

Pedagogies of Belief: Teaching and Learning in a Small Christian School

Maheshvari Naidu

Abstract

A vast array of religious phenomena, as well as constantly emerging novel forms and expressions of religious life have actualized a whole range of issues as part of the social sciences, and education, teaching and learning is embraced within this. This article approaches teaching and learning through the hermeneutic of ‘engaged pedagogy’ as put forward by the noted feminist writer bell hooks, and uses **Kainon New Church School** as a case study for what engaged pedagogy means in the context of teaching within a religious school. The article suggests that such engaged teaching aims at accruing a particular kind of ‘social’ or ‘religious capital’ for the learner. Social capital itself is a reference to the resource embedded in the connections within and between a network and nodal actors in the network, and religious capital is defined (Finke 2003:3) as consisting of an acquirement of ‘power and level of embeddedness into this or that religious culture’.

The article attempts to illustrate that Kainon School is part of a small networked community comprising the School, the Church, and the Congregational community (who are in many instances also parents at the school) and argues that teaching and learning occurs within these communally overlapping fields, similarly embedded within a particular religious culture. Methodologically, the paper is situated within a qualitative framework where the experiences and reflections of teachers and learners are captured through personal interviews and sustained observation.

Keywords: pedagogy, engaged, New Church, spiritual

Methodological Entry

I have always felt that it does not make for overly scintillating reading to begin an article (even an academic one) with the ‘nuts and bolts’ of methodological design and approach. Such an opening does however, aid in locating ones reading in terms of getting a ‘grip’ on how the researcher ‘enters’ and gains insights from a field site. This is of course important to us in situating our own critical understanding of the communication and analysis of the ethnography that is said to emerge from the research ‘turf’.

That said, for this particular study, the qualitative case-study approach was found to be well suited as it often is for studies that involve understanding social phenomena through what people say and what people do, allowing us as it does, to privilege the rich narratives and stories that the participants are able to share with the researcher. ‘Thick’ attention (beyond statistical analyses) can be paid to the nuances of behaviour and the experiences of teachers and the learners, who are the primary participants in this study. Thus methodological validation for the qualitative approach can be found in the opportunities it organically presents for gaining an insight into the intricacies of social processes (see Donnelly 2000: 138). To this end semi-structured interviews (with open ended questions) were carried out with teachers, the Headmistress, the Pastors as well as the school secretaries at Kainon School. The learners across the grades 3 to 7 were also interviewed after consent was gained from both the teachers and the parents of the child. Interviews lasted anywhere from 45 to 90 minutes and were designed to be face-to face and on a one-to-one basis, allowing space for conversation beyond the defined parameters of the question to occur, should the participant feel inclined to wish to continue to ‘talk’. The interview questions with the teachers sought to elicit the participants’ beliefs about what they perceived to be ‘good teaching’ in general and their particular philosophical and pedagogical approach at Kainon in terms of their own teaching practice. The questions ranged from general questions about the participants’ educational background and teaching experience to more specific questions probing what they believed was the aim of teaching, and how they understood the teaching process and the children they taught.

Such conversation (with the adult participants) would often organically lead into scheduling follow-up meetings or extending the conversation beyond the allocated time. This is a methodological and

disciplinary prerogative often employed by anthropologists who see value in ‘conversation’ as interviews. The conversations were recorded in many instances and all interviews were transcribed. These fluidly shaped interviews were in turn enriched and complemented with non-participant observation of congregational gatherings and worship, as well as gaining familiarity from literature about the numerous programmes held through the Church. Various Kainon School functions and events were attended which afforded wonderfully rich opportunities to observe teachers and learners, and the dynamic processes of teaching and learning outside of the formal classroom context. Consent to conduct research and interviews at the school, was obtained through a formal application presented to the Headmistress and school governing body. While the teachers indicated an interest in seeing the completed article, there was no compulsion that anything written, had to be vetted by them¹. The non-participant observations were carried out in 2010/2011 and the ‘formal’ interviews were scheduled during the second half of 2011. Narrative and thematic analysis (Denzin 1989) was used in understanding the transcribed interviews and in identifying particular strands of belief patterns and teaching approaches that emerged from the participants.

