

Institute for Christian Teaching  
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**RELIGIOUS STUDIES MODULES  
AT STANBOROUGH SCHOOL:  
BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN FAITH AND THE  
SECULAR CURRICULUM ?**

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Prepared for the  
22<sup>nd</sup> International Faith and Learning Seminar  
held at Seminar Schloss Bogenhofen  
Austria - August 1998

## Introduction

This essay will report on an experimental programme of classes introduced at Stanborough School, England in 1990 and known as Religious Studies (Rst) Modules. After outlining the background which gave rise to the programme and its theoretical basis, I shall describe its design, implementation and development during the last seven years. I shall then discuss issues surrounding the delivery of the classes, and using data collected from both student and teacher participants, attempt an assessment of its achievements. Finally, I will examine the entire project, in order to draw conclusions and inferences which may be of use to both Stanborough and other schools.

## The background and the reasons why the programme was set up

At the time this programme was implemented, Religious Education (RE) was taught by a specialist RE teacher in two 35-minute classes weekly. These classes dealt with the content of Christianity and discussed its application to lifestyle and moral issues. Form Meetings associated with the morning registration time or plenary Assemblies began the day with prayer and provided for some pastoral care. Because this meant that most members of staff had little to do with the teaching of religion or the spiritual side of the curriculum, there was a sense that faith was being “ghettoised” in a way which would not happen if the Form teachers were all teaching Bible at the start of the day, as is sometimes the practice elsewhere. There was also a sense of compartmentalisation in which teachers stayed within their own subject areas, and the syllabi being followed (some of which were written by the state examining boards) left little time for excursions into distinctively Adventist perspectives or digressions into apologetics.

As George Akers (1994, p.7) has emphasised, “the ability to model before students the process of ,thinking Christianity’ ... is a prophetic function [of the Christian teacher],” and one of the most powerful ways this can be done is by “personal disclosure, open discussions of the ways the teacher has integrated faith and learning into his or her professional life.” The Modules programme was therefore devised as a way of extending the reach of those non-RE teachers. It was presented to teachers as an opportunity for them to reflect on and share with the students

some of the ways in which their interest in their subject related to their spiritual life and religious beliefs, as well as being a space where they could deal with issues of especial concern, such as the Creation-Evolution debate at some length. Additionally, it was hoped that students would be enabled to see more clearly the spiritual commitment of the teacher, to understand that it was not only the RE teacher who was there because he was a Christian, and to demonstrate that religion is not the sole preserve of the RE class. A final objective was to deal with the problem of the limited expertise of the RE teacher when handling technical topics, by allowing a subject specialist to present the more detailed material

In presenting these objectives I am aware that some might want to ask the question whether this was an attempt to integrate faith and learning merely by bolting something onto the curriculum as a bridge between the sacred and the secular, and which therefore merits criticism in the light of the model described by Akers and others.<sup>1</sup> The concept challenges many approaches commonly assumed to be a part of IFL. Later discussion will try to assess the extent to which this may or may not have been the case, but at this stage it can be pointed out that the Modules programme was never intended to carry the full weight of the integration of faith and learning, but was conceived as a useful supplement. Other programmes which have been reported on or proposed, such as “minicourses” (Akers & Moon, 1980) and a college course entitled “God and Nature”(Taylor, 1988)<sup>2</sup>, have followed a similar path, suggesting that there is indeed room in our approach to IFL for this additional facet.

#### Description of the programme - its original form and subsequent development

The RSt Modules were introduced alongside another curriculum innovation known as Projects. The two programmes were similar in that they both divided the students into six small groups

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<sup>1</sup>This model presents a continuum from disjunction (effective secularisation in which faith is compartmentalised away from learning), through conjunction (the interpolation of religious material into teaching content in a way which fails to meaningfully challenge the secularist mindset), to genuine integration.

