



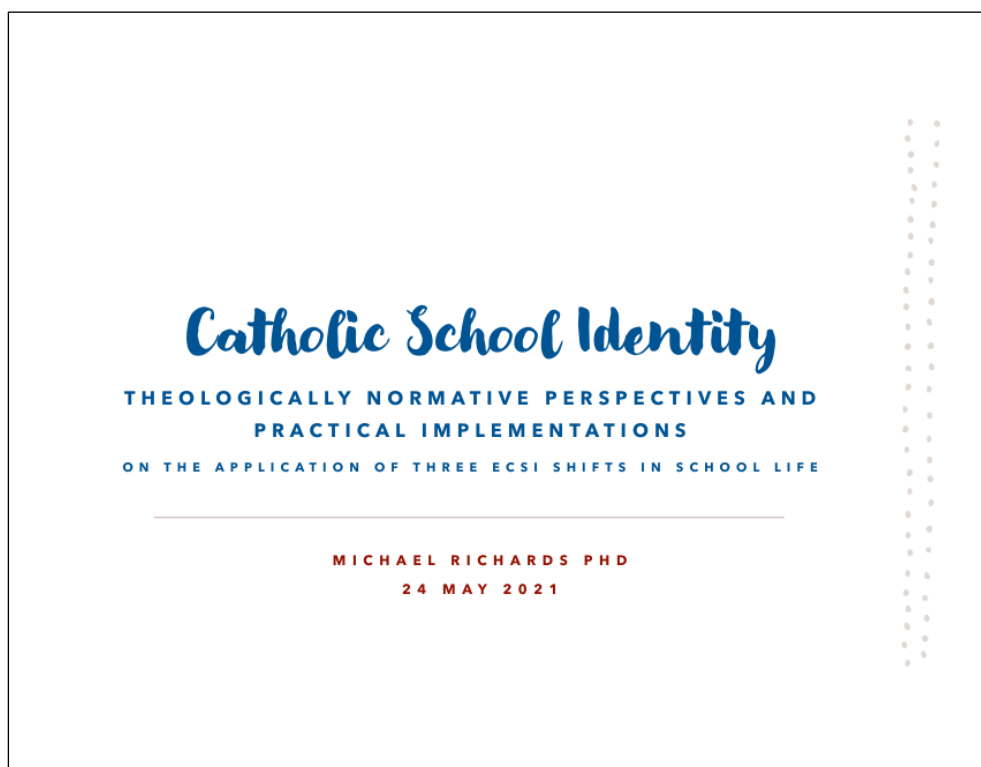
Catholic School Identity

Theologically Normative Perspectives and Practical Implementations.
On the Application of Three ECSI Shifts in School Life

Michael Richards, PhD.

Online lecture 24-05-2021

Introduction



It's really an honour for me to be with you for this *ECSI Intensive Course* lecture. It's an honour and privilege to be counted in the eight sessions amongst such esteemed people that I once worked with not so long ago in Leuven. It's also actually very humbling for me to be able to have a little time with you, my Australian friends, some whom I've known from the years past and some who are new at this moment. It's humbling because I've learned a lot from you over the years about the many, many good things you are doing in Australia. Some of those things are ideas that I bring here to the school I work at now. So, I hope that what I have to share with you today is of great benefit to you as a starting point for your *ECSI Intensive Course*, because my lens on the topic today is a combination of theology and empirical work, but also of practical implementation in the school for several years.

Objectives and Outcomes

Objectives and Outcomes

Intensive course colleagues will demonstrate:

1. **Familiarity with the 'three ECSI shifts'** through interaction with the presenter and each other.
2. **Awareness of practical implications of the 'three ECSI shifts'** through the mirror of international trends and practices.
3. **Preliminary vision of various components and themes of the ECSI Intensive Course** that can help you transform your leadership in relation to the Catholic Dialogue School model.

I have three objectives for our time today or three outcomes I hope that you'll be able to arrive at when we're done. By the end of this time, I am aiming for you to become more familiar with the three ECSI shifts through interaction with me and through interaction with each other. I am also aiming for you to be more aware of the practical implications of these three ECSI shifts through this mirror of an international lens. So maybe in having some distance between your local experience in Australia and hearing me speak about what some of these things look like in my context, here in Arizona, maybe this international lens is useful as a way of reflecting on things you're doing well and maybe also reflecting on things you want to do differently in your context. And thirdly, I am aiming by the end of this time, that you have some preliminary vision of the components of this *ECSI Intensive Course*, that you want to pay closer attention to in the weeks ahead and that can help you transform your leadership towards a Catholic Dialogue School model. That might be especially useful to those of you who are first-time-ever participants in this *ECSI Intensive Course*.

Pathway

5 min	Welcome and context
15 min	Shift 1 • Towards recontextualization and multicorrelation
15 min	Shift 2 • Towards valuation of faith and religiosity in dialogue with others
15 min	Shift 3 • Towards a hermeneutical and post-critical faith understanding
5 min	Summary
10 min	Discussion

Over the next 55 minutes, the pathway I'm going to take is approximately a third of our 15 minutes, 15 minutes, 15 minutes to address each of the three shifts and I'll do that both from a theological, empirical and practical perspective. In just a moment I'll say more about the method that I'm using today. At the end I'll take a few moments to summarise my main insights from this and then I'll be sure to allow about 10 minutes of questions, remarks or any other discussion that will be helpful to you.

Method

Each Section

- Theologically normative position
- Description of the ECSI shift
- School-level attitudinal data
- Real challenges and strategies towards implementation
- Brief pause point with thought prompt
- Intensive Course signposts

Here's my method in each of the sections. So, each of the 15-minute blocks follows approximately this method. First, I'll take just a brief moment to re-identify with you what the theologically normative position is in ECSI. Then I'll take a few minutes to describe what this one particular ECSI shift looks like, using the charts and the visuals that many of you are accustomed to already. Then I'll share a bit about the school level data from my school related to ECSI and related to these particular shifts, because then I'm going to use the data with you to talk through a few of the real challenges that we face here in this school in Arizona, as well as the strategies that we are working on towards implementation. Towards the end of each of the sections, I'm just going to take a very brief pause point, 60 seconds, 90 seconds and there'll be a thought prompt on the screen. I'll invite you to use those 60 seconds to jot down some key words, key ideas, questions in response to that thought prompt that you might want to bring back at the end to our discussion. And then before we move to each of the next sections, I will show you a few of what I call the 'signposts' in the *ECSI Intensive Course*. These are little flags of things you might want to pay closer attention to, content-wise, in the intensive course. They'll help you along the way towards these shifts.

Norms

- **Camera**

Leave your camera on or off, as you wish.

- **Chat**

Please do not enter remarks or questions in the chat during the presentation.

- **Questions**

A few pause points are included throughout for noting questions.

A discussion segment is included at the end for follow-up questions.

Prof. Pollefeyt has already spoken about the norms, I'll just add that it's helpful if you do not enter any remarks or questions in the chat during the presentation, because I actually can't even see the chat, all I can see are the slides on the screen at the moment, but at the end we'll have time for questions.

National context for Catholic school in the United States

National Context for Catholic Schools

- **Catholic minority among a diverse majority.**
By and large, mainline Protestants and Evangelicals have historically dominated the Christian landscape in the United States (in numbers, voice, and positions of power).
- **Catholic schools = private schools without state funding.**
No direct revenue from the state. Indirectly funded services account for less than 1% of our operating budget.
- **Strong culture of local governance and operation.**
Limited scope of diocesan offices (varies by diocese or religious congregation). Limited authority at the state or federal level.

I'll take just a few moments before going into the first shift to speak a little bit about the context in general, in the United States, in Catholic schools because I've learned over the years from you Australians, when you've been in Leuven for the intensive courses, that our contexts have many differences in them and that these differences in context have an impact on and can challenge or can be an opportunity for growth and Catholic identity. So, as for the United States, here are a few key points about our context for Catholic schools. First of all, I think, similarly to Australia, Catholics in general are a minority population in the US and religiously speaking we are a very diverse country, but the single biggest religious group is not the Catholics but if you look at Protestants and Evangelicals, they are the one group that's historically been the largest group in the Christian landscape in the US and I'll mention here that they're the largest group in terms of numbers, but they're also large in terms of their voice, their influence and they're large in terms of holding positions of power. Secondly (and this is a significant difference between Arizona (the US) and Europe, also to some extent between us and Australia), Catholic schools in the US are entirely private schools. We receive no state funding at all for our operations. We get a little bit of indirect funding for various services, but as you see here, it accounts for less than one percent of our operating budget. So, we are entirely on our own to raise all our revenue through tuition and philanthropy. That can be a good thing and that can also be a big challenge. Part of the good thing is that for our Catholic identity we have full control over our curriculum, our standards, our hiring processes. So, we are fully private schools, with no state funding. Thirdly, here in the United States, there's been a very strong culture of local governance and operation of Catholic schools. So, by comparison, my understanding of Australia is that you, compared to us, have much stronger services through the diocese, through the collection of dioceses at the state level and even at the national level. By contrast, here, the locus of control and operation is very much at the school level, so our diocesan offices here in the United States provide very limited services by comparison with dioceses in other places, like in many parts of Australia.

National Context for Catholic Schools

- **Shrinking geography.**

Declining number of schools and declining overall enrollment (especially in long-standing Catholic communities).

- **Changing demographics.**

Steadily increasing enrollment of "other believers" and "other philosophies".

Decreasing familiarity among teachers and staff with "Catholic thought and tradition".

- **Existential crisis?**

A couple of last words about our context in the US. We have a shrinking geography of Catholic schools. And that's happening faster now than it has in the last 30 years. Not only is the total number of schools in the US declining, but the schools that are open (and there are still many that are open) they're still a big operation, but in the ones that are open, we continue to see declining enrolment by region. All of this goes along with the changing demographics. Like many other parts of the world, we have a steadily increasing enrolment by other believers and other philosophies in our school, both in parent and student population and in our teachers. Some are wondering if this poses a sort of existential crisis for Catholic schools in the United States.

National Context for Catholic Schools

BREAKING | Mar 23, 2021, 05:55pm EDT | 7,826 views

Pandemic Leading To Increase In Permanent Closures Of Catholic Schools



Tommy Beer Forbes Sta
Business

Forbes (23 March 2021). Available at :
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/tommybeer/2021/03/23/pandemic-leading-to-increase-in-permanent-closures-of-catholic-schools/?sh=4013c741d85>



Wall Street Journal (10 May 2021). Available at : <https://www.wsj.com/articles/catholic-schools-are-losing-students-at-record-rates-and-hundreds-are-closing-11620651600>

And as an example of that, just over the last few months, we see articles like this. A lot of Catholic schools are closing this year and next year as a result of the pandemic. And that's for many, many reasons which are beyond the scope of this lecture, but I offer you this context as a way of understanding a bit more about the situation in terms of the ECSI shifts. The question of focusing on developing Catholic school identity here in my school, in Catholic schools in the US, is done in this larger context of what it means to operate as a Catholic school in the US.

Local Context

Under-resourced students and families.

Arizona is one of the least-wealthiest states in the United States (GDP).

Significant population of migrant-generation Mexicans and first-generation Mexican-Americans.

Small and generally very marginalized population of indigenous peoples.

Under-resourced schools.

Arizona ranks between 41 and 49 (of 50) in educational attainment and public investment (PK to 12).

Lastly, just a couple of brief words before we shift into the main parts of the lecture. Here in Arizona in particular, we are definitely an under-resourced community of students, families and schools. We rank very low at the national level in terms of our educational achievements and public investment. **What that means for Catholic school identity here in Arizona is that a lot of our families choose us not because we are Catholic. A lot of our families choose us because we are the safe choice. We are the choice that offers a college prep curriculum, that graduates a 100% of our students into four-year programmes; these are among the top ten of choices. Catholic identity as such is not on the radar of most of our families.** That's another part of our local context, which is not necessarily true in all schools across the US.

Personal

- Principal & Academic Dean at San Miguel Catholic High School since 2019
- PhD from KU Leuven in 2019 (promoted by D Pollefeyt)

Faith in Dialogue : Recontextualizing Catholic School Identity and Mission in a Diverse and Changing United States

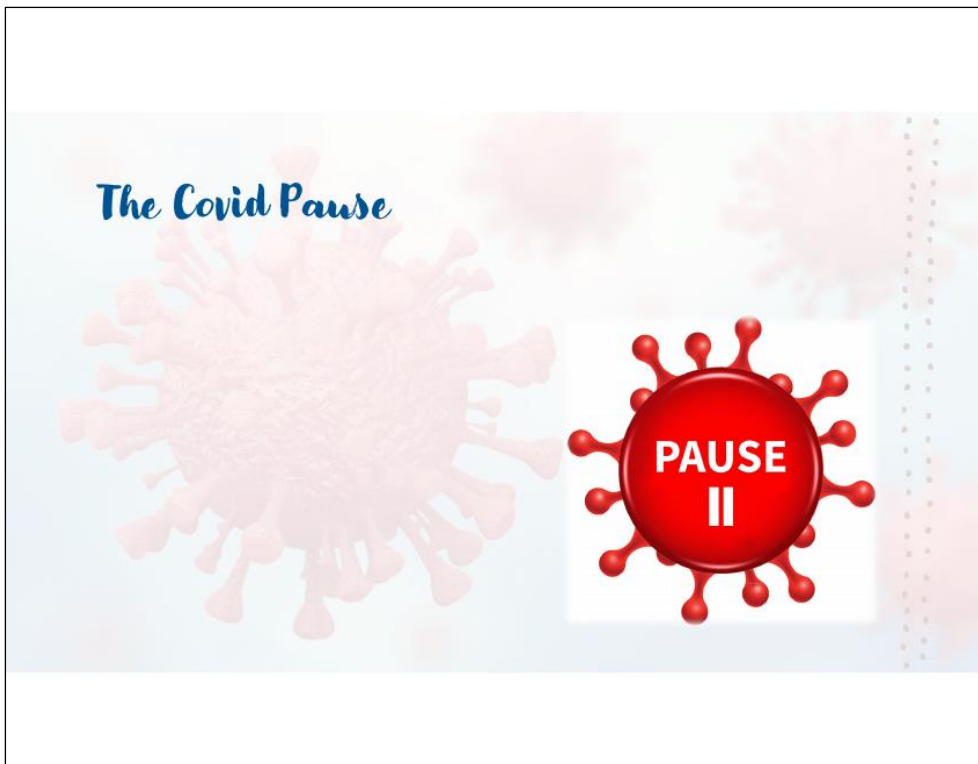
- Research assistant with the ECSI Research Group from 2014-2019
- Avid supporter of ECSI Intensive Courses since 2014

A few more words about me so you know who's talking with you. Thank you, Prof. Pollefeyt, for your very kind introduction. I have been the Principal and Academic Dean here for two years and I received my PhD in Leuven in 2019.