Introducing Kainon

Kainon New Church School, in the leafy and rather picturesque suburb of Westville North was founded in 1932 and is intimate², in both spatial scale

¹ I would like to formally thank Mrs. Jane Edmunds, the Headmistress at Kainon School as well as all the teachers and staff, who made time and set aside space in their obviously full teaching day to accommodate the research. An especially appreciative note must be added as they were exceedingly warm and welcoming.

² In late 2010 and into 2011, an extensive 14 million rand upgrade was planned and executed with the aim of increasing infrastructure and capacity to about 120 children or approximately double the previous capacity (in single as opposed to the previous multi-grade streams). However, the emphasis was still on maintaining a ‘small school’ ideology and learning intimacy.

and design³ as well as the student population, which has consistently numbered over the last decade, an annual average of 50-60 children across the spectrum of Grade R to Grade 7⁴. Tucked away from main arterial roads and further nestled off Perth Road itself, it sits somewhat embedded into the suburban surroundings with residential homes bordering and framing the one side and the Palmiet Nature Reserve offering a rather lovely eco-visual backdrop.

The material on the official website (echoed and variously articulated by the pastors and the teachers in the face to face interviews) points out that Kainon School was founded as a New Church school and that all teaching is from this religious perspective. It is claimed that ‘the New Church draws its teachings from the Bible, and emphasises a value centered life and acceptance of all people who strive for such a life’. We are told that New Church teachings ‘offer answers that build a foundation of a deep spirituality and at the same time are immediately practical’ (Source: Kainon Website).

Kainon School as a limb of the Kainon New Church in Westville is moreover part of a large international (religiously aligned) educational academy. The Academy is said to host primary and high schools, offering ‘Kainon education’ in multiple sites in Pennsylvania, USA, and with an additional two schools in Kenya and Ghana and a College offering ‘Kainon education’ for (general) college students as well as those wanting a more specialised post-graduate degree in New Church Theology. The Academy is described as having been a center for New Church education since its founding in 1876, ‘looking to the Lord in the light of the Old Testament, the

³ The architectural firm commissioned describes their brief having factored in that, ‘Careful consideration has been taken in retaining the spirit and architectural character of the original complex while simultaneously infusing a clean, contemporary aesthetic with new, state of the art facilities’.

⁴ There is also a kindergarten school, Kainon Pre-primary School which, while very much a part of ‘Kainon Schools’ in vision and philosophy, operates independently with its own Headmistress Mrs. Daphne Plug. The pre-primary school children had daily classroom worship and fun Bible stories and enactments, but of course a much more informal learning pedagogy and no formal taught doctrine which was part of the upper or senior primary school curriculum.

New Testament, and the Heavenly Doctrine' (www.kainon.co.za/).

Finke (2000:5) tells us that most religious groups outline a set of core teachings and practices embedded in a unique history, and are typically supported by sacred texts, narratives, divine revelations, and writings from their respected and charismatic leaders. This is certainly true as the theology of the New Church is patently positioned as a 'new Christianity', or 'distinctly new religion' claimed as 'the next step beyond the traditional Christian church teachings'. We are told that The New Church accepts the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God, but is however, distinctive from other streams of Christianity, as it is further deeply rooted in the particular exegetical and core interpretive writings of the theologian Emanuel Swedenborg. The New Church differentiates itself by basing itself on the words and theological thoughts claimed as revealed to Emanuel Swedenborg. The Church erects its philosophy around ten basic inspirational tenets that it sees as intrinsic to spiritual growth; *The Lord Jesus Christ, The Lord's Word, Heaven and Hell, Marriage, Charity, Worship, Prayer, The Church, Spreading the Good News and Trust in Providence*.

Kainon School sees school as an extension of the home and articulates that its mission is to educate the heart and mind of each child for a life of service to the neighbour and the Lord Jesus Christ. Psalm 25:5 is put forward as a kind of teaching signature; *'Lead me in your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation'*.