<sup>2</sup>This was to be “a survey of the natural world from the perspective of the cosmic conflict between good and evil” (p.271), and is very similar in concept to some of the material presented at the secondary school level in the Modules programme.

(typically half a normal class size or around 8-10 students), and rotated the groups around a selection of topics at six-week intervals. The Modules were allocated one period of 35 minutes per week. In the first two or three years of operation this was timetabled at a randomly chosen time of the day/week, but later timetabling established it as an event for the last period on a Friday. The programme was initially operated with students from Years 7, 8 & 9 (11-14 year-olds). In the last year, this has been modified so that only years 7 & 8 are involved, and the four groups are rotated around only four topics at quarter-yearly intervals.

Each year-group would go through the entire sequence of six topics, so that over the course of their three years' exposure to the programme, students would experience each topic three times, each at an appropriately advancing level.

Teachers were given freedom to devise their own assessment objectives and instruments, and grading was optional, so long as sufficient information was provided for the coordinator to report either "Satisfactory" or "Unsatisfactory" participation.

The selection of topics chosen was governed by a number of factors. In the first place, because of the concept of the programme it was important that the teachers involved be committed and willing to involve themselves honestly in its ideals. Prospective teachers were therefore given the option of declining to take part, or of suggesting an alternative topic before the negotiated solution was implemented, and all teachers were invited to submit proposals related either to their subject area or other personal interest. Some subject areas (such as Science and the Bible) presented themselves as obvious candidates and areas of need, while others were introduced more experimentally. There was, however, a general presumption that any subject area could benefit from this type of programme - it was not merely a remedial device for those subject specialists who experienced difficulty with IFL - and teachers were encouraged to think creatively about ways in which they might become involved in the programme. This meant that, because there was room for only six Modules on the timetable, not all of the available possibilities were actually taken up in any one year. Finally, the selection of teachers available (in a school setting where many specialisations are covered by a sole member of staff) depended on their other timetable commitments, and this varied from year to year.

The units of work devised during the life of the programme have covered the following areas:

*Archaeology and the Bible* - A review of the archaeological discoveries which support belief in the veracity of the Bible.

*Art and the Bible* - This module looked at the types of religious artwork done in the past and today and gave students an opportunity to create religious work of their own such as banners for display in church.

*The Bible as Literature* - This Module was taught by three different teachers at different times, each of whom brought their own distinctive style and content to the module. Typically, the course involved some literary criticism (as appropriate for the age group), and reflective and creative responses to the text, either in writing or in enacted scenes.

*Bible Geography* - A survey of the Bible Lands.

*Bible History* - This module tended to restrict itself to a survey of the historical periods during which the events of the Bible took place.

*How to Study the Bible* - A basic tutorial in the skills of finding a reference; devotional and other approaches to reading and dealing with the different kinds of writing found in the Bible, planned at least partially with unchurched students in mind.

*Music and Christianity* - A more recent addition, this module has concentrated on discussions of the students' own musical preferences as Christian youth, and on sampling different types of Christian music.

*Science and the Bible* - This module focussed on issues connected with the Creation versus Evolution debate.

During the period of operation of the Modules programme, there has been continual

development of the school's entire Religion Curriculum, including the core RE class. This has led to pressure to transfer some of the material originally written for modules into the RE class. The "How to..." module was soon transferred into the year 7 RE programme and the History module was dropped from the set for timetabling reasons. Other modules have not so far been affected.

#### Issues that arose with the delivery of the Modules programme

The issues that have come to the fore in the course of operating the programme can be divided into those which bear close relation to theoretical questions, and those which are primarily practical but which have implications for the theoretical construct of the programme.

In the theoretical area, one of the challenges facing administrators of Adventist schools is raising the level of awareness and understanding of the principles of IFL among teaching staff. In this case, as can be seen from the outline descriptions of the modules above, there was sometimes a divergence between the stated intentions and concept of the plan and the proposals actually put into practice by the teachers. In particular, teachers were often reluctant to open themselves to questions of how they could speak meaningfully to their students about the relationship between their subject interest and their faith. Indeed, in some cases, teachers seemed reluctant to embark on this train of thought even for themselves! There may have been a number of reasons for this.