Personal

- At home in the Catholic community, even amid the many challenges we face both internally and externally
- Basic middle-class upbringing in a Polish-American (very ethnically Catholic) community, challenged by life in the socio-cultural margins of US society
- White, male, educated in primary and secondary Catholic schools
- Born 1976

Also, just personally, I am a person who is at home in the Catholic community. This has been my home for my entire life, so that's a little bit about me.

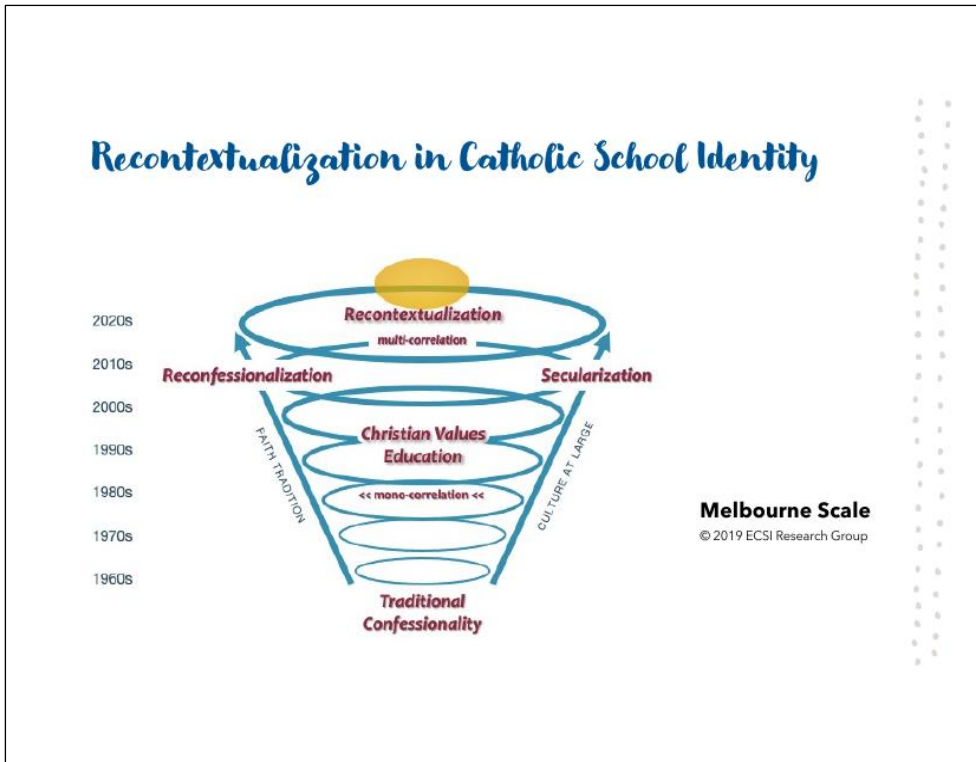


One last comment, because this is relevant to the question of shifts in our work in developing our implementation strategies here at my school, in Arizona, and in many parts of the country in general. This Covid condition has meant that, probably like in a number of other places, that a lot of the plans that we were developing on our Catholic identity have all been on pause during Covid. We've shifted a bit to doing things online in terms of our Catholic identity, but the kind of shifts and strategies that I'm now going to talk about are, as of this time, still strategies that are living on paper. There's a pause on them until we can actually come back to school. And by back to school, I mean actually being physically present here on campus. Most of our students have not been on campus in 15 months. Most of our operations have been entirely online since March 13th 2020. So, this is a significant challenge for us in determining what it means to be a Catholic school when most of our operations are online. So, keep that in mind as I mention these shifts and strategies.

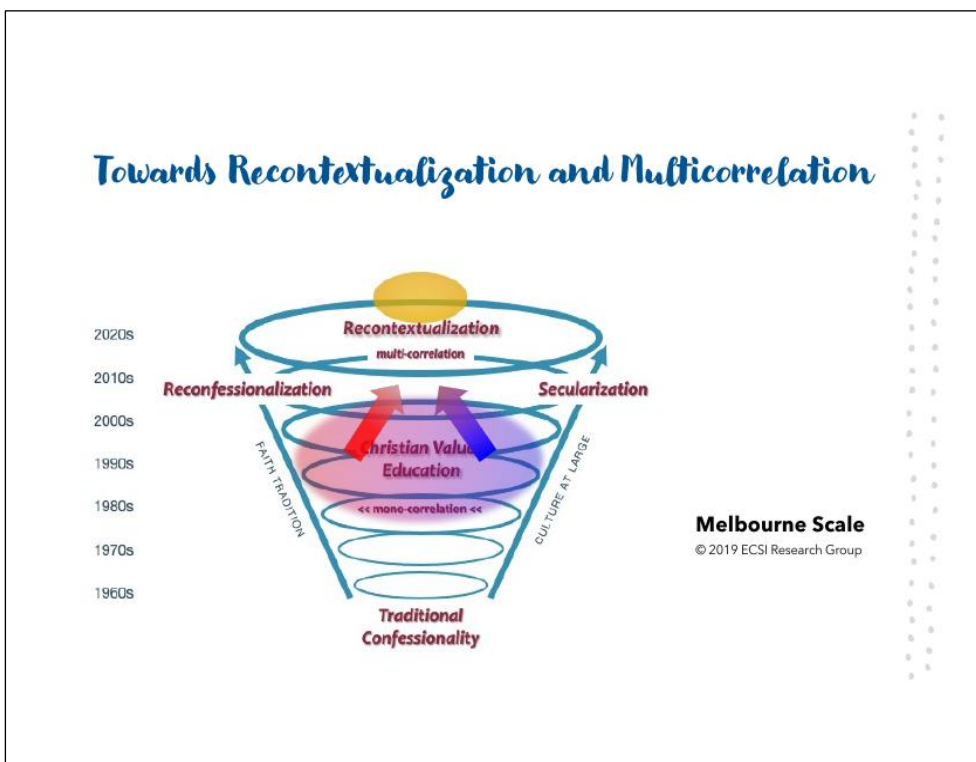
Shift 1. Towards Recontextualisation and Multicorrelation



The first shift that I would like to talk with you about is the shift towards *Recontextualisation* and *Multicorrelation*. And I think it's helpful to put both of those terms together because they are closely related in the idea of what we are shifting towards. And the main shift here I'm going to look at with you is the shift towards that, but from a position of *Values Education*.

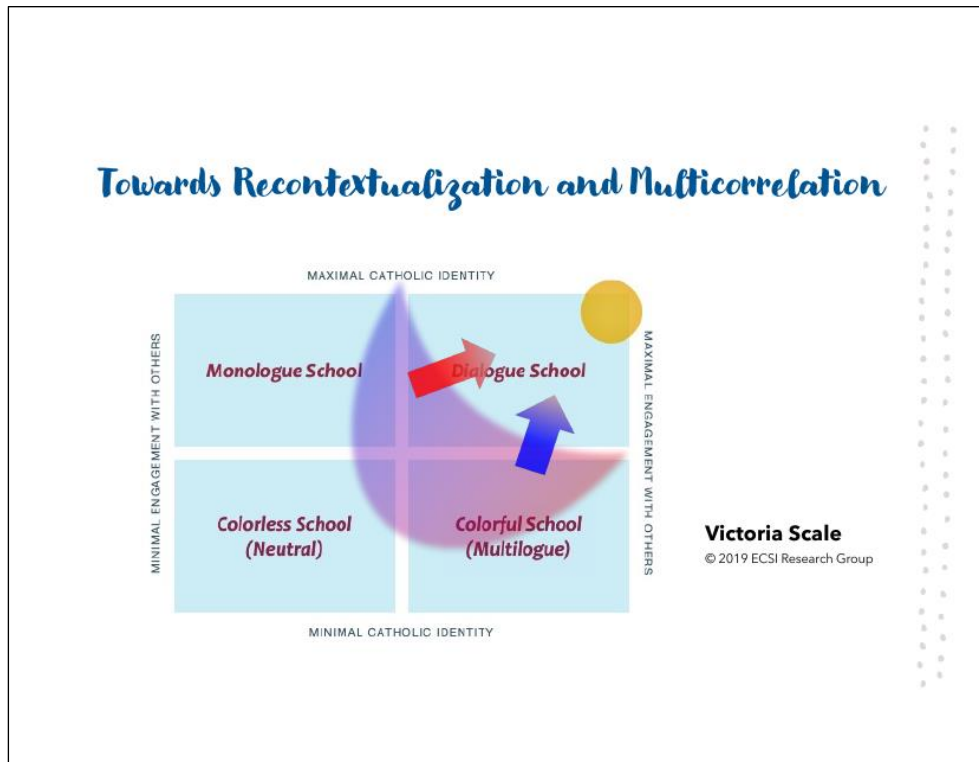


So, I know many of you, if not all of you, are familiar with this diagram, the sacred *Melbourne Scale*.

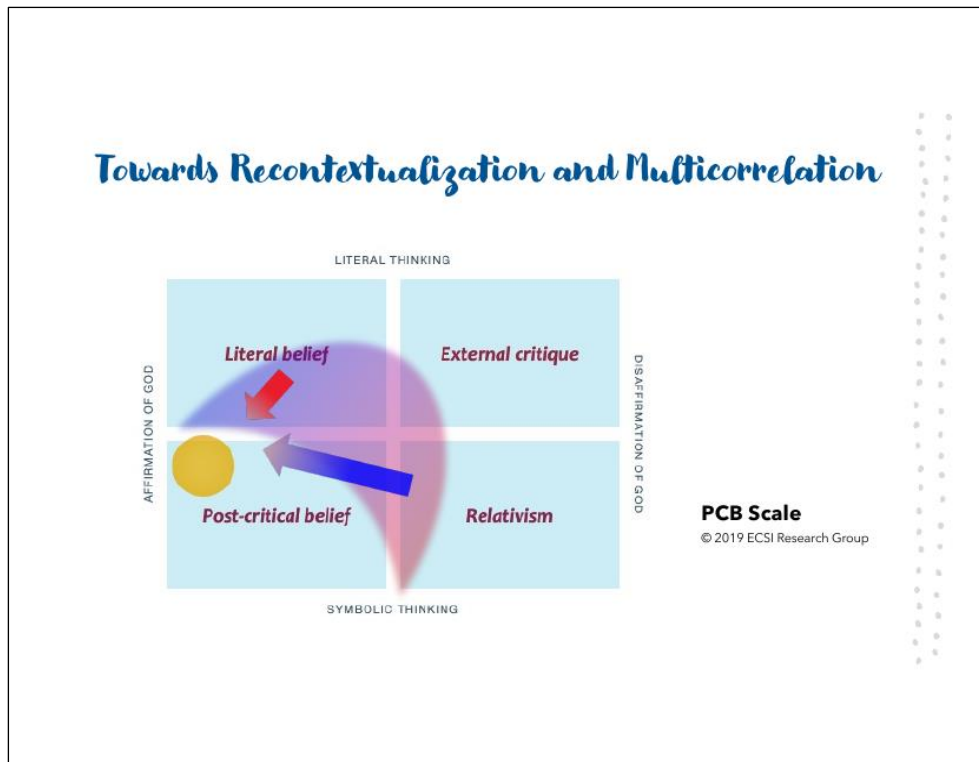


What we're looking at here in terms of this shift, is this movement from the centre position here in *Values Education*, forward towards *Recontextualisation*, towards that theologically normative position represented by the golden dot at the top of the diagram. If you look closely at the centre, with the blue and the red, and the shaded oval and the arrows here, the blue and red arrows are the shift that

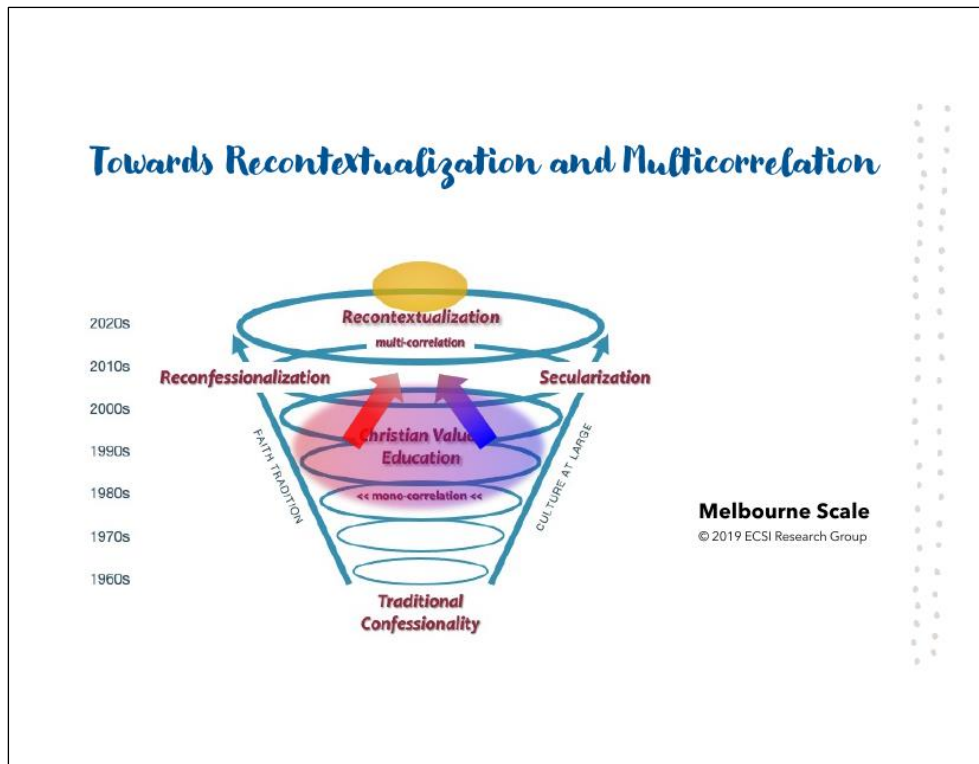
I'm talking about. How do we invite students, families, teachers, staff members, administrators, people who are philosophically or praxiologically positioned deeply in *Values Education* (whether that's *Values Education* leading towards *Secularisation* on the right or *Values Education* with the intention that it's leading towards *Reconfessionalisation* on the left) to join an enterprise that explicitly aims to be about *Recontextualisation* and *Multicorrelation*? That's the shift that's seen here on the *Melbourne Scale*.