Positioned thus against the religious landscape of the New Church, it is of course wholly understandable, *predictable even*, that Kainon School feels strongly about teaching children (religious) values and skills that the school believes the child needs for a successful and happy life. It claims to do this by 'building the community around family values that help children grow to be confident and kind' (Source: Kainon Website). Kainon School proudly 'sells' itself as caring profoundly about every aspect of the child. The school is advertised as aiming 'to nurture the spiritual, moral, academic, social, athletic and artistic well-being of each and every child'.

The blurb on the Kainon website advertises '*an independent co-educational Christian Primary School*' and continues by describing that:

Kainon School is an English Medium Primary school and a member of ISASA (Independent Schools Association of SA). The

school caters for Grade R-Grade 7. Kainon focuses on a high academic standard in line with the national curriculum, embedded with strong Christian morals and values (Source: Kainon Website).

It is of course the last sentence in an otherwise ubiquitous statement (that one may well find attached to numerous other independent or private schools) that comes under our lens, the embedding of an otherwise nationally generic curriculum, with ‘strong Christian morals and values’ that is of special value to us. For Kainon School, as they put it ‘*Religion is a part of this balance in everyday life*’. While the aim of effecting this balance is through a religious community and congregational group grounded in New Church theology for the adult members, for the children this balance is aimed at being ushered in and nurtured through a particular pedagogical approach within the school curriculum, which I argue can be seen as a resource of religious capital afforded to the learner.

When teachers in a public school hold particular overt and pronounced personal religious views, there are of course implications for how their particular pedagogical ‘signatures’ might be articulated in concert with or against questions of the learners’ religious identities, lifestyle and learning. However, in a private school itself positioned within a communal ideological and theological worldview, the critical question shifts to what form the pedagogical praxis takes, as the assumption is that the parents here have willingly and knowingly sought out such a learning milieu for their child.

Religious Capital as a Form of Social Capital

Social capital⁵, as a sociological concept, has emerged as something of a trendy label in the social sciences. Portes (2002:2) points out that the original

⁵ The concept of social capital has also accreted to itself much conceptual opaqueness that in some instances, clouds the term because of the mutable and varying definitions imposed by different scholars (see Putnam 2000; Portes 2000; Schuurman 2003). The paper however, takes as its starting point that social capital is to be understood as working on the level of the individual and small group.

theoretical development of the concept of ‘social capital’ by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1984) and the American sociologist James Coleman (1988) centered on *individuals* or *small groups* as the units of analysis, and on the benefits accruing to individuals *because of their ties* with others. These theorists defined social capital in terms of a *resource* to which an individual has access to, and is able to use for his or her benefit. Simply put, social capital is a reference to the resource embedded in the connections *within* and *between* social networks. For a community, frequent cooperation by its members leads to tighter social linkages and increased trust in one another, described as a ‘virtuous circle’ of participation and trust (Janjuha-Jivraj 2003:32).

Kainon New Church School, I suggest, sits within such a virtuous circle and religious community. At the time that the interviews for this study were being conducted⁶, a large numbers of the learners were from families that were members of Kainon New Church⁷. The Pastor that taught religion and doctrine to the senior primary learners was also the officiating Pastor who had general pastoral duties for the larger Kainon New Church

⁶ The interviews were conducted over the period September to October 2011, although earlier informal work and sustained non participant observation, attendance of school and Church meetings etc were carried out through many months in 2010/2011.

⁷ The website seals the invited parameters of the knitted community by stating ‘We are looking for families that have a similar approach to parenting and life, so that together we consistently teach our children the spiritual values. We invite you to look at what we stand for and to contact us should you be interested in viewing our school’. That said, there are children at Kainon that are not New Church followers, and a few that are not followers of Christianity, although these children are in the minority. The interviews with the families of these children reveal that while the New Church and Kainon School are not discriminatory or exclusionary, the School management had communicated that it needed to ensure that the difference in religious worldviews would not be disruptive for either the Kainon children or to the newly enrolled learner. The School makes it clear that the enrolled learner would need to join and be part of all worship and teaching and learning activities directly related to the New Church Christianity.

congregation. Indeed the sacred space for the school's (i.e. learners') daily worship and congregational weekly worship overlapped and ensued in the same Chapel space. Many of the teachers were members of Kainon New Church and several parents who had their children attending the school, had themselves attended Kainon in their childhood years. The children also in many instances quaintly shared that their 'older brother' or 'older sister' or 'cousin' had also attended the school.