At the most mundane level, it has to be remembered that this is a type of programme which will necessitate careful and personal preparation by teachers who are already carrying a heavy workload. It was therefore sometimes seen as an additional task for which the teacher had little time. Acceptance that the extra work involved is worthwhile for such an apparently small unit of work will depend on the extent to which the teacher understands the importance of IFL and feels the need for this type of teaching opportunity, as well as the level of importance attached to the programme by the school administration.

Rather more significant, however, is the problem that many teachers found genuine difficulty when confronted with the question, "What is the relationship between your life as a [subject]

teacher and your life as a Christian?” While most were able to admit some kind of generalised connection, probably along the lines of, “Certain things I encounter in my discipline cause me to experience awe at God’s creation,” the task of defining a more specific connection with concrete points that would be presented to a young audience was ineffectually undertaken.

The problem now becomes twofold. In first place we have the possibly alarming situation that teachers themselves have a low level of integration between their faith and their subject areas.. If even teachers in a denominational school stumble at this point, something would seem to be so seriously wrong that we are called to check whether we are in fact asking the wrong question - in fact a non-question - because such connections do not genuinely exist at all? If this were the case, the results of any work would merely be artificial constructs dreamt up for the sake of filling a laudable-sounding gap in the curriculum, and the whole enterprise would be likely to be more educationally and spiritually damaging than profitable. As matters stand, it would seem that many teachers might sympathise with this view. They live, except at the most general level, with a disjunction between their subject interest and their faith and do not perceive this as a problem. On the other hand, the overwhelming consensus of those who have explored this field denies such a position emphatically, and calls us to a radical re-examination of our positions as Christians who are also teachers.

Secondly, we must take into account the problems teachers experience bringing their religious experience to bear upon their teaching material. This brings us to the heart of the problem with the current state of IFL in our schools. Is it something which can be expected to happen adequately in an intrinsic way, inseparable from the warp and woof of our classes, or is it something which mandates discrete and intentional additional moments in our teaching? In other words, just how can teachers understand such demands for higher levels of integration as those put forward by Korniejczuk (1993 and subsequently) when it comes to what actually happens in the classroom? We have a wealth of theoretical foundation, but explanations of the practical understanding - even where they have been articulated or proposed in the literature or in curriculum guides - have not yet percolated down to the level of the chalkface.

It was this failure at the conceptual level which caused both the reluctance of some staff to

embrace the concept of the Modules programme, and the dissonance which eventually emerged when the modules began to happen. Teacher interpretations of the task tended to lapse into wooden or unimaginative solutions which relied on pushing the students through an amount of cognitive content - much of it almost value-neutral - as a way of filling in background to the Biblical data, rather than taking on the challenge to wrestle with questions of faith and feeling. Thus, the modules in History and Geography in particular became dominated by the content of epochs and rift valleys and were only related to the real life of the teacher (or the students) to the extent that the teacher conveyed the extent and causes of his enthusiasm for the topic. This did sometimes happen, but despite the fact that this was perhaps the core reason for running the course, provision for it failed to find its way into the curriculum outline for the module - and this was not because it was somehow discouraged, but simply because the people writing the course outlines did not understand that this very aspect was what would be valued, or that it would be respected if included! As a result, although some useful interaction took place, the full potential of the opportunity was not realized.

To be fair to the teachers involved, we should note at this point that the task they were being set in this Modules programme is one that would be much easier to fulfil at a higher level. With a class of over-16s in the top end of secondary school, or undergraduates, the personal and social dynamics of the relationships between the teacher and students and the maturation and interests of the students combine to create a very different task from that of opening this type of topic up with serried ranks of twelve-year-olds. Nonetheless, to say that one started at the hard end is not to say that the task is impossible, or that successful interpretations of the task cannot be arrived at. Thus, although we have contemplated bringing the programme into the upper school at Stanborough, we have persisted with our focus on the junior end, where there is more timetable space available (the examination demands of the current British system block out almost all discretionary time between years 10 and 12), and where we still see the need to tackle these issues before the students go any further in their education.