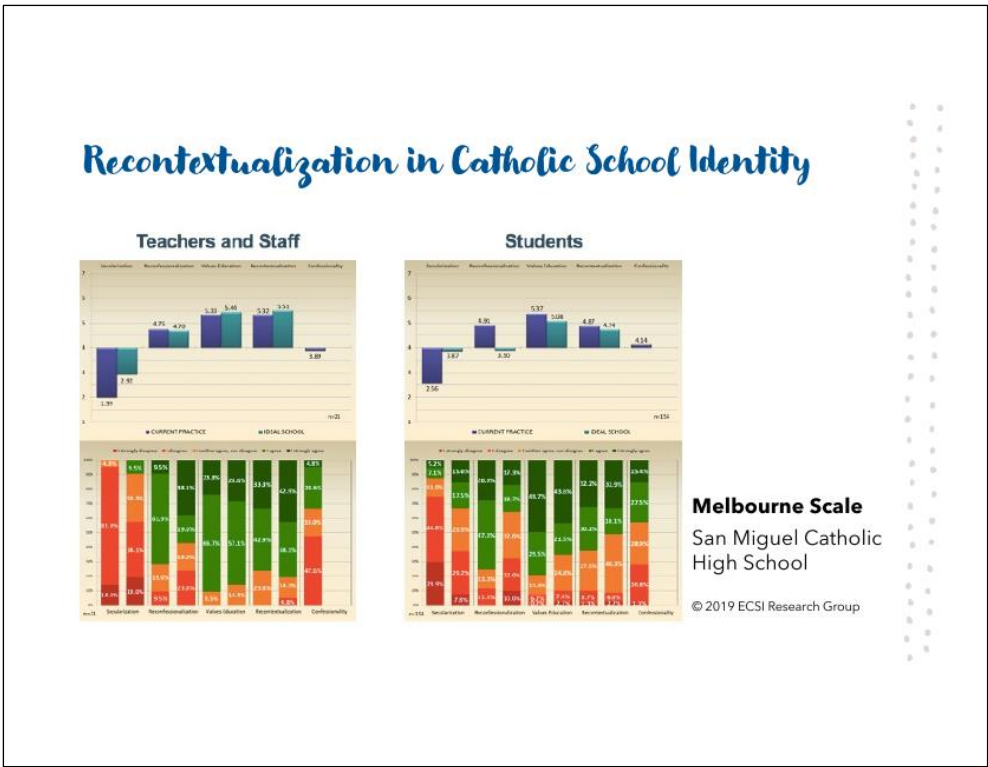
That same kind of shift can also be seen here on the *Victoria Scale*. How do we invite people who look at dialogue, the Catholic *Dialogue School*, from a lens where they are more squarely positioned in the *Colourful School* model (so they are people who maximally favour diversity and engaging with that diversity, but they are much more hesitant, even distant, from brining in questions of Catholic identity, faith, religiosity) into that dialogue? That's the blue arrow. As for the red arrow, here we see people who are more positioned somewhere between the *Monologue School* and the *Dialogue School*. How do we invite them to join us in the shift to *Recontextualisation* and *Multicorrelation*? I'll speak more about these people who are in these arrows at a later point, but we can see the same kind of shift here in the *Victoria Scale*.



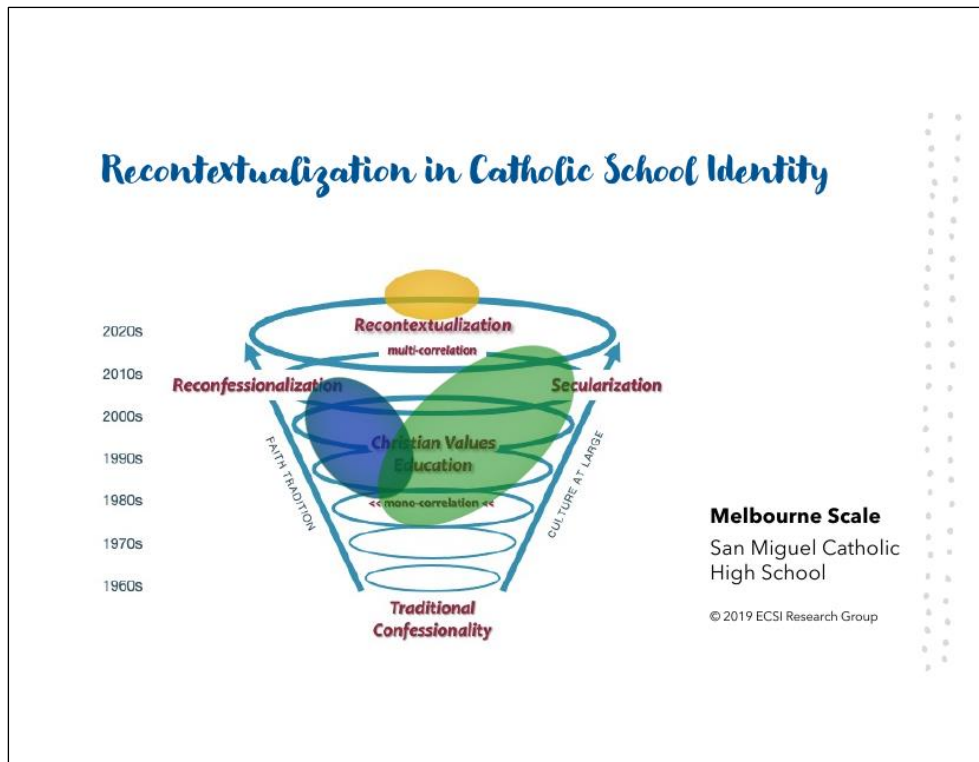
Thirdly, we can also see the same shift towards *Recontextualisation* and *Multicorrelation* from a perspective of the *PCB Scale*. How do we invite people who are more squarely rooted in *Literal Believing* or *Relativism* towards a position of *Post-Critical Belief*, which as we know from the research you're going to be looking more closely at, that's the position of *Recontextualisation* and *Multicorrelation*. I'll come back and speak a little bit more about this in one of the later shifts.



But to return again to this model here; for the next couple of minutes let's stay focused on this model about shifting from *Values Education* towards *Recontextualisation*. Whether or not that *Values Education* is yielding towards *Secularisation* or whether it's *Values Education* that aims to be more about *Reconfessionalisation*.



I think you're probably familiar with looking at charts like this. This is my school. I won't walk you through all the details here; in just a moment I'll show you a visual that will give you a better summary about what this looks like. But just very quickly, what you can see here on the left with the dark blue, is that teachers and staff generally don't distinguish. They favour *Values Education*, they are in favour of *Recontextualisation*, and they see that it's in our current practice, but the *Values Education* bar and the *Recontextualisation* bar are more or less the same; so, they don't really distinguish between the two of them. I'll show you what that looks like in just a moment. On the right side you see the students (the blue bar being the current, and the greenish, teal bar being the ideal preference). In the current practice of the school, our students see *Values Education*. That's definitely the one that dominates. They see some *Recontextualisation* behind that, but they see much more *Values Education*. What's interesting to note here is that while on the left side teachers and staff would prefer more of what they see, students would prefer less. So, you see a decreased sense of the ideal among the students in the teal numbers here in the teal bars. Let me show you a visual of what this looks like back on the *Melbourne Scale*.



So here the green represents our student population, and the blue represents approximately our staff population. And what this visually tells us is that our students (now we're taking them as a whole, of course there's a lot of diversity in our student population) as a whole see *Values Education* in the school and that enables them to lean towards *Secularisation*. Or that's by preference, where they would lean. Whereas our faculty and staff also see this, they're rooted in *Values Education* and their preference is to a certain extent there, in *Values Education*, but they see the purpose of *Values Education* as something different than what the students experience it as. I know that at other points in the course you're going to go much deeper into *Values Education*, the sort of hidden agenda of *Values Education* and the points at which *Values Education* breaks down. So, my purpose here is not to go into that depth, but in just a moment I'll show you some of the signposts for the rest of your time.

Towards Recontextualization and Multicorrelation

Challenges towards Implementation

Well-Engrained Values Education


- Existing curriculum reflects a strong emphasis on 'values education' from decades past
- Limited maneuverability with regards to curriculum and instruction at the school level

Neo-Apologetics as Counter Approach

- Response to 'disaffiliation trends' – blamed on the breakdown of values education

Some of our challenges here at my school towards shifting towards *Recontextualisation* and *Multicorrelation* are clearly that we have a very well ingrained sense of *Values Education* in the school. What does that look like more specifically at a practical level? If you looked at our existing curriculum, you would see that there is a very strong emphasis on Values Education, both in terms of the standards and in terms of the materials and in terms of some of the strategies. And that's not new, that's been here for as long as the school has existed. Well, the school is only about 20 years old, but that's been around as long as most of our older teachers have been. It's something which they've carried with them for 20, 30, 40 years. It's very deeply rooted here. And so, what that sounds like is a lot of talk about peace and justice and reconciliation and respect and openness to others, and a proactive approach to combating climate change. These are the values that are talked about from a Christian perspective.

But ultimately, it's the values that the students latch onto, they love the values, but what you'll see in the classroom is that they don't really engage very much around the idea of the Christian context in which they're learning about these values and the world. In my school we have very limited manoeuvre ability with regards to curriculum and instruction and that's going to be a challenge for us in the implementation, because we can't just change our standards or our resources. I said earlier that the locus of control is very much at the school level, except when it comes to religious studies, specifically the religious education curriculum. There we have a whole bunch of structures that we have to work within. So, this is a challenge for us. Another challenge in this shift is that, and I don't know if this is the case in Australia, but it's definitely the case here, that there's a strong movement right now (maybe in the last 8 or 10 years here in the US) towards a sort of neo-apologetic approach to religious education. And this approach here in our context comes out of this very prominent sense of disaffiliation amongst our student population.



Towards Recontextualization and Multicorrelation
Challenges towards Implementation

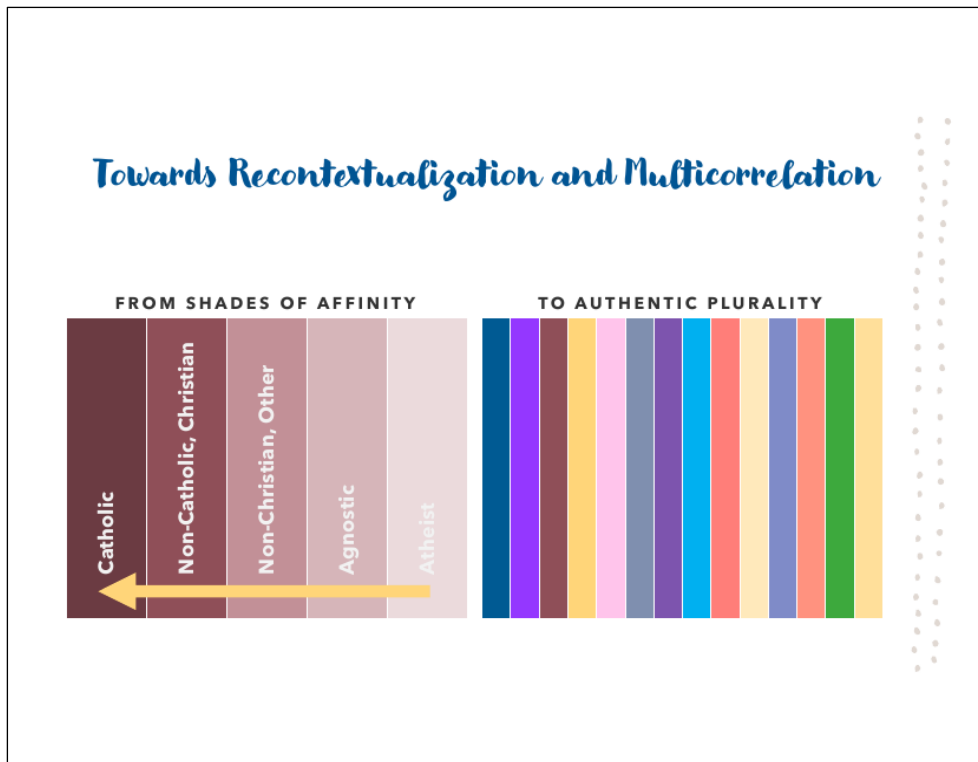
Reading of the Context

- Dominance of a "disaffiliation" paradigm
- Framed by a "shades of affinity" model for diversity

Attitudes Regarding Religious Diversity in Catholic Schools

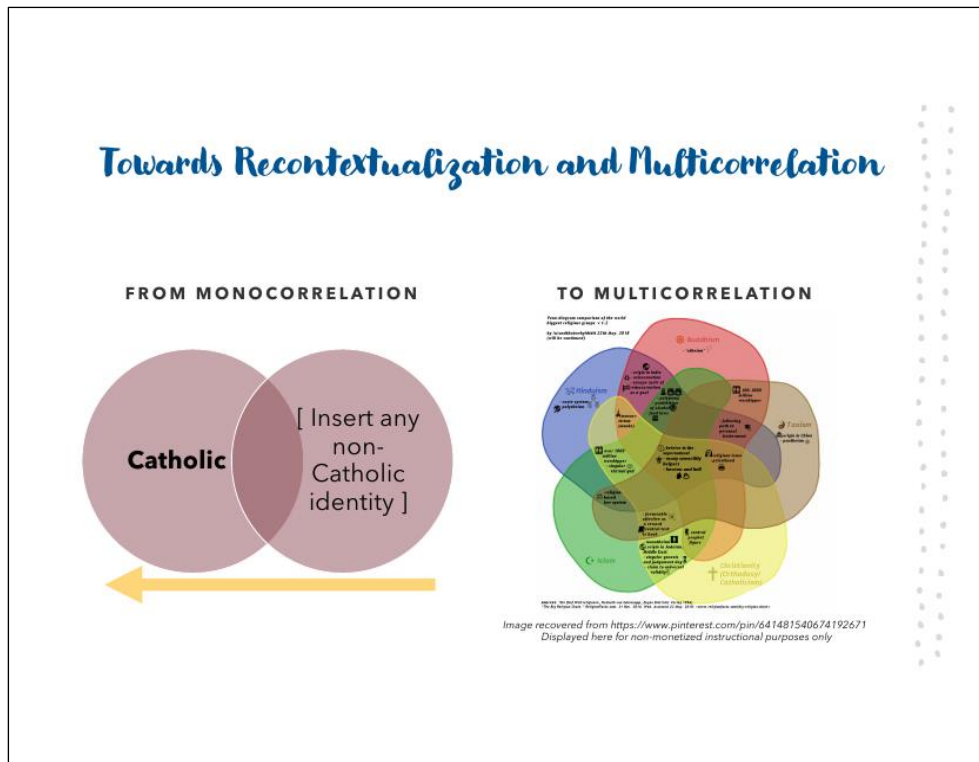
- Religious and philosophical others as 'second class' passengers in Catholic schools

Let me just speak a little bit about this disaffiliation in a moment. There are two more challenges in this context. To continue the same challenge, there is this dominance of the disaffiliation paradigm, which I'll speak about in the next slide, and I'll say a little bit more about the shades of affinity model that we use to identify students and families. Lastly, the challenge for us in moving towards *Recontextualisation*, and maybe this is similar to Australia, hopefully not; but here there's definitely a sense that if you're a religious other or philosophical other, if you are in a sense not Catholic, you're sort of a second-class passenger in Catholic schools. This is not my position, this is a general attitude that you're welcome to be here; it helps us pay the bills, it helps us keep the doors open, but the education you're going to get here is fundamentally about what it means to be Catholic. You're welcome to participate in that, but there's not an education that's necessarily directed towards your own identity and your own experience, if you're a religious other.