Farr (2004) states that putting together the various elements, social capital is complexly conceptualized as the network of associations, activities, or relations that bind people together as a community via certain norms and psychological capacities (Farr 2004: 8-9). The paper argues that the teaching at Kainon School is positioned within such a (religious) community and the pedagogical approach at Kainon is one of affording a resource of religious capital to the learners. The learners are, by and large, embedded in a compounded web of relationships with their school and church community, and with their teachers and parents, all of which cohere to socially cement and bond them together. Such an embedding recalls for us, some of the Russian scholar, Lev Vygotsky's (1978) theories on children's cognitive growth, and its development within a socio-cultural context, and 'practice' within a social environment.

Tangible or what I would call 'hard' resources such as finances, labour, information and other forms of support are often cited as examples of social capital that can be available to people. However, later scholarship (see Ammerman: 1997; Cnaan et al.: 2002) has also revealed that social ties are developed through religious participation (Lockhart 2005: 47) which often crosses status barriers and helps cement community cohesion. To me these are 'soft' resources, but no less vital and meaningful. Closely knitted social networks can thus be seen as pools of popular agency and are embedded in popular relations of solidarity and reciprocity. Kainon School is embedded in such a pool, and the teaching pedagogy articulates from *within* such a stance. Insight on pedagogical style is drawn from the interviews with teachers, who self-identify as Christians, or rather Kainon New Church Christians, to explore teaching beliefs with respect to their pedagogical engagement.

bell hooks, *the favoured non de plume of Gloria Watkins* was intensely consumed by what she saw as a 'relationship between teaching and learning'. Her first major book on education, *Teaching to Transgress* (1994)

is a collection of essays that explore her inspired and prodigious ideas on the meaning of teaching and learning. Her style is personal, often anecdotal and clothed in an experiential aura, and grounded in her own experiences, all of which lends itself to wonderful reading for the anthropologist interested in the value of the personal. She argued for a progressive and holistic education and an *engaged pedagogy*. To bell hooks,

[The] learning process comes easiest to those of us who teach who also believe that there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred; who believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin (hooks 1994: 13).

For bell hooks, ‘an aspect of the teaching vocation was sacred’ and to her it was critically vital to teach in a way that both respected and cared for the ‘souls’ of those taught if one wanted to create the conditions necessary where learning can be deeply intimate. To bell hooks, this location in the sacrality of ‘teaching’ allowed what she refers to as ‘engaged teaching’. None of the teachers interviewed at Kainon used the word ‘*engaged*’ in reference to the manner in which they taught, however their narratives of *how* they taught and *why* they taught emerge as windows into the kind of ‘engaged pedagogy’ that they employed *sans* the theoretical label.

The Teachers

Gail Mitchell has been teaching for sixteen years, spending four years at Gordon Road Girls School (a government or public school). She has thus been teaching at Kainon for twelve years, having qualified at Edgewood Teacher College in 1984. Garrulous and wonderfully vivacious in class (and certainly in the interviews!), she enthused that she ‘loved children’, chuckling that she was able to enjoy their sense of humour and sharing that she felt:

[T]eaching is kind of sacred ... the essential purpose of education is to equip children for life, not only academically but more importantly spiritually- to become decent human beings who are able to interact with anybody else, of any colour or creed. It is vital to equip children in becoming self-sufficient that they are able to research information and apply that knowledge without fear. Education is all about order, teaching children about the law of the Lord, striving for a spiritual life that is uncluttered.

