

Top Ten Challenges in Catholic Education (1996)

THE TOP TEN CHALLENGES - NCEC CONFERENCE (1996)

1. RATIONALE

- Why do we bother to have Catholic schools, and what do we expect them to achieve?
- The detailed rationale for Catholic schools (including their specific religious aims) is not necessarily fully understood, especially among parents.
- We need to be sure that we want to keep our schools, and keep them Catholic. Parents, clergy and teachers need to be convinced of the role of value of Catholic schools.

2. COMMUNITY

- The school as a community, a faith community. For many students and their parents the school is their only experience of community, let alone church.
- The bonds of partnership between schools and parents and pastors, which has been the object of so much recent discussion and concern, are tied together through the community.
- Parents have increasing expectations of schools. Perhaps the time has come for schools to increase their expectations of parents.

3. INTEGRATION

- The integration of faith and culture has implications for teacher selection and development.
- In recent years we have seen a rapid growth in the number and extent of qualified teachers of religious education, and we have seen the widespread introduction in secondary schools of RE curricula which incorporate an emphasis on rigorous content and outcomes in terms of Scripture, tradition and doctrine.
- How to maximise the accumulating expertise and resources, and make them more available for those working in the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine apostolate in government schools, remains an issue to be solved in most places.

4. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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5. ADULT AND THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

- The co-ordinated development of adult education around a coherent and systematic curriculum, its resourcing and the training of its teachers and leaders are large issues confronting us immediately.
- There is a particular need, among other things, to provide better quality programs for the professional development of religious educators, and for the faith development of all teachers.

6. UNIVERSITIES

- Education, the preparation of teachers for Catholic schools, and their ongoing personal and professional development will obviously remain a central function for the Catholic universities.
- If they are to succeed as Catholic universities they must confidently and successfully make a distinctively Catholic contribution to the fields of Business, Health Care and Law which they are also undertaking.

7. RESEARCH

- We need to know, for example, if our vast commitment to schools is really making a difference within the Catholic community.
- An immediate challenge for the Catholic universities to take up: research that is of the highest technical quality, that is related to the needs of the Australian church, that is broad-ranging and longitudinal.

8. MANAGEMENT

- There is scope for reviewing and rethinking our management structures in the late 1990s to take account of the strategic planning. Such a review should examine how best to plan for Catholic education as a whole, and how to develop effective elements.

9. CO-ORDINATED POLICY IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION

- We now need a national vision which acknowledges that education in faith is similar to education in general, in that it is a life-long process. We need a co-ordinated policy and vision for Catholic education within the mission of the Australian church.

10. LEADERSHIP

- The continuing effectiveness of Catholic schooling, and the development of a more comprehensive plan for Catholic education, requires strong and visionary leadership from our chief educators and pastors, the bishops of Australia.