So, what is this sense of **shades of affinity and disaffiliation**? Well, if you look on the left here, shades of affinity is this term that we use to say that all of our students and families are to some extent a degree from being Catholic. So, on the left side here we identify who the Catholic students are, and then the close affinity, but not quite Catholic, are the non-Catholic students. They are Christian students, but they're not Catholic. Then a little bit further away are the students who are not Christian; they're other believers but they're not Christian. Then agnostics and atheists, they're further and further away from the affinity with Catholicism. So, staying on the left side of the screen, this sense of disaffiliation coincides with the shades of affinity in the sense that disaffiliation (we're talking about the students and families who are no longer Catholic) is generally seen as the moving away from the Catholic affinity line. If you're still believing but not practicing, you're one step away from being Catholic, the next affinity line away. If you're not practicing and you're still kind of questioningly believing, you're approximately two more steps away.

What I have here on the right side is a different sense. It's the sense of authentic plurality (my term, nobody else's term). So **rather than defining our students as Catholic, non-Catholic or non-Christian, the none's, our attempt here at my school is to give everybody an authentic identity.** So let them choose their own identity and say who they are, in terms of faith and belief. Now that means that what the students say or what the parents say is not necessarily the same thing. And that's okay, but in terms of the educational programme we no longer want to label students as non-Catholic or non-Christian and treat them as though they're in these circles of affinity, but we're trying to identify students for who they authentically see themselves as at this point in their life.



Another way that we are looking at this shift, here at my school, is by looking at the movement on the left from *Monocorrelation*, to *Multicorrelation* on the right. I know in other lectures in this course you're going to go much further into depth on *Multicorrelation* and the shift away from *Monocorrelation*, but it's an important part of our movement here. And what that looks like for us at this school philosophically has to do with how this Venn diagram on the left appears. So, in terms of our religious education programme and our campus ministry programme, a lot of our discourse here sounds like *Monocorrelation* on the left. You can almost piece in any other non-Catholic identity and attempt to show how similar or not similar that identity is with Catholicism, as an authentic way of trying to make sure that people feel welcomed.

So, for example we have a Jewish teacher coming into our school this year; she's a very talented teacher and I'm really looking forward to the opportunity for her to be part of an open dialogue on religious identity. But of course, what happens instantly is that everyone wants to try and make her feel welcome, so lots of people point out all of the similarities between Catholicism and Judaism and make sure that those similarities are points of hospitality and welcome for her. But what doesn't happen (at least not yet), is a chance for that teacher to speak about who she is, what her identity is and how she sees her identity interacting with someone else's Catholic identity or any one of the many identities that we have here at the school. So again, this is a shift on paper, it hasn't been practically implemented. But we can see the goals, the way we're trying to go in allowing people of diverse identities to speak for themselves and to interact in many, many different ways with all the diverse identities that we have here, rather than always correlating everything to the Catholic identity alone.



Towards Recontextualization and Multicorrelation
Strategies towards Implementation

Awareness and Valuation of Diversity

External to the school

- *Local partnerships with Jewish community schools, Islamic school, Hindu community center at the University, Evangelical Christian schools*

Internal to the school

- *Unpacking our ECSI profile data*
- *Recharacterizing the identity markers in our enrollment database*
- *Inviting students to self-identify*

Some strategies that we're aiming to do. What we're already doing, and we need to do more of, is that (externally to the school) we are building partnerships with our Jewish community schools, our Islamic school here in town, the Hindu community centre and with one Evangelical Christian school a couple miles up the road. What we're hoping to do with these partnerships is to bring students into more contact with students. I don't know if this is your case, but here they live a lot in isolation from each other. So, what we're looking to do is to develop community service projects between multiple schools together and over time we hope that those shared community service projects give us opportunities for dialogue at different levels. Maybe first the dialogue is about the need of the community and then the dialogue emerges or evolves to questions of schooling, and then at some point the dialogue evolves to questions of faith and religiosity and the world. So, this is a foundational move for us to build these partnerships.

Internally within the school we also have a lot to do to unpack our ECSI profile data. This is a challenge for us; I'll say more about this in one of the other upcoming shifts, but we're continuing to do that. The last two things here are steps we've already taken. We are already recharacterizing the identity markers in our enrolment database, so we're no longer naming students as non-Catholic or non-Christian, but we're allowing them to name themselves as they see themselves.



Towards Recontextualization and Multicorrelation

Strategies towards Implementation

Educational Programing and Resources

- Levering those local partnerships (other schools) towards shared service projects in the community
 - Border and migration justice*
 - Habitat for Humanity (affordable housing)*
 - Ecology and climate change*

And I've already mentioned a bit about our plans to capitalise on those relationships with other schools, to build those partnerships towards service projects in the community that give our students at least the basis of a multicultural foundation for evolving towards dialogue down the road.

Quick Write

Towards Recontextualization and Multicorrelation

- What are the **attitudes in your school(s)** towards this shift?
- From a school leader perspective, what **advancement** is needed in terms of:
 - Institutional policies
 - Educational programming and resources
 - Educator formation and professional learning



In the interest of time, I'm just going to pause here very quickly, 10 seconds, so I can grab a sip of water. Would you take just a moment and continue to jot key words or phrases that you'd like to return to later, maybe a question on your mind that you'd like to circle back at the end of our time?

Intensive Course Info Point

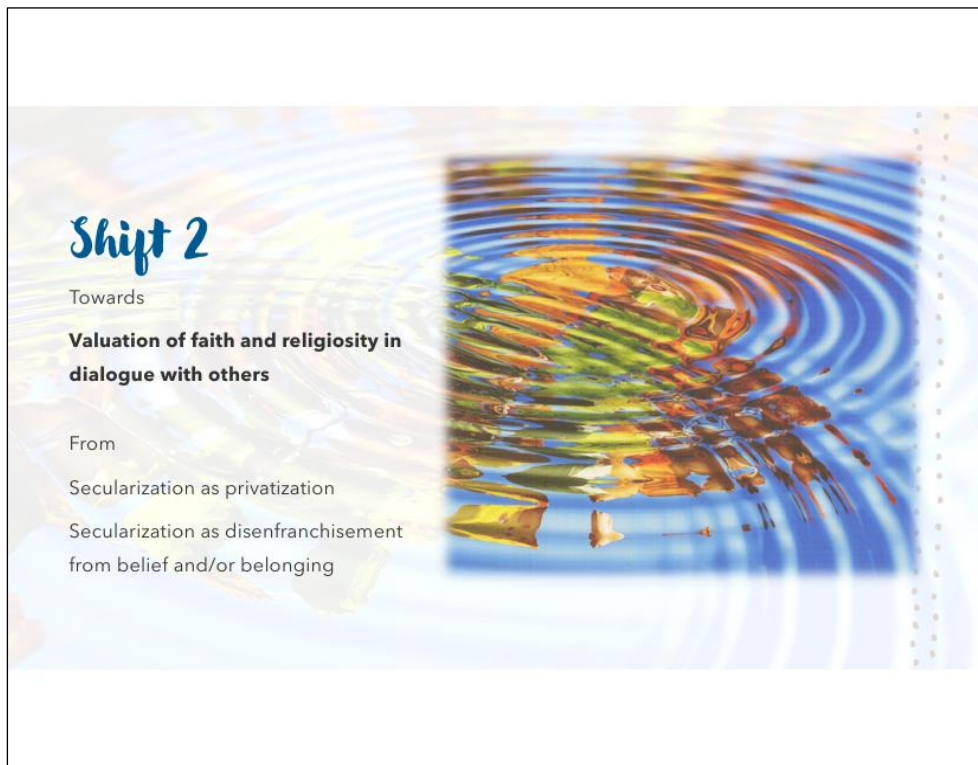
Towards Recontextualization and Multicorrelation

- The understanding of 'context' in recontextualization
- The breakdown points of 'values education'
- The key distinctions between *monocorrelation* and *multicorrelation*
- The relationship between plurality and particularity



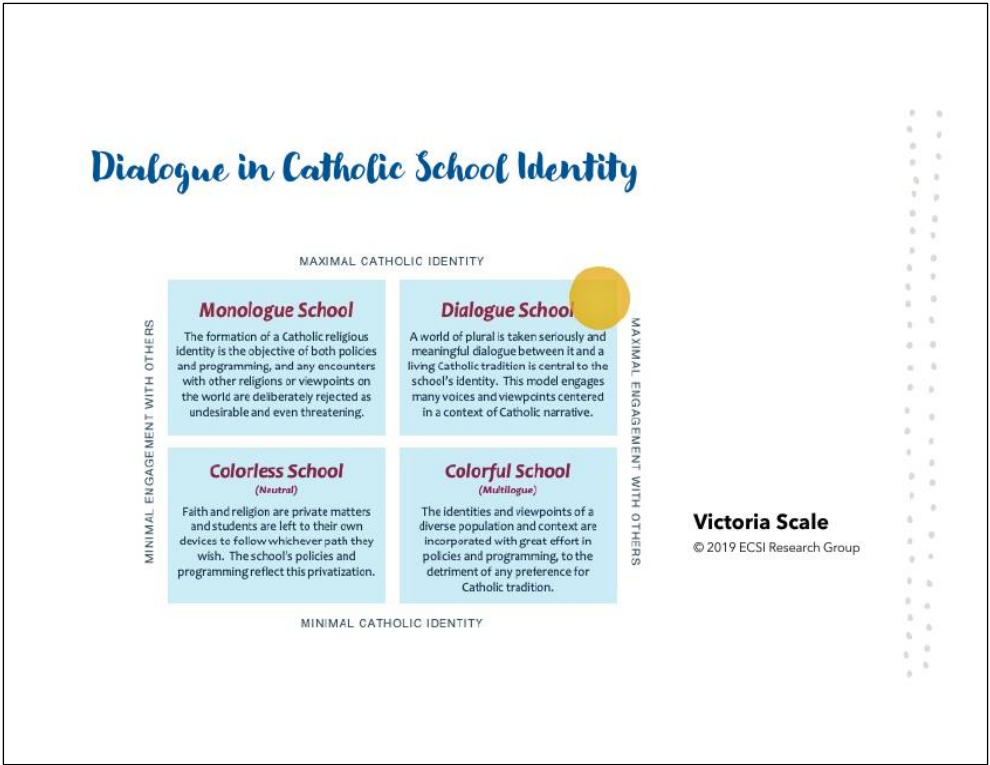
As you continue in your intensive course, here's a couple of things I suggest you pay attention to and delve deeper into if shifting towards *Recontextualisation* and *Multicorrelation* is on your immediate horizon in your school. I suggest you pay careful attention to what the meaning of context is in the idea of *Recontextualisation*. For us that's a big challenge here because we understand that, when I speak about *Recontextualisation* here, what people tend to understand is something more like re-inculturation. Meaning, for example, how do we put a traditional mass into the Mexican culture. It already exists, but we think that we need to put something into that Mexican culture, rather than allowing them to bring their culture into action with Catholic tradition. So instead of speaking about culture, what is the meaning of context? I would suggest that you pay careful attention to that because in specifically *Recontextualisation*, we're talking about a context that is religiously and philosophically very diverse, very pluralised. That's the context into which I see us moving our Catholic identity, when we speak about *Recontextualisation*. And pay careful attention to the breakdown points of *Values Education*, I believe Prof. Pollefeyt will speak more about that, and the distinctions between *Monocorrelation* and *Multicorrelation*, I believe he's going to speak more about that as well.

Shift 2. Towards valuation of faith and religiosity in dialogue with others

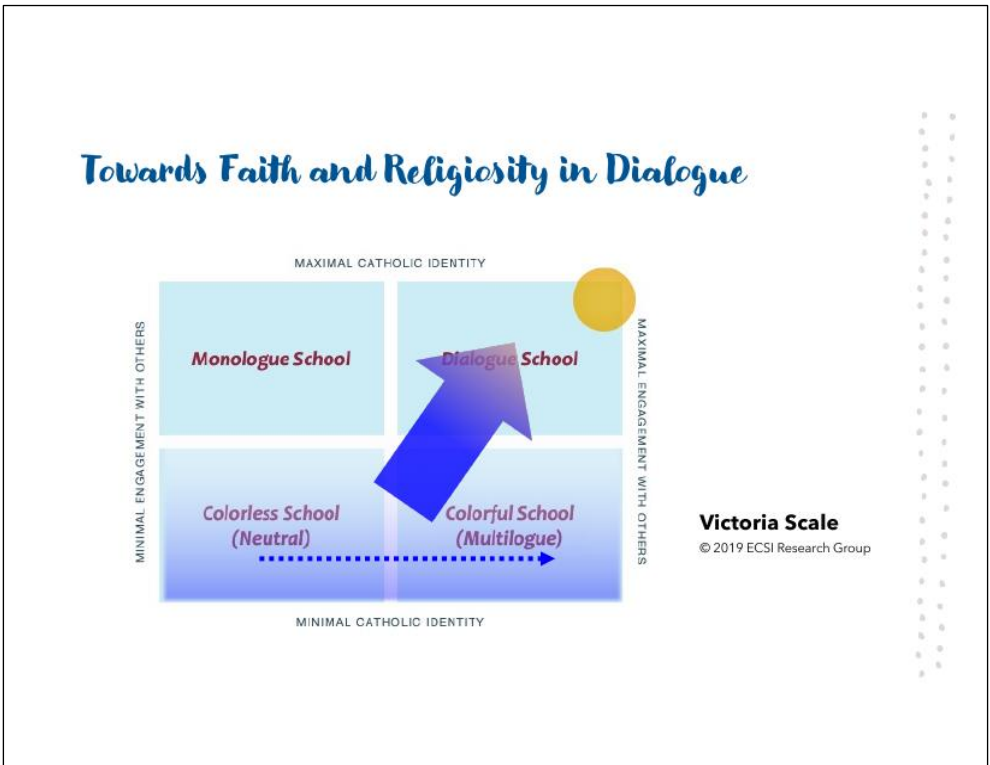


The second shift that I'm going to speak about with regards to our own school, is the shift towards a positive valuation of faith, and really religiosity, in dialogue with others. This is a shift towards the *Dialogue School* model. But this particular shift that I'm going to speak about here, is a shift towards that dialogue model, but away from a position of *Secularisation*.

