

Preliminary note to the English speaking reader

The text below is the approved English translation of the Dutch article, published in 2013:

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Though made available for an international audience, originally this article was written by Flemish authors – for Flemish readers, as it deals with the specific educational landscape that exists in Flanders in 2013. We suggest that the international reader keeps in mind that the educational contexts abroad are likely to be different from the context presupposed in this text.

Dialogue as the Future.

A Catholic Answer to the 'Colourisation' of the Educational Landscape

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Since 2007, the Centre for Academic Teacher Training of the Catholic University of Leuven's Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies has developed a methodology to carry out quantitative and qualitative empirical research into Catholic school identity. One of the empirical instruments it has developed is the so-called Victoria Scale. This multivariate attitude scale converts the identity square of differing school types described by the Dutch researchers Wim ter Horst¹ and Chris Hermans² (*Monologue School, Dialogue School, Colourful School and Colourless School*) into a stable and manageable instrument that enables us to situate the identity of schools in an empirically reliable way. This attitude scale measures where a school currently stands with regard to its identity (factual measurement level), as well as where it wants to go in the future (normative measurement level). Up to now (February 2013), the *Victoria Scale* has been applied to 15,310 people in 67 Catholic educational institutions all across Flanders. The questionnaires were filled out by students in primary, secondary and tertiary education, teaching staff, school leadership figures, parents and by those responsible for dictating policy. In this brief contribution, we would like to reflect on a number of findings of this research with an eye towards making the *Dialogue School* a reality in Catholic schools in Flanders.

The difference between *Dialogue Schools* and *Colourful Schools* is clear in Flemish Catholic schools

For the Flemish research participants, it is clear that the *Dialogue School* is distinct from the *Colourful School*. The research has shown that, conceptually speaking, people can clearly distinguish between the categories of the *Dialogue School* and the *Colourful School*. An item typical of the *Dialogue School* is: "My 'ideal school' believes that the Catholic faith offers a meaningful and valuable message that everyone should hear, albeit without the intent to make all the students Catholic". An example

¹ W. TER HORST, *Wijs me de weg. Mogelijkheden voor een christelijke opvoeding in een post-christelijke samenleving*, Kampen, Kok, 1995, p.63-75.

² C.A.M. HERMANS & J. VAN VUYGT (ed.), *Identiteit door de tijd. Reflectie op het confessionele basisonderwijs in een gesecculariseerde en multiculturele samenleving*, Den Haag, ABKO, 1997, 5-27.

expression of the *Colourful School* is: “I believe that it is more important to value the many fundamental life options and lifestyles at school (even the non-Christian ones) than to preserve a Catholic school identity.” The difference is clear: the *Dialogue School* expresses a clear preference for a particular position – namely the Catholic position – out of which to engage others in dialogue. By contrast, the *Colourful School* assumes a fundamental equivalence of all philosophical and religious positions. Both school types strive for maximal recognition, appreciation and support for plurality and ‘otherness’ at school, but while the *Colourful School* eliminates any and all expressions of preference, positing a formal equality of all substantial differences (i.e. relativism), the *Dialogue School* holds that one can only enter into true solidarity and dialogue with others in any meaningful way when we do so out of a perspective of Christian faith. In the typology of the identity square, the *Dialogue School* is an explicitly Catholic school, while the *Colourful School* no longer wishes to hold onto the Catholic identity of the school. A *Colourful School* is a non-Catholic school... or it is no longer a Catholic school. Based on the negative correlation between the *Dialogue school* and *Colourful School* on the ideal level ($r = -0.24$), it seems that research participants also understand this difference. Generally speaking, the more participants express a desire for a *Dialogue School* (thus giving it a high ideal score), the less they express a desire for the *Colourful School* (with a resultant low ideal score), and vice versa. Nevertheless, this does not mean that, in terms of actual practice, differing tendencies cannot simultaneously emerge. The *Victoria Scale* does not try to pigeonhole people or schools. On the contrary, different movements can occur at the same time, and it is therefore always important to investigate the internal connections between these varying tendencies.

Adults prefer *Dialogue Schools*, but students no longer give majority support

Generally speaking, one can say that there is very widespread support for the *Dialogue School* among adults in Flemish Catholic schools (school staff, parents and the school leadership). Over 84% are (strongly) in favour, 12% are indifferent, and less than 4% are outright opposed. Over 80% of the adults see this dialogue as already being realised. There is therefore room for growth on this point. In other words, given this broad support for the *Dialogue School* among adults in Catholic schools, policy makers do not have to be afraid to throw their full weight behind the *Dialogue School* model.