More practical issues which emerged were connected with the logistics of the programme's organisation. Our younger students found it difficult to be clear in their minds where they were going and why at particular times. This was partly because the introduction of the Projects



mentioned above caused straightforward confusion between the two, especially at group-changeover times. In some ways - and this may be significant for our implementation of IFL at its broadest - the students found it even more difficult than the teachers to grasp the intentional concept behind the lessons. In particular, many confused these classes with the “regular” RE classes, and so repeatedly brought the wrong books! This was particularly a problem when the Religion teacher, (who also happened to teach English Literature), ran the Literature module. It would seem that even in these students’ minds there was a set of secularised assumptions about RE. While they could cope with the RE teacher “putting on a different hat” to become a teacher of English Literature at certain times, once the class acquired an “RE-type” label, they expected the RE teacher to revert to type and carry on with the material taught in RE. This prevented them from fully appreciating that the various teachers were each trying contribute to a composite course under the one heading. Clearly, we need to find strategies which will enable the students to integrate their understanding of what they learn across the curriculum - an integration that is lost when they move up from the primary school, where almost everything comes to them from the one teacher. Without this basic foundation, the prospect of successfully integrating their perception of our spiritual curriculum seems more remote.

One other aspect of the programme’s implementation which needs to be examined is the decision to timetable it last thing on a Friday. Clearly, no-one wants his or her subject to be relegated to this unpopular “graveyard slot” in the week, but in the case of the RSt Modules some additional factors seem to have come into play. Our starting point is the obvious observation that a class which only meets once a week runs the risk of being downgraded in importance in the eyes of both staff and students by this timetabling. Not only is it “the tail of the dog”, but it is also susceptible to cancellations and disruptions at times like ends of terms and long weekends. When the class so affected is the most clearly visible *locus* of the integration of the school’s spiritual foundation with the range of its taught curriculum, the message sent out can become dangerously destructive. The downgrading of the importance of this class will flow over into a diminution of the importance of the entire IFL process. It may even serve to promote the tendency to secularisation and separation of faith from learning in the school.

On the other hand, this need not be the case. So long as the importance of the class is recognised by the administration, and it is protected from disruptions and the effects of poor planning. In the Adventist school setting, there is a tremendous opportunity here to end the week on a very personal and spiritually meaningful high note. The concept of the class lends itself to this, and, in these circumstances, it could be argued that the end of the week slot is the ideal place for such a class - and that such a class is the ideal topic for that time slot.

We may conclude from this that a focussed, intentional class like the RSt Module is a powerful weapon in the hands of the teacher, but that like many swords, it has a double edge. When dealing with proposals of such potential it behoves the educational planner to tread carefully and beware of inadvertently doing harm instead of good.

#### Students' Assessments of the RSt Modules Programme

There is very little in our literature about the assessment of our attempts to integrate faith and learning. In 1990 Ikonne proposed a questionnaire which was given in essentially the same format to both the teacher, as a self-assessment tool, and to the students as a way of evaluating the teacher. (Ikonne, 1990) His was short series of questions which focussed on measuring the extent to which a number of countable variables took place in the classroom and wider school setting. In working on this project I have sought to develop a more impressionistic approach, which gauges the impact of the programme on the students' perceptions rather than recording particular activities which are assumed to have the intended effect.<sup>3</sup>

In the first two questions students were tested on their recall of what Modules they had experienced and their impressions of their usefulness. Results were extremely mixed, ranging from those who remembered everything to those who made it clear that they thought nothing about the programme was in any way memorable. The nature of the majority of the responses suggested that the programme was considered one of life's small irritations. Preferences were as mixed as would be expected, but there was a slight tendency among the older respondents to see the Science Module as the most valuable, while some of the youngest ones (who had not yet

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<sup>3</sup>See Appendix 1: "Religious Studies Modules Questionnaire".

experienced all of the subjects on offer) showed an appreciation of the practical activities in the Art module.

