

SCHOOL OF MISSION AND THEOLOGY

**FROM DOGMATIC TO UTILITARIAN  
KNOWLEDGE**

**An Introduction to the Didactics of Religious Education  
Collège Protestant of Ngaoundéré-Cameroon, 1958-2008**

**MASTER THESIS IN GLOBAL STUDIES**

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**To the memory of my wife Romini Pélagie and**

**my son Naimou Mbélake Christian**

**Loved and missed**

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To God Almighty be all the glory

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The case study in this thesis is a confessional secondary school called Collège Protestant, situated in the locality of Ngaoundéré, in the Adamaoua region, Northern Cameroon. This school has the specificity that although it was ruled by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cameroon, the pupils attending this school is made of Protestant, Catholic and Muslim pupils. And no religious incidents between pupils were recorded during the decades. About the period, we have chosen the years from 1958 to 2008 because 50 years are enough to make the evaluation of the past and consider new decisions for the future. Therefore, I will reflect on the historical and social context in which religious education has evolved. It should be stated that we are not going to consider all aspects of the historical and social evolution of Collège Protestant but we are going to pick out some key issues which will help us to show why it is important to develop new methods of teaching. Pedagogical ideas and experiences from Germany, England, Norway and Finland, countries that have a long tradition in this domain, will also be relevant to our study. Some of them will not be cited but constitute background knowledge which will improve my understanding of the situation in Northern Cameroon.

The particularity of this study is based on the fact that, it is not so common to find a research study made on a specific school subject. Traditionally, religious education which has been considered as one part of international Christian mission has consequently become a specialized course of evangelization and mission. In this thesis I will discuss issues related to approaches, methods and concepts which encourage cultural diversity. Further, I will discuss the developing and the writing of didactical material adapted to the intellectual and psychological evolution of the pupils, and lastly, I will look at some possible improvements in the field of teaching methods.

It is important to mention that in this thesis the word utilitarian is used in its pedagogical understanding to mean valuable teaching which help pupils developing capacities and skills. These will not be used only related to religious life but to everyday situations.

## 1 MOTIVATIONS

This study is motivated by the following three main issues:

- The search for new ways and tasks on the road of building knowledge among young people.
- The presentation of how some administrators used their position in order to influence the social, political or even religious activities, and how, as a consequence, the school reacted pedagogically and spiritually to these influences.
- The introduction of new ways of building knowledge: here I want to show how the school moved from dogmatic teachings to utilitarian teachings. For instance, from the creation of Collège Protestant in 1958 to the year 2000, Religious teaching was based on “dogmatic” teachings and separated faith-based classes and after 2000 teaching was oriented toward the utilitarian knowledge and common teachings for all congregations.

On a practical level, I am going to do this study on the basis of the following aspects:

- Pupils need knowledge that they can use daily and that can help them finding their way in a changing society. To achieve these goals, academic materials should help them to open their mind so that when encountering other people, no matter their background, they can put together common values in order to build a peaceful society.
- It is important to use pedagogical and didactical approaches which are updated because technological progress may improve didactical materials. But how do we use them? Or how do they help us to develop the intellectual and moral capacity of the pupils? By answering these questions I want to show how a chaplain<sup>1</sup> can improve his way of teaching by using these approaches.

Finally, I argue that in the process of acquiring knowledge, good material, good methods and good training give relevant results.

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<sup>1</sup> In the context of this thesis, a chaplain is someone who teaches religious education classes. He may be a pastor or a lay person.



## 2 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 *Field work*

The field work has been done in three different manners:

- Interviewing different types of persons depending on their skills and experiences, and their connection to Collège Protestant. At this point data has been collected from nine persons, both female and male, instead of the intended ten, because one informant refused to cooperate. She thought that I was doing investigation for the Church. The others were open and discussed freely with strong confidence in my research because they have gained a lot from Collège Protestant in diverse ways.
- Doing research on written information about Collège Protestant from the Archives of the Church, the Collège Protestant and the School of Mission and Theology.
- Gathering and reading resource books on religious education, and reports on the same topic written by the board of the Protestants' Private Education Agency in Cameroon and in French we call it "Organisation de l'Enseignement Privé Protestant".

In other words, our data includes the following:

- *Oral sources made* from interviews and stored on audiotapes. Each interview lasted from 30 minutes to two hours and was conducted in French. I made interviews in offices, homes and in common rooms according to the will of the informants.
- *Written sources* collected from material in relation to education in general and religious education in particular, reports from meetings in the Collège administration, of the Protestants' Private Education Agency in Cameroon, of the board of the church, of the council of Protestant churches, and relevant documents or books on pedagogic and didactics.

I find that oral interviews are richer in information than the interviews I made through writing mails and letters. In the oral interviews, I can improve my understanding, rephrase my questions and hence, receive more interesting material from the informants. During oral interviews, I can also feel the emotion coming from my informants, and this feeling helps me to understand how relevant religious education is/was for them. Oral interviews provide details on how people interrelate or interact, how they discuss and solve problems, strategies

they develop in order not to hurt sensitive cultural issues. Oral information was confronted by information found in the archives of the church and the one of The School of Mission and Theology in order to make sure that the information is right.

## ***2.2 Text studies and courses***

Before and during the writing process of this thesis I have read books on religious education, pedagogy and anthropology. It was interesting to find that Wanda Alberts who wrote on *Integrative Religious Education* and Angelique del Rey who wrote about the competency based approach follow the same goal, namely to improve teaching and learning, although their approaches were made in different contexts. But when I apply the principle of transferability I realize that one can find interesting material in one domain and use them in another one. In order to understand the effect of interaction between cultures the *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* of Paul Hierbert was relevant, especially his approach to missionaries encountering local people, and the communication between. In addition courses on globalization, science of religion, missiology, diaconia and leadership studies were useful in the way that they helped me to have a larger and actual understanding of my topic. It is the case for instance when I discuss about conversion or *doxa*.

## ***2.3 Personal experience***

My experience as a chaplain, a chaplain-trainer and co-author of the books of religious and ethical education will be useful in this study. This study also includes my personal and professional reflections on the manuals, to which I have contributed as a co-author. I will especially explain some concepts or ideas hidden behind the usage of some pedagogical theories that are implemented in the manuals. In fact, since the year 2000 when I taught and discussed with the pupils, I realized that they needed more than dogma. They need knowledge which can help them in their everyday life. This means intellectual and moral awareness which can help them to escape or avoid social risks such as corruption, xenophobia, unintended pregnancy.... As a chaplain-trainer, I realized that there was no material which could help us to share properly our knowledge with the pupils. The lack of materials and methods make that some teachers preach instead of teaching religious education courses as a school subject.

Consequently, I argued that the way we taught in class was not the same as in the church. At school, there were principles and tools that every teacher should use in order to share

knowledge with the pupils, and which are in accordance with the psychological, physical and psychical evolution of the pupils. As a co-author of the manuals, I used the previous experience to contribute in writing textbooks which could help both pupils and chaplains, and the society at large.

### 3 METHODS

Didactics of religious and ethical teachings in schools is important too because it improve the teaching learning process or religious education. In order to understand its principles and relevance, following methods will be used:

- ***Historical chronological*** because I want to follow the evolution of religious study in Collège Protestant.
- ***Comparative***: From the historical point of view we are going to compare the teachings in different periods. It will help us to see which method has significantly changed. I will also look at comparative studies and contemporary literature in the field of didactic and pedagogic of religion.
- ***Descriptive***: I will delve into the contents and the principles of the various approaches.
- ***Hermeneutical***: We are going to interpret texts and interviews in order to understand actions and words in their context. In the context of this study, interpretation is an interesting tool which helps to understand the main idea or the figures and its surroundings or the background.

In order to answer the question of the topic, I am going to combine theories from relevant literature with in depth interviews with nine informants. My informants will be presented using the code Inf.01/2010 to Inf.09/2010 which means informant one to informant nine followed by the year during which the information has been collected. The order is defined according to the moment they were interviewed. My informants are male and female, present or former students, formers pupils who are now parents, former school headmasters, present or former chaplains. These informants were chosen because they have made or were eyewitnesses of the evolution of the history of Collège Protestant. As makers they were either in conflict with the church administration or the administrative or local authorities. As victims or eyewitnesses of the evolution they have seen all changes that have been made or decided. It will be quite difficult to name them because in some cases some of them were both makers

and victims. As makers they had the opportunity to decide and make a difference, and as victims they did not have the power to change the decisions made by the administration. Therefore, they have been chosen depending on their experiences and skills.

## **4 AIMS, CONTENTS AND LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY**

### ***4.1 The aims***

Wanda Alberts has argued that “the field of didactics has been neglected in the academic study of Religions in many countries for a long time” and this is the case in my country where none was interested in didactics of Religious education. As a school subject, it should satisfy pedagogical requirements and methodology. And it should also have the same level as other subjects of the class. This may explain why in chapter 4 we are going to talk about re-dynamization of religious education. In fact, religious education should be re-dynamized in such a way that educational theory, teaching theory and methodology help to build utilitarian knowledge and skills in accordance with the whole educational goal. For this reason, this study aims at showing that we can use new pedagogical and didactical methods to improve our teaching as chaplains and how the pupils can reinvest knowledge they have gained in their everyday life. This question is discussed now because religious education in Collège Protestant moved from dogmatic to utilitarian method within 50 years: from 1958 to 2008. This development was made possible by the introduction of manuals of Religious and Ethical teachings in all classes. Hence, this introduction was the turning point which brought together the pupils from different religious backgrounds to attend the same lessons and pursuing one goal: gain knowledge from each other and develop mutual understanding that will help them living in peace.

### ***4.2 The content***

The content of this thesis is summarized as follows:

Chapter II is an attempt to present the evolution of fifty years of the main events which had occurred in the process of evangelizing pupils through religious education in Collège Protestant of Ngaoundéré. During the period covered by this study, 1958-2008, religious education has faced external influences, encountered different persons, developed or improved strategies and helped the pupils creating a community in which there is peace, love and understanding. From the findings, we outline four main periods in its history:

- During Period I, there was a common Bible class for all pupils and the school administration was made of pastors. The findings during this period are plenty: pupils were treated with dignity, cooperation and understanding were the basis of relationships, and women played an important role in the school, no matter “the spirit of the time”. Further, the school gained a lot from its former foreign headmasters, and the evangelization in the school did not change but had rather evolved.
- Period II is the period of separation. The pupils were separated according to their religious belonging in order to be taught in separate faith-based courses.
- Period III is a period of unifying Catholic and Protestant students following the same program and the progressive introduction of manuals of Religious and Ethical education.
- Period IV started in 2008 when there was a common program for all pupils.

Chapter III will give some causes, their impacts and the reactions of eyewitness or actors of the separation among the pupils in the school. Separation occurred when a local authority, afraid that the school could convert his child, in 1968 ordered to exclude Muslim pupils from religious education classes. The school administration obeyed and reorganized this particular course. The consequence was that the pupils were divided according to their religious background: Muslims, Catholics and Protestants.

During the second period, going from 1968 to 1995, religious teaching was diversified taking into account the faith of the pupils.

1. The Muslims got ethical and moral education.
2. The Catholic pupils got mostly doctrinal education conducted by a volunteer Catholic teacher.
3. The Protestants pupils got an education that was basically Bible studies and ethics. Every teacher at the school was supposed to participate in the religious education, for the Muslim pupils as well for the Christian.

In chapter IV, we will show how religious education was revitalized and renewed with the introduction of manuals of Religious and Ethical Education. These manuals contribute heavily to the spiritual, moral, ethical, cultural, emotional and intellectual development of the pupils.

The main focus of my thesis will be the concept of competency-based approach applied to religious education in chapter 5. The departure point is the presentation of teaching methods: the teacher-centered and secondly the pupil-centered method. Then the presentation, of the competency-based approach and the principle of transferability, followed. In this chapter there is a practical approach of the topic that is based on some guide lines on how to build multicultural competencies, some directives which may help the teacher to be effective in their activities and preparing lessons by using the approach. The chapter ends by the presentation of some weaknesses of this approach and an attempt to give some explanations to them.

### ***4.3 Limitation***

In this thesis I will focus on one aspect of the subject: the Christian appreciation or discourse on the evolution of religious education in Collège Protestant of Ngaoundéré. In order to have a complete understanding of this development and its impact it is important to include also the Muslim discourse or experience about it. However, due to the limitation of this thesis I will concentrate on the academically recognized and Christian points of view.

## **5 HOW THIS STUDY CAN BE USEFUL?**

From the motivations presented above, the findings during the field work and the discussions in the process of the writing of this thesis one may say that the relevance of this study is the following:

- The research conducted in this thesis in order to present the history of religious education and its impact on the life of the school, Collège Protestant, the administration, the teachers, the pupils and the Church, is the primer one.
- This thesis is the first in its kind to present how it is possible to improve the teaching-learning process of religious education in Cameroon by introducing a new teaching method, namely the competency-based approach, by transferring concepts, methods and technology in order to adapt the teaching to the context, improve and give additional skills to pupils, and lift up their culture.
- In this thesis, one can find how to operate in a holistic way by taking into consideration the entire educative community in a pedagogical relation whose aim is to emancipate the pupils.

- Acting in a multireligious society the teaching attitude and methods should be inclusive. To achieve this goal, I will point out that this method does not destroy the beliefs of the pupils but give them a critical and constructive understanding of their faith and the one of their classmates.

## **6 A NOTE ON CITATIONS, TRANSLATIONS AND MODELS**

Citations from informants and the one from books will remain in Times New Roman Normal. Translations from French are my own. Most of the models are developed and made by me when not otherwise is written.

## CHAPTER II

# HISTORY AND PRESENTATION OF COLLÈGE PROTESTANT OF NGAOUNDERE<sup>2</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

The period treated in this chapter goes from 1958 to 2008. The four main ideas which will be developed retrace the history of Collège Protestant. The chapter describes the historical evolution of Religious Education in Collège Protestant<sup>3</sup>. This evolution was caused by many events which affected the history of the school. These events were due to the religious education at the school. In fact a parent did not appreciate that his child attended Bible classes. So he decided that the school should stop giving this course to his child.<sup>4</sup> And the school obeyed.

Thus we can divide the school's history into four periods. The first idea is the mission fixed by the Church to the Christian schools. This mission is to initiate the pupils to the Kingdom of God, in other words evangelization. There were Bible classes, and many religious activities were organized in the school such as choir and youth group. The second idea concerns the administration and their impact on the school. We will show that there were many persons from different nations which succeeded each other at the administration of the school and this diversity enriched the staff and the way the school was ruled. In addition, it shows how people from different backgrounds but following the same goal can live and work together in a hostile context. The third idea shows how context and culture can influence teachings and management. And the last idea is that difficulties or incidents, if they are considered in their positive aspects, help to build the way we feel, behave and react in a difficult environment. Figures and graphics will illustrate some of these ideas.

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<sup>2</sup> The city called Ngaoundéré is situated in the North of Cameroon. The country looks like a triangle divided in ten regions. Ngaoundéré is the capital of the Adamoua region.

<sup>3</sup> In this study, the name "Collège Protestant" in its French version will be used in order to keep the originality of this research.

<sup>4</sup> How could this only incident affect on the school's further politics? In this thesis I will present the socio-political and even religious context of the country during the period covers by this study. In the following chapter, I will show how due to his position a person use the power he has to dominate others. And it was a struggle for the Protestant schools to survive in this context.



It should be stated that this study will not approach all aspects of the life of Collège Protestant but only focus on religious education in this school.

## 1 HISTORY OF COLLÈGE PROTESTANT

The historical chapter has three main functions:

- First, to remind us where we come from because it is fundamental to know our origins,
- Second, to show what have been done so that we are where we are. The steps which have been crossed show us the efforts accomplished and how we can use the experience,
- Third, to help us avoid mistake of the pass and build a better future because historical studies are warnings to young generations.

Collège Protestant in its actual form was created in 1960. But in 1958, missionaries from the Norwegian Mission Society<sup>5</sup> and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America<sup>6</sup> have decided to create a Teacher Training School in order to give additional knowledge or courses to pupils who have just accomplished their primary education. This first course started in Meiganga<sup>7</sup> in 1957 with Rev. Schwebel as Director. The course called “complementary courses” purpose was to give pedagogic knowledge to pupil so that they will be involved in the church as teacher<sup>8</sup>. The next year, the school was transferred to Ngaoundéré and a second class was opened. The school year started with 52 pupils. But “under the pressure of the pupils who would like to continue their secondary studies, the normal school became Collège Protestant in 1960”<sup>9</sup>. In this process they were not considered as object but as subject. An object is manipulated; it does not participate in the process while a subject cooperates in the action or process. A subject can express and share his point of view while an object cannot. According to Kaare Lode<sup>10</sup>, they influenced deeply the process and the aim of the

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<sup>5</sup> They arrived in Cameroon in 1925. They were established in Ngaoundéré.

<sup>6</sup> They arrived in Cameroon in 1923 and established themselves in the region called Mbere.

<sup>7</sup> Mbere region is situated 160 km from Ngaoundéré and is the place where missionaries from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America were established when they arrived in 1923.

<sup>8</sup> Kaare Lode 1990, 143

<sup>9</sup> Kaare Lode 1900, 186

<sup>10</sup> Kaare Lode is a missionary from the Norwegian Missionary Society. He was in Cameroon with his wife from 1972-1985. He has written the first history of the Church called: *Appelé à la liberté, l'histoire de l'Eglise Evangélique Luthérienne du Cameroun*. This information should come either in the introduction when you write about your primary and secondary sources; or in the footnote where you mention him and his book for the first time.

missionaries. For instance they asked the missionaries that they wanted to continue their studies and missionaries agreed with them. In the process of education we should take in consideration the needs of pupils in order to help them, attract, motivate and keep them in the school. One may argue that in the earliest days of Collège Protestant understanding and cooperation were the basis of relations between pupils and missionaries. They helped to act with others for their goods. All these considerations show us that these pupils were treated with dignity. God has created everyone with dignity. It means that everyone has a great value and should be respected. None should be treated as an animal but all his potentialities should be preserved and promoted. This is what missionaries did. One may argue that there is an intrinsic relation between what we are and what we do.

### ***1.1 Main historical periods***

Religious education at Collège Protestant in Ngaoundéré has passed through four periods. This is due to some important events in the school's 50 years long history.