This understanding of teaching and the education process as having its roots in the ‘spiritual’ is repeated by Angelique Swain who has had six years of teaching, the last three at Kainon. Angelique demurely tells me:

The best thing about teaching is seeing a child progress academically and spiritually throughout the year.... and being able to know your learners personally and not just as another child in your classroom is a definite bonus. This has enabled us to really understand our learners and they feel comfortable asking for more help in the classroom. The staff is also very close and your colleagues don’t only become your friend but also a family member and we offer worship together. This also makes working together more enjoyable.

Sandra Watkins is known to her learners as the ‘wonderful but strict teacher’. She has been teaching for twelve years, with some of those years as a teacher in UK and the last five years at Kainon. She is known for introducing many innovative teaching techniques that paid attention to the emotional well being of her pupils, most notably the weekly ‘family circle’ where each learner was invited to communally share something ‘big’ that was going on with them at that time, whether celebratory or traumatic, in a safe, non judgemental space of peers. From what many children shared with me, the children appeared to feel safe to unburden issues that might otherwise weigh heavily on them. For her the most enjoyable part of being a teacher was getting to ‘enjoy the children at that age’ (she taught the 12-13 year olds) and building up a relationship with different children and the staff members. She shared that the most heartening aspect of teaching in a small school was getting to know every child’s name, and being able to give more attention to

learners. Sandra felt that ‘teaching children to be unique, to find their own way to (spiritually) shine’ ... and focusing on ‘out of the box thinking’ ... was critical for her, as she felt passionately that ‘the most vital part of education was that children need to get to know themselves as spiritual beings and appreciate themselves’.

For her, the purpose of education was the development of the ‘whole’ child which she perceived as being holistic and ‘more than just skills education’, and about getting the child to, ‘participate in the spectrum of activities that the school offered’, sharing that ... ‘[T]his teaches the child that they can do anything in the world and shows them that nothing is impossible and encourages them to make use of the opportunities that the Lord has presented to them’.

For Sandra and indeed for all the other teachers interviewed, ‘whole child’ did not just reference their intellectual, emotional and physical well-being but included the critical index of ‘spiritual well-being’. For many of the teachers, the emphasis was on being a ‘better person’ (Kainon New Church terms). This included not only those they taught but themselves as teachers. Such purposeful reflective practice appeared to integrate the many dimensions of teaching for the teachers (see Kane *et al.* 2004).

bell hooks stresses the demands this kind of approach places upon educators in terms of authenticity and commitment. As a vociferous black American feminist and educational practitioner whose own history was entangled with that of an ideologically and racial imperialist American history, bell hooks’ conceptualisation of an ‘engaged pedagogy’ spoke to an emancipatory activism, a ‘transgression’ and interrogative overthrowing of the oppressive class, gender and race regimes that bore down on the educational system of her time and on the student within such a system. However, while complexly conceptualised, simple strands of ‘engaged pedagogy’, can be productively unravelled and these strands offer the core of bell hooks’ belief that engaged pedagogy encompasses ‘transformed relationships with others having key roles in the lives of children’ (Glass & Wong 2003: 73) requiring that teachers grasp the lives of their students in both ‘intimate detail and broad outline’. Learning becomes about engendering ‘better people’ (Burke 2004), not only about teaching the skills necessary for students to generate knowledge (howsoever that ‘better person’ might be conceptualised). This kind of teaching speaks to rejecting what

Paulo Freire (1970) spurned as the banking concept of education and elevates students' well-being and emerging religio-cultural and spiritual identities to the status of the core curriculum.

Glass & Wong (2003:73) identify three critical aspects of engaged pedagogy and curriculum development, claiming that;

1. Engaged pedagogy addresses teachers' own processes of self-actualization and identity formation.
2. Engaged pedagogy involves deepening knowledge creation and more critical curriculum construction and selection.
3. Engaged pedagogy involves continuous critical reflection and professional development, linked to classroom and school-level reform.

At Kainon School this (1) process of self-actualisation and identity construction appears to 'happen' fluidly and seamlessly and reciprocally across the domains of church space and classroom space, in spatial as well as ideological terms. The (3) continuous critical reflection for the teachers is also a spiritual reflection that links back to the classroom and pedagogical praxis.