And there are two ways in which we see secularisation, at least in the United States (maybe also to a certain extent in Australia), in that secularisation can be seen as privatisation. So, it's that increasing separation between the public sphere and the private sphere, where religion is removed from the public sphere. It can still be very much alive, but in the private sphere alone. So that's one sense of secularisation in the US use of the term, and another sense of secularisation here is a sort of abandonment altogether of belief and practice, a disenfranchisement from any sense of a believing position. Those are the two senses of secularisation here in my context.

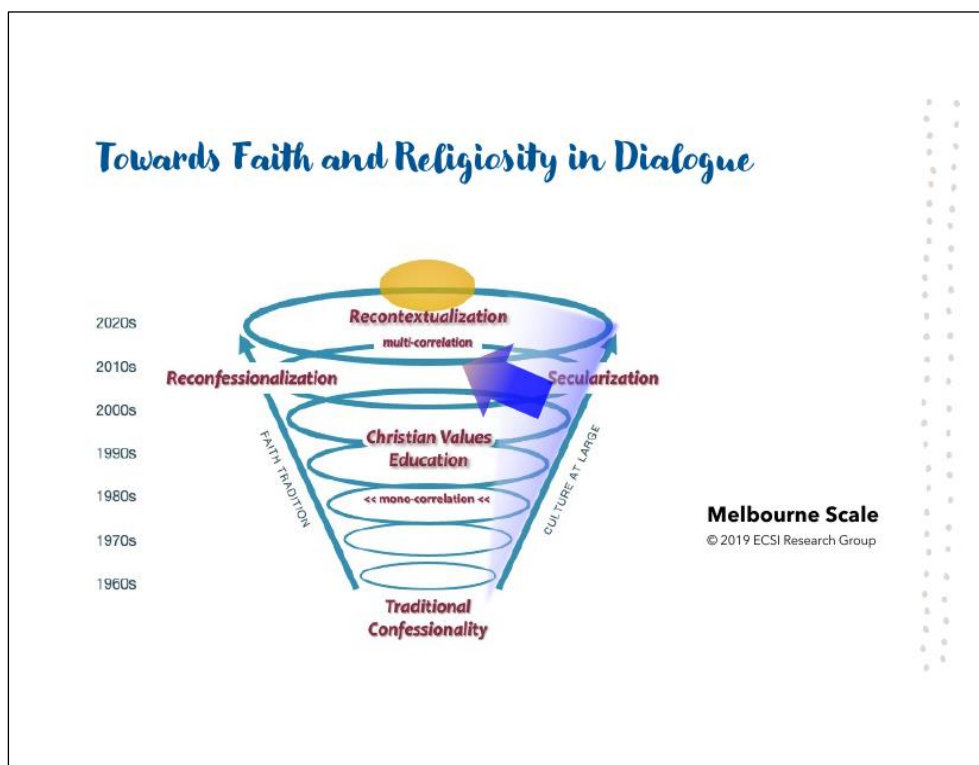


We see that shift here on the *Victoria Scale*, or as we start with the *Victoria Scale*, we see that ideal, that theologically normative position in the golden dot.

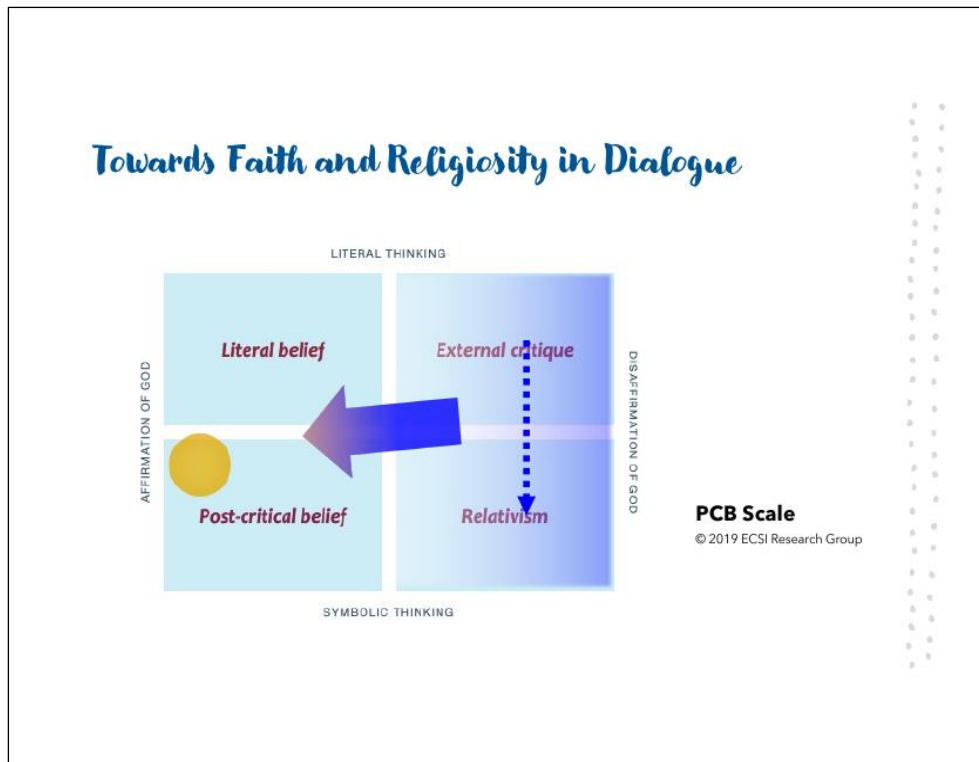


And so, the shift that I'm speaking about here is specifically how do we invite people who are much more philosophically and praxiologically positioned in the *Colourless School* or the *Colourful School* zones, how do we invite them to engage in a *Catholic Dialogue School* model. Because for them the challenge there is not necessarily a challenge of dialogue itself (and I'll speak about that in just a

moment from my own experience in this school), but the challenge here for people in the *Colourless* and *Colourful* zones is how do we invite them into a dialogue that is specifically about faith and religiosity. That's the exact challenge that I see in this model. And I see that here in our context very, very clearly. If you haven't seen these blue arrows before, the big blue arrow is about inviting all people in the *Colourless* and *Colourful* areas towards the *Dialogue School* model. And then the horizontal dashed arrow across the bottom of the two is the possibility of a kind of first movement to people who are more squarely positioned in the *Colourless School* model. Maybe the first invitation there is to invite them into a kind of dialogue that actively engages others in a plural environment, at least this kind of multicultural plural environment, because remember the *Colourless School* does not even favour that kind of multicultural engagement with others. So, there might be a kind of first movement there.

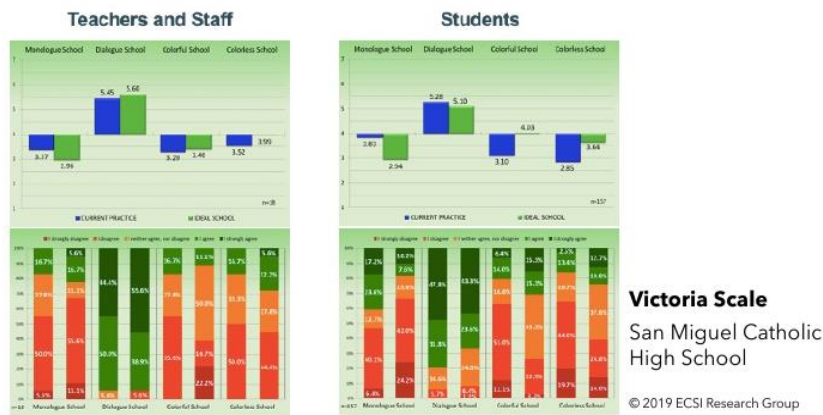


We can also see the same invitation in the *Melbourne Scale*, again we're speaking about inviting people who are squarely positioned in a *Secularising* movement, towards a stronger sense of *Recontextualisation* and *Multicorrelation*, which requires dialogue and it's the theological foundation for the *Catholic Dialogue* school. So, we see it here as well.

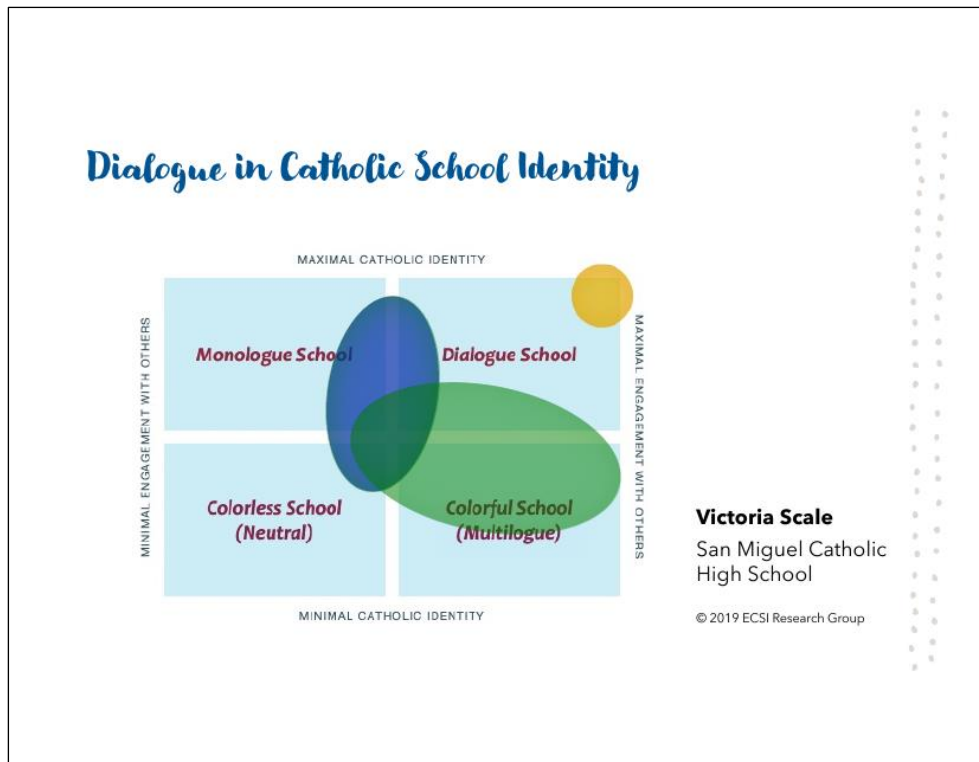


We also see the same invitation articulated in the sense of the *PCB Scale*. So how are we inviting people who are squarely positioned in *External Critique* or *Relativism*, into a kind of dialogue where *Post-Critical Belief* is valued and encouraged. And so, these two arrows are like the other two that we saw in the *Victoria Scale*. The big blue arrow is a general invitation to all people in our school who are far away from a strong sense of affirmation of God, and then the dotted arrow is maybe a first invitation for those people in *External Critique*. Maybe we first need to invite them into a sense of *Relativism* so they can at least be invited to see that there is value in plural perspectives. And then, at some point, we can secondarily invite them into a kind of dialogue that engages with people who espouse *Post-Critical Belief*.

Dialogue in Catholic School Identity



In terms of my school, probably like many of your schools, teachers and staff on the left side have a very strong preference for the *Dialogue School*. The blue is the current and the green is the ideal, so the teachers and staff definitely see my school as a *Dialogue School*; it doesn't mean that we don't have a lot further to go, but they see it that way and they want more. On the right side you see that the students also see the *Dialogue School* model, but their preference for the *Dialogue School* wanes. In fact, what the students actually prefer more would be more of a *Colourful School* model, or even to a certain extent, a *Colourless School* model. Although the preference is there, the ideal is not positive; the resistance has almost completely eroded. In the blue you see they view the current school as being resistant to *Colourful* and *Colourless*, but in their ideal, most of that resistance has eroded.



What does that look like visually? Again, the green here is our student population, and the blue is where our teacher and staff population generally fall on this diagram. So, what's really interesting to note here is that there's this tension that we see this all the time. There's this tension between the student population who want to go in one direction and the teacher and staff population who want to go in the other direction. The student population definitely wants to move away from dialogue that is about faith and religiosity. They want to move much more towards a kind of dialogue that is about celebrating multiculturalism. The teachers and staff want to move much more towards dialogue that's about a strong sense of Catholic identity and even to a certain extent away from that kind of multicultural dialogue. So, there's this tension and where this tension meets, you see here, is in the middle.