- *Period I:* From 1960 to 1969 Christian education was a course of the school's curriculum as it was in all confessional schools at the time, and still is in many schools. All students participated without religious regards and everyone contributed to the harmony and friendship that reigned at the school. The curriculum was chosen texts from the Old and the New Testament and the main didactic material was the Bible. Some chaplains sometimes used Bible commentaries. Each teacher taught religion in his class but only the missionary part of the staff had a formal education in the subject. The method which was used was bible reading, bible knowledge and counseling. No grades were given. Definitely the aim was to make the students "good Christians and good citizens."
- *Period II:* From 1969 to 1995. We call this period the "Time of separation". In fact, Religious Education was split up into three units according to the faith and confession of the pupils: one for protestant pupils which continued with Bible knowledge, one for Catholics that in addition included dogmatic instruction and the finally one for Muslims (they represented 10 to 16% of the total number) who received what was called "moral education" from Christian teachers. This change was urged by the official authority which mostly consisted of Muslims and led to a certain unrest and uneasiness at the school. Even though it was imposed from outside the school, it had a positive aspect as

it came to reflect the tolerance of the school and the respect for the pupils' belief. After some time harmony regained in the school.

- *Period III:* From 1995 to 2008. An ecumenical wind passed through the confessional schools in Ngaoundéré. The principals of the Catholic secondary school and the Protestant one, worked closely together and ecumenical religious arrangements were organized. At a time, the Catholic Church had nobody to teach their students, so it was concluded that Catholics and Protestants were to merge and receive the same basic Christian education.

Between Period III and Period IV, there was a period of transition going from 2002 to 2008. In this time manuals of Religious and Ethical Education<sup>11</sup> were progressively introduced and the training of teachers of Religious Education started. It was essential to qualify the teachers as well in the subject as in pedagogical approach.

- *Period IV:* From 1998 to onwards, a National Program of Religious education was established by the Council of the Protestant Churches in Cameroon. The following years schoolbooks became available for students and teachers.

Manuals of Religious and Ethical Education were introduced in all Protestant secondary schools in Cameroon. There was a fixed program for each year and religious education became more like any other subject. Thus, there was a common national program for all the protestant schools.

Many Muslim students became interested in the books and started attending the classes. There was also a reaction to the teaching. The students found that the education given to Muslims was neglected and insufficient and they cried for a change. There was also a practical reason. The school expanded (with more than 200 pupils at once) and there were not any longer classrooms available for a “double stream” of religious teaching. The only solution was unifying the teaching. The program was not any longer an introduction to Christianity but to Religion, and the subject changed its name from “Christian Education” into “Religious Education”. Thus Muslims and Christians came together at the Collège.

Finally, the school considered that we are now living in a new era, that of globalization, where it is very important to know each other. Mixed classes offered a unique opportunity to know

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<sup>11</sup> We are going to talk more about this in the next chapter.

each other's religion. This created some reaction from Muslim parents and students. This also required well prepared classes by the teachers. The success of this new approach depends entirely on well educated teachers and open-minded students.

Thus, the Religious Education in Collège Protestant has been subjected to changes during the time as far as content, organization and presentation are concerned. But under different circumstances the school has managed to keep its profile as a Christian, professional school and at the same time showing respect to the students' faith and belief.

Figure 1 is a chronological graphic made of three steps which summarize the period covered in this study. From the top to the bottom one can find the periods and the events. In the center there is a large arrow graduated in the middle. There are different colors in this arrow illustrating the three units resulting from the separation. Under the arrow, we have all the headmasters and chaplains who have served in the school with their period in office. At the end of the page some indications will help us to distinguish periods, events and actors.

## ***1.2 Religious education approaches used during the study period***

### *1.2.1 Integration approach*

This approach brings together pupils from different confessions to attend non-confessional religious education. The advantage of this approach is both social and individual: on one hand it creates an arena for dialogue and mutual understanding. And on the other "the beliefs and values of the pupil are challenged or affirmed by the encounter with the beliefs and values of the world religions".<sup>12</sup> In the case of Collège Protestant during Period I we have a non-separative but confessional based education. And during Period IV, the content of Christian education was revised in order to give more places to the teaching of religions and ethics. In both cases, only one aspect of the approach is satisfied. Then what can we call this model? One can use the term "semi" integrational approach to designate this model. Semi-integrative approach may be used because we have non-separative<sup>13</sup> but less non-confessional Religious Education (Period IV). One may also justify it by saying that the study of religions is done in its phenomenological aspect in the manual. In addition the name of the course is not "Bible course" but "Religious and ethical education". This last name is more integrative than the first one. During Period I and according to the mission of the school and the context at that time, one may say that the approach was dogmatic. In fact only Christian faith was taught by using

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<sup>12</sup> Jill Maybury 2000, 77

<sup>13</sup> Wanda Alberts 2007, 1

the Bible and other Christian's documents, and the name of the course was "Bible course" instead of "Religious Education".

### *1.2.2 Segregation approach*

This approach is based on the idea that pupils attend separate Religious education classes according to their confessional belongings. In this approach pupils look at each other as opponents because borders are fixed. It was the case during Period III. Christians were together, and Muslims on their side were receiving moral and ethical education.

During Period II, we find that pupils were divided according to their confession even within Christian religions. This approach is harder than a normal segregation approach. This model can be called a "*deep*" segregation approach. We use the term deep because it separates even within the same confession.

### *1.3 To resume*

The separation started in 1969 by an administrative decision taken on religious grounds: some parents were afraid that their children should be converted into Christianity. The religio-political context in the region at that time could impose such a separation. The division created a climate of suspicion and fear, and broke established relations between Muslim and Christian pupils for some time. During the third period which started in 1995, the first fusion between Protestants and Catholics took place. The reason was a practical one; there was no Catholic chaplain to ensure the teaching, but also one of mutual confidence and understanding. The Catholic chaplain and the Principal of the Collège decided to transfer the Catholic pupils to the Protestant section and teach what they have in common. But the situation for the Muslims did not change.

## **2 COLLÈGE PROTESTANT AND THE SHARING OF THE GOOD NEWS**

In the structural organization of the Church, Collège Protestant as well as the primary schools is under the supervision of the Educational Secretary. This institution is responsible for training teachers, representing, receiving and sharing funding received from the Government and partners. Because education also deals with basic needs of the population; this service is

under the “Diaconal<sup>14</sup> department” of the Church. It is the Church’s reach out to the young and a part of its mission to bring the “Good News” to everyone.

## ***2.1 Collège Protestant - a tool for evangelization***

### *2.1.1 The mission of the schools when it was created*

In the earliest days, when schools were created by the Mission organizations their motivation was to fulfill the commandment of the Lord: “teach them to obey everything I have commanded you”<sup>15</sup>. The gospel is seen as a message of freedom, dignity and hope. The order to make it known to everybody was given by the Lord himself when he separated from his disciples (Matt 28:16). The Mission societies’ working model was founded at the life of Jesus himself: He taught the people, he healed them, he gave them to eat, he preached. At a mission station you found a church, a dispensary and a school. Education is part of the Church’s mission to bring the gospel to men. The missionaries’ policy was to teach the people to read and write so they could understand the Word of God, to prepare the children for a living and to shape workers for their different fields of action: evangelization, medical work, schools. For this reason one might say that the schools are tools for evangelization, a way to make disciples. Schools of the Church were then created first for the Christian witness, ready to witness about Christ and support the work of evangelization. Further, it was to provide skills which would help them to continue the work of the missionaries. The schools were also considered as the place where the “Good news of liberation, of restoration, of wholeness, and of salvation this personal, social, global and cosmic”<sup>16</sup> shall be taught. One of my informants confirmed this by saying that his main purpose was to bring pupils to the faith in Jesus<sup>17</sup>. Another reason was that through schools, pupils, aged 12 to 19 years old, would be

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<sup>14</sup> What is the importance of diaconia in the Church? Diaconia is from the Greek *diakonein* which means to serve and *diakonos* is the service. So one might say that diaconia is the service Christians share with one another according to the teaching of Jesus Christ. It is the word in action in a community. If we want to give a Christian definition of this word we should go back in the time of Jesus when he was on the earth. The life of Jesus was made both of teaching and acting. He taught his disciples and the crowd about the kingdom of God and the everyday life. And he also acts so that his teaching will not be theoretical but practical. He taught them to love God and their neighbors. Further he adds that to love God is to love your neighbors because how can you love God that you don’t see and hate your neighbor that you see? So to love God means to love your neighbor. Diaconal work helps the gospel be relevant for the listeners or believers. In fact, through diaconal institutions the church helps her community to move from oppression to liberation; from ignorance to enlightenment, from illness to health; their quality of life was fully enriched.

<sup>15</sup> Doc 2, page 1, Unknown author

<sup>16</sup> Mathias Zahniser 1997, 24

<sup>17</sup> Inf.02/2010

healed from ignorance and illiteracy so that they would “initiate other people into the Kingdom of God” by reading and proclaiming the message contained in the Bible. Through this process, evangelization will continue from one generation to the other and the words of God will be spread throughout the world. By the time this vision and mission evolved. When schools began to gain in importance the missionaries asked the following question: “Which kind of person do we want to train? And they replied: someone who can read God's word and write, who is an intermediate clerk and assistant of the missionary or colonial administrator, someone who loves his country, is honest and responsible”<sup>18</sup>.

### *2.1.2 Mission of Collège Protestant*

Collège Protestant was part of this mission because the “Statut du Collège Protestant” edited in April 1970 declares that the goal of the school was to give to pupils from the Northern Cameroon “a Christian education and a solid general instruction”<sup>19</sup>. This is why during decades it had taken part actively in proclaiming God’s Word of redemption and salvation to pupils while it “encourage(s) everything which contributes to the general culture, develop their artistic skills and the formation of a Christian behavior”<sup>20</sup> and Dr. Ngah Joseph adds, “those who attend (it) should be aware that it explicitly proclaims Christ and, the environment and behavior are Christian.”<sup>21</sup> Hence, he is inviting the administration and the chaplains to remain faithful to this mission. In other words, the mission of the school which is evangelization has not changed. The school should continue giving Christian education while providing general knowledge.

### *2.2 Religious activities in the school*

Religious activities have been most important to create a Christian stamp on the school. But not only spiritual groups but also sport and cultural activities are an important part of the school’s image. These activities cemented the pupils during the period of unrest as to religious education. A football team as well as other teams promotes solidarity, endurance and responsibility; these may also be called important Christian values. The cultural activities like theatre, concerts, and clubs of all shades make the pupils able to practice their personal abilities and gain confidence in themselves. The pupils learn to organize and communicate with the society.

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<sup>18</sup> Charré Josué 2005, 9

<sup>19</sup> Statut du Collège Protestant de Ngaoundéré, 1970

<sup>20</sup> Statut du Collège Protestant de Ngaoundéré, 1970

<sup>21</sup> Ngah Joseph August 2010, non-published document, 5

The Christian associations like choirs, Bible groups (Brandon, GBEEC), prayer groups, and others were a treasure to the Collège. Collège Protestant has always been “a singing school” and through its history the school has jealously kept to this vocation.

The yearly Christmas concert where all the pupils participate is unique in the country and one of the great yearly cultural events in Ngaoundéré. In a two hours program the message of Christmas is presented by choirs, musicians and actors and gathers thousands of spectators.

The choirs of the school (Gospel Singers and Voix Angelique) have been very important for the school and the pupils as a means of musical education and friendship among the students. They have also made the Collège known inside as well as outside Ngaoundéré, and many pupils came to the Collège just because of the admiration of the choirs. Besides, they participate regularly in the local Sunday services. Thus they have been witnesses of their faith inside as well as outside the school. The oldest of them, the Gospel Singers, became well known and received invitations from overseas and from inside the country.

### **3 THE CONDITIONS OF THE APPOINTMENT OF THE HEADMASTERS AND THE CHAPLAINS**

In the previous paragraphs we have been presenting the periods and events which occurred in the life of the school. In this paragraph we are going to introduce the actors or eyewitness of the events and how they have influenced. During the 50 years long history of the Collège, the school has had a number of headmasters. Where did they come from, what were their qualifications, and who appointed them? In this chapter we will have a closer look at those who have directed the school. Collège Protestant was founded by the missionaries from Norway and the United States. These two missions cooperated in different fields.

The Collège was run by a joint committee of the two missions that also appointed the headmasters according to the ministry's qualifications for school leaders. The later Committee of Education, responsible for the schools in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cameroon, continued to appoint the headmasters until 2004. Surely, this was done in agreement with the Church and the Minister of Education in Cameroon. What were the criteria for the nomination? When the Collège was run by the two missions, there was a certain agreement as to the heads of the different institutions, but the main criteria that conducted the choice were qualifications, experience and personality. In the 1960s most of the missionaries were pastors



and the only ones that had an academic education that corresponded to the Ministry's qualifications of school leaders. In the 1970s the Collège got pedagogical and professional trained teachers. They became the future headmasters. This prevailed until the Central Committee took over the command. The church leaders wanted to give more space to theologians at the Collège and appointed a pastor as headmaster.

#### **4 THE PEDAGOGICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BACK-GROUND OF THE HEADMASTERS AND THE CHAPLAINS**

In this paragraph we are looking for the insights which can help the headmasters to do their work and in the same time situate them in the history. Oral and written data help us to reconstruct the following chronological<sup>22</sup> background of the headmasters.

- During our research, we found that from 1960 to 1975 all directors<sup>23</sup> were foreigners. The first headmaster was a French pastor<sup>24</sup>, Rev. Alfred Schwebel. He had a tough job starting the school. An American teacher with military background, Mr. Braathen took over when Rev. Schwebel became Secretary of Education. Then followed two American pastors: Rev. Eilertsen and Rev. Dressen. Rev. Eilertsen had to return to the United States of America because of sickness and stayed only for one year. After two years, Rev. Dressen was called to the Theological Seminary in Meiganga. Two French pastors were the next. They had their civil service in Cameroon. When Rev. Hans Barth returned after four years, Rev. Eduard Kempf continued for two years. During this period the new dormitories and the new school were built. One Norwegian, Eyvind Malmbekk, was working as a high-school teacher. According to my understanding most of the institutions were ruled by foreigners because the church did not have qualified Cameroonians to rule the institutions.

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<sup>22</sup> Divided in four subparagraphs (there is no connection between the number of subparagraph and the periods which have been mention above) we are going to find their insights.

<sup>23</sup> Evolution in the naming of headmasters from director to principals. From 1958 to 1980 there was Director because Collège Protestant can train only pupils from the first to the fourth class. In 1980, the school became a "collège d'enseignement general a cycle complet" it means it has the capacity to train pupils from the first to the seventh class in the secondary school. The headmaster is then called a principal.

<sup>24</sup> Until now I have written about the Norwegian and American missionaries. How come a French pastor? During my research, I found that some missionaries and volunteers from the French national service came to Cameroon as cooperates; some of them were involved in public and private activities.

- In 1975, the first Cameroonian director with a pedagogical education to be appointed was King Thomas. He spent four years in office. Earlier, he had cooperated with all the headmasters and he knew the school perfectly well. He had his professional education from a Teacher Training College in St. Etienne in France.
- After the Cameroonian, the Norwegians came back in office in 1979 with Erik S. Sandvik who arrived in Cameroon in 1967. Until then, he had worked in the Collège as a teacher and vice-principal. He was educated high school teacher at the University of Oslo. He is the only director to be appointed twice: from 1979-1984 and from 1989-1996. He has spent the longest time in office. When he was in office, Collège Protestant won the prize of the award of the best West-African school because of its good results in official exams in 1993 and its cultural activities. He is also known as the person who has made known the school abroad. After him another Norwegian, Kaare Lode, coming from the same mission and being a former student from the University of Bergen, continued but he stayed only for one year. He made this testimony in his book, “Collège Protestant as it is today is primarily due to the engagement of Monsieur Erik Sandvik”<sup>25</sup>. After Kaare Lode an American, Ziebel Thomas, stayed in office from 1984-1989. He left in 1989 and Erik S. Sandvik was called back from Norway.
- Cameroonians came back in office in 1996 and it was the period of “cameroonisation”<sup>26</sup> of the church. Pierre Laouan was in office from 1996 to 2002. He was one of the first pupils at the Collège. He had his pedagogical education from Ecole Normale de St. Etienne in France and Ecole Normale Supérieure in Yaoundé. He had formerly been a teacher, discipline master, treasurer and Vice Principal at the Collège. It is important to mention that many other former pupils play significant role in the Church at different levels and according to their specific training. For instance, some of them occupied the responsibility as manager of the Church institutions or as the

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<sup>25</sup> Kaare Lode, 189

<sup>26</sup> This word is used to say that Cameroonians were appointed as administrators in all institutions. The missions urged for a takeover for the Church and for the responsibilities of the institutions. Some of the Church leaders approved, others were more hesitant.

A first attempt was done in 1974. But it was in 1994 that the NMS decided that Norwegian missionaries should no longer direct an institution in the Church because the church in Cameroon had sufficient educated high school teachers to run the school. No written document were found neither in the archives of the Church nor in MHS to confirm this information. Be when discussing with the missionaries who were in Cameroon at that moment they said that I was a positive reaction to the growth of the church.



Among the findings there was no female appointed as director or principal. And we asked ourselves if there was no woman in the staff. We found that many of the female teachers were appreciated by their colleagues and pupils for their teaching and engagement. Many female missionaries were highly respected among the people, and at the Collège there was definitely no distinction. I am going to mention three of them because of their Christian devotion and witness in the school. They are:

- *Elise Weachter* was a French teacher. She was in Cameroon from 1955 to 1980. Her stay in the Collège was rather short but very important. She taught French, German, Sciences and Religion. She organized the Brandon movement.
- *Aud Bredeli*, who came to Cameroon many times (59-64, 66-70, 71-75, 79-82), was a Norwegian teacher. Her subjects were German, History, Geography and Religion. She conducted the school choir and was the leader of the girl's dormitory from 1970. A former pupil made this testimony about her, "She knew how to control people. ... She was more flexible and comprehensive."<sup>28</sup> These two statements are opposed to each other but it helps us to understand that this lady used her skills and personal character to achieve a specific goal: helping the pupils to understand the teaching while giving them additional skills. In this case I would say how to learn in an ordered environment.
- Another Norwegian, *Henny Waala* stayed in Cameroon from 1948 to 1973. She is remembered for her calm attitude and kindness. She left the Collège in 1967 to become the Secretary of Education of the Church.

Then how can we explain why they were not appointed as directors or principals although they had required insights? This question raises the debate on gender equality in general and the ministry of women in the church in particular. Many elements can be used not to justify but to explain why women were not appointed as leaders although they come from abroad and have good insights. The major element is the "social attitudes of the time". Pierre Bourdieu calls it *doxa*, He defines it as the effect of something coming to be seen true and necessary and people accept it as 'just the way things are'. So doxa is the "spirit of the time", the way people act and life in public or in private. One may conclude by saying that female headmasters in Africa and Europe or USA were not common at that time. But in Cameroon some of them occupied important positions in the educational system of the Church.