Support for the model of the Dialogue School across adults in primary and secondary schools here in Victoria, approximately 93% are strongly in favour, a little over 4% are indifferent and fewer than 1.5% disagree though not strongly. More than 84% see this dialogue as already being realised.

In the background, however, we clearly see the growth of a second tendency, although at this moment, it is more of a discussion among the adults. Roughly 50% of these same adults also make a choice for the *Colourful School*, while 28% express hesitation and 22% are outright opposed. We cannot speak of a switch between the *Dialogue* and *Colourful Schools*, but we can talk about a gradual shift in emphasis. If the *Dialogue School* should fail, it is clear which alternative would come forward.

For Catholic schools here in Victoria, 24.5% of these same adults also make a choice for the Colourful School, 31.3% express hesitation, while more than 44% are opposed.

Among the students, this transition has already taken place. They already show more support for the *Colourful School* (62.5%) than for the *Dialogue School* (50%). In addition, roughly 29% of the students express opposition towards the *Dialogue School*, even if this school type does not intend to make all of the students Catholic. It is interesting to see that on the factual level, while 80% of the adults believe dialogue is currently being realised at their workplace, a far smaller proportion of the students (just 56%) see this dialogue. Perhaps the adults are somewhat too optimistic and too quickly satisfied with the dialogue with the Catholic tradition currently taking place at their

7 perspective, the *Dialogue School* is more demanding than the *Colourful School*, which gets by with the (valuable) principle of formal tolerance.

Among the students the results are significantly different when comparing primary and secondary students. The data provided here is an aggregation of both cohorts. Students in Victoria show vastly more support for the Dialogue School (72.3%) than for the Colourful School (29.1%). Those who oppose the model of the Dialogue School make up less than 11% of all students.

It is interesting to note that on the factual level, 84.5% of adults believe that dialogue is currently being realised in their workplace, while 72.3% of students are able to recognise this dialogue in the classroom.

The Colourful School quietly presents itself as an alternative to the Dialogue School

Generally speaking, we therefore see a gradual, quiet shift from *Dialogue Schools* to *Colourful Schools* (i.e. secularisation) within Catholic schools in Flanders. Most of the adults would like to hold onto the *Dialogue School* model and even to further reinforce it, but (judging by the parallel emergence of the *Colourful School*) the Christian-religious foundation of openness and solidarity with others threatens to lose ground in favour of a more formal equivalence of philosophical and religious positions. Partly due to pressure coming from resistance shown by many students and some adults against an explicitly Catholic approach, the 'path of least resistance' frequently ends up being chosen. The result is a gradual yet clear evolution in the direction of the *Colourful School*. Many of the students (50%! (72.3%)) still express an openness towards the *Dialogue School* and many others are undecided (22%) (22.2%), but the resistance towards the *Colourful School* (18%) (33.4%) is clearly weaker than the resistance towards the *Dialogue School* (29%) (19%). It is important for school leadership figures to learn the language with which they can reflect on and become conscious of the quiet transitions taking place in their schools, as well as to make certain choices out of this consciousness. This also presupposes a strong understanding of what a *Dialogue School* is.

We distinguish two subtypes in the Dialogue School model

In conducting large-scale empirical research in Australia, we have discovered two variants of the *Dialogue School*, which we respectively call the *kerygmatic* and *recontextualising* types. Due to the advanced secularisation of the Flemish context, we cannot trace these two subtypes in Flanders. Nevertheless, in the purely theoretical debate over the *Dialogue School* in Flanders, these two subtypes still play a role. While the discussion at the workplace primarily concerns the difference between the *Colourful* and *Dialogue Schools*, there is also a (pedagogical, philosophical and theological) debate taking place in the background over which type of *Dialogue School* is desirable. Both types have a certain plausibility and can offer credentials.