The teachers share that,

As teachers we are examples to our learners, we spend so much time with the learners, it is important that we know who we are and what God wants us to do. We acknowledge that learning is useful and should be useful for development. By learning more we are able to distinguish what role God has for us in the world.

We have Christian worship and church with the whole school. You are able to freely encourage learners to do God's will and I can practice my own faith comfortably with learners and staff.

The teachers, many in casual jeans and very visibly comfortable in their (theological) skin came across in the first instance as passionate teachers rather than overly zealous New Church followers. Likewise all observations

of their interactions with the children over several months and across many situational contexts (school events, Church gatherings, at worship and during classroom teaching) saw them relaxed and typically behaved with the children, in the sense that, as the occasion and context dictated they were either, friendly or stern, loving and encouraging, or disciplinary and admonishing. For the teachers at Kainon, the learning appeared to take place in both the classroom and in the Chapel. Curriculum is informed by New Church theological worldview which they in turn trace back to the (New Church) Lord. The headmistress, Mrs Edmunds shares in her typical gentle style,

The learners learn Christian values and especially New Church values with an emphasis on a stable family life which is really useful in today's world. Children are exposed to so much in high school and in the world around them now that many of them get caught up in sex and drugs for example. We bring Christian values into what we teach and learn in the classroom.

Learners are taught according to their spiritual development. They begin learning about the development of themselves as young children are generally self-centred e.g. how we can be a better person for God ... as they get older they learn they learn to distinguish the Lord's work in the world around them and how it can affect who they are as children of God.

One of the teachers tells me,

I think the main difference in this school is that the children are taught that the Lord is a loving God who leaves you in freedom to choose. Some other (religious) schools I have visited tend to err on the side of brainwashing children in the hope of achieving some kind of salvation instead of realising that Christianity is a process.

Another teacher shares with me that, 'as a teacher you get to practice your own faith and know children on a spiritual level'.

Thus as nodal actors in both the Church and the classroom, the teachers teach to 'spiritually empower their learners'. Gail narrates that,

Daily worship in the Chapel comprises 15 minutes a day for the grades 4-7. The Junior Primary or grades 1-3 also has a 'worship circle' in their classrooms after the main worship to explain in more 'babyish' terminology what was covered in Chapel. Worship is an integral part more of social and emotional side of the day at school where we remind the children of lessons learnt and the pastor takes 'a very hands-on way' of worship. There is always a life lesson taught each day that is often a useful tool for both adults and children alike to employ in their everyday dealings. Once a week, on a Friday there is a longer 30 minute worship and the older kids get to escort and chaperone the little pre-primary school kids into the Chapel.

Her narrative is a reminder that the Pastor, whom the children also see at the weekly congregational worship, alongside their parents, is also the Pastor that they listen to before the beginning of each school day. He (along with the assistant pastor), also teaches them (grades 4-7) religion and doctrine.

All the teachers were able to articulate how they felt the Church and New Church teachings and values integrated into school life by sharing that,

New Church teachings are brought through everything, they are brought out in all areas, basically linking the teachings in one's whole life, continuing that, Yes even with subjects such as Maths...when it comes to things like division... we encourage children to share things as the Lord commands. It's a part of everything, we integrate religion with everything that we do...even in interaction with one another.

Maria Gibb, well-loved for her manic Welsh sense of humour and style, in explaining this integration in her grade 2 class tells me,

We try to bring Christian values into what we teach and learn in the classroom. For example if we look at how animals hunt we discuss how God designed the animal for that purpose etc.

Gail Mitchell who taught Afrikaans and Zulu to the grades 3-7 went into greater detail by sharing that,

New Church teachings are integrated into the curriculum through an intricate series of developmental steps... we start with where the child is at spiritually, and from grade 1 upwards, themes are then developed according to the child's spiritual development. We then have the added challenge (in a positive sense of the word) of dovetailing the New Church curriculum with the government's [curriculum]. However, with flexibility and creativity, this is not a difficult task.

... So it's mainly how we approach the material that we teach. We try to bring Christian values into what we teach and learn in the classroom. The learners are not different, only the learning experience is differentThe learners learn Christian values which is really useful in today's world.

