

SpringerBriefs in Education

William Sultmann · Janeen Lamb · Peter Ivers ·
Mark Craig

Re-imagining Senior Secondary Religious Education

Evaluating the Religion,
Meaning, and Life
Curriculum

 Springer

SpringerBriefs in Education

We are delighted to announce SpringerBriefs in Education, an innovative product type that combines elements of both journals and books. Briefs present concise summaries of cutting-edge research and practical applications in education. Featuring compact volumes of 50 to 125 pages, the SpringerBriefs in Education allow authors to present their ideas and readers to absorb them with a minimal time investment. Briefs are published as part of Springer's eBook Collection. In addition, Briefs are available for individual print and electronic purchase.

SpringerBriefs in Education cover a broad range of educational fields such as: Science Education, Higher Education, Educational Psychology, Assessment & Evaluation, Language Education, Mathematics Education, Educational Technology, Medical Education and Educational Policy.

SpringerBriefs typically offer an outlet for:

- An introduction to a (sub)field in education summarizing and giving an overview of theories, issues, core concepts and/or key literature in a particular field
- A timely report of state-of-the art analytical techniques and instruments in the field of educational research
- A presentation of core educational concepts
- An overview of a testing and evaluation method
- A snapshot of a hot or emerging topic or policy change
- An in-depth case study
- A literature review
- A report/review study of a survey
- An elaborated thesis

Both solicited and unsolicited manuscripts are considered for publication in the SpringerBriefs in Education series. Potential authors are warmly invited to complete and submit the Briefs Author Proposal form. All projects will be submitted to editorial review by editorial advisors.


SpringerBriefs are characterized by expedited production schedules with the aim for publication 8 to 12 weeks after acceptance and fast, global electronic dissemination through our online platform SpringerLink. The standard concise author contracts guarantee that:


- an individual ISBN is assigned to each manuscript
- each manuscript is copyrighted in the name of the author
- the author retains the right to post the pre-publication version on his/her website or that of his/her institution

William Sultmann · Janeen Lamb · Peter Ivers ·
Mark Craig

Re-imagining Senior Secondary Religious Education

Evaluating the Religion, Meaning, and Life
Curriculum

William Sultmann 
La Salle Academy
Australian Catholic University
Brisbane, QLD, Australia

Janeen Lamb 
La Salle Academy
Australian Catholic University
Brisbane, QLD, Australia

Peter Ivers 
Faculty of Theology and Philosophy
Australian Catholic University
Brisbane, QLD, Australia

Mark Craig 
Brisbane Catholic Education
Brisbane, QLD, Australia

ISSN 2211-1921

ISSN 2211-193X (electronic)

SpringerBriefs in Education

ISBN 978-981-19-9179-0

ISBN 978-981-19-9180-6 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-9180-6>

© The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd. 2023

Published by Australian Catholic University Ethics approval number: 2019-377H

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors, and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd.

The registered company address is: 152 Beach Road, #21-01/04 Gateway East, Singapore 189721, Singapore

Contents

1	Research Overview	1
1.1	Research Context	1
1.2	Gathering Community Perceptions	3
1.3	Findings and Discussion	3
1.3.1	Research Question: Overall Levels of Satisfaction with RML	3
1.3.2	Research Sub-question 1: What Influenced the Selection of RML?	3
1.3.3	Research Sub-question 2: What Topics Held Most Significance?	4
1.3.4	Research Sub-question 3: What Pedagogical Approaches Were Most Influential?	4
1.3.5	Research Sub-question 4: What Outcomes Were of Most Significance from the Experience of RML	5
1.4	The Educational Experience of RML	5
1.5	Research to Practice Emphases	6
1.6	Limitations	6
	References	6
2	Research Context	9
2.1	Identity and Religious Education	9
2.1.1	The National Perspective	10
2.1.2	Religious Education	13
2.1.3	Historical Approaches to Religious Education	16
2.2	Religious Education in the Archdiocese of Brisbane	19
2.2.1	A Reconceptualist Approach	19
2.2.2	P-12 Religious Education	20
2.2.3	Re-Imagining Religious Education in the Secondary School	21
2.2.4	Religion, Meaning and Life: Curriculum Overview	23
2.3	Research Overview	29

