1.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE ‘DEEP’ PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION:

The ‘DEEP’ pedagogical framework for Religious Education is based on a series of interrelated perspectives that have begun to emerge from both ‘Brain-based’ learning theory and developments within Religious Education in Australia. The framework is designed to emphasise four interactive dimensions of learning that could underpin a critique of pedagogical practice in Religious Education. In contrast to the more linear or cyclic models of learning the ‘DEEP’ framework is built on the premise of learning being a dynamic, experience that involves continual shuttling between the various learning dimensions.

The philosophical stance advocated by the ‘DEEP’ framework is grounded in constructivist learning theory. This approach views students as active learners; who learn at different rates; need diverse and multiple challenges; require support in making connections; and who need to take responsibility for their learning. ‘DEEP’ learning strategies allow students to construct religious meaning by communally participating in a variety of intellectually challenging experiences relevant to their religious tradition. ‘DEEP’ thinking activities must have connections to prior learning, cater for individual differences and have relevance in a real world context.

The four key principles of the ‘DEEP’ framework are summarised as follows:

**Discernment:** The generation of personal meaning and understanding

**Enrichment:** Catering for individualised learning

**Engagement:** A personal choice to be involved in learning

**Participation:** The communal dimension of learning
THE IMAGE OF THE FISHING NET

"Push the boat out further to the deep water, and you and your partners let down your nets for a catch" (Lk 5:4)

The metaphor of a fishing net being cast out into the deep water by a group of colleagues united by a common purpose resonates strongly with the 'DEEP' pedagogical framework. The imagery of the fishermen plying their craft is richly ingrained in the Christian tradition ('Don't be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.' Lk 5:8). If the fishermen are analogous of the teachers then the 'net' is symbolic of their pedagogy. In the context of the 'DEEP' framework, the concept of pedagogy refers particularly to 'the art and science' of teaching Religious Education, especially as it has been informed by understandings of how students 'best learn'. Pedagogy represents the underlying rationale that informs the selection of specific teaching strategies and is capable of incorporating an eclectic array of methodologies matched to the particular needs of the student cohort.

The characteristics of the 'fishing net' metaphor that may illuminate a pedagogical approach to Religious Education could include:

**The corks keep the Net afloat:** Each net depends upon a number of corks to keep it afloat. In much the same way Religious Education teachers need to keep in mind a number of key pedagogical principles (corks) to underpin the selection of rich learning experiences for their students. Whilst various learning models and theories help enrich our understanding of how students 'best learn', it is weaving together of the theoretical insights and practical strategies, that produces the best learning outcomes. (*DEEP* Framework)

**The strands of the Net are woven and interconnected:** No one strand of the net is responsible for capturing a fish. It is the interconnection of the woven strands that combine to achieve the desired result. Similarly, religious meaning emerges when students shuttle backwards and forwards in their thinking processes so as to make the connections between what they know about their Christian tradition and what they have just discovered. (*Discernment*)

**Weave the Net in order to capture the ‘big’ fish:** Students need to be confronted with concepts and problems to challenge their thinking and demand much more than superficial answers. Weave the net too tightly and the thinking process may become cluttered with a multitude of disconnected facts. Weave the strands too loosely and the important ideas and concepts escape. The skilful fisherman chooses a net pattern that best suits the environment and the individual needs of the time. (*Enrichment*)

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Into the Deep 13
You must cast the Net in order to catch fish: In biblical times fishing was more than a hobby; it was a crucial life-sustaining activity. Engagement is crucial to the religious experience. Students need to be motivated to engage in the learning process. They need to perceive a purpose and relevance in what they are doing, before they will even 'bother to go fishing'. (Engagement)

Fishing is a communal activity: Just as when fishing with a net, learning is a communal experience. Everyone within the learning community needs to combine their skills and efforts in order to produce quality outcomes. Christ was aware of the personal background and talents of each of His followers and invited them to participate in His ministry in unique and significant ways. (Participation)

The best catch is in the deep water: Casting a net from the shore will probably only result in ensnaring little fish. Good fishermen trawl over vast areas in their endeavour to maximise their catch. Ultimately, learning should be an adventure. Both teachers and students need to be encouraged to take 'risks' in the Religious Education classroom. Christ encouraged his disciples to do the 'unexpected', to go beyond the established conventions and venture 'into the deep'. The rich experiences and the surprises are to be found in the deeper, uncharted waters. (Interactive 'DEEP' learning experiences)

Every now and then the Nets need to be repaired and strengthened:
Even the best of nets 'wear thin'. Students and teachers need to periodically engage in periods of reflection. The learning process will always benefit from the regular evaluation and refinement of the learning net as the Religious Education unit unfolds. (Reflective Moments)
1.6 OVERVIEW OF WHOLE BRAIN THINKING QUADRANTS

INTRODUCTION:
The thinking process is essentially the brain’s attempt to make sense of the world around it. Thinking alters the information stored in the memory in interesting and diverse ways. Neural connections join new data with information that already has meaning and relevance to the learner. The more closely the new information is aligned with what the learner perceives as interesting, useful or emotionally stimulating the more likely it is to be integrated and learnt.