The Learners

The learners observed over many school visits, all appeared in many ways very 'typical'. Polite and charming, they could instantly metamorphose into bickering and teasing, and well, become typical kids on the playground. In other words normal well-adjusted school children! Having spent time at the school and having been seen many times by them, I was not a stranger. They were polite in their exchanges with me, but the acquaintance meant that they could be relaxed in the interviews with me. This was evident in the way Evan greeted me, with both a polite 'Good morning Mam', as well as a Hi 5!

Evan (grade 7) felt that if other schools had a Church as part of the school 'they too can learn about the Lord and how they can treat each other with respect and how to let their life shine like we do'. Not being shy to volunteer his thoughts even before being asked, he was happy to share that the 'worship reminds us of the love of the Lord and that we can do all things with him on our side. I don't think it's the same for other schools as they don't have prayers like we do and they don't do religion like we do'.

The word 'relax' cropped up more than once as both Evan and Ethan (also grade 7) tell me separately that they get to 'relax and focus on the Lord'. Ethan adds his own 'take' on the matter by stating rather quaintly that 'it's important for our teachers because they have a lot of work and when they get home they have to work more and they don't have time for the Lord'.

Shivani (grade 6) was one of the few non Christian children at Kainon and I knew her parents to be practicing Hindus. Even she showed how comfortable she was at Kainon and tells me that she ‘went to a different school before coming here and I like it here because we all respect each other. I think it’s because of the church’. Shivani added that ‘worship is nice because we get to relax[!] and listen to pastor and he teaches us the importance of respect and if my other school had worship like we do, the people there wouldn’t be such bullies’.

Cameron (grade 5) shyly confided that ‘Our school is small, unique and we learn about the Lord according to New Church which is nice because we are the only school around that does that. Other schools learn about the Lord in general but we are special because we follow New Church and its curriculum’.

He was less shy about looking up and telling me that having a Church at school and having worship would help them [other children] have faith in God and teach them to read the bible like the pastor encourages us to do’.

The Pastor’s narrative speaks directly to how he perceived the place of religion in the school;

It’s essential to have religion in all schools as it helps the child to grow in all aspects and without religion it’s impossible to control or teach a child to behave. It is through religion that children learn what is right and wrong and God’s expectations from them. Christian schools have a major role to play in the lives of learners as the learners are able to connect to their spiritual selves from an early age.

He claimed that the church breeds leaders and felt that, ‘it’s best to teach children religion at their tender age as its when most foundations in their lives are laid’. Religion is important in the home and the school ... Kainon is different from other Christian schools as we allow children of all religions and they value learning of other religions’.

The Pastor felt strongly that this effort of allowing other religions in their school, ‘allowed the child to grow up knowing the different religious options that are there for them to choose from. He told me that that ‘parents

voluntarily send their children to their school hence they know that the church's foundation and principles are based on the New Church philosophy, so we (the school) have the responsibility of ensuring that children learn it and are able to apply it in their lives'.

The pastor added that the assistant Pastor held weekly Youth meetings and regular socials and retreats to which many of the (older) ex Kainon children now in high school were invited to and regularly attended.

Gail, in a follow up interview felt comfortable in telling me that she thought,

[C]hildren who are not brought up in a Christian home are often less observant of their manners, and the way in which they speak to others, and deal with others. I firmly believe that we at Kainon are very sheltered in this regard as our children in general are very aware of these behaviours and thus are well mannered and kind towards others. Part and parcel of belonging to a Kainon philosophy is to be considerate of others and keep in mind the mantra 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you'. We have a particular ethos here you know...

One of the younger teachers echoed what many teachers articulated during their own interviews that,

... everything at Kainon revolves around happiness in a useful life in our school ... it's important that we remind ourselves as teachers, and remind the children their purpose on earth and that God loves us all.

This was said to be encapsulated in the school ethos and said to find expression in the Kainon School slogan.

In Usibus Felicitas (Happiness in a useful Life, in all we do).