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<sup>28</sup> Inf.04/2010

## **5 THE HERITAGE OF THE HEADMASTERS COMING FROM ABROAD**

After reconstructing the history of Collège Protestant, the first idea which catches our attention is that persons from many nations have succeeded each other especially during Period I. The second one is that they do not spend enough time in office. In a previous paragraph we have explained the process of nomination and the purpose of this paragraph is to find in the legacy, what the school has gained from them. Before giving answers to this question, let us look for the impact of the instability or short term period in office of the headmasters in the school. Instability may be either as a weakness or as a strength.

### ***5.1 The effect of instability***

Instability can be seen as a weakness because when we want to build good leadership we need to spend some time in office. This period helps to understand the philosophy of the milieu, develop the vision of the school and the principles, and build the economy. This is why we think that in the process of building Collège Protestant instability was a weakness especially during Period I. In addition it is quite difficult for a researcher to find the fingerprints of some headmasters because they were soon forgotten. In fact many informants (among former pupils) did not say anything about some headmasters; they simply forgot to mention them. Short term periods in office may on the contrary be seen as an element which strengthens or enriches the administration. A short term stay in office helps to bring new blood in the system, create, diversify and enrich relationships. Due to diverse background and skills of the administrators, it helps to organize the administration and the studies. And differences may enrich an organization. In other words, when people with different experiences and competences work together they can build a strong administration.

### ***5.2 The heritage according to different voices***

In order to find the heritage or the benefits from the foreigners we will consider some testimonies of the administrators, pupils and the school.

... There is no one who said that I am not able to teach. We were glad to have the French teachers because they knew the school system; they knew the language better than an American or a Norwegian. When there were cooperates? We were really happy. The teaching staff was mostly Europeans.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Inf.01/2010

Obstacles were considered as challenges. Although they do not have the required skills to teach because the system was not the same as in their countries, they adapted themselves to the new environment. In addition, they did not look at their differences as obstacles but they used it for the growth of the school. We find that we should use our skills, differences and knowledge to build and enrich the community in which we live.

If there was a disagreement, (between) the French or others we didn't feel it. They continued to work in peace and had confidence in each others. If it was a Frenchman, or another, when they are in quarrels, you can't feel it. You saw them as if they are in peace. They were very confidential. They solved their problems without making it known by the community who may say look at those who teach us the Bible are quarrelling too... ...I learned it too.... Towards the end of their stay they had free place to Cameroonians... (organizing everything so that succession takes place easily). Otherwise I would not be where I am today. They were humble, they gave you the opportunity to give to others ...., they helped without being jealous of others.<sup>30</sup>

How can we interpret this narrative? It shows us that there are many ways of learning or teaching. In the school, pupils learn more from what they see than from what they hear. And pupils learn from their teachers through their daily life. And as a chaplain the message we deliver and our everyday actions also contribute to evangelization. Hence, Mathias Zahniser argues that to “evangelize is to share”<sup>31</sup>. We share knowledge, behavior and a way of life. Education is not only a matter of words but it integrates words, deeds, and signs. The whole person of the educator is involved. From this informant we can find three lessons:

- *Confidentiality*: as a leader of a group or a community, we have to solve our problems without making it known by those who are not implicated.
- *Facilitate succession*: when someone is in office we should prepare and facilitate succession so that the institutions continue.
- *Solidarity*: James wrote “If a brother or sister is naked and lack daily food, and one of you says to them: ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled; and you do not give them what is needed for the body, what good is it?’” (James 2:1-2). Hence, we have the responsibility to assist those whom we serve.

In some few cases, when the headmasters returned to their countries, they continued keeping good relationships which exist even 30 years later. Too many of them forgot the school for

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<sup>30</sup> Inf.04/2010

<sup>31</sup> Mathias Zahniser 1997, 59

which they were responsible too soon. Sometimes they left teachers and even pupils sorry and they missed those who went back abroad without staying in touch. But one of those who continue keeping relations argues that according to him “it is the human relationship which is more important than learning or knowledge.”<sup>32</sup>

They were the ambassadors of the school abroad. Through them the school was able to establish and develop partnerships with institutions abroad. These partnerships have helped to provide scholarships to students, train teachers, pay salaries, to provide furniture, infrastructure and didactical materials and administrative equipment, support service of the college chaplaincy. This is why good relations matters.

It is important for our general evaluation of the contribution of the foreigners to the rise or the development of Collège Protestant that we appreciate how tolerant most of the early headmasters of this school were. Figure 2 shows us what the school has benefited from the good relationship it had with the former headmasters.

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<sup>32</sup> Inf.02/2010



Fig: 2. Support from abroad to Collège Protestant



## 6 THE SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE COUNTRY AT THAT TIME

Collège Protestant was created at the moment where the country got its independence. The socio-political context of the country at that moment was a context of fight: fight for the liberation and the independence of Cameroon after more than 200 years of colonization (from the English, the Germans, and the French). The Adamoua region whose administrative capital is Ngaoundéré was Islamized in 1825. When the first missionaries from the Norwegian Missionary Society arrived one century later, they found that this region was strongly influenced by Islamic culture, belief and traditions. The missionaries' presence was not well appreciated by the first occupant (the Muslims) who looked at them as opponents and even enemies. This attitude continued many decades after. For this reason, cohabitation between Christian missionaries and the local Muslim-dominated administration was not easy. During the period covered by this study one may say that from 1960 to 1982 there was a political influence by Muslim leaders and from 1982 and onwards there was a new regime which promoted laity<sup>33</sup>.

Three cases illustrate how culture (the Islamic one) influenced evangelization in general and Religious education in particular:

In a correspondence between two headmasters one can read:

Your preoccupation has to concern only Churches of the North-Cameroon, because in the South, chaplains have this free access that you ask.<sup>34</sup>

This "laconic" answer shows us that we have two different cultures: one which tolerates Religious education in the South and the other which was hostile to it in the North. The reason is that the South was acquainted to Christianity, and Christian Education was freely taught in schools. That was not the case in the North.

Another correspondence shows us the difficulties Christian schools faced to receive financial support from the Government:

The policy of strangulation continues ... we have done a lot of effort for private education since 1960 ... a long series of deletions: .. 4 million less than what we were expecting? And this money will be given to the Franco-Arab schools.

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<sup>33</sup> The laity principle is based on the idea that the State does not interfere in religious matters but give opportunities to every religion to express themselves according to the regulation.

<sup>34</sup> Letter from a headmaster from the North asking his colleague in the South to ask the Government to authorize Bible classes, June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1978.

Then the year after 1.5 million less. Meanwhile prices rise by 30 per cent.  
Deleted grant to the North ...<sup>35</sup>

Here we find all difficulties faced by Northern school founders to receive financing support from the state. This is an indirect way to prevent Christian's school to function and to proclaim God's Words in this part of the country. By stifling the school the consequence is the stifling of Religious Education.

The third is a testimony of an informant who writes about the construction of a dormitory:

You take Collège Protestant where missionaries had built up the fourth Class before independence and after independence it has not been expanded. The missionaries fought for the expansion of the buildings so that the second cycle will function, it was refused each time. They refused because of Bible education...<sup>36</sup>

In this case teaching Bible in schools was the reason why the school administration did not receive the authorization to expand the infrastructure.

These three examples show us how the socio-political context was at that time. Influences can be direct or indirect, moral or physical. We also found that there were tensions, incidents and in some cases conflicts between these two communities. However, one informant has made this testimony: "... with Islam, relationships were especially cordial with particular persons".<sup>37</sup>

Paul Hiebert argues that "to participate fully in another society we must be given a status within it"<sup>38</sup>. And one of the statuses he has mentioned is friendship. It means that some people had special relations with Muslims because they were friends in one way or the other. When relationships are cordial in a multicultural society, it is possible to achieve common goals such as peace. Building cordial relationships in a multicultural society is the goal which should be achieved by all its members in order to build bridges of understandings. And we should prepare pupils to face and react positively in favor of any action which helps to build a community of peace, love and understanding.

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<sup>35</sup> Letter to owners of the Protestant Schools in Garoua, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1965.

<sup>36</sup> Inf.09/2010

<sup>37</sup> Inf.09/2010

<sup>38</sup> Paul Hiebert 1985, 260

### ***6.1 Regulations concerning religious teaching in Cameroon***

In Cameroon, education is a serious matter and the Government wants that every pupil receives a good education in whatever school he is, private or public. In general, laws on education provide guidelines on the formulation and implementation of education policy and financing of education. These laws also define the organization, evaluation of the educational system and research in education. It provides guidelines for the educational community made of students and teachers. None can rule a school without taking seriously these regulations. If not, the State can stop financing the school or close it. But what about religious education, what is the principal concern? All written documents on regulation concerning education in Cameroon, do not explicitly say anything about Religious Education. However, the law organizing private education recognizes the originality of each private agency because they are faith based organizations.

### **CONCLUSION**

In this chapter an attempt was made to summarize fifty years of the main events which had occurred in the process of evangelizing pupils' through Religious education in Collège Protestant of Ngaoundéré. This study, based on oral and written sources, makes us understand that there were four main periods in its history:

- During Period I, there was a common Bible class for all pupils and the school administration was made of pastors.
- Period II is the period of separation and the pupils received Religious education according to their religious believes.
- Period III is a period of unifying Catholic and Protestant students following the same program and the progressive introduction of manuals of Religious and Ethical education.
- The last period which started in 2008, has a common program for all pupils. There were three reasons for merging students once more:

- (1) The main idea in globalization is that it is important to know the people around you, his or her faith and his or her way of thinking. Further, it is important to discuss these different world views and to share each others' experiences.
- (2) The school wanted to give its students a particular education where tolerance and understanding were important.
- (3) The school had not sufficient class rooms for three different groups at the same time. Christians and Muslims had to be together during religious education.

The findings are plenty: pupils were treated with dignity, cooperation and understanding were the basis of relationships, women played an important role in the school no matter “the spirit of the time”, the school gained a lot from its former foreign headmasters, and the evangelization in the school did not change but had rather evolved.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **TIME OF SEPARATION**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Nine years after its creation, Collège Protestant faced one of its most serious problems as a confessional school. In fact in 1969, the local authorities ordered the school to exclude the Muslim students from the school's religious education classes, based on Christian knowledge and ethics, (commonly called Bible courses). And during this period it was the integrative religious education approach which was used. Due to this intervention, "three faiths based classes" emerged. So far religious education had been common for all creeds and harmony reigned among the students as to religion.

This chapter will cover specially the second and the third period of the history of Collège Protestant: from 1965 to 1995 and from 1995 to 2008. See figure 1. The first paragraph of the chapter will help us seeking when it occurred, what has stopped or continued during this time and how the entire educative community appreciated it. We will have a look at the situation in the school before the interdiction and listen to the testimonies of the effect of it. Afterwards we will find that in 1995, Catholic and Protestant pupils came together and attended the same class on the basis of the principle that one teaches what one has in common. The last paragraph will focus on a discussion on the impact of Religious education on the pupils before and after the parting of the students.

The chapter aims to show how culture can influence actions and how external influence on a school can have negative effects on pupils and the staff.

#### **1 THE BACKGROUND OF THE SEPARATION**

Before the separation, how was the atmosphere in the school and in the classes? Where there anything at stage telling that a change would take place? Two testimonies from that time could inform us, the first one is from a (foreign) former teacher, the other from a Christian pupil.

When I arrived (in Cameroon) in 1967, you could not know who were Christians or Muslims. There was no distinction. .... That was the atmosphere that I found myself at the Collège. A friendly fellowship reigned and there was no difference. Any way I did not feel any difference.<sup>39</sup>

During the first year, there was no distinction. All pupils, Muslims, Catholics, Protestants, Lutherans or other were invited to Bible classes.<sup>40</sup>

How can we understand these testimonies? If members of different confessions followed the same religious teaching, it means that diversity was not a problem. In other words, they have succeeded to put aside their differences and were oriented towards a common goal: the education and the well-being of the entire community. It helped them to build a community based on tolerance and reciprocal acceptance. There was unity within diversity. But if the ‘atmosphere’ and the ‘environment’, in other words if the socio-religious context was good why did the separation occur?

### ***1.1 The separation of the pupils according to religious belongings***

One of the students at the time said:

In our class there was a student called .... He was the Divisional Officer<sup>41</sup> of N'gaoundéré's nephew. He went to his uncle and told that the school had forced him to attend the Bible class. And the Divisional officer intervened and ordered the school to exempt Muslims from Christian teaching.<sup>42</sup>

He [the Divisional officer] ordered the school stop “Religious Education for Muslims” ... Then there were three classes of Religious Education: one for Catholics, another for Protestants and a third one for Muslims. It was like this for years.<sup>43</sup>

As the Divisional officer stopped Christian religious teaching for Muslims, the school reorganized and diversified the religious education. The students were divided into three groups: one for Protestants, one for Catholics and a third one for Muslims. A particular curriculum was elaborated for the Muslims where ethics and moral behavior were the main topics. The Protestant and the Muslim group were taught by the teachers of the school, the Catholic one, by a visiting priest.

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<sup>39</sup> Inf.01/2010

<sup>40</sup> Inf.09/2010

<sup>41</sup> Divisional officer: in its French calling *Préfet* (*praefectus*, Latin) is a civil servant appointed by the State to top a department. He is the custodian of the State authority and is in charge of the security in the department. He draws his power from his position and in our case he belongs to a dominant religious group. That is why he can express his authority in all aspects of the activity which are going on in the territory in which he tops. Because he depends on two more powerful sources, he can misuse his authority in favor of his religious group.

<sup>42</sup> Inf.09/2010

<sup>43</sup> Inf.01/2010

This happened in 1968. There is no written material to confirm the decision taken by the Administrative authority. But the effects of the decision were that for four decades there were different religious based classes. At that time oral or written decisions taken by the Divisional authority had the same effects. In other words, a written or oral administrative decision has the same power: the power of a law.

### ***1.2 What should occur in this separation? What were the consequences of this reorganization?***

In this section, we will discuss the reasons of the Divisional officer for intervening and try to see the effects it had on the school. Although the harmony and the ambiance were still good, all pupils did not appreciate the change. Appearances do not fool anybody. Silence does not mean that all agreed on what was going on. Seeking to understand the reasons of the Divisional officer, various elements should be taken into account. Based on testimonies and some written sources, several reasons could explain his reaction:

I remember, once I was assaulted by a parent who told me that I was about to convert his children to Christianity, and that if his child became a Christian he would kill me.<sup>44</sup>

The reactions of the parents can be understood in two different ways. First they did not appreciate that Collège Protestant could convert their children to Christianity. They were afraid that their children should learn things at a confessional school that was contrary to their faith and culture. Secondly, it proved that they were interested and preoccupied by the type of teaching their children received in general and in religious classes in particular. So one might argue that education of a pupil (child) is not only the concern of the school but of the entire educative community, parents included. In most cases we find that parents who abandoned the education of their children to the school arguing that they are busy. The general opinion among parents is that the education of their child is the entire responsibility of the school and not of the parents. They argue that the daily work keep them busy all the time.

This attitude exposes children to all kinds of derivations and influences. The consequence is that children do not have any benchmark or basis and this exposes them to any religious influence.

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<sup>44</sup> Inf.08/2010

## 2 THE PUPILS' REACTION TO THE DIVISION

Division occurs when there is a misunderstanding between people or when differences in opinion and living are so great that they cannot continue to be together. In both cases division is questionable. It always affects people affectively and psychologically. Based on religious matters, it constitutes a field of misunderstandings and conflicts.

We felt it because the harmony that existed disappeared. (Was not there any longer). Friends became intelligent agents among their classmates. The atmosphere had changed (for the worse).<sup>45</sup>

It was a dictatorship (from the authorities) that shocked everyone. The class was infiltrated by elements that could inform the authorities.<sup>46</sup>

The class became a place of intelligency and a climate of fear seized the school. The church leaders, the school staff and the students were afraid of the authority because nobody could refuse or challenge a decision taken by administrative authority. The pupils accepted it and at that moment they understood that hereafter there were two different groups in the school based on religious belonging. The separation also affected their human relations because everybody had felt so far that Christians and Muslims had contributed with something positive to the community at school. A former headmaster expressed it in this way:

I think the presence of Muslims helped Christians in two ways. First through their fidelity in prayers, then in their everyday life.<sup>47</sup>

When they were together they learnt from each other but after the separation, Christians lost the example given them by their Muslim friends. The Muslims inspired the Christians to be punctual in prayers and serious in their everyday life. In addition their discussions were based on both religious and ethical questions. It was/is common to see them discussing about their religious believes such as the question of salvation, triune God, worship, celebrations and also about how they behave in classrooms, how their vestment should be; and even a topic like prostitution is often debated. Religious education classes were and are an arena of dialogue between the pupils, and it also include situations where critics were uttered. For instance, Muslim pupils criticized the attitude of their Christian class mates because they did not dress well (in Islam a girl should cover all her body and her hair), or when boys are disturbing in class. As Paul Hiebert argues, "We have to learn from one another so that we can love our

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<sup>45</sup> Inf.01/2010

<sup>46</sup> Inf.09/2010

<sup>47</sup> Inf.01/2010



neighbors as humankind and evaluate their way of behaving and acting.”<sup>48</sup> Learning from one another also helps to understand our faith and to evaluate our actions. In addition another informant has given the following testimony.

When we attend the Bible course, Muslims also understand a little what it is about in our religion. They realize that the way they understand our faith is not right.<sup>49</sup>

### **3 THE REASONS WHY CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS FOLLOWED THE SAME COURSE**

The first fusion was with Protestants and Catholics together. They, [Catholics] had problems finding Catholic teachers of the Bible. We adopted the principle that we teach what we have in common.<sup>50</sup>

The first question which arises is what do they have in common? The answer is: they believe in the same God, they have the same Savior, Jesus Christ and they are led by the same Holy Spirit. Why then, did Catholics and Protestants split into two groups? Separation between Catholics and Protestants is a collateral effect of the intervention from the principal that would wake the old memory<sup>51</sup> between these two communities. Two reasons can explain this fusion: first, by the time, the number of Catholic pupils decreased and the chaplain, who for years had been responsible for the teaching, left Ngaoundéré. The Collège in accordance with the chaplain then decided that the Catholics joined the Protestants and that all Christians should have the same basic Christian education. The next principals from the Catholics and the Collège Protestant worked closely together and ecumenical religious arrangements were organized. It became a sign of ecumenical cooperation.

