includes recognition of strategies used by some Catholic schools to integrate Catholic knowledge while instructing in literacy. Many elementary schools utilize the Daily 5 curriculum, while some integrate classical literature in literacy instruction. All provide opportunities for students to gain knowledge of the faith while learning how to read. Conversation with Catholic school partners also yielded suggestions for integrating Catholic identity within the curriculum, such as teaching virtues through the use of Great Books, the Salesian Model of Education, and specific study related to the Saints, particularly St. Don Bosco, St. De La Salle and St. Ignatius.⁵

Important to integration of evangelistic efforts into curriculum are the seven themes of Catholic social teaching (CST): Life and dignity of the hu-

5 See “Ten Patron Saints for Catholic Classrooms” (<http://www.catholicteacher.com/ten-patron-saints-catholic-classrooms>), and “Patron Saints of Education” (<https://carfleo.com/2016/05>).

man person; call to family, community and participation; rights and responsibilities; option for the poor and vulnerable; the dignity of work and the rights of workers; solidarity; and care for God's creation.⁶ Vital to the life of a true disciple of Christ, the action of Catholic social teaching ought to be a product of a relationship with Christ rather than a replacement of that relationship. The environment of the Catholic School described by Bishop Thomas J. Olmstead and the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd/Montessori⁷ evolves out of that relationship and motivates the disciple to action. Integrates these Catholic Social Teaching themes into shared units of study across grade levels, which provides opportunities for students and educators to put their faith into action.

Integrating religious instruction, formation and evangelization objectives into the classroom and school requires continuous professional development of its members. The advances and ubiquitous nature of technology affords opportunities for educators to receive professional development. The development and engagement in professional and personal learning networks (PLNs) allows for collaboration among writers, Catholic organizations, and school partners.

Additionally, the distinct development and constant conversion of the individual educator or school leader cannot be overstated. In order to provide the model of the Catholic worldview, educators must address their own understanding of who Jesus is and how He is actively working in their lives. Evangelization and faith formation involve the heart of the individual as well as the head. To approach evangelization and faith formation with mere content knowledge, filling the mind with facts about Jesus and the church, falls short for real conversion to occur (Acts 2:37). Jesus taught his disciples through relational ministry, integrating His teachings while living with and among the people, modeling His love for the Father, and sharing His life with the people. Therefore, faculty must focus on being a witness to the active presence of God in their lives both in and out of the classroom.

What can educators, and school leaders do to enhance their Catholic identity in their school environment?

6 <http://cici-online.org/catechetical-connections/7-themes-of-social-justice>

7 <https://www.cgsusa.org/discover/cgs-approach/>

Table 1
Examples of PROFEss Framework Dimensions

Framework Dimension	Practical Examples
Professional and Pedagogical	The use of social networks like Twitter allow professional educators space to gain professional development through sharing and exploring ideas and pedagogies, emphasizing collaboration and connectedness. Twitter chats may be used to gain resources and relationships between colleagues in particular content areas and as Catholic educators.
Relational	Educators may offer testimony of active faith by sharing their witness with students and encouraging awareness of how God moves in their lives. Personal invitation to faith may be modeled by the educator as a pursuit for a distinct relationship with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
Formational	The vocation of educator includes the call and obligation to assist in the formation of individuals with a distinct dignity whose origin is the living God. The integration of curriculum which has the creation of God as its epicenter, therefore is critical.
Evangelistic	Lives of the saints and individuals found in sacred scripture may be presented in any content area. Each story allows the opportunity for revelation of profound truth in what God is able to do with our consent. We bear witness as we focus on how our own decision to allow God to transform our sinful natures may be used as a tool for evangelizing all of society.
Students	The Church recognizes through the dignity of the human person, the right to an education, particularly one that enables the student to recognize and apply the gift of faith and foster a new or existing personal relationship with Christ.

Recommendations

According to the analysis of findings regarding Church doctrine and Catholic education, educators and school leaders can use the PROFEss framework to reflect upon integration of Catholic identity in light of professional and pedagogical requirements, and integration of relationship, formation and evangelization education for P-16 students.