2.3.1	Terminology	29
2.3.2	Researching Religious Education	30
2.3.3	Research Problem	32
2.3.4	Research Purpose	32
2.3.5	Research Question	32
References	32
3	Commonality of Trends in Religious Education	35
3.1	Context for Religious Education	35
3.2	Definitional Perspectives	35
3.3	The Catholic School and Religious Education	36
3.4	International Perspectives	38
3.5	Sub-questions from the Review of Research	41
References	41
4	Gathering Community Perceptions	45
4.1	Research Overview	45
4.2	Participants	45
4.3	Data Collection and Process	47
4.3.1	Instruments	47
4.4	Data Analysis	48
4.4.1	Survey	48
4.4.2	Semi-structured Interviews	49
References	49
5	Reporting Community Perceptions	51
5.1	Results and Discussion	51
5.2	Students	51
5.2.1	Choice and Themes	51
5.2.2	Topics and Themes	53
5.2.3	Pedagogies and Themes	55
5.2.4	Outcomes and Themes	58
5.2.5	Overall Trends	61
5.2.6	Core Influences	63
5.3	Teachers	65
5.3.1	Choice and Themes	65
5.3.2	Topics and Themes	66
5.3.3	Pedagogy and Themes	68
5.3.4	Outcomes and Themes	69
5.3.5	Overall Trends	72
5.4	Parents	74
5.4.1	Choice and Themes	74
5.4.2	Overall Responses on Topics, Pedagogy and Assessment	74
5.4.3	Outcomes and Themes	75
5.5	Summary	77
References	77

6	What Matters Most: Interpretation of the Data	79
6.1	Participant Perceptions: First Order Interpretation	79
6.2	Researcher Perceptions: Second Order Interpretation	81
6.2.1	Research Sub-question 1: What Influenced the Selection of RML?	83
6.2.2	Research Sub-question 2: What Topics Held Most Significance?	83
6.2.3	Research Sub-question 3: What Pedagogical Approaches Were Most Influential?	84
6.2.4	Research Sub-question 4: What Outcomes Were of Most Significance from the Experience of RML	84
6.3	Integrating Literature with Community Perceptions: Third Order Interpretation	85
6.3.1	Emerging Directions	85
6.3.2	New Understandings	87
6.4	Modelling and Advancing Theoretical Propositions	88
6.4.1	Modelling the Integration	89
6.4.2	Advancing Theoretical Propositions	92
	References	93
7	Practice Implications	95
7.1	Practice Emphases	95
7.1.1	Participant Agency and Support	95
7.1.2	Curriculum	95
7.1.3	Pedagogy	96
7.1.4	Formation	96
7.1.5	Catholic School Identity	96
7.1.6	Evaluation	96
7.2	Limitations	97
7.3	Further Research	97
7.4	Conclusion	97
	Appendix A: Student Survey	99
	Appendix B: Teacher Survey	103
	Appendix C: Parent Survey	107
	Appendix D: Semi-structured Focus Group Interview Process for Students and Teachers	109
	Appendix E: RML Teaching and Learning Principles	111
	Appendix F: Content of Units	117
	Appendix G: Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools	121
	Reference	123

About the Authors

William Sultmann AM, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor at Australian Catholic University and Deputy Dean of La Salle Academy. He is a teacher, psychologist, practical theologian, and leader with senior executive and governance roles in education, health, and welfare across Government and Catholic sectors. He has chaired and participated in multiple state and national bodies and consulted nationally and internationally. He has published comprehensively through books, monographs, and journals and holds research doctorates in Educational Psychology and Practical Theology. Current responsibilities include university teaching, applied research and professional writing, and community engagement in not-for-profit governance boards. In 2019, Bill was honoured in the Queen's Birthday Honours as a Member of the Order of Australia.

Janeen Lamb, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor at Australian Catholic University with expertise in Educational Leadership, Curriculum and Pedagogy, Statistical Applications, and Research Methods. Professional experience and expertise have been evidenced in positions as Director, Higher Degree Research in Education, and in instructional leadership in teaching doctoral courses. Her work on leadership and the development of leaders within faith-based cultures has been across several national projects as well as provincial research in support of specific Arch/Dioceses. In all cases, the significance of leadership and its integration within the changing landscape in which the faith-based school operates has identified the significance of mission and curriculum within educational practice.