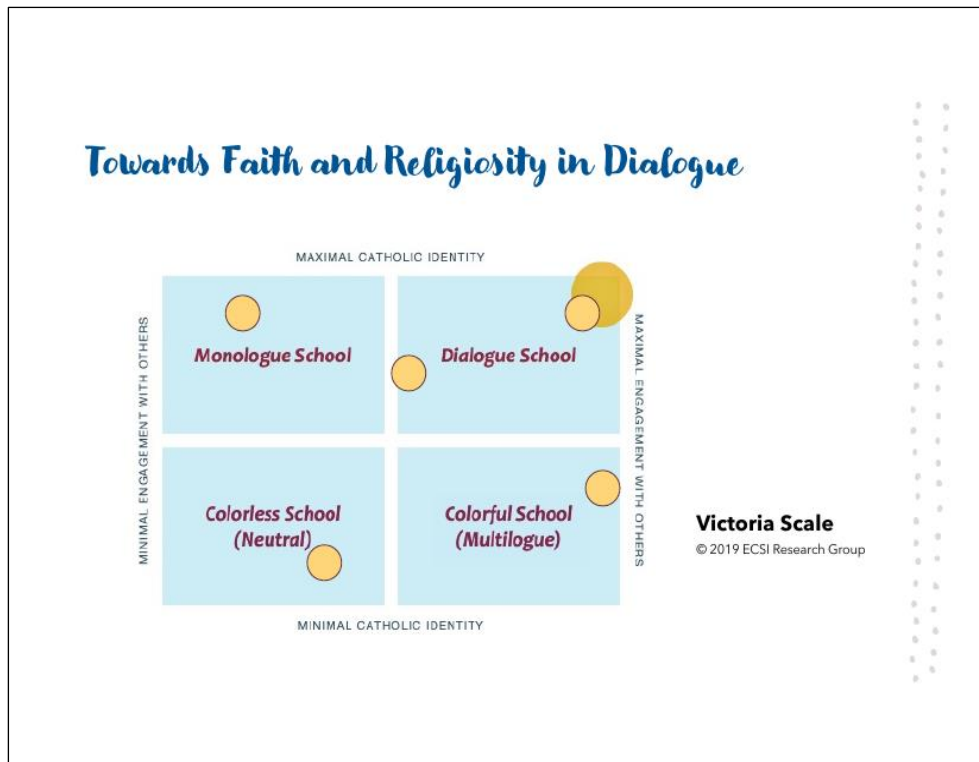
The point at which the teachers and students actually agree, where they support each other, is in this kind of neutral zone of dialogue between the four different quadrants. What that means practically, is that here at my school, students and teachers love to come together when the dialogue is about anything but Catholic identity and almost anything but multicultural identity. They love to come together, both groups, in dialogue about school policies, about games and sports and activities, and clubs and college application process, and just general American culture, what's on the internet these days. Faith and religiosity? No. Students do not want to engage in that, and teachers and staff are not so much enthusiastic about dialogue concerning the multicultural, plural sense of identities. So that's a big tension here.

Towards Faith and Religiosity in Dialogue
Practical Challenges

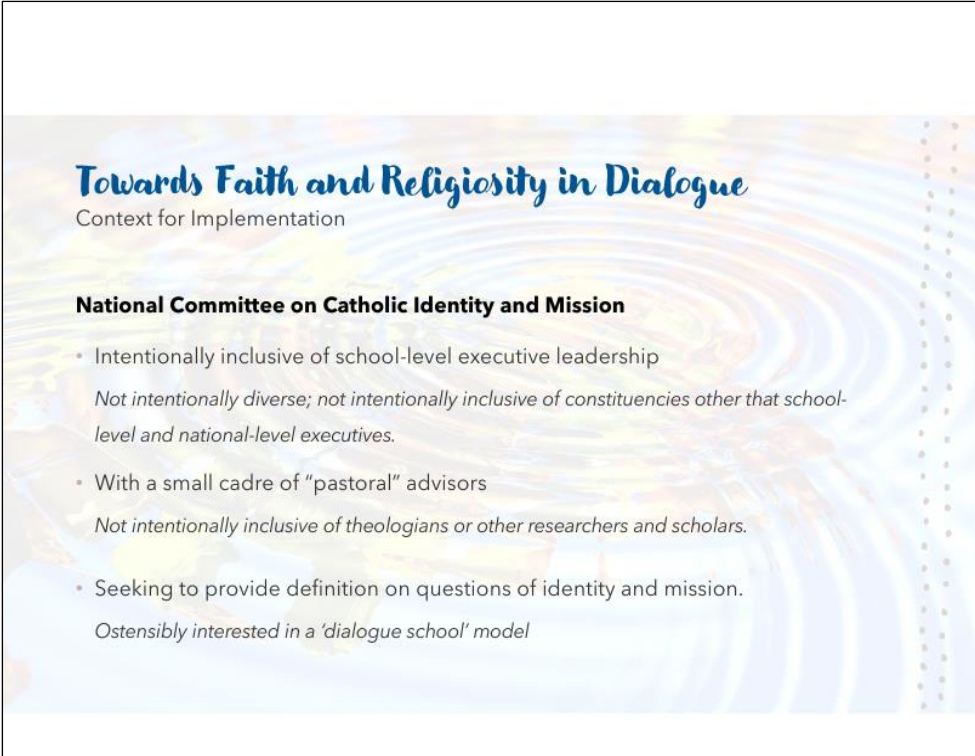
Everyone's (seemingly) in favor of 'dialogue!'

- 'Dialogue' as 'celebration of plurality' (baptized multiculturalism)
- 'Dialogue' as 'cautiously kerygmatic proclamation'
- 'Dialogue' as 'collaboration on school policies'
- 'Dialogue' as 'closed feedback loop about Catholicism'
- 'Dialogue' as 'reflexive transformation through mutual encounter with others'

This tension kind of sounds like this. It sounds like everyone is in favour of dialogue, that word they got it, they'll all say: "I like dialogue". But what they mean by dialogue is very different across the board. Some people mean dialogue in terms of multicultural plurality, Native American culture, Mexican American culture, African American culture... all the different cultural things, not faith and religion, just secular cultures. So, you've got people who will talk about dialogue in a very different sense. Then when some people speak about dialogue, they mean a kind of kerygmatic proclamation in the style of dialogue. "We're going to talk about faith and religion because I want to be able to evangelise." That's what some people understand as dialogue. Then other people want to look at dialogue as being about school policies; some people here will use the term dialogue if what they mean is we're going to dialogue about what it means to be Catholic, no reference to anything else in the world, just what it means to be Catholic. And some people do mean dialogue as a kind of reflexive transformation that happens through mutual encounters with others.



Just visually you see these positions all over the place. So, people in all these different smaller circles, let's name these smaller circles as kind of like an individual normative position: "what I personally think should be the norm", we see these individual positions all over the place and the thing here is that everybody uses the term dialogue. So, if we speak about a *Catholic Dialogue School*, lots of people are in favour of that, but their understanding of dialogue is not the same.



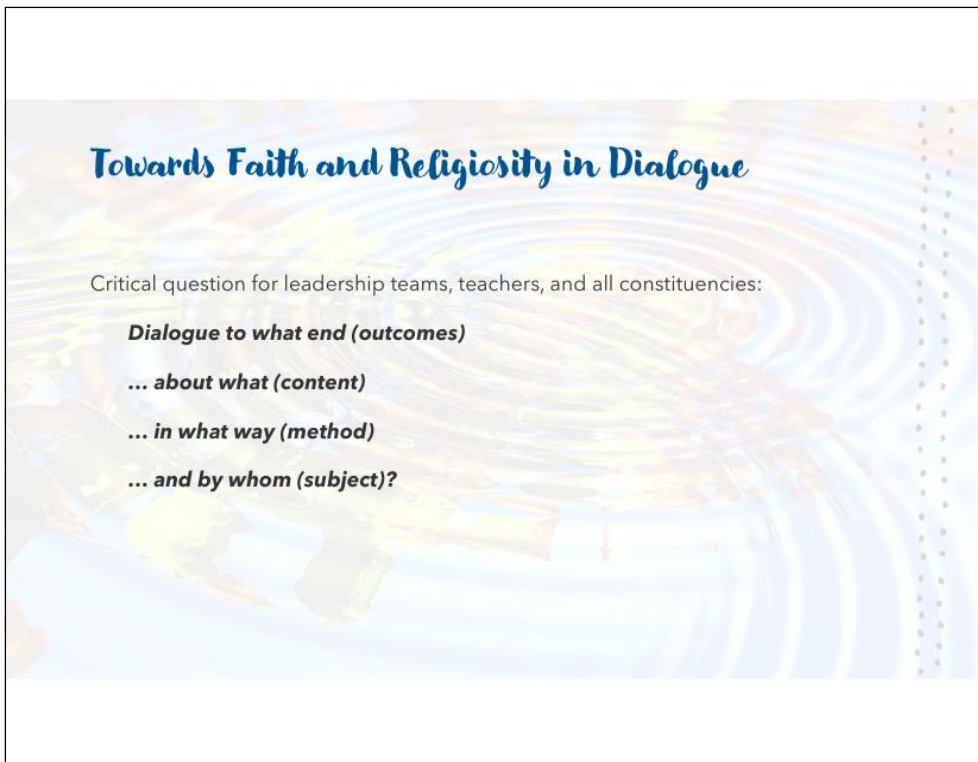
Towards Faith and Religiosity in Dialogue
Context for Implementation

National Committee on Catholic Identity and Mission

- Intentionally inclusive of school-level executive leadership
Not intentionally diverse; not intentionally inclusive of constituencies other than school-level and national-level executives.
- With a small cadre of “pastoral” advisors
Not intentionally inclusive of theologians or other researchers and scholars.
- Seeking to provide definition on questions of identity and mission.
Ostensibly interested in a ‘dialogue school’ model

I also see this in our national level in the US. I'm part of the *National Committee on Catholic Identity and Mission*. We're having a conversation right now on this committee about dialogue. Not necessarily exactly about the *Catholic Dialogue School*, but something like that. They don't have that name, but they have the idea. This committee is a committee of principals, presidents, rectors from schools all across the United States, with a small group of pastoral advisors. I say pastoral because it's not necessarily theologians or people from university research fields, but more so people from the pastoral world, from parish ministry, counselling. And so, this national committee is talking about whether or not Catholic schools should be places of dialogue. But this committee has very, very different senses of dialogue, almost like what it looks like here at our school.

On this committee there are two dominant parties. There's the kerygmatic group who sees that purpose to dialogue and they definitely want to be sure that that is the idea of dialogue that dominates in our discussion, that that is the purpose of Catholic schools, is to evangelise in a kerygmatic sense, to proclaim the gospel, the good news, almost or even to the extent of being apologetic. I'm not criticising any of this, I'm just relating to you where the tensions are. The other tension in this group is that there is an entirely different party which is much more likely a *Colourful School* model; they prefer a phenomenological approach to plurality, in the sense that the faith and religiosity is removed from dialogue. So, this local tension is also seen at the national level. In this national committee it is definitely true that many people are looking for an easy solution to the sense of dialogue. My point here is that it's very difficult to engage people in digging into what it means when you say dialogue. Everybody uses the term, but it becomes obvious in discussion that people have different understandings of dialogue and so it's hard to shift people towards a *Catholic Dialogue School* model, when they kind of think that they're already there, but yet they don't appreciate the deep theological meaning of dialogue. So, the strategy for implementation, at least it's true here locally and then to a certain extent on the national committee, is that we're shifting towards a *dialogue about dialogue*. Yet what do we all mean when we say that we want to see more dialogue in the identity and mission of our school? So that means that we actually have to set aside time to engage in deeper theological learning about dialogue, which you are all doing in the intensive course, so how lucky you are.



Towards Faith and Religiosity in Dialogue

Critical question for leadership teams, teachers, and all constituencies:

- Dialogue to what end (outcomes)**
- ... about what (content)**
- ... in what way (method)**
- ... and by whom (subject)?**

This is a critical question that has come up for us and I pose back to you, if it's helpful for you, if you're facing the same idea, the same challenge in terms of: everybody loves dialogue, but they all mean different things when they talk about dialogue. These are the questions that we're wrestling with here. What do we all mean by dialogue in terms of the outcomes and what is the end game in dialogue, what is the content of dialogue, what is the method by which we will dialogue and who are the subjects in this dialogical process: the teachers alone, the students as subjects in the learning process? So, these questions here have framed our shift very well so far, because they're exposing a lot of the diversity about thinking about what dialogue is.

Quick Write

Towards Faith and Religiosity in Dialogue with Others

- What are the **attitudes in your school(s)** towards this shift?
- From a school leader perspective, what **advancement** is needed in terms of:
 - Institutional policies
 - Educational programming and resources
 - Educator formation and professional learning



In the interest of time, I'll invite you to continue noting any key words, phrases and questions and I will move to just point out that as you continue in your intensive course these coming weeks, pay closer attention to this idea of what dialogue is in the *Dialogue School Model*.

Intensive Course Info Point

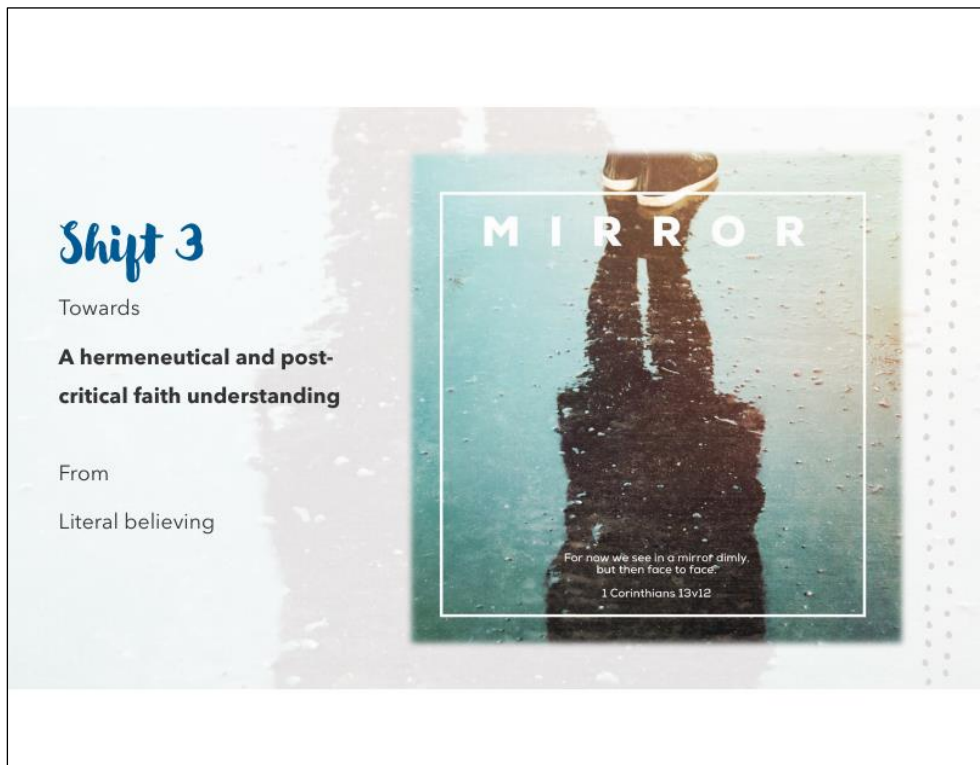
Towards Faith and Religiosity in Dialogue with Others

- Differentiation between theologically normative positions
 - **Recontextualizing dialogue**
 - **Kerymatic dialogue**
- Theology of otherness
- Theology of God as dialogical
- Symmetry in dialogue