Responses to questions three and seven were decisive. In question three, students were asked subject by subject whether they felt that having a Christian teacher mattered, and by a factor of more than 3:1 they differentiated between RE and all other subjects. In question seven, they were similarly asked about the difference their own religion made to their study, and the same pattern emerged. The overwhelming conclusion was that, except in RE, the students saw neither their own faith nor that of the teacher as a relevant factor, whereas in RE itself the situation was exactly reversed. Clearly these students were operating with a rigid wall of partition in their minds between their faith and everything in the curriculum except RE. (Incidentally, this perception may go some way to explaining the difference teachers perceive between the way these students relate to RE compared with other subjects: It is often treated as an optional addition to the curriculum without academic respectability.)

When students were asked what difference having Christian teachers makes in general, most of them reported that saw no difference. Some of the students, however, did respond in terms of a distinct range of items:

One of these can be expressed as “convenience”. The school routine was seen as one in which prayer is considered a normal part of daily activities and can be turned to at any time, and one respondent mentioned the avoidance of problems with Sabbathkeeping.

In a related area, respondents showed some awareness of the Christian school as a better environment by making comments such as “They take a cleaner approach.”

There was also evidence of a feeling of social or philosophical security. Students felt glad to be in an environment where their beliefs were not constantly under challenge - in other words, an environment governed by the Adventist worldview. This was expressed by phrases such as “They teach you things which are not contradicting your beliefs.” Thus, although, they were unable to articulate it in a formal way, at the practical level the students did show an awareness

and appreciation of the school's attempts to base the curriculum on our distinctive philosophical foundation.

The most frequent mode of response, however, interpreted it in terms of the teacher's attitude to the students. Typically, they thought of a Christian teacher as more understanding and kind, more likely to treat them with respect and more trustworthy. (Indeed, personal experience suggests that the students also apply this measure in reverse and tend to question the Christianity of teachers they perceive as unkind, uncaring or short-tempered.) Thus it is primarily in the domain of relationships and attitudes that students perceive the impact of faith on the school curriculum.

Another very strong result was obtained by question 5, in which students were asked whether the Modules had changed the way they thought about the teachers. If the Modules had been providing an opportunity for more self-revelatory type of teaching, one would have expected a positive response here. In fact every single student answered negatively! But before we jump to the apparently obvious conclusion, a note of caution must be sounded. One problem in interpreting this data is the question of how to control for the overall impact of the curriculum as Christian in all its parts. The more fully integrated faith is into the life of the school, the less students are likely to identify this course as doing anything significantly different from their other classes. Lack of response here may therefore indicate simply that the students took what was happening for granted as just another facet of Christian school life.

Finally, question 6 sought directly to identify the impact of the Modules programme on the student's own level of cross-curricular faith integration. Again, the majority of responses were negative, although there were a couple of straws in the wind - one from a student who said she now thought "God could be found in most subjects" and another who thought that the Modules and the other subjects sometimes contradicted each other!

The interpretation of these findings must, however, take into account the age of the respondents. At this age we might not expect students to be able to articulate, or even be conscious of the school's objectives in these terms, in which case their failure to report it is not

necessarily an indicator that nothing is happening at that level. The more significant factor may be that certain of the students did in fact mention effects which relate to this area and this is hard evidence that the programme was having some effect.