The importance of conceptualising and understanding what ethos is lies in what it can reveal about social processes and structure. Donnelly (2000: 134) however, reminds us that 'ethos' is a fashionable but imprecise and 'hazy'

term often employed by organisational theorists (and as in this context, educationists and theologians) ‘to describe the distinctive range of values and beliefs, which define the philosophy or atmosphere of an organisation’ and that it is somewhat resistant to empirical study.

However, although not quantifiable, like Donnelly, ethos for me is observable as the intangible yet discernible something that emerges from social interaction and process. For Donnelly (2000: 13) ethos emanates from individual and group interaction and is not so much something formally documented, but is rather a process of social interaction. To Donnelly, and clearly discernible amongst the Kainon teachers and learners ‘it is not independent from’ the organisation or network ‘but inherently bound up within it’. Social network theory unveils how nodes or the actors in the organisation and networks and ties or relationships between the actors function within various networks. Closely knitted (small) social networks are seen as pools of popular agency and are embedded in popular relations of solidarity.

Iannaccone’s (1990) argument was that just as the production of household commodities was enhanced by the skills known as human capital, the production of religious practice and religious satisfaction was enhanced by religious human capital. Fink (2003) explains that Iannaccone defined religious human capital as ‘skills and experiences specific to ones religion, religious knowledge, familiarity with church ritual and doctrine, and friendships with fellow worshipers’. Thus, knowledge, familiarity, and friendships specific to a given religion helped individuals to produce religious commodities that they defined as valuable (Fink 2003:2). All the teachers claimed to have experienced being socially and religiously supported with the ongoing spiritual programmes run by the Pastor as part of their teacher development. This seemed to clinch their small teacher community and many shared how close they felt to the group as a whole and pointed out their tighter bonds with one or more teachers. This appeared to be echoed amongst the parents and children. Many parents from the congregation socialised regularly with each other outside of Church events, and although the children spent social time with children from other schools and faiths, many pointed out that their ‘closest’ friends were also children they met up with at weekly congregational worship.

Conclusion

The foundational ideas of religious capital stem from social and cultural capital theories and theorists (Bourdieu 1984; Coleman 1988; Lannaccone 1990; Putnam 2000; Finke & Dougherty 2002; Finke 2003). Adler and Kwon's (2002) discussion on social capital raises many important points which I believe holds true for religious capital. The foremost being the point that capital is encapsulated in 'solidarity' and lies, according to Adler and Kwon (2002:18) in the social structure within which the actor is located, and is the resource available to actors as a function of their location in the structure of their social relations. In the context of Kainon School, the primary actors are the teachers and learners and this social structure is stitched into place by the structure of the New Church theology (with its Congregational limb), and offers the embedded matrix from which teaching and learning takes place across the multiple domains of class, church and congregation and by the teachers and learners who straddle these domains. As recipients of a particular kind of 'engaged pedagogy' the learners are afforded what can be described as a form of religious capital that is aimed at nurturing the (spiritual) student.

Religious capital itself consists of the degree of mastery and attachment to a particular religious culture (Stark & Finke 2000: 120; and Finke 2003:2). According to Finke (2003:2) the 'mastery of' refers to the knowledge and familiarity needed to appreciate a religion. Finke goes on to make the more powerful point in my opinion by adding that 'to fully appreciate' a religion 'requires emotional attachments and experiences that become intrinsic to one's biography'. This is a wonderfully visceral way to put it, 'become intrinsic to ones biography'. The time spent at Kainon with both the teachers and learners lays bare that New Church had become intrinsic to their biography. Therefore religious activities such as daily worship prefacing the school day and weekly congregational worship, punctuated by formal lessons in doctrine all embedded within the canvas of the overall learning curricular experience served to not only, to quote from Finke (2003:3) contribute to 'increasing confidence in the truth of a religion', but also 'strengthening emotional ties to a specific religion' in this instance 'New Church'. It is these emotional attachments and the 'mastering' of a religion that are to be understood as investments that build up over time and constitute religious capital.

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Maheshvari Naidu
School of Social sciences
University of KwaZulu-Natal
naiduu@ukzn.ac.za