### **4 THE IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS AND ETHICAL TEACHINGS ON THE PUPILS AND THE SOCIETY BEFORE AND AFTER SEPARATION**

God has created everyone with dignity. Dignity means that everyone has a great value and should be respected. Nobody should be badly treated or cursed but all man's potentialities

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<sup>48</sup> Paul Hiebert 2008, 81

<sup>49</sup> Inf.06/2010

<sup>50</sup> Inf.01/2010

<sup>51</sup> Here I think about Reformation in the 16s century and its consequences.

should be preserved and promoted. The school helps the pupil to build up an identity that will help to transform himself and the society.

According to Nora Stene Preston, three different levels<sup>52</sup> have to be examined in order to understand children's religiosity: the child is a family member, second the child is a church community member, and thirdly the child is a pupil in religious education classes. I would like to examine this concept and see how I have respected those three levels mentioned and which hypothesis can be presented.

#### ***4.1 The child is a family member***

The time I spent in the Collège allowed me to change (my life) ... I first attended a Public Secondary school. There I liked strolling around with my friends, moving from one place to another. We didn't think too much about our studies. Neither did I in fact consider or think about religion... (When I came home after my first year at the Collège my parents were impressed because they found that everything had changed (in me). (That I had completely changed).<sup>53</sup>

How can we understand the word "change" being used by this pupil? This word is also used by politicians and by preachers. In their sermons they invite the audience to abandon what they were used to and follow a new way. They invite for a revolution in their habit and behavior. In the case of my informant, religious education classes helped him to abandon a style of life and embrace another one. He moved from what he considered bad to enter into a new life. And when change affects someone's relationship with God we talk about conversion. Conversion is a deep transformation of a person whose consequence is the acceptance and the adherence to a new way of believing. It "changes not only the individual, but also the groups that must assimilate or give up the convert"<sup>54</sup>. And this is the goal of evangelization.

A testimony from my female informant goes in the same direction when she said:

...Here (in the Collège) was also Religious Education which helped us in (so) many ways. I became a believer. It was a much better life than the time I spent in the Public Secondary School in Yaoundé.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Nora Stene Preston (2005, 21) cited by Gerd Marie Ådna (2010, 299), "The Interaction Between Interviewees and Interviewers: Perspectives from Religious Studies", in Bård Mæland (ed.) 2010. *Culture, Religion, and the Reintegration of Female Child Soldiers in Northern Uganda*, 295–314, (Bible and Theology in Africa, vol.10, New York: Peter Lang).

<sup>53</sup> Inf.06/2010

<sup>54</sup> Andrew Bucker 2003, 69

<sup>55</sup> Inf.05/2010

Pupils who grow up in a place without Religious education may not have a stable life. Many changes have occurred in the life of these pupils during school time and the family can feel it (And it is visible for the parents).

#### ***4.2 The child is a church (community) member***

During this study, we find that most of the pupils were involved in one of the choirs of the church and were active members of the church, sometimes serving as a deacon.

Claude was not a churchgoer. Now, life has changed. On Sunday mornings he takes a bath and go to church..... On Tuesdays the choir has its rehearsal, he never misses one, because he likes singing. If Claude is out, the parents know that Claude is either at church or at the choir. “Many of my friends complain about me,” he says, “but I have an organized life, I’ve got used to this way of living and will not lose it. I cannot change. This is my life.”<sup>56</sup>

This testimony shows that when the teaching is serious and satisfies the need of the pupils, they engage themselves in the life of the Church. And then they move on step by step, and form members to responsible leaders. Religious education and the environment help the pupils to abandon old habits which are not in accordance with a modern Christian life.

#### ***4.3 The child is a pupil in a religious education class***

One of my young informants told me the following story on the effect of religious class on a girl who participated in Religious activities in the Collège Protestant for seven years.

I had a friend who wanted to become a Christian. Her parents refused and they said that as long as she lived under their roof she had to respect their decisions. Later she could do as she wanted. She answered that even after 20 or 22 years she would convert to Christianity. She stayed in the Collège Protestant all her school time (seven years) I don’t know her reasons.<sup>57</sup>

She had had some strong experiences that had touched her life and her faith. And the Collège Protestant was a community in which she could understand her faith and live in an including environment. Such an environment is a place in which all members no matter their differences feel that they are accepted by others. Those who are dominant in number do not oppress others but through dialogue and cooperation they develop confidence, respect and trust. A similar general wisdom says that man becomes what he hears and what he sees. In other words, it is the message and the way of life, the behavior and the attitude that make people

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<sup>56</sup> Inf.06/2010

<sup>57</sup> Inf.06/2010

think of a conversion. When the message is clear and respond to man's basic questions of physical needs, thinking and understanding then anybody can be tempted to change his religion. The other reason worth mentioning is how open the school community is. When someone feels that she or he is included in the community and that she or he is considered with dignity, then conversion is a possible result.

Another one told me that by attending religious classes in the Collège Protestant, he stopped loitering and smoking. He became more and more serious at home, in school and in his studies.

To resume one may argue that religious education class has three main effects on pupil: it influence their religious belief, their world view and their studies.

After examining the three levels of children's religiosity, I feel we should have had other examples because these levels limit our research in the family, the class and the church forgetting that pupils act in a multi-religious and multicultural society (the theory for this will be developed in the followings paragraph). And with globalization, people share relations with others around the world. I am convinced that the everyday life is spent mostly outside the family, the church, and the religious education classes<sup>58</sup>. They are restricted surroundings. Now, religious education classes also prepare, on the basis of the new approach, pupils to live in a complex environment open to the whole society and the entire world. Thus the pupils are prepared to interact with people they are not familiar with. So I suggest a fourth and last level:

#### ***4.4 The child is a pupil living and acting in a multi-religious and multicultural society***

The child is a member of a multi-religious and a multicultural society. And in this society it will fight corruption, favoritism and other negative relational acts... My youngest informant told me that:

If we continue with the same friends and if we meet in (active) life, may be in the same job, I do not believe that corruption will exist, that the temptation will exist. Because we already know each other and it will be easy to find who is corrupt or not....., it is good.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Nora Stene Preston's research is mainly discussing children below 12 years. Nowadays, her theory can be applied on all teenagers. Because the pupils of my case study after their eight hours daily classroom, spent some time participating in religious or sportive activities, going to cybercafé (most of them don't have the net at home), visiting each other and even loitering. One may conclude by saying that they spent most time out of their homes different from pupils below 12 years.

<sup>59</sup> Inf.07/2010

This informant, who is 15 years old, is aware of the danger that represents corruption in a society. And when he says “we know each other” it means that they know habits and behavior of each other. They know the weakness and the strength of everyone. By attending the same religious classes they acquire skills which will help them to build a better society. Hence, children’s religiosity should be studied where it interacts with others. My hypothesis is that religious education, when it is well done, brings deep changes in the life of pupils and it can be seen in their everyday life.

## **CONCLUSION**

Separation occurred when a local authority leader, afraid that the school could convert his child, ordered to exclude Muslims pupils from Religious education classes. The school administration obeyed and recognized this particular course. The consequence was that the pupils were divided according to their religious background, Muslim, Catholic and Protestant. During the second period, going from 1968 to 1995, Religious teaching was diversified taking into account the faith of the pupils.

(1) The Muslims got ethical and moral education.

(2) The Catholics got mostly doctrinal education conducted by a volunteer Catholic teacher.

(3) The Protestants’ education was basically Bible studies and ethics.

Every teacher at the school was supposed to participate in the Religious Education, as well for the Muslims as for the Christians. There was no common Bible class for all the pupils. During 26 years there were three different faith-based classes according to the three main confessions in the school, each group attending a special class. Bible classes for Protestants and moral classes for Muslims taught by the teacher of the Collège Protestant, and Bible classes by a Catholic teacher.

During the third period from 1995 to 2006; by the time, the number of Catholic pupils decreased and the Catholic chaplain, who for years had been responsible for the teaching, left Ngaoundéré. The Collège in accordance with the chaplain then decided that the Catholics joined the Protestants and that all Christians should have the same basic Christian education. By examining children’s religiosity, we found that Religious education, when it is well done, brings deep changes in the life of the pupils. These changes can be seen at home, in their religious community or in class. Further, we also find that due to globalization, pupil interact with other persons around the world. For this reason we added a fourth level of importance for

his or her religiosity: he is a member of a multi-religious society. In this particular case his religiosity can be an orientation for the type of relation or person he wants to be and to encounter.

It is important for our understanding to conclude this chapter by introducing the fourth period because it will help us to understand what we are going to do in the next chapter. The fourth period starts in 2008 and continues till present time. From 1998 a National Program for Religious education was established by the Council of Protestant Churches in Cameroon. The following years schoolbooks became available for students and teachers. Manuals of Religious teaching were introduced in all Protestant secondary schools in Cameroon. There was a fixed program for each year and religious education became more like another subject. I will return to these manuals and the new curriculum in the next chapter. Many Muslim students became interested in the books and started attending the classes. There was also a reaction as to the teaching, the students found that the education given to Muslims was neglected and insufficient and there were cries among Muslims pupils and some Christian teachers for a change. There was also a practical reason. The school expanded and there were not any longer classrooms available for a “double stream” of religious teaching. The only solution was to put Muslims and Christians together.

Finally, the school considered that we are now living in a new era, that of globalization, where it is very important to know each other. Mixed classes offered a unique opportunity to know each other’s religion. This has created some reactions from Muslim parents and students too. This requires a good preparation by the teachers. The success of this new approach depends entirely on well educated teachers and open-minded students.

## CHAPTER 4

### RENEWING AND REVITALIZING RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

#### INTRODUCTION

Since some time, we are happy to feel a desire to revitalize and to organize the work, whose will is illustrated by the production of manuals (of religious and ethical education)..... All these attempts compete, one can see, one goal: to rehabilitate the Protestant education....<sup>60</sup>

Two words catch our attention when we read this passage: revitalize and rehabilitate. Revitalize means that something/one has lost vitality. Can we say that religious education has lost vigor? According to events described in previous chapters one may answer with the affirmative. Religious education in Collège Protestant has lost its strength or influence on a particular group of pupils of Collège Protestant for many decades. During this period it also faces many attacks and influences which had “weakened it” and had induced its lost of importance in a way that many pupils took it as a second level course. This is why this informant talks about rehabilitation when he refers to all efforts which have been done in order to restore religious education in its former privilege. This privilege was that religious education in Protestant schools should play a central role in the life of the schools. And that all those who attend our school should find the particularity of protestant education. The questions that will be discussed in this chapter are: how Religious education has been revitalized? How did the process of rehabilitation take place? And how did the manuals contribute to it?

This chapter aims to present and discuss the principles or processes of the elaboration of the manuals of Religious and Ethical education from the conception of the curriculum to their publication. This chapter also includes my personal and professional reflections as the co-author of the manuals. I will especially explain or enrich the understanding of some concepts or ideas hidden behind some theories in the science of pedagogy.

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<sup>60</sup> Josué Charré April 2005, 3-4

## **1 THE PROCESS**

As mentioned in chapter II, the school administration started thinking seriously about religious education in 1998 during the meeting of the Council of Protestant Church in Cameroon<sup>61</sup>. From these meetings, serious decisions were taken in order to revitalize and rehabilitate Religious Education. One of them was to write textbook in which the aims and visions of religious education will be developed. In order to achieve this goal four main phases<sup>62</sup> were established.

### ***1.1 Phase 1: Production of manuals***

The Council agreed to produce text books both for primary and secondary schools. Each manual should be accompanied by the teacher guide book (it has not been done yet). So there will be seven books for pupils and seven other books for teachers. For secondary schools emphasis has been given to produce pupil's text books. To achieve this goal some principles have been established. These principles concern general goals, the learning objectives and the syllabuses.

#### ***1.1.1 Generals goals***

A report from the Council stipulates that with the collaboration of parents, the church and the school, the goals of Religious Education<sup>63</sup> are to:

- Provide a strong Christian knowledge to pupils. This education will enable them to (1) resist all forms of seduction and, (2) keep their Christian identity and (3) be familiar to their cultural inheritance.
- Encourage them to grow up spiritually so that they will be active and enlighten members of their religious communities. The importance of this point has been developed in chapter 3 about "child religiosity".

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<sup>61</sup> Council of Protestant Church in Cameroon: in Cameroon, Protestant Churches are organized in a Council. This council made of 11 the churches represents them at the national or international level according to the agenda.

<sup>62</sup> FEMEC, Secrétariat National de l'Organisation de l'enseignement Privé Protestant, plan de progression

<sup>63</sup> Erik Sandvik and Prosper Mobéang, Foi et Science, manuel de l'Enseignement Religieux et Ethique, classe 2<sup>nde</sup>.



- Awake attachment to ethical values so that pupils will develop their personality, make ethical decisions and form a personal view of life so that they will be useful for their homes and the entire society.
- Encourage a spirit of tolerance and cooperation. Pupils live in a multicultural society and it is important for them to (1) know other way of belief so that they (2) will respect other people and their tradition, (3) develop interreligious dialogue and (4) achieve common goal with believers of other religions.

A brief comparative study of this goals and the one define when the school were created shows a big change. In fact the teaching of religious education's aim was to make disciple but now the aim is redefined in such a way that the audience is not only a disciple but someone who has a strong religious and ethical background and open to others. This pupil is not only Christian faith oriented but prepared and open to the world.

#### *1.1.2 The learning objectives*

In order to achieve these general goals, learning objectives were defined in a document entitled “Some *principle for the elaboration of manuals of religious education*<sup>64</sup>” will be based on:

- *Study of the Bible*: the pupil should deepen their knowledge of the Bible and its importance for the individual, the society and the culture. Both Old and New Testament should be taught in an inductive way from the first to the seventh academic year.
- *The history of the church*: the pupil should know the history of the church from the reformation to onwards. This knowledge will show him how the church found its way during centuries in a hostile context and enable him to stand for justice.
- *Study of ethics*: in this case, the pupil will be taught principle and values of Christian and other religion's ethics and even secular ethics. From this cross ethical values, he will be able to judge and take morally valuable decisions.

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<sup>64</sup> The french title is *Quelques principes pour l'elaboration du manuel de l'enseignement religieux*, authored by the Council of Protestant Churches in Cameroon, the year is not specified.

- *Study of religion:* the pupil should have knowledge on the fundamental teachings, beliefs, traditions and the holy books of the five main religions in the world: Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity. The pupils will find similarities and differences between these religions by comparing some religious expressions, practices, architecture (their temples or other holy places), vestments, gender equality... This knowledge will help them to understand their neighbors in their everyday religious life, promote tolerance and cooperation which are the basis of peace. Studies of the religions also open their mind to other cultures and ways of thinking.

### 1.1.3 *The syllabuses*

The syllabuses<sup>65</sup> follow a spiral development according to the physical, psychological and intellectual evolution of pupils. This is called psycho-pedagogical basis<sup>66</sup>. In fact, courses such as sexuality, which concern physical and psychological dimensions, should be taught when teenagers are facing puberty, not after, in order to solve specific questions which rise during this period of their life.

In the first cycle, made of four classes, pupils are 12-15 years old. They should acquire knowledge about the Old and New Testament, the Bible, the Church, ethics and religions.

- The Old Testament will give them knowledge about patriarchs; prehistory, exodus, the prophets, the exile and the occupation. Examples from big figures of the Old Testament are presented and discussed.
- The New Testament is about the birth, childhood and life and death of Jesus.
- The courses on the Bible present it as the holy book, and also as a historical and religious book. It also shows the importance of its content in the history and the society.
- The study of the Church will present the church in its local and holistic dimension, missions and, missionaries and the expansion of the church, and the role of the church in the society.

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<sup>65</sup> It is from the document entitled "Overview of the conception and the progression of the syllabuses" authored by the Council, the year is not specified.

<sup>66</sup> Psycho-pedagogical basis refers to the concept that each pupil is a unique individual and has their own idiosyncratic knowledge base, preferred ways of learning, personality, motivations, interests, values, and social history.

- About ethics pupils should acquire skills on how to live in a community, what does it mean to have a responsibility, the importance of human relationships, the aims, norms and consciousness for the well-being of the community.
- The last section of the syllabus for this cycle is about religion. Here there is a phenomenological presentation of religions, examination of their origins and different religious systems, discussions between religion and beliefs, the concept of the sacred, of time and eternity, and about justice in religions.

In the second cycle (made of three classes) where pupils are more mature (16-18 years old), they will have a comparative study on Christianity, sciences, religions, history, philosophy and ethics. For this category of pupils the courses will focus on:

- The Christian creeds,
- The process of writing the Bible,
- Jesus, his mission and the church, and the church history,
- Events and the ecclesiastical year and feast,
- Christianity, philosophy, sciences and other religions,
- A large study of ethics: personal and social ethics, importance of life and the nature, different ways of living and looking at life within or out of their traditional milieu.

One of the main recommendations on this syllabuses concern Christian teachings. It was decided that the manuals should present only what Christians share in common. Particularities such as dogma should be put aside and the different confessions will do it in their catechism. This recommendation was important because the manuals will be used by all Protestants Schools in Cameroon and doctrinal discussion will divide instead of bringing together pupils.

#### *1.1.4 Interdisciplinary*

The program was established in this way: when a course is given in philosophy on God, or in science on the origin of life, the chaplain gives religious meaning or understanding of God or the origin of life according to the class. By doing so pupils have both religious and non religious presentations of the subject. In the manuals the chaplains and the teachers of

philosophy or science are asked to work together in order to have a general presentation of the subject. The aim is to confront the two approaches and outline aspects of complementarities. It will help them to build a bridge between knowledge from the secular and the one from the chaplain. This way of introducing interdisciplinary links between these courses and the goal is to give relevant knowledge and skills to pupils. They will find that courses are not arenas of competitions but of sharing data and information. There is a big emphasis on interdisciplinary issues because this teaching method helps to mobilize all potentialities, physical, artistic and linguistic of the pupils. Interdisciplinary studies are based on the idea that one can work with a colleague of another discipline, use visits or visitors of other courses to attend the religious education class in order to share their knowledge or experience in a particular domain or topic. These visitors may be parents or religious leaders who are asked in advance to tell the class one short story from their experience that may interest the class or deepen a discussion. And it is common to find reference in the manuals to other courses or disciplines which can help pupils to have a large view of a subject. So that they will find that religious education shares common ground with other disciplines. This last point also opens the pupils to their external environment namely the multicultural society. For instance after the course on Islam, pupils are sent to meet an imam to discuss questions such as the importance of fasting in the life of a Muslim or to take part in a traditional ceremony in order to see how important are the place and the deeds for those who attend it.