#### Teacher assessment of the Programme

The instrument devised for gauging teachers' attitudes to the programme differed in content but not in style from the Student Questionnaire. Again, the intention was to provide a mechanism by which teachers might be enabled express their impressions of the programme and reveal they way they approached the issue of IFL.<sup>4</sup>

The responses of those who had not been involved in the programme confirmed that most of them did not want to become involved and tended to see the programme as a potential source of unnecessary extra workload. Those who had been involved at some time, on the other hand, were generally content to do it again or continue. In one notable case a teacher who had initially joined the programme only reluctantly became converted to its potential and augmented her subject teaching with ideas gained as a result of her involvement. There was, however, little other evidence that teachers had found the experience this stimulating, or that it had prompted a serious reappraisal of the level of IFL in their teaching overall.

Ideas of how the Modules class might extend teaching opportunities tended to emphasise items corresponding to Korniejcuk's lower levels of integration, such as references to Bible examples. Interestingly, this perspective was also connected with an expressed fear that the lesson might seem to be "contrived". Thus, opinions on the extent to which various subjects could be integrated with faith covered a broad continuum from "unwilling" and "difficult" through to "deep", with the most constructive respondents seeing opportunities for informal IFL, drawing links with the nature of faith and emphasising a God-inclusive view in their presentations. One teacher interpreted the task in terms of fulfilling the Spirit of Prophecy injunctions that relate to the subject. IFL was generally seen as easier in the Earth Sciences and Humanities.

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<sup>4</sup>See Appendix.

### Achievements of the Programme

The contribution made to the curriculum by this programme can be analysed in terms of the four dimensions of IFL described by Holmes (1987, pp47-60) and brought to the attention of Adventists by Akers and others. Some application of this has been done by Woolford (1988), but in presenting this list, I have rearranged the contents into a suggested hierarchy in which the highest items may be expected at least to some extent to comprehend and include the ones below. Thus, the four dimensions are as follows:

1. Ethical - factors which raise moral consciousness
2. Attitudinal - factors which lead to the transmission of values such as service, honesty etc.
3. Foundational - factors which help students perceive our foundational philosophy
4. Worldview - factors which relate to our inclusive outlook and approach to life

The module which was reported to be the most successful was Science and the Bible. This module was perceived as effectively getting across the intended Creationist message, and so contributed most clearly at the foundational level, clarifying the teacher's philosophy of science and enabling the students to hold their Adventist beliefs with augmented confidence. In the process it can be assumed to be contributing to the students' appreciation of our worldview, but, as it stands, it does not seem to have any necessary bearing on their attitudinal or moral development. There is, however, no reason why development of the course objectives could not write this into the module.

In more general terms, the programme had the effect of involving a range of staff members in the RE curriculum in a very visible way. Again, this reaches the foundational level in the sense that it brought to the fore aspects of our educational philosophy. For students, it challenged them to think of our total curriculum in a more integrated way, and encouraged them to stretch their own religious perspectives into all areas of their lives. But for teachers also, it served as a salutary reminder that we do not expect their subject interests to live in a secularised compartment, and challenged them to think more consciously and concretely about the level of integration in their own lives. Thus, the programme had a beneficial impact for the entire school

community.

In providing a special lesson time which was not tied to any mandated syllabus, the Modules programme also gave teachers and students space for a freer hand to do more overtly religious things with their classes and deal in a fuller way with aspects of spirituality. The very act of taking the time to do this extended the implications of the programme through and beyond the foundational level so that it began to touch attitudinal objectives - expressing the values which lead us to prioritize religious, spiritual or devotional aspects of life in an already crowded schedule.

Although the potential of this has not yet been fully realised, the extent to which the Modules classes allow the teacher to express an enthusiasm not otherwise revealed could also be an important factor in the transmission of values. The Modules give the teachers freedom to devise units of work which come directly and in an uninhibited way from the interests which lie closest to their hearts regardless of whether these things normally find a place in the school day. This must be an important factor in making this course the *locus* of a special experience for the students and teacher alike.<sup>5</sup>

It must be observed, however, that the Modules programme does not appear to have reached the objectives of the ethical level. There seems to be no theoretical reason why it should not do this - it is simply that the content chosen has not brought the classes this far - and the question of developing the modules in this way stands before us.