Subtype 1: The kerygmatic type of Dialogue School

Just like in the Catholic *Monologue School*, in the *kerygmatic* type of *Dialogue School*, the Catholic faith tradition represents a highly meaningful and valuable message that should be heard by everyone. Ultimately speaking, one is convinced that the truth offered by the Catholic faith is more fundamental and fulfilling than the ideas offered by other religions and philosophies. Why else should a school want to be a Catholic school? A Catholic school must therefore, in principle, give priority to the Catholic faith and Catholic practices, placing them over other religions and philosophies (i.e. apologetics). The (parents of the) students have after all consciously chosen to enrol themselves in a *Catholic* institution.

It is therefore reasonable to expect that all those involved will participate in the Catholic school project, even though it is possible that their levels of participation may vary. It is obvious that in a Catholic school, religion is by no means an individual, private matter that should play no role in the life of the school. Catholic schools must be engaged in the faith formation of the students, and students may not retreat into their individual, private spheres on this matter.

Unlike the *Monologue School*, however, the kerygmatic type of the *Dialogue School* does not go as far as to expect that all of the students are or will become Catholic. It is of fundamental importance that Christians must respect people with other convictions and lifestyles. The Christian faith itself has a fundamentally relational and dialogical character. Faith neither can nor may ever be imposed on others, whether by explicit or implicit coercion. Nevertheless, it is of course possible and even desirable to be enthusiastic about faith and Christ and to invite others to that same faith. Furthermore, the encounter and dialogue with others is an opportunity to witness to that belief in both word and deed. Standing in the midst of a pluralistic society with an attitude of tolerance, solidarity, friendship and love for all people is of course compatible with a Catholic educational project. At the same time, one holds onto one's own Catholic convictions which one positively and optimistically communicates to others. In order for this to be possible, believers must search out new, creative ways to be Catholic in the midst of the present-day culture. They must find new ways to live as 'authentic' Catholics in the present society in such a way that the particularly Catholic faith can speak openly and freely in the midst of other voices. In this situation it is important to keep an open mind, always on the search for God in the world. It is necessary to have an open encounter and dialogue with other philosophical convictions, without, of course, taking in too many 'un-Catholic' influences.

In other words, the kerygmatic type of *Dialogue School* is primarily concerned with the search for a new 'public relations strategy' and not so much with recontextualisation or new, fundamental theological developments. The 'Catholic package' of faith convictions and truth claims, rites and rituals, moral and socio-political attitudes, distinctive prayers and music – or in other words, the traditional Catholic way of life – is more or less fixed and immutable. Generally speaking, it is not desirable to want to change the content or form of the Catholic belief in order to make it 'conform' or 'resonate' better with the constantly changing present-day cultural maelstrom. Catholic schools must therefore try to avoid clearly non-Catholic or anti-Catholic attitudes and practices, because these can undermine the mission of the Catholic school. The essence of Catholicism is to a large extent defined by the tradition and must be preserved and, if necessary, protected from other ideas. In this type of *Dialogue School*, everything comes down to proclaiming the plausibility, greater value and truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ in an honest way within an open dialogue with all who are prepared to enter into the discussion.

Subtype 2: The recontextualising type of *Dialogue School*

The *recontextualising* type of *Dialogue School* is no less gripped by the Catholic faith than the kerygmatic type, but it is more modest, careful, inquisitive, and less convinced of its *a priori* 'being right'. If we want to authentically live out our Catholic faith from within a multicultural setting, we must hold an open, searching and interpretive attitude.⁴ The process of encounter and dialogue with

⁴ We detect a significant correlation between the support for a *Dialogue School* model on the one hand and a *Post-critical Belief* on the other hand ($r=0.63$). It is clear that a symbolic-hermeneutical understanding of the faith tradition contributes significantly to an open, searching and tolerant Catholic school identity.

otherness is not just an opportunity for proclamation, but also – and more fundamentally – constitutive of one’s own religious understanding, because it is in this encounter and confrontation with the other that God reveals Himself. It is here that new layers of meaning are opened and faith is recontextualised. Dialogue becomes reciprocal, and both dialogue partners become vulnerable and receptive towards new meanings.

However, it is the theological (epistemological) conviction of this type of *Dialogue School* that the truth of Catholicism is not fixed and cannot *a priori* be known with certainty. The truth must rather be discovered and made true in lives actually lived through a continual process of interpretation. Believers are challenged to search for new insights into what it means to be Catholic in the midst of the present context, and to do so creatively, innovatively, and with an open mind. *Recontextualising Dialogue Schools* are constantly on the search for new ways to express and live the gospel. They are always looking for new ways to make it true today. When we do this, we stand with one foot in the Catholic tradition and the other in an unwritten future. The outcome of this search is uncertain, and it is possible that some valuable things from the past will disappear into the background. Nevertheless, we satisfy ourselves with new discoveries, and hope that the Holy Spirit accompanies us on our journey.