Underpinning the development of the ‘DEEP’ strategies is an appreciation that students think and respond in different ways. Not only do students have varying ‘capacities’ to think, each student brings to the learning experience a distinct, preferential thinking mode.

An understanding of the unique thinking preferences that may be exhibited across a classroom of students has significant implications for curriculum design and delivery. Concurrently, whilst accommodating the unique differences in thinking styles, there is awareness that learning is amplified and enhanced when all modes of the thinking process are integrated and engaged.

WHOLE BRAIN MODEL

After years of exploring the underlying principles of how the brain works Ned Herrmann developed an integrated model of the workings of the whole brain. Herrmann believed that the dichotomy of simply separating things into two categories (left and right brain) fell short of actually describing the differences in intellectual functioning.

Herrmann illustrated that by incorporating the research of Paul MacLean on the Triune Brain and Roger Sperry’s left brain/right brain function, it was possible to build a model of the human brain with two paired structures, the two halves of the cerebral system and the two halves of the limbic system. This concept allows researchers and educationalists to differentiate between both the left and right brain as well as between the cognitive intellectual brain preference (cerebral) and the visceral, structured and emotional preference (limbic).

‘Whole Brain’ theory allocates the brain’s specialised thinking modes into one of four physiological structures as illustrated below:
Essentially Herrmann developed a metaphorical model that suggested that the brain could be sub-divided into four ‘thinking’ quadrants. The upper (cerebral) left A mode of thinking can be described as analytical, mathematical, technical and problem solving. The lower (limbic) B mode can be thought of as controlled, conservative, planned, organised and administrative in nature. The lower (limbic) right C is interpersonal, emotional, musical, spiritual and the talker modes, and the upper (cerebral) right D is imaginative, synthesising, artistic, holistic and conceptual.

A modified representation of Herrmann’s thinking modes are characterised as follows:

**The A-quadrant Analyser:**

Logical thinking, analysis of facts, processing numbers

**The B-quadrant Organiser:**

Planning approaches, organising facts, detailed review
The C-quadrant Personaliser:

Interpersonal, intuitive, expressive

The D-quadrant Synthesiser:

Imaginative, big picture thinking, conceptualising

Herrmann also recognised the interactive nature of thinking. He noted that because individuals use a combination of mental preferences involving all four quadrants, they typically shuttle back and forth between different quadrants when faced with making a decision.
**Discernment:**
The generation of personal meaning and understanding

1.1 Generate opportunities for meaning to emerge
1.2 Encourage students to disclose their understandings
1.3 Allow students to reconstruct what they have learnt
1.4 Nurture 'Connected Knowing'
1.5 Foster a balance between 'Slow' Thinking and 'Fast' Thinking
1.6 Emphasise elaboration over acquisition
1.7 Engage the learner in Reflective Practice

**Engagement:**
Personal choice to be involved in learning

3.1 Be problem based
3.2 Be personally relevant
3.3 Connect naturally with what has been taught
3.4 Acknowledge the role of emotion in learning
3.5 Encourage risk taking
3.6 Incorporate Modelling, Joint Construction and Independent activities
3.7 Allow for neural fatigue and recovery

**Enrichment:**
Catering for individualised learning

2.1 Address a range of outcomes in one task
2.2 Input data through a preferred perceptual modality
2.3 Accommodate preferred cognitive processing styles
2.4 Cater for mixed ability levels
2.5 Allow all students to make a start
2.6 Allow for open-ended responses
2.7 Provide choice as to how the task can be accomplished

**Participation:**
The communal dimension of learning

4.1 Value the 'wisdom' of the community
4.2 Emphasise positive interdependence
4.3 Encourage individual and group accountability
4.4 Help to scaffold learning amongst team members
4.5 Develop collaborative and social skills
4.6 Be time efficient and manageable

**Distinguishing Pedagogical Characteristics of the ‘DEEP’ Framework**