#### The theoretical basis of the programme

Earlier in this paper, I touched on the question of whether the Modules programme should be seen as an attempt at mere conjunction rather than the full integration of faith and learning. The ensuing analysis has made it clear that, although the Modules are an addition to the curriculum,

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<sup>5</sup>This was, after all, my own experience in a secular setting when as a sixth-former I encountered a small course on jazz music in which the teacher simply introduced us to the genre through his favourite records. I have loved jazz ever since. Why could not the same thing happen in the religious sphere?

they do have a role to play which legitimately extends what is possible even in a fully faith-integrated curriculum. In particular. It can contribute to cross-curricular integration, and can function as a test-bed for new ideas and approaches which does not immediately jeopardise established courses.

### Immediate Findings of the Study

This survey of the past few years' work at Stanborough School points out a number of operational principles. Because it relies on material which must be largely personal, the Modules programme must be considered labour-intensive. For it to achieve its maximum potential, teachers need to be given sufficient time and resources to create effective materials. But, more importantly, they must themselves feel the need for it and come to it with a sense of personal commitment. In order to facilitate this, the school needs to be sure that concern for the spiritual progress of its students is a prominent part of its ethos in which all teachers are involved.

One aspect of achieving this relates to the development in the teachers of their own strong sense of integration of faith and work. Teachers themselves need opportunities and resources to work on these issues, both privately and in dialogue with other adults. Only then can they be expected to translate this living experience into a teaching programme from which our youth can benefit.

Once this has been achieved, the need for practical guidelines and suggestions from within the teaching profession comes into play. At present, there is a dearth of such material within Adventist literature at least. One of the first tasks of such material as it is produced will be to clarify what objectives a teacher can suitably set for this type of faith-sharing teaching at the various levels of spiritual development found in schoolchildren - part of the problem of motivating teachers to become involved in this type of programme lies in the way we express its aims. When aims are expressed in terms which focus most naturally on "comparing notes" spiritually, teachers will tend to expect this to appropriate mainly for a more mature age group. A clear expression of what features of his/her faith an adult can be expected to share with developing child is therefore needed.



One of the more intriguing responses to the student survey was the observation that Modules and other classes sometimes seemed to contradict each other. Although there must obviously be a certain unity in the message put forward by a school (and the Church), we should treasure the diversity that this comment reveals. The more personally a teacher is able deal with IFL, the more this kind of variety will become evident, and one of the benefits of the Module programme has been that it has allowed students to hear more than one teacher on a specific topic.

At the very least there is room for a closer relationship between the different components of the Modules programme, which could come out of joint planning by the teachers involved. Perhaps the next step is to bring these perspectives together into the one lesson or class by extending and developing the Modules in the direction of a team-taught programme which would draw the various perspectives together around a number of key topics.

Conclusion: The broader implications of the study

Our experience with the RSt Modules programme has highlighted the way in which teenagers relate to the question of faith and learning. As might be expected from theoretical models of intellectual development, they connect only indirectly or intuitively with issues of philosophy or worldview, but they see great significance in the areas of attitude and practice. This suggests that, for students at this level, the major focus of our efforts at IFL should be in these areas, and that our formulation of the principles of IFL should be phrased in a way which recognises the primary significance of these categories at this level, and does not inappropriately underestimate them in relation to other aspects. IFL can mean different things at different levels.

Students also highlighted the extreme significance for them of the extent to which they perceived the teacher as kind, caring, understanding of their needs or helpful. Whether or not these qualities are exclusive to the Christian teacher, students clearly see them as foundational to the Christian ethos of the school, and therefore to the credibility of the faith it stands for. While any school - Christian or secular - is likely to prize these attributes in a potential recruit, this study indicates that a Christian school would be wise to accord them an especially high status in its recruiting criteria and courses of teacher training, as they contribute not merely to

the levels of social well-being in the school but directly to the fulfilment of its spiritual mandate.