As the world evolves and changes, so do the idea of what it means to be Christian in this world and the way the original evangelical inspiration is given a concrete form. Catholic faith must change her profile and ‘re-contextualise’ herself as she enters each new era. This process of recontextualisation began already in the earliest days of Christianity, and it is now up to us to carry on this tradition in the 21st century. The Catholic tradition has always been developing and renewing itself in a great variety of ways, and it must keep doing this today. Whenever God walks besides us on this path, new revelations come forth, and the faith tradition further unfolds itself.

In order to bring about a *Recontextualising Dialogue School*, it is crucial to have active dialogue with people of other convictions and lifestyles. It is therefore important that many different philosophical and religious visions, practices and lifestyles can exist side-by-side in a Catholic school. It is precisely through recognising, respecting and truly valuing the differences between people that the school can rediscover her *Catholic* identity again. This receptivity towards ‘the other’ is fundamental. It is important to actually meet the other, and this means actually listening to what moves his or her spirit. It is only when we look the other in the eye that we can encounter the face of Christ. When we offer protection and hospitality to strangers, God can reveal Himself to us in new and unexpected ways.⁵

Dialogue between Christianity and culture

Both subtypes of the *Dialogue School* play a meaningful role in the present-day debate over Catholic school identity. In both Australia and Flanders, we offer a nuanced criticism of the kerygmatic variant of the *Dialogue School* while openly promoting the recontextualising variant, and we do this on both empirical and theological grounds.

⁵ For further treatment of the *Dialogue School* model of the recontextualising type, see POLLEFEYT, D., & BOUWENS, J., *Framing the Identity of Catholic Schools. Empirical Methodology for Quantitative Research of the Catholic Identity of an Education Institute*, in *International Studies in Catholic Education* 2-2 (2010) 193-211.

In the kerygmatic type of *Dialogue School*, dialogue tends to be used as an opportunity to promote the Catholic faith, and though this is done open-mindedly, it is also done unambiguously. The relationship between the dialogue partners is asymmetrical – one gives and the other receives, one speaks and the other responds, whether agreeing or disagreeing. The relationship with the tradition is protective and preserving. In Fowler's terms,⁶ it's about faith formation aiming at an initiation into the 'conventional synthesis of belief'. By contrast, in the recontextualising type, dialogue is the context of a real encounter with difference. It is an encounter that transforms all of the partners involved in the dialogue. The relationship between the dialogue partners is symmetrical. One speaks while the other listens and vice versa. The relationship with the tradition aims at a dynamic renewal and the search for plausibility against the background of a changing context. In Fowler's terms, it corresponds to a 'subjunctive faith' wherein the value and truth of one's own faith convictions do not depend on the absence of value and truth in the other's faith convictions. On the contrary, the encounter can even enrich and deepen one's own faith convictions.

A recontextualising *Dialogue School* consciously and actively positions itself in the dialectical tension between continuity and discontinuity, between tradition and innovation. It is through this dynamic that the Catholic tradition can progress further and make itself worthy of belief. A one-sided emphasis on innovation can cause one to get lost in the 'dialogue'. For all intents and purposes, the school actually becomes a *Colourful School* that no longer dares to speak out of Christian particularity. It becomes 'active-pluralistic' instead of Catholic. On the other hand, a one-sided emphasis on continuity can cause one to lose touch with the context, thereby also losing both plausibility and inspiring relevance. Such a school ends up becoming a *Monologue School* in the margins of society. Such *Monologue Schools* have almost no support in Flanders. Furthermore, one can question how compatible such a school is with the Catholic message itself or with the age-old dynamic of the Catholic tradition.

