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## **Evaluating Evangelisation in Faith-Based Organisations: A Study of Catholic Educational Centres**

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### **Abstract**

*Whilst many studies have shown the positive impact which faith-based organisations have contributed to global development, a question arises over the effectiveness of these institutions at imparting to their beneficiaries what makes them unique – their faiths. This study seeks to review the literature and interview key members of Catholic faith-based organisations to better understand the role that evangelisation, which is defined as “bringing the Good News of Jesus into every human situation,” plays in their work. The study focuses in particular on Catholic educational organisations and seeks to understand if they have institutionalised measures of success for this component of their ministry. The research finds that there is a great shortage of academic study on this element of the faith-based nonprofit sector. Furthermore, it was found that although faith-based organisations are by their nature defined by their religious aspect, this element is not universally measured, nor seen as necessarily the primary focus of organisations’ work. Through brief questionnaires, it was determined that evaluation methods differ amongst Catholic organisations in different geographical regions. Additionally, at times it may simply be impractical or irrelevant to measure the outcome of this evangelisation component of an organisation’s work. Notwithstanding this, the questionnaires found that measures of some elements of spiritual development are being used either formally or informally in many Catholic educational centres around the world.*

## **Evaluating Evangelisation in Faith-Based Organisations: A Study of Catholic Educational Centres**

The nonprofit sector is made up of a multitude of different subsets of organisations. A significant yet often understudied subset of the sector is faith-based organisations (FBOs). These organisations, which are normally linked to a religious community, are present in numerous different places and social sectors all around the world (Clarke & Ware, 2015). Although religious congregations typically have the spiritual health of their community as their most important

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and driving objective, they can oftentimes involve themselves in projects seeking to address the physical, material and mental well-being of both those within and outside of their community. For the purpose of this study, the most appropriate definition of an FBO is “an organization, with or without nonprofit status, that provides social services and is either religiously-motivated or religiously affiliated” (Goldsmith, Eimicke, & Pineda, 2006, p. 2).

These FBOs are therefore defined by having an added layer to their work that is not present in comparable NGOs. This layer is one of spiritual expression or evangelisation (Clarke & Ware, 2015). In this way, whilst an FBO may deliver the same good or service as a secular nonprofit, it may do so for either of two reasons; a) to provide a space for expression of the religious faith for those within the religious community who feel called to serve and b) as a means to evangelise to those who are perceived to require spiritual development along with the other social services provided. FBOs therefore operate under a stated dual identity, that of service provider and religious organisation for the needy (Lloyd, 2007).

These faith-based organisations have been found to have several advantages for performing social services over those of their secular counterparts (Goldsmith et al, 2006). These advantages include their deep community involvement and the natural trust that this builds within their constituencies. This is complemented by a potential ease of accessing human and financial capital for its services from within and outside of the community due to sitting in the heart of communal life. This presence also allows them to more easily grow grassroots projects which are developed and driven by constituents of the communities being served.

With the researched advantages that these organisations bring, it may be logical to conclude that when delivering on the organisation’s mission, FBOs will endeavour to deliver both their social and religious services as efficiently and effectively as possible. Whilst it has become commonplace for nonprofit organisations to commit energy and resources into measuring their social impact, the question arises whether FBOs, with their dual identity, have also found effective and reliable measures of success for their religious services. Thus, this paper seeks to research if tools also exist to measure the spiritual development component of the work being done by faith-based organisations around the world. In particular, it is of interest to uncover if there are reliable, accurate and relevant outcomes measures. This research seeks to do so by reviewing the available academic literature on the topic as well as through questionnaires to various organisations in the field. Due to time and resource limitations for this

study, the research questionnaires and principle focus of the study has been narrowed to focus in particular on Catholic educational centres which operate in the Grand Rapids (Michigan), Belém (Brazil), Nairobi (Kenya) as well as Cape Town and Johannesburg (South Africa) regions.