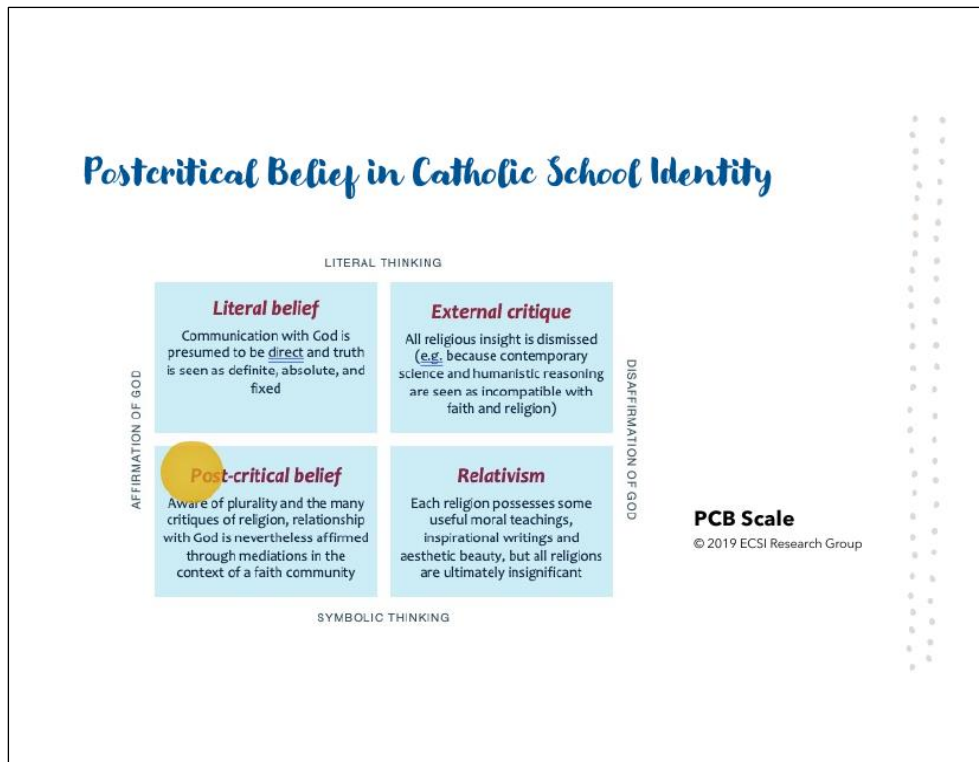


Normatively or theologically speaking, what's the difference between *Recontextualising* dialogue and kerymatic dialogue. And there are other forms of dialogue, but the difference between these two is critical and we see that in my context here. Pay attention these couple of weeks and beyond, to deeper senses of a theology of otherness, theology of God as dialogical, and what Prof. Pollefeyt will speak more about, in terms of the symmetry and asymmetry that's involved in dialogue. All of these things will help to really break open this casual sense that people have of "Oh yeah, dialogue, love it, let's go". But then you discover that there's so much diversity out there concerning the actual thinking about dialogue.

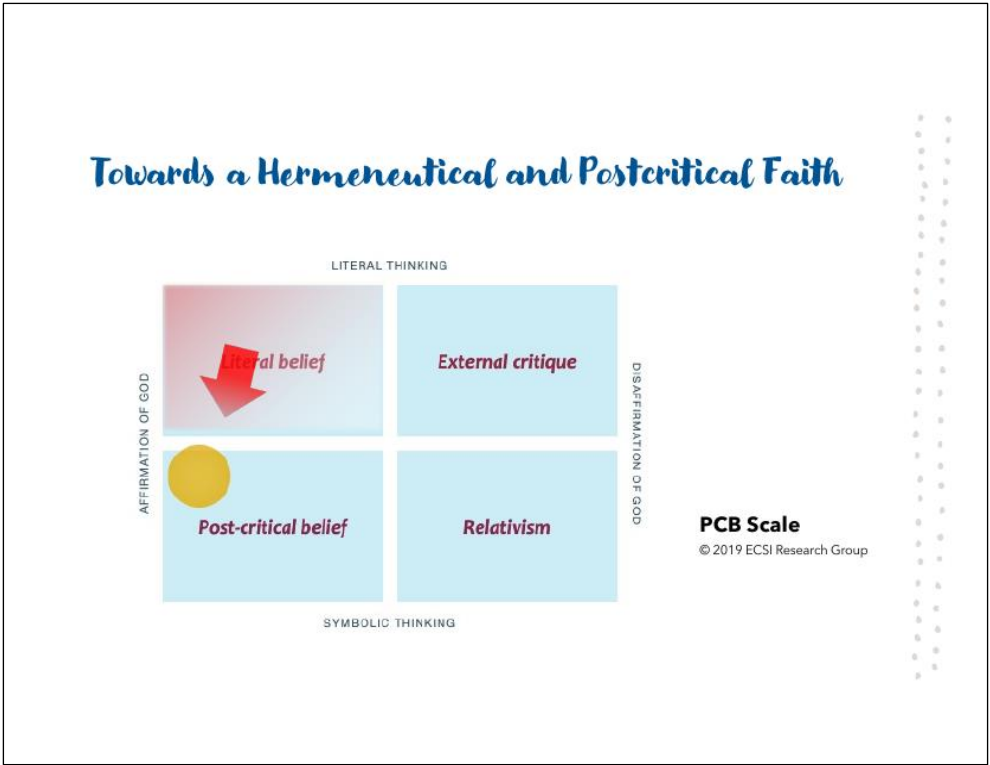
Shift 3. Towards a hermeneutical and post-critical faith understanding



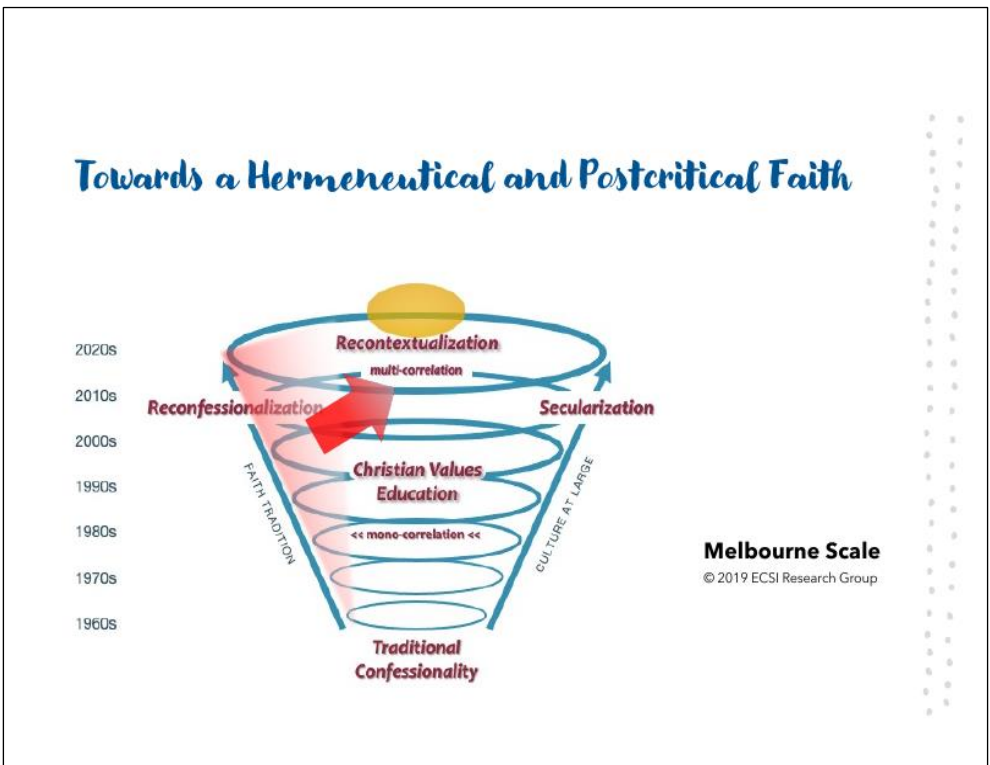
In the time that remains I'm going to speak lastly about the third shift. We have seen some of the themes of this shift in the earlier ones, so a little less time is needed on this one. The shift that I'm speaking about here is a shift towards the *Post-Critical* perspective, the hermeneutical faith understanding, as I've spoken about it.



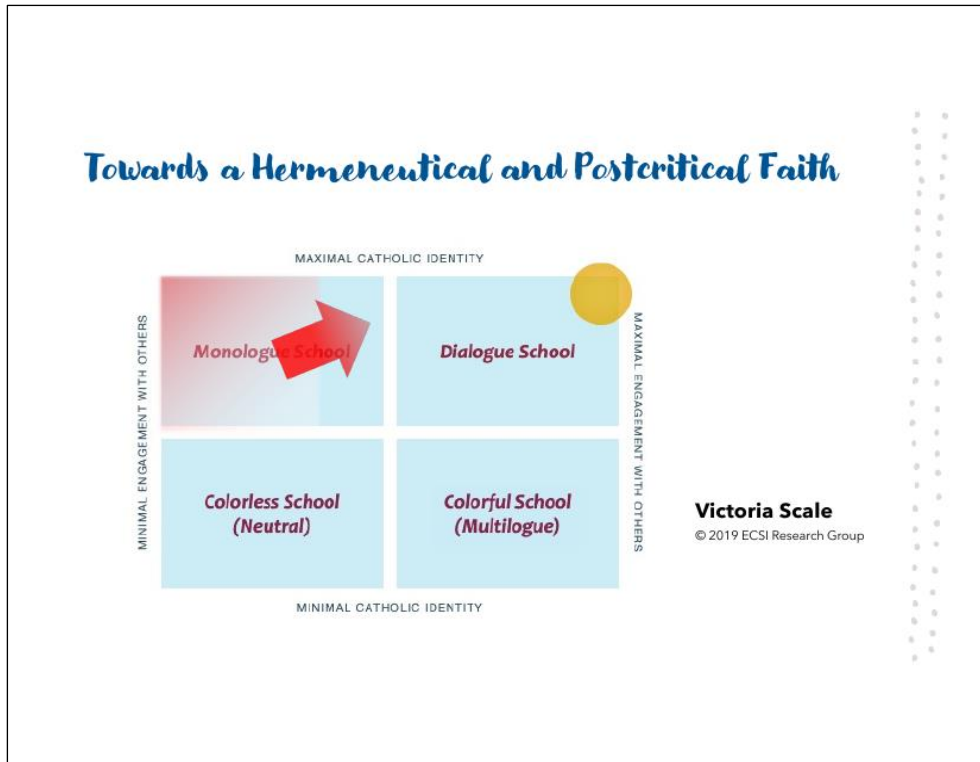
And specifically, we're speaking about inviting people forward from a position of *Literal Belief* to value-engaging with people who are more squarely rooted in *Post-Critical Belief*. And for those of us who are believers, ministering to and working with other believers, it may also involve an invitation for the other themselves to shift slowly out of their *Literal Believing* position towards something closer to the theologically normative point here in the gold dot, which is in *Post-Critical Belief*. I know in your ECSI course you're going to go much more into depth on this normative position, that's not my purpose here.



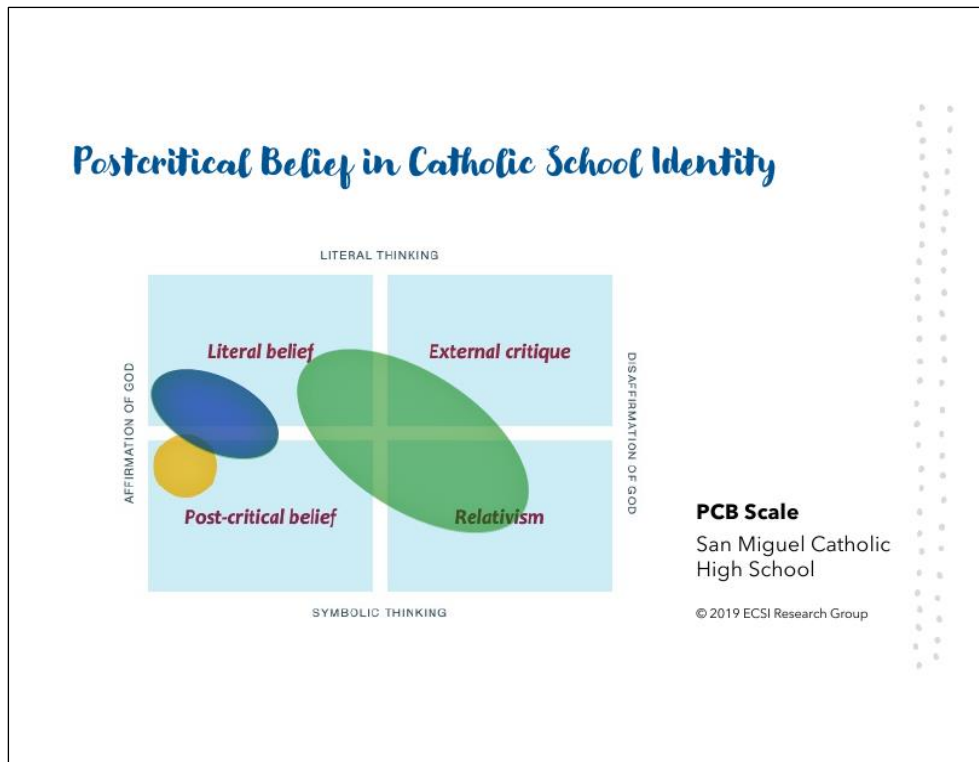
But I'm speaking about this shift in terms of this invitation to people in our schools, who are firmly rooted in *Literal Believing*, to engage with those of us in a *Post-Critical Believing* context of dialogue.



We see the same shift in the *Melbourne Scale*. This is often correlated with people who are moving in a *Reconfessionalising* direction, or they have *Reconfessionalising* tensions. How do we invite them to come to see the value of *Post-Critical Belief*, hermeneutically, in our faith understanding, as we engage in *Multicorrelation* and *Recontextualisation*?



We can see the same kind of invitation articulated here in the *Victoria Scale*. It's again inviting people who are squarely rooted in a position of, here on the screen I know it's the *Multilogue School*, but inviting people who are rooted in a position of *Literal* faith – this is the way it is, it's kind of black and white, and in order to shift towards the *Dialogue School* model, I've got to invite people to become much more open to the diversity of thinking and diverse perspectives.