#### *1.1.5 The writing process*

After the general goals, the goals of study and the syllabuses were clearly defined, the process of gathering data and writing texts began. The writing process took eight years during which seminars were organized in order to gather data. Before and during the process, many journeys in or out of the country were organized in Madagascar, Cote-d'Ivoire, Rwanda, Togo, France, and Norway.... in order to share experiences. Afterwards the writing team started harmonizing chapters so that they would have the same pedagogical, esthetical, ethical and theological presentation. Contributions of experts in domain cited above helped to give "more correctly, precisely, objectively, and scientifically"<sup>67</sup> content to the manuals. Frequently the writing team met the Council in order to evaluate the evolution and solve some problems. The writing process was a good moment for the writing team because it was the occasion to learn more about their faith under the light of other faiths, considering on their

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<sup>67</sup> Geraldine Van Bueren 2004, 567

personal life in accordance with the ethics and morality they wanted the reader to acquire and develop methods of work which help them to enrich their knowledge and capacities. At the end of the process seven books were produced.

Now, I am going to present a brief summary of the manuals. The title of the book (both in English and French) is followed by the class in which it is taught:

- *God's love* (first class), (*L'amour de Dieu*, sixième)

This book is about the love of God from the beginning to the end. God teaches us to love our neighbor as he loves us. This book shows what God has done for us and what we can do for those around us and with whom we live and interact every day. So this book helps to understand the word of God and how one can put this into practice wherever he is: at home, in the classroom and in the society. It gives us:

- Role models,
- Examples to follow,
- Knowledge of God.

- *God's fidelity* (second class), (*La fidélité de Dieu*, cinquième)

In this book, we discover the loyalty and solidarity of God to men. Throughout Israel's history we see how God follows and leads his people. Similarly we see how his people speak to us today. God gave us life, but he also gave us free will. Through the texts of this year, we understand that there are two forces in the world: good and evil, God and Satan. They fight the man. Satan wants him to go away from God. He tries to win by seduction, jealousy and pride. Sin is an act of disobedience against God, its effect is separation. When man chooses evil, his life will be difficult. Despite all the distractions of humans, God remains faithful. The life of Jesus was a constant struggle against evil, to protect rights. The pupils should learn to combat evil and, remain committed and loyal.

- *God's messengers* (third class), (*Les messagers de Dieu*, quatrième)

Here we discover these messengers through the texts in this manual.

- In the Bible we find the efforts of those who were sent to keep and share the Word of God through the centuries.

- Through the texts of the Old Testament, we follow on one hand the historical development of the people of Israel during the period of separation and dislocation of the country and on

the other, the action of the prophets against injustice and idolatry.

- The New Testament passages introduce us to Jesus' ministry, the way he chooses his collaborators (disciples) and their readiness to continue his work and bring his message to the world.

- From the Day of Pentecost, begins the story of the Christian Church. We are witnessing the events of the day and follow the evolution of the Church through the centuries until today.

- The ethical part is about love between men. We address issues affecting relations with our parents, our mentors and our friends and our accountability to anyone.

- *The kingdom of God* (fourth class), (*Le royaume de Dieu*, troisième)

Our study in these manuals is about freedom. The pupil will learn how to be free from the difficult times, turn failure into victory, assessing the advice and put their gifts or talents in values. Once again, the examples drawn from the Bible are to be applied in situations of everyday life.

- The book begins with a study of the Bible and its use in everyday life. It continues with the history of the Jews under the yoke and external domination.

- We listen to Jesus, his conception of freedom and victory, life and relationships. We will see what advice Jesus may give a student in her third school life and in the future.

- We conclude with the vision of life in the hereafter and what other religions believe for instance regarding eternal life, death, peace.

- *Faith and Science* (fifth class), (*Foi et Science*, seconde)

The book of class five explores the phenomenon of religion and its impact on society. It puts Christianity in relief by comparing it to other religions and science.

It opens on to a large study of religion followed by an introduction to traditional religion and world religions. The chapter about the study of religion focuses on what is common in all religions such as believes, values, rituals, symbols, dogmas, the holy books, holy places, life on earth and after, and the place of the highest divinity in the life of the community or the individuals. In this last case it is mentioned that in traditional Religions this highest divinity has the most beautiful and powerful name. For instance, in my traditional language the highest divinity is called "the biggest spirit" because it is believed that there are many other spirits around him. This kind of analysis is opened in order to see what God is called in diverse languages or religions. And one further remark is that in most religions, (except in Buddhism where it is said that it is a religion without God), God or the highest/ultimate

divinity has the highest position in the hierarchy of the divinities. These lessons will help the pupils to improve their understanding of their own faith and that of the others in the sense of cultivating a peaceful coexistence with them. The constellation faith and science helps the student to reflect on the coexistence of the two approaches to reality and their various contributions to the welfare of mankind. This manual continues by examining the tenets of Christianity, and concludes with the presentation of the history (life and important events) of the Jewish people until the time of Jesus.

- *Faith and Community* (sixth class), (*Foi et Communauté*, première)

In this manual, the study will focus on the Church and Christ's presence in the world. The Church is God's people, those who confess the name of Christ around the world, those who believe and those who will believe. Similarly, we present the Church as an institution that has crossed centuries and continents. Finally, we address Christian behavior in certain situations of life: the Christian answer to the exploitation of the fabulous gift that God gave for instance through sexuality, and further the proper response to stimulants (alcohol, drugs, and tobacco).

- *Faith and Philosophy* (seventh class), (*Foi et Philosophie*, terminale)

This book is about man and his place in the universe. At the beginning there is a discussion on the existence of God, man, evil and on the human condition. It examines its function in society: the phases and contexts of life. Finally it is reflecting on the relationship of humans with spiritual forces. This book puts the student at the center of large preoccupations: his one existence and the one of the society, and invites him to reflect and to take a position against negative forces, behaviors, understandings or practices.

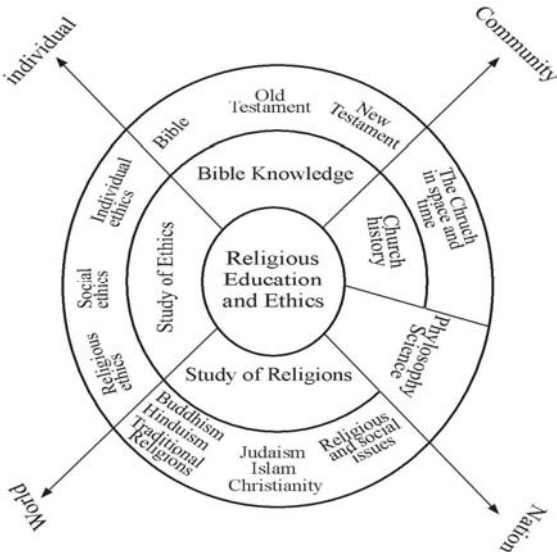


Figure 3: Spiral and inductive conception and presentation of the curriculum. The knowledge is gained gradually according to the physical and intellectual evolution of pupils.

### ***1.1.6 Discussion***

The manuals are written on the basis of multireligious approach combined to ethics. It means that the pupils learn about other kinds of beliefs and ethics, and at the same time deepen their Christian faith. This is why one will find emphasis on “values shares by different religious” and “common values”. These values are peace, love, freedom, loyalty.... Hence, education and knowledge are both about religious and ethical values, what does it mean?

#### ***1.1.6.1 Education about religion***

Education about religion means that the pupils receive knowledge about religions (teachings, beliefs, traditions, and holy books), history of religion and comparative studies of religions in a pluralistic society. The pupils acquire factual information on several faiths, understanding of religious vocabulary or concept; develop awareness and sensibility to the view of others. This knowledge, which is an encounter with other religions, is an “important precondition for the development of a culture of tolerance”<sup>68</sup>. Some authors call it Interreligious education. The pedagogical approach used here is the integration approach because brings together pupils of different confessions. The advantage is that it creates an arena for dialogue and mutual understanding. And Martinus Nijhoff concludes by saying “The most interesting..... (in) education (about religion) is the development of values and attitudes among (pupils) so that they can appreciate the diversity and richness of different ethnic, religious, social and cultural groups as a source of positive contributions to the whole society”<sup>69</sup> and also a development of critical thinking. For instance in the section called “I observe”, the pupils can discuss cases related to the topic according to their personal understanding and formulate a conclusion which can be based on religion or ethics and therefore may be used in everyday life.

#### ***1.1.6.2 Education in religion***

This form of education is also called mono-religious education because it is focused on a particular faith (focus on Christianity in our case). In this case knowledge on Christian dogma

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<sup>68</sup> Ingvill Thorson Plesner 2004, 809

<sup>69</sup> Martinus Nijhoff and Micheal M. Roan 2004, 851



such as the triune God, the death and resurrection of Jesus-Christ, and redemption are taught. The advantage of this education is the teaching of dogma whose aim is to make disciples, and make children grow in the faith.

The advantage is that pupils “deepen knowledge on a particular confession”<sup>70</sup> while the disadvantage (which can be considered as irrelevant) is that the feeling which raises from this kind of education is that if a pupil is not curious and interested he will feel segregated both from Christians or Muslims. For instance, when the Christian creed is taught some Muslims will not pay attention to these lessons as the demonstration of the idea that the Christians worship three Gods. On the other hand Christians will not feel concerned by the teachings about the Muslim pillars which stipulate that “there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet”. In order to avoid possible misunderstanding it is important for the chaplain to create a platform on which respect, dialogue, “greater knowledge about, and understanding of”<sup>71</sup> will be carried up. To do so, the chaplain should motivate the pupils to discover what they have in common such as the importance of prayers, pilgrimage, ethical standards etc.

### ***1.1.6.3 Education about and in ethics***

What is it about and how can it be practiced? The logic here is like the one in the previous presentation. Education about and in ethics provides skills and values which can be used in everyday life. This kind of education deals with responsibility one has for oneself, for the other and for the community. It helps the pupils to find that they are also concerned by the well-being of all humankind. For instance, some questions such as tobacco, alcohol and drugs do not have biblical reflections because at that time people did not use them or they were not social problems. But today, there are social phenomena which gain in importance due to the evolution of the society and its habits. In order to prevent people from their disasters and warn against the negative effects, we need ethical reflections. These reflections can be based on the ethics of a particular religion or not. Ethical reflections on specific topics considered by pupils and the teacher as good or not are presented and discussed in class or outside. In a more practical manner, the pupils can also find for instance practical guidance and exhortation about active life (in a company, how to react against corruption, how to gain consideration, importance of preserving life and the nature...), in a hostile context. Out of the class they are

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<sup>70</sup> Geraldine Van Bueren 2004, 567

<sup>71</sup> Camilla Olin 2000, 121

sent to find data from resources persons, or conduct specific work (interview, discussion with other pupils, posters) so that they can apply the knowledge.

### ***1.2 Phase 2: Presentation and diffusion***

When a book is produced, it was presented to the Protestant schools so that they would buy and read it. Since 2005 seminars were organized at the national level. Until now presentation and diffusion are made only in Protestant churches because the principal targets are Protestant pupils.

### ***1.3 Phase 3: training***

Presentations are followed by training. During seminaries the writing team explains the content of the manuals and how the chaplains can use it. This training is made in such a way that theologians receive pedagogical basic knowledge while the teacher receives basic theological knowledge. The main focus during training is to help the chaplains to write a Religious education course using pedagogical tools. This point will develop the purpose of the next chapter.

### ***1.4 Phase 4: introduction of the manual in the official curricula***

At the end of the process, Religious education should be introduced in the official curricula which include even Catholic and Muslims pupils.

## **2 THE PEDAGOGICAL BACKGROUND OF THE REDACTION OF THE MANUALS**

Some pedagogical bases have been presented in the previous sections. In this one we are going to mention four others:

### ***2.1 The learning objectives***

At the beginning of each chapter the learning objectives are clearly defined so that the pupils know where they are going and which kind of skill they should acquire or develop.

### ***2.2 The insight***

The manuals are writing according to the principle that the pupils should move from the “known” to the “unknown”. The “known” is the insight or previous knowledge of the pupils.

On a topic “unknown” is meant what pupils are going to learn. It means that the chaplain should consider knowledge previously acquired by the pupil on a particular topic and build the new one with them. It responds to the pedagogical principle stipulating that education ought to be child centered.

### ***2.3 The structure***

The chapter is made of texts and images. And according to an old Chinese proverb “one image is better than thousand of words”. In other words with one image one can explain thousands of details. Which kind of information can one find in the manuals? The illustrations were made in accordance with the history and the local context. Illustrations help to make a connection with reality. The content is quite diversified because of the big number of chapters of each book. The table of content shows us diverse information about religions, philosophy science, history, ethics and other.

### ***2.4 The evaluation***

At the end of any chapter there is an evaluation. This part is made of three kinds of evaluation. We evaluate the knowledge which has been acquired, next we try to apply it in the context of the class and then how the pupils can use it out of their traditional environment.

## **3 THE RELEVANCE OF THE MANUALS**

One can ask the question in another manner by asking: what can s/he gain when s/he reads the manuals? Or how can s/he use or reinvest the knowledge s/he gains from her/his readings? Three different informants will help us to give answers to these questions:

### ***3.1 The manuals are easy to read***

One day a teacher asks his pupils to read the next chapter in order to prepare the following lesson. One pupil reacts: “Sir, we have already read the entire book.” The teacher was surprised. And the pupil continued and said: “The book is easy to read and we understand easily what is written and the most interesting is that when you start reading you don’t want to stop.” So how can we understand this? The text fascinates and interests them. Why? Obviously the reason is that the stories are familiar to them, and the presentation and lay out are well done.

### ***3.2 The manual's style is simple***

A parent said that he bought the books because of the good French which is used. What does it mean? The style and the expressions were used according to the level and the vocabulary of the pupil according to their class level. The syllabus is simplified in order to give a simple and good understanding of the lesson in accordance with the understanding of the reader. To gain this goal every time that a chapter was written, it was submitted to a French consultant who read and corrected the text according to the level of class and the style.

### ***3.3 The manual's target is larger***

The last history is the one of a single pupil. One day she came to school without her text book and the teacher asked her: "Where is your text book?" She answered: "My father borrows it and he doesn't give it to me yet." So the book does not interest only the pupils but also parents and other members of the community. We find that the target is larger than we expected because the manual addresses issues that affect all aspects of society.

### ***3.4 The manuals can be used as a teacher's guide***

The manual helps the teacher to reflect on the manner s/he will use to transmit knowledge and to evaluate his/her teaching. It provides guidelines to prepare and present a lesson. At the end of these lessons, the pupils build knowledge and the teacher plays the role of facilitator, helping them to have organized and rational reflections.

## **4 THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE MANUALS IN THE PROCESS OF BUILDING KNOWLEDGE**

### ***4.1 The manual are utilitarian tools***

From all what we have presented in the previous section, the manuals are utilitarian tools and they contribute in the process of building knowledge. They help both chaplains and pupils and even other members of the society. For this reason one may argue that manuals are tools without which it is impossible to built knowledge or gain understanding. It is the basic material that permits to give the same education to the pupils of the level within an educational system. For chaplains, manuals are the raw material from which a teacher prepares the lesson. For pupils it helps to develop their understanding and open their minds.

What does it mean? In a manual, there are diverse kinds of information about a topic. The role of the teacher is to interpret, analyze and explain it in a manner that will move the pupil from one step of knowledge to the other.<sup>72</sup>

#### ***4.2 Religious education is systematized***

One of the biggest contributions of the manual in the process of building knowledge is that religious education is systematized. According to the class, a number of lessons have been defined and classified in such a way that there is a logical presentation of the knowledge. In addition the learning objectives contribute to follow up how cognitive, affective and evaluative competences are gained and implemented. For instance, when pupils are receiving knowledge on or about Islam or Ethics, they move gradually from simple and basic concept to the “more complicated” one in accordance with their academics evolution. This is the inductive and spiral conception and presentation of the curriculum. Further, the aims are defined and presented according to the specific needs of the pupils in such a way that the lessons contribute to give a specific answer to the questions or difficulties encountered by the pupils. To achieve this goal, the lessons are presented in diverse ways either in its religious or non religious meaning.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I was presenting the process of the elaboration of the manuals of Religious and Ethical education. This presentation shows that there was four phases namely:

- *Phase 1: Production of manuals.* This phase was the longest. During it the general goals, the teachings objectives, the curriculum and the syllabuses were elaborated. Afterwards the writing process started.
- *Phase 2: Presentation and diffusion of manuals:* When manuals were published, they were presented so that the pupils and the chaplains can use it. This phase of presentation was followed by the training of the users.

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<sup>72</sup> This is why specific training matters. A chaplain should have specific training that will help him to teach and mentor a child because he takes care of the spiritual, social, physical even academic needs of the pupil.

- *Phase 3: The training phase was and is going on.* It aims at providing chaplains with the skills that are enabling them to use these manuals.
- *Phase 4:* This phase concerns the introduction of the manuals in the official curriculum so that all pupils should acquire the same religious education.

The development of religious education curriculum has brought enormous changes in the aim, the organization and the content which have taken place in the process of writing these manuals. For instance, religious education has been so far “confessional” in the sense that it has mainly focused on knowledge about one denomination or tradition: predominantly Christian ‘Lutheran’. Now the tendency is a more ecumenical approach or even a multireligious approach.

In the manuals, one can find religious education about and in religions, and education about and in ethics. This education is based on “common values and “commons values shared by all”. Changes were also brought in the teaching method (didactics) of religious education. Interdisciplinary issues and methods were used in order to help pupils in the process of building knowledge. The aim of these changes was to be in accordance with the new pedagogical approach so that the pupils should be at the center of the process of education. Consequently, education ought to be child centered. It means that the teacher is the guide, the facilitator of learning processes of the pupils.

The pupils and other readers appreciate it differently. Some on them are interested in the language, others in the organization and other in the progression. For the teachers, it facilitates the preparation of lessons and the process of building knowledge with pupils.

## CHAPTER VI

### COMPETENCY-BASED APPROACH

#### INTRODUCTION

In the two previous chapters, an attempt has been made to show how religious education has evolved. In chapter III strategies were presented, and in chapter IV I have shown how to renew and revitalize them. In this last case, we have demonstrated how knowledge was organized in the curriculum, and then presented and disseminated in the manuals. This chapter will focus on the content of the manuals, what I consider as “raw material”<sup>73</sup>, should be transmitted through a specific method of teaching called competency-based approach. These methods’ aim is to open up possibilities for learning to be more diverse, effective, enjoyable and practical, so that “learners do not simply interpret meanings but actively collaborate in creating them. Thus, they will be able to determine their own paths of learning”<sup>74</sup>: this concept is called pupil-centered learning.

For this purpose this chapter will look like a field of teaching, learning and sharing both by the teachers and the pupils by introducing guidelines for an effective classroom activity. This is important because according to the new approaches in the domain of teaching-learning, students learn from each other in a dynamic environment. I consider as a dynamic environment the school in general and the society at large, because there is a deep interaction between them.