### **Research Questions**

- What role does evangelisation play in the work of Catholic educational centres?
- Do Catholic educational centres measure the evangelisation component of their work?
- What tools are most commonly used to measure the inputs, outputs and outcomes?
- Do differences exist between the methods for evangelisation and tools for measurement used across different geographies?

### **Methodology**

The methodology for investigating this question was twofold; conducting an extensive literature review on the topic and sampling a questionnaire to a small group representing Catholic schools and educational centres in Grand Rapids (Michigan), Belém (Brazil), Nairobi (Kenya) as well as Cape Town and Johannesburg (South Africa) regions. The literature begins by looking at the general faith-based sector before narrowing in focus to Catholic educational institutions. The aim of the literature review is to understand the position that these organisations have in many communities, their views on evangelisation, the role this plays in their work, how this has been achieved and whether measures are used to assess the success of this element of the FBOs' work. Subsequent to this, the questionnaire was sent out to targeted groups of Catholic schools and vocational education centres as well as to leaders at the Catholic diocese and provincial office level. These questionnaires were submitted via email and contained two primary questions:

1. Do Catholic social projects that you are involved with measure/track the evangelisation component of their work?
2. If so, what measures do they use?

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The purpose of these questions is to gain multiple insights. The first is to understand whether these geographically separated groups of Catholic projects align with the findings of the previous researchers as found in the literature review. Secondly, these questions seek to understand if in this sample, there exists a difference between the methods of measurement done by the Catholic organisations in these three small subsets of three continents – North America, South America and Africa. Furthermore, are these organisations measuring these with respect to inputs, outputs or outcomes. Lastly, they sought to provide insight into whether there is a standard best-practice that has been developed and is being used by multiple or all organisations in a specific field of work, namely Catholic educational centres.

A small and non-representative total of seven responses were received from the sample group. The responses received were from individuals in the following positions:

*Table 1.*

Grand Rapids (USA)	Southern Africa	Belém (Brazil)
Director of Family, Youth and Young Adult Ministries – Diocese of Grand Rapids	Head of Formation – Org #1 Formation Centre for Africa & Madagascar (Nairobi, Kenya)	Auxiliary Bishop – Archdiocese of Belem do Pará
Director of Religious Education for Grand Rapids Catholic School #1	Head of Youth Ministry – Org #2 Provincial Office of Southern Africa (Cape Town, South Africa)	
Religion and Social Sciences Teacher – Grand Rapids Catholic School #2	Director of Org #3 Planning and Development Office – Southern Africa (Johannesburg, South Africa)	

These responses were analysed and compared to those of the literature review to ascertain a deeper understanding of the research question. The results were compared and conclusions drawn in relation to the research questions of the study.

## Literature Review

### Lack of Academic Literature

Analysing the existing academic literature on the topic of faith-based nonprofit organisations it is quickly concluded that there is a significant lack of academic writing on the issues which affect the faith-based nonprofit field. This phenomenon is discussed by numerous researchers who have joined the growing wave attempting to better understand the missions, composition, and effectiveness of these unique organisations.

Kurt Alan ver Beek proposes that this may be due to faith-based organisations being considered a development taboo topic for many years (Ver Bleek, 2000). This led to an absence of academic study of the sector subject as both researchers and practitioners in the field ignored these institutions due to aversion towards them. This has been identified as a significant paradox of the nonprofit field – that despite the significant size and importance of the faith-based sector, for many years there was a lack of academic attention paid to it. (Deneulin & Rakodi, 2010). In a research report for Harvard University, Berger ascertains that “an understanding of FBOs’ operations and influence has been limited by the lack of documentary data and available literature about these organizations” (Berger, 2003, p. 3). Further to this, a report for the US Department of Housing and Community Development highlights how empirical analysis of this sector is in short supply. The report indicates how the academic literature provides “no comparisons of similar types of secular and faith-based activities, no analyses of the outcomes of any of the activities conducted, and hence no assessments of the factors that influence the scale or quality of outcomes” (The Urban Institute, 2001, p. 12).