Here in my school, if I just skip ahead to this slide here, it's easier to see, our students generally fall in, pretty widely, the area of *Relativism*, to a certain extent also *External Critique* and strangely enough (maybe strangely to some of you in Europe) we have a kind of subpopulation of students who is squarely in *Literal Belief* here. But not a lot of students in *Post-Critical Belief*. Our faculty and staff (in the blue oval) is much closer to the theologically normative position and they bear a lot of hallmarks of *Literal Belief*, so there's a challenge here for us to invite our teachers and staff closer to *Post-Critical Belief* as well.

Towards a Hermeneutical and Postcritical Faith

Challenges to Implementation - Counter Position

Curriculum and Engagement

- The closed feedback loop.

Example : [Credible Catholic](#) (apologetics units for Natural Science and Religious Education) from the [Magis Center](#).

Teacher Formation

- The teacher as "master apologist".

Example : [Master Teacher Certification in Contemporary Apologetics](#)

One of our biggest challenges in terms of doing that here in my school, and in Arizona in general, is that there's a very strong movement here locally towards apologetics, as the curriculum method in religious education. I won't link to these sources; if you have the slides, please feel free to link to those or look them up on your own, but this is an example, if you're not familiar with it, of the kind of neo-apologetic movement for religious education here in the United States and it's very prominent here in Southern Arizona. This is a challenge because the curriculum as it is, is one in which the teacher is seen as a master apologist.

Towards a Hermeneutical and Postcritical Faith

Implementation Strategies

Curriculum and Engagement

- From answers and proofs to questions and interpretations
To what extent is the question more important than the answer?
To what extent are multiple (valid) perspectives possible?
- From student as object to student as subject
To what extent is the student the hermeneut?
To what extent is the students own identity, context, experience involved in the hermeneutical endeavor?

So, the strategy here in terms of inviting people towards a *Post-Critical* faith position, a hermeneutical faith position, is to invite people to shift from a position of "we've got the answers, we've got all the proofs, it's done, learn them, we're done", to a position of valuing the questions and looking for interpretations.

And it's also about inviting people to shift away from seeing the student as an object, which is not to say that the neo-apologetic movement does that, but I'm speaking about something more broadly here, to seeing the student as a subject in the process. So, to what extent do we also invite the student to become the hermeneut and the teacher and that's the kind of master hermeneut from whom the student learns.

Towards a Hermeneutical and Postcritical Faith

Implementation Strategies

Teacher Formation

- From master apologist (the defender) to master hermeneut (the seeker)

To what extent is the teacher also a learner in faith?

- See recent work on hermeneutical learning and teacher formation in:

D. Pollefeyt (2020). Hermeneutical Learning in Religious Education. *Journal of Religious Education* 68, pp 1-11.

[Link to Journal of Religious Education](#)

So that's part of our implementation strategy. It's to look for professional formation opportunities for our teachers; not just our RE teachers, but all of us who are educators in the school. Formation opportunities that invite people to delve much more deeply into what it means to approach faith from a hermeneutical perspective. That's not an easy strategy for us to work on, because it's not as if there's a whole lot of opportunities for Catholic school teachers here in the United States to do that. Maybe at some point in the future we will have a US version of the *ECSI Intensive Course* which would be a great opportunity for people to do that.

Intensive Course Info Point

Towards a Hermeneutical and Postcritical Faith Understanding

- Sacred space of not-yet-knowing in full
cf. 1 Corinthians 13:12 in light of the gospels
- Hermeneutical-communicative model for faith learning
- Witness-specialist-moderator



So, as you're moving forward in the intensive course, please continue to pay attention carefully to what the hermeneutical communicative model means for faith learning, how the teacher can be formed as a master hermeneut if you will, and how the teacher can help young people become as a subject, a hermeneut themselves, a hermeneut student. Prof. Pollefeyt mentions this in recent articles, and I'm sure in this course we'll speak much more about the teachers as a witness, specialist, and moderator; pay careful attention to the themes there.

Summary

Summary

Three shifts towards Enhancing Catholic School Identity:

1. Towards **recontextualization and multicorrelation**, from values education and monocorrelation.
2. Towards **valuation of faith and religiosity in dialogue with others**, from secularization (both privatization and disenfranchisement).
3. Towards **a hermeneutical and post-critical faith understanding**, from literal believing.

Well, I've said a lot, and as a quick summary here I'll just observe again that we're speaking about three shifts in the process of enhancing Catholic school identity at my school, and the invitation for you to do the same. It's a **shift towards *Recontextualisation* and *Multicorrelation***, especially for those people who are rooted in *Values Education*, inviting them forward to *Recontextualisation*. A **shift towards valuing faith and religiosity in dialogue with others** and that's especially necessary as an invitation for people who are squarely rooted in a strong sense of *Secularisation* and it's an **invitation towards a hermeneutical and a *Post-Critical* faith understanding**, perhaps most so that the third one is an invitation for people deeply rooted in a *Literal Believing* position.

Summary

Integrated strategies

School Committee on Catholic Identity and Mission

- Intentionally inclusive of diverse identities in belief and religiosity
- Intentionally inclusive of all constituencies
- Intentionally inclusive of Catholics / Christians with a dialogue mentality
- Intentional engagement with data, research, theological scholarship
- Supported with time, leadership, financial and material resources

I'll just finally mention here my second to last point, that all of the strategies which I've talked about today at our local school here are integrated in a *School Committee on Catholic Identity and Mission*. Now, the Covid pause means that this school committee has been getting of the ground in a very, very slow way, but they are poised to launch next year. We are very excited about their work; they have a lot of resources to dig into, a lot of it are ECSI related resources, which will be a fantastic discussion point for them. What I'd like to really point out here about this school committee, is all of these bullet points that are about intentionality. So, this school committee is intentionally inclusive of diversity and intentionally inclusive of all our constituencies: students, families, board members, community members etc. It's intentionally inclusive of Catholics and Christians who are coming in with a dialogue mentality and there's intentional engagement with the data and research and the theological scholarship.

Summary

Complex challenges requiring:

1. A dedicated and high-expertise team of leaders and educators
2. Grounded in strong theology that speaks to our world today
3. Using empirical data to understand their communities and guide development
 - Profile of diverse identities*
 - Perceptions of Catholic school identity and mission today*
 - Attitudes towards shifts in that identity and mission for tomorrow*
4. Live out their commitments to a contemporary mission for Catholic education
5. In a spirit of faith, service, and cooperation with God's holy spirit

So just lastly for me, I can very well appreciate with many of you in your leadership roles, absolutely. These are complex questions, this sense of *Recontextualisation*, *Post-Critical Belief* and Catholic dialogue in the *Dialogue School* model. These are complex shifts that we are working on. What I'm beginning to see here in our recent work, and what I invite you to see, is that it does absolutely take a dedicated and high-expertise team of people to lead this effort. And it absolutely does require that they all be grounded in the strong theology that speaks to our needs today, like the theology you get in this intensive course.

It is absolutely necessary that we engage with empirical data about our schools to understand the community and to guide our development and it's absolutely true that this team of leaders and educators sees this role in the school as one of living out their commitments to the shared mission that we have today, for Catholic education in a sense of faith service and cooperation with God's Holy Spirit.



So, on behalf of my students here and my teachers, who are just delightful people, thank you for the privilege of this time together today. Thank you for this honour to be able to share with you the attempts that we're making here, one little school in Arizona, towards the *Catholic Dialogue School* model and I pray that there's points of inspiration here for many of you who continue to do good work in Catholic school leadership in Australia and beyond.

Discussion

I believe now we have some minutes for questions or comments or some discussion. What would be helpful here is for you to put your name into the chat, so I can see who we're looking for.

Questions and answers

Gina Bernasconi: "Hi, Michael, are you able to say more about the attitude of families to the approach to Catholic identity you're taking? Such data is hard to come by in our diocese."

Response: It's a good question, so Gina is asking about what the attitude of our families towards the model of *Catholic Dialogue School* that we're talking about here. You're definitely right, Gina, to observe that the data is hard to come by. It's also hard to come by for us. Almost universally anything we ask parents to participate in, like a survey, gets somewhere in the range of about 10, 12% of response. So, it's even very hard to gage what the parents' perspectives would be on that. Anecdotally though, what I can say is that there's not a tremendous amount of enthusiasm for what we're doing, from parents. I think that parents are... Well, remember first of all, that for parents, Catholic identity is not in the top 6, 7, 8, 9 reasons why they choose our school. So when we talk about reshaping our Catholic identity, many parents, in terms of speaking with them anecdotally, are like "Yeah, okay... but what are you doing about college admissions, what are you doing about offering the IB programme or more AP classes, or how come there's not a varsity baseball team this year? Catholic identity okay, great, but what are you doing about the other things." So, I have the sense, maybe you do as well, that bringing the parents along is a few more steps down the road, at least for us. It's already starting in the inner core with our teachers and staff, and school leadership; our board members are slowly coming to understand what we are doing here. Parents are probably one of the furthest tiers out, however some small points of success have been inviting some parents into the *Catholic Identity Committee* and the opportunity there is for those parents to be able to engage other parents. So maybe where some parents aren't really that open to engaging with us teachers on questions of Catholic identity, they may be more open to engaging with other parents, in like a parent forum. That's one thing we're beginning to do with parents, but you're absolutely right, it's true here too, data on parent attitudes is hard to come by.

Jeff Hobbs: "In Australia we tend to have Catholics as the largest single group of any religious group with a dynamic and diverse Catholic education system but, as you observed, we are much more strongly tied to wider powers that exist in the Church. I often find that our clergy, not all but a lot, lack a sense of where this project is heading. How are your local clergy and/or bishops taking this approach to the 'Catholic school'?"

Response: So, Jeff here, you're asking about what our relationship is like with local clergy. Well, in the case of our school, Jeff, we're an independent Catholic school, owned and operated by the De La Salle Christian Brothers, and so our affinity in this project is with them. They're on board, their own Brothers and their own lay members, who are in leadership, are part of our *Catholic Identity Committee* and are supportive of our work and are helping us to drive that with investing time, resources and personnel.

There continues to be a big disconnect here for us between the school and the local clergy. People at the diocesan level and the bishop's office, for example, I think it's fair to say that we have different viewpoints on where this project is going. The bishop is supportive from a distance. He's supportive of things in general that enhance Catholic school identity, even if he does not yet quite appreciate the sense of Catholic identity that we're talking about here at the school. But in terms of the level of support and the level of commitment, most of the local clergy and the bishops included, are fairly distant from us to a certain extent philosophically, but to a much stronger extent practically, because of our close affinity with the religious congregation that sponsors the school. We couldn't be luckier to have a religious congregation that is well-aligned with this vision, so yeah, it's a challenge for you as well, I'm sure.

It's a challenge to bring more priests and bishops into the circle of discussion about the *Catholic Dialogue School*. Yet here in my context it's actually kind of rare, I don't know what it's like in Australia, but it's rare that bishops or clergy get all that interested in Catholic education in general. It's kind of like the thing they don't want to deal with. They just kind of hope it keeps going well, they hope that the school doesn't close, that no scandal emerges and they have so many other important things that they are dealing with that a lot of people just tend to trust the operation of the schools to other people. So I don't see that as a negative, it's not that they are impeding our efforts in any way, but it's not a positive, in that they are not very closely engaged in what we're doing. My hope is that the more that the students become involved in this project, the more we'll be able to reach out to clergy, because it'll be students from their parishes, it'll be students who know them individually. So, if the priests and the bishops are not that motivated to engage by my invitation, we hope that they will be by students.

Kim Tedford: "Have you been able to invite those in the *Literal Belief* group to get involved? If so, what strategies work to get the *Literal Believers* to engage in Dialogue?"

Response: I see a question from Kim Tedford. Have you been able to get those in the *Literal Belief* group to get involved? Yes, yes, we have. Because at least here the thing about my school, is that people who are much more strongly *Literal Believing*, is that they have a very strong sense that this is a Catholic school, it needs to publicly be a Catholic school, we need to have a vibrant sense of religious life at this school. So, they're motivated, at least my teachers and staff, to engage in this conversation. It's not hard to invite them into the circle of discussion. What is difficult to do, is to invite them to see the multitude of perspectives about what vibrant Catholic identity looks like. The thing that's been working well with those people, is inviting them to listen to students. And they tend to not listen when it's teachers talking to teachers, but if we can make the conversation more student-centred, they tend to be more open to the sense of students, because they are often very authentically motivated by a strong and positive sense of wanting this to be a community where students are engaged in faith and religiosity. So, if we can help those people understand what the student multi-philosophical, multi-religious worldview is like, then they're more patient with this sense of how we can respond to that. So, the key there is to invite them out of this zone, thinking about "we are Catholics, and everybody else is the non-Catholic" and inviting them into a zone of "we are Catholics of many kinds in a world, a context of people of many different positions". And when they see that in the lives of the students, they tend to be more open with engaging with questions that look more like *Post-Critical Belief* instead of *Literal Belief*.

Catherine Simmonds: "What practical strategies have you been able to implement regarding *Recontextualisation* and dialogue in particular?"

Response: I think I have time for one more, I think we're at the limit here. I see a question from Catherine Simmonds about practical things we've done regarding *Recontextualisation* and dialogue. One little caveat about that is to remember the Covid pause, so we haven't been in person, on campus in 15 months (most of our students), so what we're planning to do in terms of *Recontextualisation* and dialogue has yet to be realised. The first project we have on the board is a campus architecture project, not new buildings, but like artwork around campus. We have a very strong art department here at this school and so we're working with the art teacher who's on board with this dialogue school project. Working with the art teacher to do things in her curriculum, but to help students explore artistically a sense of *Recontextualisation*. 93% of our students are Mexican American, most of them are immigrant students and families from Mexico, so many of them come with a traditional Mexican sense of Catholicism, and so there's a fantastic opportunity here with our students to look at for example the Virgin of Guadalupe, reading into the traditional image of the Virgin of Guadalupe in our art class. In the next semester, students are going to begin to explore new ways of expressing the theology that is embedded in the image and the narrative of the Guadalupe and the art teacher showed me some samples of what she has in mind and what that project looks like and at the moment it's open to a lot of diversity; from something that is recontextualising the narrative and image of the Guadalupe into the story of Muslim immigrants here in Arizona. That's one possibility. I wish I could say something more concrete or show you some examples about that but it's the Covid pause that has our plans living on paper at the moment.

Concluding words

I wish we had more time for this discussion in person, but such as it is. Again, I'm just very thankful to have had this time with you and I certainly hope that there's some points of inspiration for you here in your own work and I certainly look forward to any further exchanges that we might be able to have in the future.