The aim of this chapter (which is the focus of this thesis) will be presented as follows:

- Presentation of some teaching methods.
- Explanation about what a competency-based approach is.
- Showing how to apply this approach to religious education by introducing the concept of transferability.
- Being more practical by showing how to combine these methods and how to write a pedagogical accepted lesson in religious education.
- Outlining of some of the weaknesses of this approach as one of my informant has pointed at.

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<sup>73</sup> According to me, I consider a book as a raw material, because it contains information and knowledge that should be understood and adapted to a context in order to be useful.

<sup>74</sup> Richard Edwards and Robin Usher 2008, 55

## 1 TEACHING METHODS

Teaching methods have evolved from a teacher-centered to a pupil-centered approach. In this paragraph, we will present each particularity and how it has been used or is being used. This reflection will help us answer the following question: which teaching method is appropriate for pupils in a secondary confessional school open to diverse cultures?

### *1.1 The teacher-centered method*

The characteristic of this teaching method is that the teacher is considered as the only person who has “the entire knowledge”. From him the pupils only acquire “standardized knowledge”<sup>75</sup> in religion in order to reproduce them in the society. Wanda Alberts argues that this method provides a “strong knowledge on the faith and the values of a particular confession in such a way that other ways of understanding the world, perceiving the reality of life and evaluating deeds which are not in accordance with the acquired teachings are wrong”.<sup>76</sup> This approach, where knowledge goes from the teacher to the pupils, is long and takes time. One might argue that with this method, ideas and values are not challenged or confronted because there is only one way of understanding the reality, the one of the teachers. They impose their own particular religious beliefs<sup>77</sup> on pupils. In chapter II and III we mentioned three main points throughout the period of the study:

- The aim was to make disciples who would continue the work of evangelization. And the result was that many pupils contribute to create new churches in the cities where they were called to serve even as civil servant.
- The curriculum was decided by the school but the lessons were elaborated by the teacher, so he was the only person to tell what was good or not, relevant or not. He is the one to say which skills will be gained and most of the skills were faith oriented such as: how to worship, to love each other, develop good relationship with God.
- The teaching material was basically the Bible. All lessons were oriented towards the Christian faith.

What are the advantages of the teacher-centered method? Certainly, because it gives a strong basic knowledge and fundamental skills, the students understand what the teaching is about.

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<sup>75</sup> Wanda Alberts 2007, 361

<sup>76</sup> Wanda Alberts 2007, 363

<sup>77</sup> Teachers do not create new beliefs or values but they spread beliefs and values they have inherited or received.



The weakness of this method is that it is exclusivist in the way that it is concentrated on one specific religion and do not give opportunities to others to express their view. In addition this method reduces the classroom as the only place to acquire knowledge to mean that extra class activities are not promoted. Finally, this method limits interactions during the teaching-learning process.

### ***1.2 The pupil-centered method***

The pupil-centered method is a situation where the teaching objectives for the lesson include “acquisition of independent study skills, greater student autonomy, working collaboratively with others, the construction of knowledge from firsthand experience, and the application of basic academic skills for authentic purposes”<sup>78</sup>. According to Westwood it means that the sphere of acquiring or building knowledge is very large and diverse. And the pupils learn to accept and respect each other, to organize work groups and share ideas or knowledge. It includes for instance the media and the policy of helping the pupils to develop their own capacities. Wanda Albert lists some of these capacities when she talks about participation “in social life, independence to actively and responsibly take part in shaping and transforming social life”<sup>79</sup>.

Angelique del Rey has opened a very interesting reflection on the concept of responsibility as a skill in the learning-teaching process. Her ideas let her argue that “if we want to train someone, we must give him responsibility. But to give responsibility means that we judge him capable to assume them [...] we need to use pedagogy of success which consists of giving them special tasks”.<sup>80</sup> Through these tasks they will acquire vivid skills. Her statement let us say that helping the pupil to assume responsibility is a part of our task as teachers. And the question one may ask is: which kind of task can a teacher give so that his pupils become responsible persons? Where is he going to find these tasks? The answer to this question can be found after reading the history about Joseph in Egypt. Through this example from the Bible, the pupils will find in their neighborhood an area in which they can assume responsibility. And their achievement will determine if they are capable or not. If not then “identify sources of weakness”<sup>81</sup> and look for a remediation process. She follows by writing that a task should be given in accordance with the level of possibilities and potentialities of

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<sup>78</sup> Peter Westwood 2008, 26-27

<sup>79</sup> Wanda Alberts 2007, 70

<sup>80</sup> Angelique del Rey 2010, 113

<sup>81</sup> Angelique del Rey 2010, 113

the pupils. So each group of age should have special tasks founded on the psycho-pedagogical basis.

To acquire skills and strategies the learning-teaching process should involve the pupils in “the activities of observation, manipulation, comparing, analyzing and discussing the subject”<sup>82</sup>. These classroom activities combine intellectual, emotional and physical exercises so that all senses are used, not only one. They therefore reduce the influence of the teacher and improve the participation and the “emancipation”<sup>83</sup> of pupils helping them to develop old or acquire new skills or capacities. The word “emancipation” used in this context is very important because the pupil-centered method aims at improving the emancipation of pupils. Emancipation facilitates imagination, integration and dialogue. When a pupil is emancipated, his mind is open and he can be involved in a constructive discussion. This is why they should be free to choose the kind of activity they want to be involved in during or out of the class. Therefore the teacher should, when preparing the lesson, diversify these classroom activities. To achieve this goal the teacher should ask the following questions when preparing the lesson.

- What will the pupils achieve at the end of the process? What would they be able to do and understand at the end of the activity which they were not able to do before attending the lesson?
- Which activities should be given so that the pupils will be able to develop the needed skills?
- How to evaluate the knowledge or skills they have achieved?

These questions introduce us to the competency-based approach which will be developed in the following paragraph. This approach can also be called the “Hamburg” and “Berlin” models according to the writings of Wanda Alberts.

To summarize one may say that there is a clear distinction between these two methods which are both theoretical and practical. Wanda Alberts clearly summarizes the distinction between these methods as follows: In the first one, one may argue that it is *assimilation-exploitation-separation* while the second is about *emancipation-liberation-integration*. The role of the pupils in the first is the one of a consumer and the teacher is the master. It means that pupils are not empty baskets which need to be filled. While in the second method pupils are actors and teachers are facilitators. To be a facilitator means that the teacher “identif(ies) what ...

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<sup>82</sup> Prosper Mobéang 2008, 15

<sup>83</sup> Wanda Alberts 2007, 361

pupils already potentially know” about the subject and “helps students to overcome any barriers which prevent them from bringing to light what they already know.”<sup>84</sup> Both cooperate in the process. But the question which arises is which method is appropriate according to the context in which pupils of Collège Protestant are trained today?

## **2 THE COMPETENCY-BASED APPROACH**

In this paragraph, we are going to present and discuss the concept of competency-based approach. In order to achieve this goal we will first look for its origin, then the meaning and the benefits or improvements it has brought to the teaching-learning process.

### ***2.1 Origin***

Angélique del Rey, a French philosopher, says that the term *competency* was introduced in the educational system on the demand of owners of factories or industry plants. For instance, they asked technical schools to give to pupils elements which would enable the pupils to be “effective” in practical life. The “effective” elements were called capacities or competencies. In fact, owners of factories and industries were complaining because candidates from technical schools were not competent enough for the work and the employers were obliged to give them additional training. This was very expensive. Thus, the term *competency* was first, used in technical programs of training pupils on the demand of factory owners. Angélique del Rey adds that it was urged for the “need of the economic”<sup>85</sup> profit.

Then what is a competence? According to Angélique del Rey and from an economical point of view it is the ability to produce items which can be sold. It is the ability to transform into consumable products as a result of knowledge based on theory. Or in other words: the capability of using one's skills to transform nature.

But how has this concept been transferred from technical schools to the classic educational system? Which kind of competencies are pupils from general education going to acquire? And for which purpose? These questions introduce both theoretical and practical reflections. It also introduces the concept called “transferability”<sup>86</sup>.

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<sup>84</sup> Wanda Alberts 2007, 136

<sup>85</sup> Angélique del Rey 2010, 9

<sup>86</sup> Council of Europe Publishing 2007, 167

On the basis of this understanding, we conclude that due to the competition in the society there is no place for unproductive intellectual capacities. Anyone should be able to do or produce something by using his head, his heart and his hands. Pupils should be able to use their cognitive, affective and evaluative skills to change or to become useful to themselves and to the society. That is why competency training aims at preparing pupils to respond to a complex environment and to be competitive and flexible. The competencies which should be acquired in religious education are numerous and vary from one lesson to another. I will present three examples in order to deepen the explanation.

## ***2.2 Definition***

Angélique del Rey gives us a definition of the concept of competence from the economical point of view. Now we are looking for the definition from a pedagogical point of view.

On the basis of its original concept, and considering the new pedagogical context in which this is used, one may say that competency-based approach is a teaching method which favors the development of the pupils in all their aspect: cognitive, affective and evaluative or practical involving all his senses and potentialities. This method provides utilitarian knowledge which is built through practical activities or case studies. The word utilitarian is used in this context to mean knowledge which can be reinvested in everyday activity or life according to the need or the situation. These activities should be related to cases or experiences that will be faced by pupils and how they can get out of them. It is not only difficulties that pupils should be taught about but also how to take initiative or to develop strategies.

## ***2.3 Aim of this approach***

The competency-based approach presents pupils as the author of their own learning process and the teacher is the helper, the facilitator, and the guide. The pupils are not passive vehicles but producers of knowledge. The knowledge is built together and both teachers and pupils learn from each other during the class activity. The aim of this method is the “acquisition of knowledge mobilized when needed”.<sup>87</sup> These situations may include encounters with other believers, in active life, and in their community because life does not finish in the classroom, it continues after and in active life. In this case pupils should be able to use their cognitive; affective and evaluative skills to change or to be useful to them self and the society.

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<sup>87</sup> Angélique del Rey 2010, 112

The competency-based approach helps to ask the questions how practical can the teaching and utilitarian the knowledge be. It means that the teacher should reflect on the way he will use didactical materials which are available to make his teaching practical in the understanding (cognitive) and reinvesting (action). This last point is made possible only if the pupils feel that the teaching interesting (affective) and they desire to reinvest it. This desire is occurred by the challenges raised by the lessons, or the mechanism to solve them. These mechanisms may come or result from the group works or the lessons. To achieve this goal the teacher has to think on the following four didactic questions: what is the aim of the lesson? What do they already know about the subject? How the lesson will be presented? How to find that they have gained or acquired knowledge or skills? Now let us give some explanations on these questions:

1. The first question is about the aim of the lesson and is formulated as follows: what do you want pupils to learn? But we should also ask this question: And what is learning? According to Piaget, pupils are different from one to another. Without individual imbalanced learning can not be effective. The pupils learn when the content changes its behavior for a long time, and gives a new response to a stimulus or set of stimuli that did not provoke it before. So a pupil has learned when he has acquired lifelong skills. In addition, the learning process should consider specific needs of pupils and give answers to them so that they can react differently to them. So the aim of a lesson should help to provide lifelong skills and give specific answers to pupils in accordance with their development.

2. The second question focuses on the prior experiences, knowledge, attitudes and intentions. It means that pupils have previous information on the subject and the teacher should exploit them or create activities which will help them to learn both from the teacher and also from their classmates. Then the questions are: who learns from whom? How to learn from other(s)? The answer to these questions will highlight three kinds of interaction during the classroom activity:

- *The teacher learns from the pupils:* he will find what they already know about the topic. So he takes in consideration their previous knowledge on the subject. He should pay attention to what they say.
- *The pupils learn from the teacher:* he introduces them to the new knowledge.
- *The pupils learn from each other:* in group works or small activities they learn or share ideas. For instance, pupils “can be encouraged to think about the

words they use and the meanings behind those words. The groups discuss among themselves their answers to these questions shape their understanding. At the end of the process anyone learn from anyone. The knowledge is “built and shared by all participants”<sup>88</sup>.

How can we find these interactions? They can be verbal or non verbal. Pupils can express their admiration or ask questions in the case of verbal interaction while the pupil can make a sign of deception in case of a non-verbal interaction. It is important to pay attention to these emotional reactions because they show how relevant the lesson is.<sup>89</sup> From this presentation, one may say that interactions or pedagogical relations are relations in which you find the need to give and the need to receive. Each party should be involved and interested in the process in order to create a harmonious learning-teaching environment.

3. The previous question implicitly introduces the third one because it refers to the way the different structures of the lesson will follow each other. They are called methodological steps. What is the particularity of these methodological steps? They are made of forms of interaction, and how didactical materials and media are going to be used or introduced during the lesson. Skills and competencies are clearly defined, presented and discussed with the pupils.

4. The last question is about the assessment and evaluation. It comes generally after the lesson. How successful was the lesson? The evaluation also introduces these three questions: how have pupils perceived the new experiences? How have pupils perceived the new evidences? Do they perceive them as difficulties, challenges or utilitarian tools that they will use after class or later in their active life?

The success of a lesson depends on how it was prepared and presented, and also how interesting the teacher was. By asking that question the teacher should also think about remediation. In other words: how can he solve a problem raise by the lesson if it was not understood? How can he give relevant answers to a deep theological or ethical questions outlined by the lesson? For instance, after a lesson on abortion, if there is girl who has experienced it and found herself guilty, how can the teacher organize sessions of counseling

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<sup>88</sup> Tony Monchinsky 2008, 157

<sup>89</sup> It is important to have a structured plan of the lesson which takes into consideration different types of interactions and media so that the lesson will be relaxing, practical and instructive.

which will help to restore her in dignity without imposing his point of view but helping the pupil to find the right theological or ethical response to her situation?

#### ***2.4 Conditions in which building competency are possible***

The pedagogical conditions in which we want to build competencies are important. They concern the environment (school, classroom,) the actors (pupils, teachers), the didactical materials (textbooks, others didactics support), the discipline, the motivations etc. Angélique del Rey says that it is important to “let books circulate among the pupils, create an atmosphere of trust, provide a place for culture and personality of each one, invite pupils to participate to the course, be careful and not lose anyone, work with colleagues, open class on the external environment”<sup>90</sup>. It means that (1) each pupil should have access to manuals so that he can find the information, (2) the teaching conditions should be relaxing and emancipating, and hence the pupils participate in the process when there is an atmosphere of trust and confidence. By doing so, we lift up the culture and the personality of each pupil.

In addition and as Tony Monchinsky has pointed to:

- *Everyone should participate actively*: “While we’re on the subject, be careful you’re not constantly picking on the same five or six kids who have their hands raised or on only the boys.
- *The pupils should express their opinions*: Everyone in your class has something to say though they sometimes lack the confidence or interest to say it. They should be encouraged without pressuring them. “What do you think about this?” “What’s on your mind?” “How do you feel about what so-and-so said?” “Why do you think, is this important or not important?” Ask open-ended questions that encourage a student to open up and share her thoughts and opinions.
- *We should pay attention when someone is talking*: At the same time make sure that the noise level in the classroom is such that the rest of the class can hear (who is talking). Like Montesquieu has mentioned we are “social animals”. That means we enjoy talking to each other. And during the teaching-learning process “students like talking to one another”<sup>91</sup>. This oral interaction helps to share experiences or open discussion.

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<sup>90</sup> Angélique del Rey 2010, 110

<sup>91</sup> Tony Monchinsky 2008, 167

- *Always reactivate the interest*: make sure that all pupils are present physically and psychologically. The learning process and the methodological steps should present new challenges in order to (re)create motivations and interest during the lesson. It is important to keep the pupils awake during the lesson. When they are awake and interested they participate actively, and promote interdisciplinary skills and cooperation.

To summarize, the competency-based approach aims to acquire knowledge and understanding of beliefs and values in order to reinvest them in the daily life. It refers to the transformation approach to education in which pupils build knowledge and which helps them to be emancipated, autonomous, responsible, and critical. This approach is a roundabout where the pupils come with their beliefs and values share them and continue their way after enriching their experience or practice. In addition, Wanda Alberts argues that it “encourages pupils to engage with their own beliefs and values in relation to understanding others”<sup>92</sup>. It is the place where negative values should be addressed and confronted. It does not destroy previous beliefs or values but shape them when encountering others. In this process the pupils interact, reflect and integrate values which will enable them to build a peaceful society in an environment of confidence and trust.

### **3 THE PRINCIPLE OF TRANSFERABILITY**

#### ***3.1 What is transferability?***

More and more often we hear about the “technology or competences transfer”. This expression is basically used when a group of people, who has a particular knowledge, meet others who do not have it. The groups are asked to share experience, knowledge, technology methods and samples of manufacturing and facilities. In this way scientific and technological development are ensured and made accessible for a wider range of users who can then further develop and exploit the technology into new products<sup>93</sup>. Transferability is the act to transfer one or several elements from one concept to another by adapting it or them to a new context.

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<sup>92</sup> Wanda Alberts 2007, 364

<sup>93</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Technology\\_transfer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Technology_transfer), assessed on January 2011



### ***3.2 Which kinds of concepts are transferable?***

We understand that to transfer means to take a concept or a competency from one domain to another in order to bring some improvement in the new domain. So transferability helps to improve teaching and learning by adapting relevant concepts and theories from one subject to the other. Which kinds of concepts are transferable? And in which condition or context are they applicable? In this paper, this concept will have the same understanding theoretically but in practice we will adapt it to religious education according to its aims and context. In our case, pupils from general school will not be asked to make a heater for instance. They will be asked to use their knowledge or develop other capacities in order to use them when encountering other believers or facing special circumstances in their life.

Before the transfer is done, some basic conditions should be assured: how can we apply the method in the educational system? How can we transfer the concept of competency-based approach in religious education? How can competency-based approach help to improve religious education? And which competence will our pupils acquire when attending religious education classes?

If it is not easy to perceive how pupils came to believe (we have mentioned in a previous chapter that it may take many years), other competencies or skills such as how to valorize ones' talents, live as a respectful religious citizen which includes how the values of the nation can be developed. The competence we should look for is for instance how to adapt our communication, verbal or non-verbal, according to the religious environment. One of these competences might be multicultural competence. And "the development of multicultural competence involves a comprehensive approach in conceptualizing, teaching, and assessing competence"<sup>94</sup>. There is a key word in this quotation which should be considered as the departure point in the process of building competence: conceptualizing. The next reflections will help us to find the content of this word.