Professional and Pedagogical Development

Education of our young is considered a true apostolate mission. The call to serve the Church as a professional educator requires being led by the Holy Spirit. Educators must be able to bear witness and evangelize to non-Catholics or non-believers as well. Technology is an effective tool for both professional and pedagogical development as tools are used for involvement in networking and sharing of resources, building Professional Learning Networks (PLNs) and conversing with educators and school leaders across geographical boundaries. Additionally, the inclusion of multiple strategies and exploration of alternative and supplemental curriculum for integrating content that is essential to the Catholic faith exemplifies both professional and pedagogical development of the Catholic educator.

Relational Development and Religious Education

Educators and school leaders must make time for growing their relationship with Christ through Scripture study, Sacraments, community, Adoration and prayer. If we as educators are to model a relationship with the living God, including personal testimony, we ask the question, "What is God doing in your life today?" This reflective practice invites us to articulate how God's living presence is made known to us now, in the thick of our daily routines and the work we are called to do. Communicating not only this question but also our own reflective answers with our students provide the model of the relationship we are called to have with the person of God who cares for each of us and desires our intimate union. Living out our faith in an authentic manner, we must have the expectation that we will encounter Jesus every day and carry this disposition with us as we practice our professional calling as educators. Those individuals we share part of our day with, our students, colleagues, administrators, even strangers all ought to encounter Christ every day too. With a mutual expectation we can experience Christ authentically, together and through one another.

Catholic educators need to be prepared to teach the faith through both words and actions, being careful to teach truth according to genuine sources and the light of the Magisterium. Educators must hold students accountable for understanding religious knowledge and its truths related to society. As we are charged with educating the whole person, it is important to assess students' maturity and growth not only intellectually, but morally and spiritually as well.

There exist relational and religious dimensions that educators and school leaders need to develop and support, as these experiences add to the entire school climate. Working together as a community, the educator, administrator, and school families may make this an interdisciplinary effort as they build the kingdom of God through their academic and religious themes.

Formational and Evangelistic Development

Formation and evangelization must be a product of an encounter with Christ and relationship built through those encounters. Without the foundation of that relationship, knowledge of the faith may result in an attitude of compartmentalization where religion becomes a subject rather than a disposition that permeates every aspect of the disciple's life. Individuals should be formed firstly by their relationship with Christ, knowledge gained by walking with the Holy Spirit, which leads to personal sanctification, and application of Christian morals and values, which help fulfill the apostolic mission.

Within a Catholic school environment, the entire community is responsible for assisting in formation. Spiritual formation may take place through extracurricular activities outside of the classroom, personal formation workshops, talks and events, opportunities for service, personal and communal prayer and worship, as well as sacraments. Inside the classroom, it is necessary to include the social teachings and "solid doctrinal instruction in theology, ethics, and philosophy" (Franchi, 2007, p. 239).

Viewing the profession of an educator as a personal vocation acknowledges the importance and necessity of ongoing conversion. The vocation of educator includes the call and charge to assist in the formation of individuals rather than simply transmitting knowledge. It is important for educators to understand the relationship among current culture and ideals of the Church from the critical, evaluative, and historical dimensions.

In conclusion, and in order to continue serving students, all educators and school leaders must explore a variety of opportunities for professional development and worldwide leadership. Participation and research sharing

at Catholic conferences and workshops afford connections for faith development, Catholic vision, and reflection on our own formation. Similarly, it is important that educators and school leaders have both presence and leadership roles in secular conferences, both nationally and internationally, as they provide authentic situations for discipleship, evangelization and constructive dialogue with other professionals in the field. The Congregation for Catholic Education (1982) states, “the call of the Church to lay Catholic educators to commit themselves to an active apostolate in education, is not a call limited to the Church’s own schools. It is a call that extends to the entire vast teaching field, to the extent in which it may be possible to give Christian witness in teaching” (Franchi, 2007, p. 232). Connections and relationships fostered while collaborating with professionals both Catholic and non-Catholic are a conduit for sharing the Truth and love of Christ. We are called to profess the truth, to be the light of Christ, His hands and feet as we serve with mutual respect. Integrating the PROFESs framework is one way to enhance Catholic identity in the school environment and fulfill the mission of the Church.

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