Fortunately, subsequent researchers have highlighted that this taboo was broken after the beginning of the 21st century and can be viewed to have reversed from a taboo to a fashionable research topic after that point (de Kadt, 2009). Whilst this uptake in interest has spurred a wave of academic attention on the success of these organisations, there are still prevalent gaps in the academic research. Thus, it is imperative that researchers continue to administer broad-based surveys of FBOs in order to ascertain reliable empirical data of the field (Petersen, 2010).

## **Advantaged Position of FBOs**

Adding to this paradox is the point that FBOs hold positions of strategic importance and value in delivering community services. This theme was discussed by Tyndale in an article which describes “no other organizations as more firmly rooted or with better networks in poor communities than the religious ones” (Tyndale, 2003, p. 26). This is a crucial point which indicates how these organisations, often being at the very centre of community life in every corner of the world, are especially well placed to drive successful, beneficiary-led programmes. Further to this, Tyndale elaborates how religious leaders already have a large degree of community buy-in and trust which places them at an advantage when attempting to implement projects in their areas.

This aspect has been reemphasised repeatedly in development literature and further confirmed when the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees issued a 2014 report that highlights these attributes. This report emphasises the important contribution and position that FBOs and those who lead them occupy; positions which make them one of the most influential global INGO sectors (United Nations Refugee Agency, 2014). The advantages that faith-based organisations and their leaders have in their position within the constituent communities visibly implies that they cannot be ignored as partners, implementers and catalysts for social development and change. Furthermore, this highlights the need for sufficient time and financial resources to be committed to the academic study of this field and its measures of success, especially in the area which makes it unique – its faith/religious element.

With new and more effective mechanisms for implementing development strategies being constantly sought after, it is critical to note that in the developing world the “growing churches are reflective of a deeper adoption of a Bible that speaks to everyday, real-world issues of poverty and debt, famine and urban crisis, racial and gender oppression, state brutality and oppression, and persecution,” (Jenkins, 2006, p. 5). Confirming that FBOs will continue to be fundamental players in the development field for years to come.

## **Position of FBOs Towards Evangelising**

In order to fully understand this faith/religious element of FBOs work, an investigation was conducted into both the academic literature and documented Catholic church views on evangelising through these means. The academic literature indicates, as is to be expected, that with countless FBOs, each with

their own mission, geographical focus area and religious foundation, there is no one sole idea of evangelisation shared by all of these social service agencies. The literature rather points to each FBO sitting somewhere along a spectrum of 'religiosity' (Goldsmith et al., 2006). This spectrum ranges from purely faith-focused organisations on the one end to almost exclusively secular-orientated on the other (pg.5).

The academic literature does not indicate in any way that this is problematic. Matthew Clarke for example demonstrates through a case study of churches involved in community development in Vanuatu that there is no clearly demarcated line "between what they are doing in terms of religious ministry and what they are doing in terms of development ministry" (Clarke, 2013). His study finds that whilst there is a higher goal of evangelisation, there is a dynamic blurring between the two ministries. Therefore, the churches in these communities' view "working to improve health and education important both in and of itself as it provides an opportunity to live the Gospel" (Clarke, 2013). Furthermore, this approach was found to reflect that of the "church's early missionaries who saw physical and social well-being as being complementary in value to spiritual development" (pg.9).

Importantly, the literature does indicate that, along this spectrum, those organisations which view the religious component of their work as core to their operations are the least likely to compromise on their principles. These are also less likely to partner with secular organisations whose values may be in conflicted with their own. On the other hand, it is found that some FBOs have little religious element to their programs and only loose links to the religion to which they are affiliated (Goldsmith et al., 2006). These organisations may in practice be almost identical to their secular counterparts.