### ***3.3 How to conceptualize a competence?***

This is an important question that should be asked every time we are preparing our lessons. Because, the imagination of the teacher and the success of the lesson are based on this question. Conceptualization is the mental process whereby ambiguous and imprecise notions are made clear and more precise. Some of these notions might not exist and one should be able

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<sup>94</sup> American Psychological Association 2003

to imagine and create them. In other words one should be able to transform existing or imaginative issues or concept into didactical material. Further it is the process during which, the teacher build connection between existing and non-existing concept. In one of the examples below we will see how a teacher can transform the map of Palestine (existing concepts) into a coffin. To conclude, the teacher should mobilize all possible creativity and practical wisdom in order to conceptualize competence in order to:

- *Produce didactical material.* Religious education is a poor discipline in the sense that it is not easy to find teaching materials.
- *Bring originality in the teaching-learning process.* Originality also brings improvement in the teaching and the classroom activity and helps pupils to move from one step to the other in the process of gaining knowledge and capacities.
- *Stimulate the curiosity of pupils.* From my experience I found that pupils are very interested when their chaplain is creative.

These are situations in which the teacher is the creator. He creates conditions in which he can teach and assess what he has conceptualized.

#### **4 WHAT IS EXPECTED FROM THE TEACHER?**

In the teaching-learning relationship, change in one part of the model affects other parts, for instance, learning changes learners. Hence one moves from the transmission of knowledge to the facilitation of learning relationship between the teachers and the learner's changes in such a way that the teacher is called facilitator. To achieve this purpose he should acquire new skills and knowledge in order to be effective. And an effective teacher operates in a holistic way in transmitting knowledge, giving clear explanations, providing appropriate tasks, and facilitating the acquirement of new and relevant competences. He should not neglect to develop the capacity of the classroom management, maintaining order, student practice, questioning skills, teaching methods, and classroom climate. In addition teachers should possess "a repertoire that consists of metaphors, analogies, illustrations, activities, assignments and examples"<sup>95</sup> which will help diversifying his teachings, specially the presentation, and make them enjoyable.

Another important skill of the teacher is flexibility. To be flexible means that one should consider that there is an alternative way of representing the ideas, beliefs or values which can be totally opposed or in contradiction to each other. The benefits of an effective teacher

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<sup>95</sup> Peter Mortimore 1999, 84

are that he enhances pupils learning. And this teacher is called a creator of “a learning environment and learning as design”<sup>96</sup>, we now face a redefinition of the role of the teacher being the facilitator and the creator helping pupils to access and use knowledge.

## **5 BUILDING MULTICULTURAL COMPETENCE**

In chapter III, I have mentioned that discussion between pupils, of Collège Protestant during the study period, was about religions and ethics. When I was gathering data from my informants, I had the impression that these pupils although they do not want to hurt each other, try to highlight some failures about practices, values and believes of the opponent religion. On one hand, during their theological discussion they raise the question of the triune God and Allah, the Salvation, the role of prophets and the relevance of holy books. On the other hand, their discussion on ethical topics was very constructive in the sense that Muslims pupils were trying to show that their Christian classmates do not dress respectfully. It means that they expose themselves by their way of dressing, and Christian pupils agree on that point. But nothing is done to go further in order to answer the following questions: how can we organize ourselves in such a way that we dress correctly according to our culture. Who is able to help us achieving this goal? The finding according to my analysis was that they lack multicultural competency. And the point is how to build multicultural competency in the school milieu. In order to answer this question I will present two points but I will focus on the second one. So to build multicultural competency one should:

### ***5.1 Be tolerant***

Paul Hiebert argues that we “relate to a variety of people in different ways”<sup>97</sup>. The fact is that in our classrooms, we find pupils from different background. And each pupil is a special case with whom we act and respond particularly. If we consider them as opponents or enemies of our religious convictions we will build conflictual relationships. But when encountering the so-called “other” the role one should play facilitate our integration. In other words, there is a strong connection between integration and tolerance. Tolerance refers to the idea that one should accept that our way of doing is not the only one and that we are different according to our sex, age, cultural back-ground and religious belonging and worldview, and that our point of view can be criticized or challenged. So to be tolerant means that the life and the culture of others are part of the diversity in which we live. This is why we talk about diversity in unity.

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<sup>96</sup> Richard Edwards and Robin Usher 2008, 55

<sup>97</sup> Paul Hiebert 1985, 258

To conclude a teacher should be tolerant because pupils do not learn only because the lesson, the teacher or the subject is interesting “but also according to the nature of the relationship within which they hear it”<sup>98</sup>. And this relationship should be based on mutual acceptance and understanding.

## **5.2 Be open**

What does it mean to be open? How can we be open? And to which extent? To be open means that one should be ready to engage in a “challenging dialogue”<sup>99</sup>, related to beliefs, values and practices. When addressing these issues, one should present and explain the meaning of words, actions and experiences. This is called a critical approach. Learning from this exercise will help us to “interact and competently”<sup>100</sup> understand each other and “work through the crisis that results from the exchange of diverse worldviews”. Further one should be able to engage in the second step which is the promotion and building of common values. We called this exercise *constructivist approach*. In the case of the pupils of Collège Protestant it may be suggested that talking about the best way of dressing is to (1) evaluate the reaction of one another on the manner pupils are dressed in the school and out of it, (2) the effects (how they feel themselves and how the society looks at them) and (3) how to remediate or correct it. The final result may be the promotion of local ways of dressing or to “dress with dignity”<sup>101</sup> as one of my female informants has concluded. Finally, it means that one should develop “lifelong skills”<sup>102</sup> to reasonably understand and engage in a process of remediation. These are issues in which the teacher should play the role of the facilitator. Because the questions asked by the pupils concern their behaviors, in fact the way we dress is an expression of the way we behave, in and out of the school and also the appreciation of the entire community. So the teacher should: facilitate the understanding of social and traditional values on dressing, facilitate defining acceptable skills and facilitate the assessment of these skills.

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<sup>98</sup> Paul Hiebert 1985, 261

<sup>99</sup> Joseph L. White and Sheila J. Henderson 2008, 164

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, ibid

<sup>101</sup> In Cameroon there is a regulation on dressing in schools. The uniforms are made of long skirt and a blouse for girls and trousers and shirts for boys. In the Northern Cameroon, where Muslim culture is dominant and dressing a strong symbol, dressing is a serious issue. Many pupils are influenced by modern ways of dressing especially the one they see in the movies and they want to replicate it in everyday life. So they adapt or show their uniform according to the models they watch on the TV. Some people tolerate it but others do not. And there is a discussion about it among pupils and in the society.

<sup>102</sup> Richard Edwards and Robin Usher 2008, 54

One of the findings during this study was that Angélique del Rey a French and Wanda Albert a German followed the same goal when improving the teaching methods. They are different on the point that Angélique del Rey's approach is secular and philosophic while Wanda Albert is more concerned about religious matters. By bringing up their ideas I try to implement the concept of transferability. This means that one can find relevant material even in philosophy which can improve our teaching. My hypothesis is that while we are looking for ways of improving our teaching we should have an open mind and find around us which material can be useful.

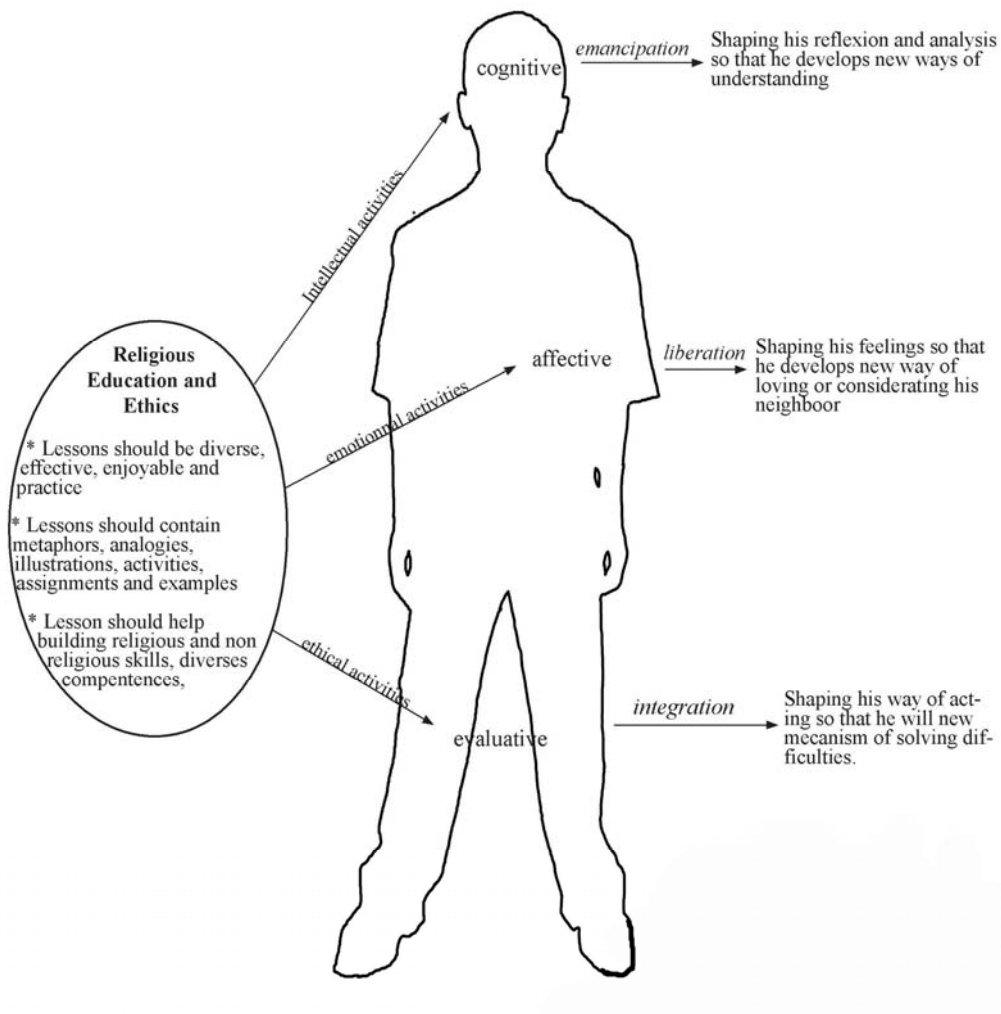


Figure 4: Religious education courses should help pupils shaping their way of understanding, feeling and acting and acquire new competences.

## **6 MODEL LESSONS**

The following lessons will help us to understand how we can transfer the concept of the competence-based approach to religious education and the classroom practice. The first one starts in the classroom and continues in the library while the second one is an entire classroom lesson. We must mention that it is not easy to replicate the lessons if the pedagogical material are not available but they give new orientations on the way we should prepare our lessons. The following model lessons focus on competences that should be acquired through to the knowledge. So I will not write the entire methodological steps of a lesson.

### ***6.1 Model Lesson 1. Title: The Bible***

This lesson is a second one from a serial of 4 on the Bible. The first one was a general introduction on the Bible, this one is about books and the periods, during which its books have been written, the third one will be on the author(s) and the last one will be about the message, the content of the Bible. This lesson is given to first class pupils aged 12-13 years. And this is a 45 minutes lesson. In the following demonstrations, I consider myself as teacher preparing my lesson for the next class.

#### ***6.1.1 Objective***

At the end of the lesson, pupils will be able to classify the books of the Bible according to their styles and when they were written. To achieve this goal, activities will be conducted both in the school library and the classroom. The competence to acquire or develop are presented as follow

- *How to find books in a library:* there is no course which helps to acquire this competence in our educational system and many pupils do not know how to find a book in a library. So the encounter with the library and the books will motivate them to be familiar with books in general.
- *Understanding the principle of the classification of books in the Bible:* It should be the basic principles such as the section or parts, the style and the periods. According to the level of pupils (refers to psycho-pedagogical basis) they will not understand concepts as canon and others. They will acquire this understanding during further lessons or classes.
- *How to organize a personal library:* in many cases we find pupils who do not have any personal library and their books are everywhere in their room. This lesson will

enable them to organize their rooms in such a way that they can find a place to keep their books.

### **6.1.2 Activity**

#### *1. Go to the school library*

The second activity will be conducted on the field. The pupils are invited to a practical activity in the school library. Before going there the chaplain should prepare the activity with the librarian. They have to discuss on the objectives of the lesson and the goal of this specific activity.

The librarian will give a general picture of a library. To achieve this goal he should

1. Teach the pupils how a library is organized by presenting the different sections History, Sciences, Literature, Geography, Religions, Revues and Publications...
2. Explain how books are classified and the system of their codifications,
3. Help them to identify and find books in a library. Then pupils will find some books and discuss with the teacher and the librarian about this experience.

Before leaving the library some pupils should summarize what they have gained in order to make sure that the goals have been achieved.

#### *2. Back to class*

The teacher will help pupil making a comparative study between the general picture of a library and the Bible. So on the basis of the knowledge they gained from the librarian, pupils will be able to find how the Bible is organized, its different parts or sections, and later the style and period to which they belong. In addition a comparative study can be done with other religious Holy Books.

### **6.2 Model Lesson 2. Title: Jesus gives life**

This lesson can be divided in two or three sessions.

#### *6.2.1 Objectives*

At the end of the process pupils will be able to:



- Draw the map of Palestine and to position some few cities. It is important that pupils know Palestine, a place where the main monotheist religions come from. In addition, it will be easy for them to find where Jesus lived and had performed miracles.
- Learn how to show compassion and share the hard times with others.
- Acquire behavior or competence which can be used during painful circumstances.

To achieve this goal, activity will be conducted in class and, if there is an occasion, during a funeral ceremony.

## **2. Classroom activity**

*Educational phase No.1.* Arise and maintain interest by watching a movie.

*Educational phase No. 2:* Enhancing or exploiting the artistic capacities of pupils by drawing the map of Palestine. The chaplain can be assisted by the teacher of geography.

- Step 1. The teacher draws the map of Palestine. He should perform slow and ample movements to allow precise imitation by pupils. While he is drawing pupils imitate him. He has to practice several times at home and memorize the right position of points to use as reference. Then the teacher asks pupils to give him the names of towns, villages or places visited by Jesus. As soon as they are given, the teacher indicates its position on the map.
- Step 2. This activity develops the drawing ability and awakes the mechanical zone of the brain of pupils. The reactions of pupils should be observed: the artists among them are very comfortable. You have to encourage those who do not perform well.
- Step 3. The next step consists of the transformation of the Dead Sea into a coffin. The Dead Sea looks like a coffin overturned and by drawing lines along its cost you can transform it into a coffin. After this exercise ask pupils to identify what they see. The teacher draws some points at the base, middle and top. Connect the dots. Reverse drawing and observe. Ask the pupils to identify the drawing. If they do not recognize the change immediately, it may happen, draw a cross in the top lengthwise. Finally they can find the coffin.
- Step 4. Invite pupils to imitate. Observe their reactions. This funny activity will help pupils to learn while having fun. See figure 5.

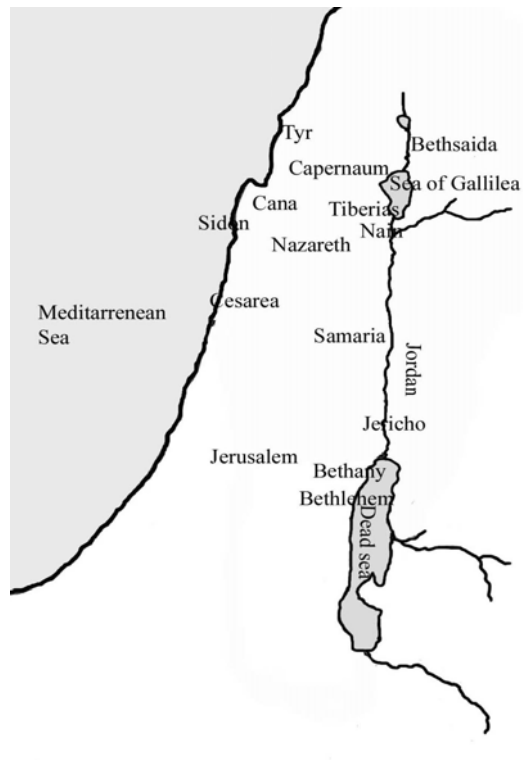


Figure 5: Transforming the Dead Sea into coffin.

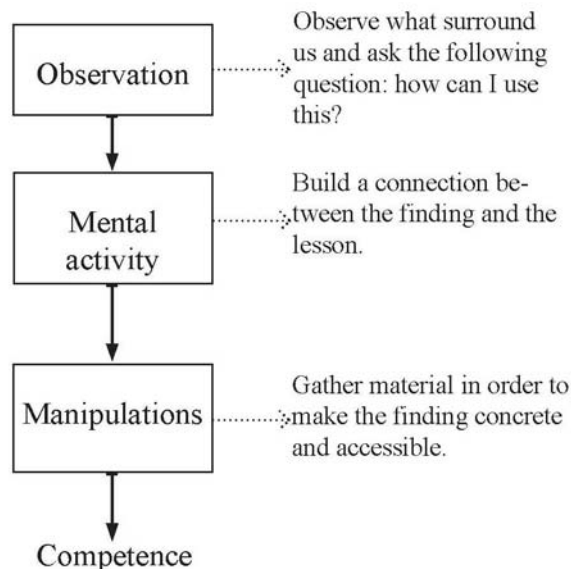
### 6.3 Discussion

Why this activity matters? I am going to present three reasons to answer this question.

- There an old Chinese proverb which says "A picture is better than 1000 words". So by bringing the geography of Palestine near to the pupils they will first recognize that Palestine is on the earth not in heaven, as most of my pupils told me, next they will easily remember where events had taken place, and third the teacher and his pupils have together produced a didactical material. It is known that it is not easy to have the map of the Palestine in our classes because the Administration does not provide it. And for those who will ask to report at the end of the Bible I will argue that most of Christians do not have a Bible and pupils do not come to school with their Bibles. By producing this map the pupils will have the feeling that they have contributed to the process of producing a didactical material.
- This activity also matters because pupils learn to see differently what surrounds them. It helps them to catch opportunities they encounter and use them in their favor. And

Maria Montessori<sup>103</sup> argues by saying "Help me to help myself". We have to teach pupils that there are facilities around them that they can use in order to improve their everyday life.

- Finally, in a previous paragraph, I discussed the topic called conceptualizing competence. So when preparing my lesson I ask myself how I can create a link between the Dead Sea and my lesson on the death. The connection was obvious but I was looking for something original. In fact there is no document in which it explains that one can transform the Dead Sea into coffin. But it is through observation and mental activity that one can realize such competence. And when the mental activity is going on, the next step is manipulation. The manipulation consists of finding materials (Dead Sea on the map of Palestine) and organizing them (drawing lines) in such a way that they become concrete (coffin) and accessible (pupil recognize and name it). To conclude there are three main steps to follow in order to conceptualize a competence: observation, mental activity and manipulation.