Peter Ivers, EdD is a Senior Lecturer and National Coordinator for Postgraduate Studies in the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy at Australian Catholic University. He has extensive experience in a variety of leadership roles in different educational settings. His doctoral work investigated the emergence of educational discourses on Religious Education in the Archdiocese of Brisbane between 1984 and 2005, and this has been extended to include recent research projects for the Archdiocese. Peter teaches postgraduate units in Religious Education in areas of History and theories of RE; RE Curriculum; Catholic Social Teaching; and Partnerships in RE.

Mark Craig has been a secondary school teacher of religion for over 20 years and is currently employed as an Education Officer with Brisbane Catholic Education. Before that, Mark was in full-time ministry with the Archdiocese of Brisbane. He is currently completing a Ph.D. in Philosophy at the University of Divinity, Melbourne, and has a Master of Education (Research), as well as a Bachelor of Theology. Mark is a sessional lecturer with BBI TAITE and has published several books on religion and spirituality as well as articles on Religious Education pedagogy and curriculum in Religious Education Journals.

List of Figures

Fig. 2.1	An overview of Religious Education in Australia 1960–2022	17
Fig. 2.2	An overview of parameters shaping the RML curriculum	24
Fig. 2.3	A summary of RML content	26
Fig. 2.4	An overview of Religious Education in Australia 1960–2022	31
Fig. 4.1	Overview of research design	46
Fig. 4.2	Breakdown of participant engagement across data collection periods	46
Fig. 4.3	Breakdown of data analysis	47
Fig. 5.1	Graphic representation of influences on student choice	52
Fig. 5.2	Graphic representation of importance of RML content by topic	54
Fig. 5.3	Graphic representation of student perceptions of pedagogical approach	57
Fig. 5.4	Graphic representation of student perceptions of outcomes	60
Fig. 5.5	Graphic representation of student perceptions of RML by research themes	60
Fig. 5.6	Graphic representation of the influences on teachers to teach RML	66
Fig. 5.7	Graphic representation of teacher perceptions of the RML units	67
Fig. 5.8	Graphic representation of teacher pedagogy in RML effectiveness	67
Fig. 5.9	Graphic representation of teacher role in RML effectiveness	69
Fig. 5.10	Graphic representation of assessment on RML effectiveness	69
Fig. 5.11	Graphic representation of internal personnel contribution to RML	70
Fig. 5.12	Graphic representation of external personnel contribution to RML	71
Fig. 5.13	Graphic representation of teacher outcomes from teaching RML	71
Fig. 5.14	Graphic representation of teachers’ evaluation of RML	73

Fig. 5.15 Graphic representation parent perceptions
on choice influences 75

Fig. 5.16 Graphic representation of parent perceptions of difference
of RML 76

Fig. 5.17 Graphic representation of parent perceptions
of RML outcomes 76

Fig. 6.1 The educational experience of RML 90

List of Tables

Table 5.1	Influences on student choice of RML ($N = 276$)	52
Table 5.2	Importance of RML content by topic ($N = 276$)	54
Table 5.3	Comparison student responses for themes within the construct of topics	56
Table 5.4	Student perceptions of pedagogical approach ($N = 276$)	57
Table 5.5	Comparison student responses for themes within the construct of pedagogies	59
Table 5.6	Student perceptions of RML outcomes	59
Table 5.7	Comparison student responses for Themes within the construct of Outcomes	62
Table 5.8	Student perceptions of RML by overall themes	62
Table 5.9	Influences on teachers to teach RML	65
Table 5.10	Teacher perceptions of the relevance of each of the four units of RML for students	66
Table 5.11	Teacher perceptions of pedagogical practices in RML	68
Table 5.12	Teacher ratings of professional discussion with internal and external personnel on RML	70
Table 5.13	Teachers outcomes from teaching RML	71
Table 5.14	Teachers' evaluation of RML	73
Table 5.15	Parent perceptions of influences on choice	74
Table 5.16	Parent perceptions of difference in RML	75
Table 5.17	Parent perceptions of RML outcomes	76
Table 6.1	All participant groups overall satisfaction rating with RML	80
Table 6.2	Comparison of participant groups across research sub-questions	80