In between these two temptations (the *Monologue School* and the *Colourful School*), there is actually a vast field of possibilities that can be creatively unfurled. Perhaps this is where the future of Catholic education lies. Catholic schools and school communities should take options that determine their identities, each from out of their own history, tradition, context, school population and vision for the future. Parents and students should be able to choose from a plurality of Catholic schools, each with its own emphasis on and relationship with identity and diversity. The task of Catholic education will consist in bringing these schools into conversation with each other to challenge each other and learn from each other. It may perhaps also be necessary to ask whether it would be better for certain schools to honestly admit that they have become completely *Colourless* and can in all honesty no longer be called Catholic schools (which of course does not make them any worse as schools). Whenever schools make choices concerning these issues, it seems to us to be important for them to consider the following three important findings that have come out of our fundamental and empirical research.

There is a connection between *Monologue Schools* and *Colourless Schools*

When finding oneself within a context of secularisation and pluralisation, there is on the one hand the temptation to push kerygmatic dialogue so forcefully that the school's identity shifts in the direction of

⁶ J.W. FOWLER, *Stages of Faith. The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1981. Alsook: J.W. FOWLER, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian. Adult Development and Christian Faith*, San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1984.

a *Monologue School*. The more *Dialogue Schools* are eroded by unconscious and not-explicitly *Colourful* tendencies, the more the longing for ever clearer speech is fed. At this moment, a *Monological* Catholic pedagogical model receives support from just 3%, although an additional 15% of the adults are in doubt. Among the students, this minority tendency is somewhat stronger (10%), especially among the younger students.

Theoretically speaking, we would have expected a clearly negative correlation between *Monological* and *Colourless* tendencies. Remarkably, however, our research has shown that in reality, there is actually a small positive correlation between the two ($r=0.09$). As people observe more *Monological* features, they also see more *Colourless* features. (This correlation is much stronger in Australian schools, where *Monological* tendencies are also much higher.) This looks like a contradiction. How can a school be both *Monological* and *Colourless*? Qualitative research has helped us to understand why. Whenever a school begins to forcefully impose one particular fundamental life option, all the other options go 'underground'. The discourse quietens down, and both the life options themselves and the engagement in these life options are forced into the private sphere. People no longer dare to lay their cards out on the table. Instead, they conform to the reigning discourse, albeit only formally. When they go home, however, they leave everything behind in the school, together with the chalk and the blackboard. The school therefore ends up becoming a *Colourless* environment.

There is a connection between *Colourful Schools* and *Colourless Schools*

We observe a second, very strong correlation between *Colourful* and *Colourless Schools* ($r=0.47$), and even on the more conceptual, normative level, the respondents do not see the difference between *Colourful* and *Colourless Schools* very clearly ($r=0.64$). Schools that opt for a *Colourful* identity model should know that *Colourlessness* lurks around the corner as a secondary and connected pattern, certainly in the long term. This empirical finding is not very difficult to explain. A school can appear to be *Colourful*, but if its source of inspiration dries up and is replaced by formal principles such as tolerance, respect, democracy, et cetera, *Colourlessness* can in the long run float up to the top. There isn't anything concrete, particular or 'warm' that connects different people at the school to each other. Because different colours are no longer 'allowed' to make any difference at the school, they also cease to play any role of importance in the long run. Instead, procedures, professionalism and efficiency take the rudder.

***Dialogue Schools* should acknowledge their identity**

The key question is of course how concrete of a form to give to the recontextualising type of the *Dialogue School* model, both today and in the future. Schools need to have a language and a conceptual framework in order to be able to adequately analyse their own situation. This is a necessary prerequisite for being able to effectively work on building up an identity. One must adequately understand and accept who one is, where one stands and how one evolves. Against the background of this analysis, schools must ask themselves *where they want to go*.

Indeed, to become a *Dialogue School* ultimately demands a *decision*. It ultimately depends on a decisive answer to the question of whether the Catholic narrative is worth the trouble and whether it will

continue to function as a privileged dialogue partner in an educational project. It concerns an *exercise of the will* – made in the first instance by the school board, the management and the staff – concerning the future of the philosophical and religious identity of the school. One doesn't have to expect that this exercise of the will should come about through some sort of democratic majority and that it should be supported by everyone all the time. It should, however, be supported by the school board, the management and the other leaders of the school, from whom one can expect an unambiguous and active engagement in the religious education project of the school. From the teaching staff, one can at least expect loyalty and constructive cooperation in the *Dialogue School*. Even if not everyone supports the project, everyone can agree to contribute according to his/her individual identity and talents. In addition, a diversity of positions (critical ones as well) is, in principle, enriching. The decision to work on building up a *Dialogue School* manifests itself in big and small choices, actions and words in the daily life of the school. It expresses itself especially in the quality of the interpersonal relationships in the school. It also asks for a continuous renewal and re-profiling of the school as the context shifts.