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<sup>103</sup> Maria Montessori 1870-1952, Italian physician and educator, is known through her Montessori Method. The method itself aims to duplicate experimental observation of children to bring about, sustain and support their true natural way of being.

*Educational phase No. 3.* Exploitation of knowledge and improvement of the vocabulary of the pupils.

It will be done during discussion and sharing points of views. What does the image of coffin makes you think about? What is the difference between death and life? What feelings does it feel like facing death or a coffin? Have you ever attended a funeral? Share your experience. What is the necessity of presenting condolences? How should we behave in mourning? In this activity pupils will give their understanding on death according to their experience and religious background. It will introduce them to the next activity.

*Educational phase No. 4.* Group work, research and restitution

It is in the working group that the explanation has its true meaning. Because group work provides pupils with more facility to express their views, ask questions, or exercise their ability to lead a group.

- *Free work:* Here students are free to choose activities they want to do. Ask students the following activities:

- (1) Writing a letter of condolence to a friend sorely tried.
- (2) Writing a letter of thanks following the assistance we have received following the death of a loved one.
- (3) Preparation of an object that gives joy (flower, music ...)
- (4) Role play: here they will learn how to receive people coming to a funeral ceremony

- *Restitution in plenary:* Each group is called to present their work and discuss with others on some specifics difficulties they faced during the work group.

## **7 WEAKNESSES OF THE NEW APPROACH**

Even with this liberal teaching, the Holy Spirit can do a lot for those pupils. Sometimes we want to do this or that according to our willing without taking into consideration what the spirit can do. But the Holy Spirit is on top of us. One can give something very simple but if it is really practiced, then it will be a way that God can use to convert people.<sup>104</sup>

From this informant, I find a couple of critics and a solution. And in order to highlight them I would like to discuss three issues:

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<sup>104</sup> Inf.08/2010

### ***7.1 The teaching is liberal***

According to my informant, the teaching is liberal. By using the word “liberal” he means that we allow more places for secular knowledge than the spiritual one. In fact, when we have ethics and teaching about other religions the space for Christian knowledge is reduced. But we should take into consideration all pupils who come to our school in order to learn about their beliefs and values, understand each other, and promote common values. We need to develop pupils with all their potentialities: cognitive, affective and evaluative. So to be liberal means to be inclusive. We are living in a secularized and pluralistic society for this reason we “need to develop pupils “and enrich spiritual knowledge, understanding and insight”<sup>105</sup>. In addition “help them helping them self” as Maria Montessori has mentioned, by developing relevant competencies. So it is possible to use secular methods in order to achieve religious goal.

### ***7.2 The place of the Holy spirit in the teaching***

My informant has mentioned that there is no consideration for the Holy Spirit in the new method. The spirit *pneuma* in Greek and *ruah* in Hebrew is a controversial term. In fact people assign different meanings and understandings on this term. That is why, in order to avoid confusion and exclusion, because I want my work to be used by everyone, no matter what his beliefs, I think it is better that these issues should be debated on their theological level by those who are mature intellectually and spiritually. But in order to give an answer to his remark let us say that, according to the Christian faith, the spirit comes from God and acts beyond our will because “The Spirit is like the wind that blows wherever it wants to. You can hear the wind, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going.” (John 3:8) For this reason when the teacher is preparing his lesson, and if he is a Christian, he needs to take some time to pray so that God can use him, the lesson and all opportunities to transform the listeners. He can do it and there is no problem according to his conviction. The questions which come are: if he is not a Christian what should he do? Where will he find the strength, the support or the right way? I did not give emphasis on these issues in this paper because of this dilemma. This issue is more exclusive than inclusive while we are trying to build a better world of unity, peace and love together.

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<sup>105</sup> Andrew Wright 2000, 7

### ***7.3 God acts beyond methods***

At the end of my informant's argument, he mentions that God can use any opportunity to make his word known. I argue that God acts beyond methods and we can teach in a very liberal way but with a strong dogmatic background. How is it possible? The new method does not destroy the Christian basic dogma. It does not go against any religious belief. But it helps the pupil developing both religious and secular oriented skills. It should be mentioned that we do not teach dogma in its fundamental understanding but we give overarching glimpses of the most popular religions. And in the case of the manuals, it is the Christian values, for instance, which are the basis of the discussion. The aim is to give concrete and simple meaning or interpretation of these beliefs and a "working definition"<sup>106</sup> of words, of values and practices. We encourage religious leaders to teach dogma to their believers according to their respective religious belonging.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I was presenting and discussing issues related to classroom activities in general taking into consideration the didactical issues, environment and materials. In this paper on can find both theoretical and practical approaches to the teaching-learning process. The departure point was the presentation of teaching methods. In that paragraph, I present the difference between teacher centered method, in which the teacher is the central authority transmitting knowledge, to the pupil centered method, where pupils contribute in the construction and the understanding of the knowledge. At the end of the presentation I summarize by quoting Wanda Alberts who says that the teacher-centered method is about *assimilation-exploitation-assimilation* while the second one is focused on *emancipation-liberation-integration*. And this is summed up by the introduction of a didactical approach which put more emphasis on the building of skills, capacities and competencies which can be mobilized where and when needed. This approach is called the competency-based approach. The paragraph starts with the definition of the key word competence both in its economical and pedagogical understanding. After saying that the concept of competence was introduced in the technical school for the purpose of economy, I present how it was introduced in general schools where the aims and the context of the teaching-learning process is not the same. This

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<sup>106</sup> Andrew Wright 2000, 7

introduction was made possible through the concept of transferability. This word means that there are experiences, methods or concepts which can be transferred in other domains in order to improve them. I also mention that there are some conditions in which this transfer should be done.

From the definition I say that the competency-based approach is a method of teaching which favors the development of the pupil in all his cognitive, affective and evaluative aspect involving all his senses and potentialities. I also argue that through this approach, the learning is more diverse, effective, enjoyable and practicable. It helps pupils to be emancipated, autonomous, responsible and critical by confronting them to everyday situation. In fact during classroom activities, or even outside the school, because there are activities which can be done out of the class, pupils and teacher interact in such a way that the knowledge is built together and values integrated. In this process, it is expected that the teacher should operate in a holistic way which takes into consideration local and global issues related to the subject. By acting in that way he is not any more a teacher but a facilitator or a creator helping pupils to access and use knowledge.

The practical aspect of this chapter was some model lessons in which I show how from simple activities and reflections a teacher can help pupils building lifelong skills or competences. The first lesson was about a classroom activity on the Bible which starts in class and continues in the library. And the competence was that the pupils by the end of the activity will be capable easily to find a book in a library and organize their personal library. The second lesson was about death, which knows neither color nor religion. Her pupils learn how to organize a funeral for instance, but the focus was the transformation of the Dead Sea into a coffin. This activity allows me to show how a teacher can conceptualize a competence and teach it. I also took an example from a discussion among the pupils of Collège Protestant in order to show how a teacher can be a facilitator in an ethical discussion concerning dressing. My hypothesis is that in such discussions pupils need someone who helps them to overcome barriers, to go further in analyzing social matters and to promote common values acceptable by them and the society at large.

Finally, I ended this chapter by presenting some answers to one of my informants who thinks that the new method is liberal and that it does not take into consideration the Holy Spirit. He was right. I argue by saying that we can teach in a liberal way but with a dogmatic background because this method does not destroy beliefs and values but reinforce them in their understanding in an integrative approach and hence we live and act in a pluralistic

milieu. Nowadays as I have been presenting it in this thesis, religious education is no more a missionary wing for a particular religion. As a school subject it contributes to give utilitarian teaching and knowledge to pupils no matter their religious belonging so that they become good believers and citizens.



## CHAPTER VI

### GENERAL CONCLUSION

This thesis has been an attempt to provide historical, cultural, evangelical and pedagogical perspectives on religious education in the case of Collège Protestant during the period from 1958 to 2008.

#### 1 THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

In this historical perspective I have given an overview of how religious education has evolved from dogmatic to utilitarian pedagogical methods and aims. This evolution was first made possible because of the following:

- **Events:** There have been inner and outer events. These events are the separation of the pupils according to their religious belonging during decades, the merge of Catholic and Protestant pupils and the “camerounisation” of the school. The outer event was the interdiction to give Christian education to the Muslim pupils in 1969 even if it was a Christian confessional school.
- **Actors and participants:** According to my informants, they built and shared ideas and projects, developed strategies, and adapted to context and created good relations. One of them said: “There is no one who said that I am not able to teach. We were glad to have the French teachers because they knew the school system; they knew the language better than an American or a Norwegian. When there were cooperates? We were really happy...”<sup>107</sup>
- **Environment:** The environmental complexity of African societies shows elements which are inter-related and should be considered within the context, not out of it. This complexity affects the way activities, beliefs and values are run or practiced. How to survive and pursue once vision and mission in a hostile environment?

All of them were interacting and influencing each other. The findings invite us to say that when we are engaged in a process we will face obstacles but if we consider these obstacles as

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<sup>107</sup> Inf.01/2010.

challenges we will move from one step to the other and gain respect from the persons among which we work. To achieve this goal one should be devoted and courageous, patient and hard working, even comprehensive and strict.

In the domain of didactics which is our main concern, the history permits us to see that education, pedagogical approaches and even the way to acquire knowledge has evolved. For instance, we saw that during the period covered by this study, education has moved from transmission to transformation. On one hand education as transmission denotes the process of acquiring and implementing standardized skills through the pedagogical activities of assimilating and memorizing theories and dogma. On the other hand, education as transformation is the process in which pupils build knowledge with his teacher and facilitator. This case introduces integration and emancipation in the teaching-learning process. And the logic effect is that the knowledge acquired helps to shape their understanding, feelings, behaving and acting. These are the reasons why this kind of knowledge is utilitarian.

Religious education has been taught in Collège Protestant for 50 years and has been an arena of encounter with other cultures and beliefs. It has deeply influenced the lives of the pupils and this encounter has helped them to experience a religiosity that can be seen at home, in their congregation, in the school and in their relation with people around the world. Religious education has also helped them to shape their worldview. Encounter with others helps to understand their beliefs whose consequence is the respect of the believers of other religions.

## **2 THE CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES**

This perspectives introduce us into the way on can express religious belonging in the context which is or not favorable. And we find that the mode of expression of power depends on the link or the belonging to the more powerful source. It is the case when the Divisional Officer, who draws his power from his position and his religion, decided that Christian education should not be taught to Muslims, and later the same person stopped the expansion of the school.

This perspective also shows us that people from different continents sharing the same goals, can put aside their differences in order to improve the living condition of those among whom they are called to serve. It is the case with the French, Americans, Norwegians, and Germans who worked together and combined their knowledge and competencies to provide education to pupils of Collège Protestant during decades. Although some of them have been forgotten by the school after they left the country a few of them continue developing relationship with it

in such a way that the school gains in infrastructure, finance, scholarship and didactical material.

The findings on this era allow us to say that during the period covered by this study it was:

- *A struggle to adapt* to a new culture, it was the case of westerners adapting to the African context.
- *A struggle to survive* as a minority in a dominant culture; this was the case of the Christians in Northern Cameroon where Muslims were dominant.
- *A struggle to raise* one voice in order to share ideas and experiences. This was the case of women through their devotion and competencies. One of my informants gave this testimony: “She [Mrs. Aud Bredeli] knew how to control people. [...] She was more flexible and comprehensive.”<sup>108</sup> This means that women have played a significant role in the life of those pupils.

The findings emphasize that “We have to learn from one another so that we can love our neighbors as humankind and evaluate their way of behaving and acting”<sup>109</sup>. Learning from one another also helps to understand our faith and to evaluate our actions.

### **3 THE EVANGELICAL PERSPECTIVES**

One may say that we have shown that the environment, the culture, the teachers and the religious activities contribute to build Christian faith. This is why the pupils after their training have continued practicing Christian activities where they live. They have contributed through their testimonies to the expansion of the Church in the country. This is in accordance with the words of Jesus Christ who said “You will be my witness in Jerusalem [Collège Protestant] and all over the world [where they were called to serve].” One may argue that in this school, the gospel has been really taught in a thorough way. We use the word really to mean that it had created the desire to share, and given courage to proclaim the gospel. One may argue that Collège Protestant has been preparing, during decades, missionaries who will spread the word of God in Cameroon. They gained this missionary spirit through religious education and examples from the life of their teachers. Their missionary activities help the Church to move from its traditional location (Northern part of Cameroon) to the South and other regions.

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<sup>108</sup> Inf.04/2010.

<sup>109</sup> Paul Hiebert 2008, 81

By discussing children's religiosity, we found that Religious education, when it is well done, brings deep changes in the lives of the pupils. These changes can be seen at home, in their religious community or in class. Further, we also find that due to globalization, the pupils interact with persons around the world for this reason, hence, we added a fourth level: the child is a member of the multi-religious society. In this particular case his religiosity can orient the type of relation or person he wants to encounter.

#### **4 THE PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVES**

The pedagogical perspectives were introduced to approach religious education. During the period covered by the study, and in order to keep the school specificity which is religious education as part of the curriculum, we find that religious education has developed in the following stages:

- Integrative religious education from 1960 to 1969. During this period all pupils attended the same Christians classes.
- Hard segregative religious education from 1969 to 1995. The pupils were separated according to their confessional belonging. There were three faith-based classes: One for the Catholics, another one for the Protestants and the last for the Muslims who received moral education. The findings during this period are that even though the separation was imposed from outside the school, it has a positive aspect as it came to reflect the tolerance of the school and the respect for the pupils' beliefs.
- Semi-integrative religious education from 1995 to 2008. An ecumenical wind passed through Christian schools in the town and after constructive discussions, an ecumenical arrangement was organized. The conclusion of that arrangement was that Catholic and Protestant pupils should receive the same Christian education. The Muslim pupils continued receiving moral classes.
- Integrative religious education from 2008 and onwards. All pupils are once more gathered to receive the same religious education class. The last point has been made possible through the introduction of manuals of Religious and Ethical education on one hand and the development of competency-based approach applied to Religious Education on the other.

***The manuals of religious education:*** The development of religious education curriculum has brought enormous changes in the aim, the organization and the content of religious education. These manuals were elaborated on the basis that the pupils need to know their faith and other ways of beliefs surrounding them in order to develop understanding and peace. These manuals give knowledge about the Christian faith, the main religions and especially Islam, ethics and other relevant subjects. This program helps pupils from different cultural background to interact and learn from one another during the teaching-learning process. The manuals were written in a spiral and on an inductive basis in order to give the pupils additional knowledge about that what they have acquired the previous year. They are based on the idea that we should move from what pupils already know to the new knowledge, taking in consideration previous understanding or knowledge on a topic. Many activities at the end of each chapter help the pupils to practice or use the knowledge in the everyday life.

***Interdisciplinary issues and methods*** were used in order to help the pupils in the process of building knowledge. The pupils and other readers appreciate it differently. For the teachers, it facilitates the preparation of lessons and the process of building knowledge with pupils. Finally, as a result of the manuals, religious education has become more systematized.

***The competency-based approach:*** this is also called the “Berlin” and “Hamburg” models, this approach aims to help pupils gaining skills which will enable them to live and practice their faith without hurting convictions, improve the way of teaching in order to help the pupils develop competencies, to learn from each others’ experiences, beliefs and values, and use their experiences and competencies in their daily life. The findings let me conclude that it is important to utilize the latest knowledge in science and technology to improve the way we teach Religious education as school subject through the process of transferability. At the end of the presentation, I summarize by quoting Wanda Alberts who says that the teacher-centered method is about *assimilation-exploitation-assimilation* while the second one focused on *emancipation-liberation-integration*. And this summary let me introduce a didactical approach with more emphasis on the building of skills, capacities and competencies which can be mobilized where and when needed. This approach is called the competency-based approach and is largely discussed by Angelique del Rel. The paragraph starts with the definition of the key word competence both in its economical and pedagogical understanding. After saying that the concept of competence was introduced in the technical school for the purpose of economy, I have presented how it was introduced *in general schools where* the aims and the context of the *teaching-learning process is not the same*. This introduction was

made possible through the concept of transferability. This word means that there are experiences, methods or concepts which can be transferred in other domains in order to improve the new domains.

From the definition, I say that the competency-based approach is a method of teaching which favors the development of the pupil in all his cognitive, affective and evaluative aspects involving all his senses and potentialities. I will also argue that through this approach, the learning is more diverse, effective, enjoyable and practicable. In this process, it is expected that the teacher should operate in a holistic way which takes into consideration local and global issues related to the subject. By acting in that way he is not any more a teacher but a facilitator or a creator helping pupils to access and use knowledge.

The practical aspect of chapter IV is some model lessons in which I have shown how one can use simple activities and reflections and how a teacher can help pupils building lifelong skills or competences. Finally, I have given some answers to one of my informants who thought that the new method is liberal and that it does not take into consideration the Holy Spirit. I argued by saying that we can teach in a liberal way but with a dogmatic background because this method does not destroy beliefs and values but reinforce them in their understanding in an integrative approach.

How can we justify the theme of this study? One may say that from 1958 to 2008, Religious education classes in Collège Protestant have been influenced by many elements of the local and international contexts which contribute to the improvement of the teaching. This process has been made possible through the introduction of *Manuals of Religious and Ethical Education* and the transfer and implementation of the competency-based approach to the teaching of Religious Education courses. The result is that the pupils are more and more autonomous in the way they learn and use their knowledge in a multi-faith context. One can logically extend this result by arguing that in the domain of acquiring knowledge every school subject should improve the way teaching and learning are organized in order to adapt to the context.

My main theorists are Wanda Alberts and Angelique del Rey. Wanda Alberts, a German scholar, teaching at the University of Bergen, Norway, is more concerned about religious education in a diverse society, while Angelique del Rey, a French philosopher, focused on the need to build competencies during the teaching-learning process. Their ideas help me to

understand and develop my theory which is: religious education that takes place in a diverse milieu should help the pupils to acquire new competencies applicable in situations needed. So I try to build a pedagogical bridge between their ideas by using a concept developed in this thesis: transferability.

In this thesis I have been presenting mostly how Christian's pupils and parents appreciate religious education during the period covered by this study, 1958-2008. In the same period many Muslim pupils were engaged in different ways in the life of Collège Protestant. The questions which will not be discussed in this thesis, but in further studies, are: How did Muslim pupils and parents really experience multi-faith life in that confessional school? How do they react to all the changes which have occurred in the life of the school? How can they contribute to a larger integrative religious education system?

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