This study has also served as a demonstration of the often-expressed lament that the principles of IFL are poorly understood by teachers in practice, and as a result IFL has a lower profile in curriculum design and teaching practice than should be the case. In many cases, teachers are interpreting the request to integrate faith and learning in terms of additional content, which results in artificial and ineffective constructs, and they miss the opportunity to create strategies which are intentionally focussed on the transmission or development of values. Nevertheless, there are some indications in this programme that this can be done. These successes need to be built upon. Staff training needs to be designed which will help teachers come to terms with integration in their own minds and open themselves up to its modalities and possibilities in the classroom.

Taylor asserted that, "In the curricular programme of the school, it is beneficial to provide an interdisciplinary focus for any integrational factor." (1988, p265) The nature of this focus was aptly described by Pearson as "connectedness". (1989, p290) This study has confirmed that where there is a sense of fragmentation between the teachers and subjects a student encounters during the school day, learning difficulties are created which impinge specially on the students' spiritual development. It makes it more difficult for them to achieve their own sense of intellectual and spiritual integration. The Modules programme contributed to overcoming this problem, but in order to enhance their unity, schools need to ensure there are open channels of communication between teachers in different departments,.

Finally, having done certain things in a Modules class which we might not otherwise have thought of tackling, we are brought to the point of asking whether some of them might not have been done in the mainstream class after all. Where the answer is positive, then clearly it has been beneficial for the whole programme for this integrational development to take place. The Modules programme can therefore function as a catalyst to development and as a test-bed for new ideas and proposals. In fact by its very nature, the Modules class is likely to serve as a feature of the total curriculum which engenders such ideas, and can be a point of stimulation and growth within the school. It challenges our tendency to conform to the expectations of the

national, secular curriculum and prompts us to suggest ways in which we can deliver the same goods but in a distinctively Christian way.

The Modules programme at Stanborough has been developed, for local, logistical reasons, in the lower secondary years. As such it has brought into sharper focus our understanding of the spiritual needs and learning patterns of these students, although we struggled with the details of how our task could be done. The challenge now is to reap the same rewards by extending the programme to a wider range of age levels.

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Appendix 1

RELIGIOUS STUDIES MODULES QUESTIONNAIRE

Your Form:

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE - RST MODULES

1. List the modules you can remember doing:

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2. On your list put a tick (✓) beside the ones you thought were worth doing and a cross (X) beside the ones that weren't.

3. Do you think it matters if your teacher is a Christian for:

YES NO

Maths & Sciences

Languages

Art & Practical Subjects

English & Literature

Geography & History

Business Studies & IT

RE

4. What difference has having Christian teachers made in any of the subjects you have studied?

5. How has RSt Modules changed the way you think about the teachers?

6. How has RSt Modules changed the way you think about the other subjects you have studied?

7. (a) Do you think your religion makes any difference to the way you study:

YES NO

Maths & Sciences

Languages

Art & Practical Subjects

English & Literature

Geography & History

Business Studies & IT

RE

(b) If you would like to explain what difference please do so here:

1. Have you been involved in teaching modules? Y/N If Yes, go to Q.2  
If No, go to Q.8

2. Please indicate which modules you have been involved in teaching.

3. Before you started how keen were you to be involved?

4. How successful did you think your teaching was?

5. What would you identify as the most important benefit/outcome(s) of the module?

6. How keen are you to continue/do it again?

7. What do you think of the relationship between the module and your regular subject teaching?

Please skip to Q.10

8. How much would you welcome the opportunity to be involved in a module related to either your subject speciality or personal interests?

9. What things do you think you might be able to achieve in a modules class that you find it difficult to do in your other classes?

10. What is your overall impression of the Rst Modules programme?

11. How far do you think faith can be/is integrated in the subjects you teach?

Subject 1:

Subject 2:

Subject 3:

Thankyou for your input.