### **Catholic Church's Views on Evangelising**

In an attempt to narrow the scope of this study, particular focus was paid to the literature and writings concerning the Catholic Church. Pope Benedict XVI wrote in both the *Deus Caritas est* and *Caritas in Veritate* encyclicals that the church is not merely an NGO and exists with a mission to evangelise (Benedict XVI, 2005). This implies that any activity that it does should be directed towards this aim. That being the case, the activities of Catholic organisations should not be limited to purely charity or philanthropy. Notwithstanding this, it is common that a Catholic social service institution is created not with the express intention to evangelise but as a direct result of a community's evangelisation - an

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expression of their faith through works of service (Catholic Bishops of the United States of America, 2008). These acts of service are however in themselves an indirect form of evangelisation. In accordance with this the US Catholic Bishops note that evangelisation is often effectively done “through simple living of the faith,” which calls on believers to make this manifest through their works of service (Catholic Bishops of the United States of America, 2008, para. 3). Finke & Bader in their 2017 book *Faithful Measures: New Methods in the Measurement of Religion*, use the term “social evangelism” to describe these FBOs which are more concerned with service than evangelisation (Finke & Bader, 2017, p. 269).

An important annotation to this with respect to FBOs which line up predominantly in the ‘secular’ zone of the religiosity spectrum, is that as the church’s mission is to evangelise, the work performed by Catholic FBOs should in no way impede or be contrary to evangelisation. Lest this be a form of mission drift which directly diminishes the wider church’s capacity to perform its mission.

### **Evangelisation Goals in the USA as Stated by the US Catholic Bishops**

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has developed three primary goals for the evangelising efforts of the church within the United States. These goals are based on the Biblical example of evangelisation methods used by Jesus, as well as the contemporary reality of the 21st Century United States. The stated goals are:

to develop such enthusiasm of the faith within Catholics that they will freely share it with others; to invite all people in the USA to hear the message of salvation of Jesus Christ so they may come to join in fullness of the Catholic faith; and to foster gospel values in our society, promoting the dignity of the human person, the importance of the family, and the common good of our society, so that our nation may continue to be transformed by the saving power of Jesus Christ. (Catholic Bishops of the United States of America, 2008, para. 2).

These goals establish a clear mission for Catholic churches and faith-based organisation in the USA. Likewise, in other countries similar goals for evangelisation have been outlined by bishops’ conferences in their geographical

regions. We can therefore deduce that as a direct extension of the church, Catholic social projects will in some way work to achieve one or more of these goals, either directly or not.

The USCCB make an important note that “Catholics cannot proselytize - that is, manipulate or pressure anyone to join our Church” (Catholic Bishops of the United States of America, 2008). They emphasise that all evangelising efforts should, much like Jesus’ be guided by a spirit of invitation.

Complementary to the USCCB’s goals, the US National Directory for Catechesis (NDC) draws from the Biblical scriptures of the life of Christ to likewise highlight the importance of Christ’s methods of formation (Belleville, n.d.). This directory identifies six dimensions of the Catholic faith as continued from the teaching and life of Christ (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005). These dimensions are therefore the critical practical elements which those evangelising the Catholic faith should seek to transfer unto others. The NDC notes that “all efforts in evangelization should incorporate these tasks” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005). These six tasks are: “promote knowledge of the faith, provide education on the liturgy, moral formation, teaching to pray, education for community life and promote missionary action” (Belleville, n.d.). An important note that the establishment of these six elements highlights, is the Catholic church’s view on evangelisation. This view is not, as is often misunderstood, about interfaith conversion, but rather about the spiritual development of both insiders and outsiders to the faith, using a multi-pronged, Biblical approach based on the life of Jesus. Furthermore, it reiterates that all efforts to evangelise should incorporate these various dimensions of the faith.