We also cannot expect a *Dialogue School* model to materialise purely through the application of special techniques, procedures, mechanisms, strategies or wonderful little 'tricks'. The decision to pursue the *Dialogue School* is based on an inner attitude fed by personal faith. It's driven by a hope in the future and a trust in people, by the joy found in being allowed to work on God's Kingdom, by the dream of a school community that lives by the gospel and by the conviction that a school becomes better – in all respects – when it strives for the Catholic *Dialogue School* model.

Of prime importance is to explicitly and actively make Christ Himself present, both in the heart of the school's life and the hearts of the people of the school. Christ is the privileged reference point that refers to the tradition, and it is the people inside and outside the school who give form and content to the relation between Christ and tradition in an authentic way. Catholic spirituality is a core element of this. The Catholic tradition is a religion of mediations. It offers a great number of mediations that allow us to flexibly join ourselves, over and over, both to each other and to the God who speaks to us through the tradition, i.e. through texts, history, human experiences, scientific insights, moral values, narratives, symbols and rituals, traditions, offices, parishes and social organisations, theological and church teachings, art and architecture, meditation and prayer.

The *Dialogue School* model 'automatically' arises when two conditions come together. The first condition is met when a member of the school staff chooses to live, behave and witness as the best Catholic she/he can possibly be, out of a personally lived spirituality surrounded by the mediations through which God announces Himself. The second condition is met when that school staff member *simultaneously* receives the students entrusted to him/her in an open, unprejudiced, unbiased and vulnerable way. The school staff member meets the students as they truly are, puts their interests first and walks side by side with them. The result of this interaction, cross-fertilisation and inner struggle is an authentic *Dialogue School* model where the Catholic faith is unavoidably and credibly recontextualised in the dynamics of encounter, friction, exchange and dialogue. The attraction of a real, radical and necessarily recontextualised Christian love of neighbour is indeed irresistible. However, neither of these conditions is self-evident. Where is God in the school? God is with us (always and everywhere) through a chain of mediations at expected and unexpected places and times, in ever new and unpredictable ways. Do we recognise God? What can we do in our schools and with ourselves in order to see God more clearly, especially in the face of the other who crosses our path?

It is striking how this dynamic between Catholicism and context plays out with more attention, emphasis, urgency, courage and creativity in other parts of the world than in Flanders. At the same time, we also hold that there is great support in Flanders to realise a *Dialogue School* model, and that almost nobody would resist a reinforcement of the *Dialogical* dynamic of a Catholic school. Opinions are somewhat more divided among the students, but in a *Dialogue School*, that isn't necessarily a problem. On the contrary, Catholic *Dialogue Schools* seek to guide all students to a better future in which they can expand their humanity and realise their potential – whoever they are, wherever they come from and wherever they are going.

What does all this mean for the students in our Catholic teacher training programs? First of all, it is important for future teachers to learn to recognise and understand the difference between a *Dialogue School* and a *Colourful School*, between a Catholic and a pluralistic education project. It is particularly important for them to learn to recognise the specific logic of the preferential dialogue with the Christian tradition which is particular to the *Dialogue School*. The personal nature of one's faith commitment should be the prime focus. Furthermore, it is important for future teachers to learn to find their own place within the *Dialogical* dynamic, as well as the possibilities and engagements that are tied to that place. In addition, there must be room for respect, openness, diversity, free choice and growth. There is a need for a strong learning environment in which students are challenged, stimulated and supported in their personal philosophical growth in dialogue and confrontation with a Catholic faith perspective. Research shows, moreover, that the broader and deeper the confrontation with the Catholic tradition is, the further and deeper students can also grow in the development of a symbolic-believing attitude. Students who cannot situate themselves in this faith perspective can have their own place within the *Dialogue School* model as well, which they ought to find and occupy for themselves. Indeed, our research findings show that students and teachers with a symbolic-hermeneutical but non-believing attitude can also make a positive contribution to a Catholic *Dialogue School*. Finally, it will come down to bringing all students in the educational program – both the believing and non-believing students – into dialogue with each other and the Catholic tradition, via the question of how each can contribute in his/her own way to the realisation of the *Dialogue School* of the future.