## **Evangelising Through Educational Institutions**

Catholic schools are possibly the most visible Catholic social projects in many parts of the world. The impact of the educational services provided by religious organisations throughout history has been astounding and continues to be so today (Deneulin & Rakodi, 2011). In a 2004 article Kim & Placier highlight the findings of certain researchers that “Catholic schools serve the common good by producing more than test scores. Catholic schools, these authors contend, are moral communities that emphasize equity and social justice rather than individual self-interest” (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993, p. 2). The Diocese of Phoenix has further documented a clear idea of the role which Catholic schools play in the church’s mission (Bishop Olmsted, 2017). In his writings the Bishop

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breaks down the evangelisation role of Catholic schools into five responsibilities; “to be places of encounter with the living Jesus Christ, which are Spirit-filled communities, that impart a Catholic worldview, which assist students in becoming free and sends them out as missionary disciples to transform culture” (Bishop Olmsted, 2017, para. 4).

These writings indicate in a very clear way that in every level of the Catholic church’s structure there is a clear guidance and mission towards evangelisation as a critical component of its work. This is evident in literature pertaining to both the global and diocesan level. It is therefore logical to infer that all Catholic social projects directly or indirectly affiliated to the church would seek to align to this mission of evangelisation, in the most appropriate way possible for the community and culture which they operate in.

### **Methods of Evangelisation**

Having analysed the available literature to understand the value and ends of evangelisation in Catholic schools, the focus is shifted to understanding the methods which have been developed to evangelise in these educational organisations. However, there is a lack of academic study on this component of the faith-based nonprofit sector. In spite of this, there were still several informative articles which provide insights into methods used by various churches in different geographical regions.

In his study in Vanuatu Island in the South Pacific, Matthew Clarke finds the use of the facilities of the sacred place of worship as a powerful tool for evangelisation (Clarke, 2013). He attributes this to the “ownership which the community feel towards this sacred space in their community” (pg.3). The study shows that even if little explicit evangelisation is done, the presence of the beneficiary in this space is already an invitation to participate and engage more fully in the practices of the church. This is a more indirect and acceptable form of introducing the beneficiary to the faith that does not involve manipulative proselytizing as warned against by the US Catholic Bishops (Catholic Bishops of the United States of America, 2008).

The most comprehensive study found on the evangelising methods used in social projects is a study on protestant churches in Philadelphia. In this 2004 study, four principle strategies were found to be used by the large number of churches surveyed (Unruh, 2004). These strategies aligned with other writings which indicate that each institution has a different intensity of evangelisation in

its programmes. The first strategy used by a number of FBOs was termed “implicit” – where the program was known to include a religious team but no direct evangelisation occurred. The second strategy is “invitational” – the beneficiary is invited to a religious event occurring outside of the social project. The third strategy is “relational” – where members of the church will directly share information about the church during or in the vicinity of the social service. The fourth and most direct strategy is “integrated optional.” This strategy involves disclaiming the expressly religious components of the programmes to beneficiaries and providing them with the option to opt-out of the participation of those components of the service. Although in some programmes full participation in all activities is required (Unruh, 2004). In that study, Unruh goes one step further to also include a list of the tools used by these organisations to introduce and share their faith to beneficiaries. This list can be summarised into these categories: “Religious self-descriptions, religious objects in program environment, invitation to religious services, prayer, use of sacred texts, worship, personal testimonies, religious teaching and invitation to personal religious commitment” (pg.7).

The above two studies whilst informative about the methods being used in these particular circumstances are still insufficient to generalise to a wider FBO audience. Furthermore, it points to a great need for further investment into the research of FBOs by the academic community.

### **Adaptation of Methods Based on Circumstances**

In a globalised world the interactions between individuals from every walk of life become common place and even the norm. This, along with the global phenomenon towards urbanisation means that communities are now more integrated and mixed than ever before. Faith-based organisations in many parts of the world do not only provide assistance to those within their own religious communities but serve beneficiaries of every race, religion, nation and gender. Academic research unanimously states that FBOs serve a wide range of beneficiaries. Ferris in particular, highlights that “the majority of Christian NGOs help everyone, regardless of religion” (Ferris, 2005). This help is predominantly focused on material services. In the USA 19% of students in Catholic schools are non-Catholic (National Catholic Education Association, 2020). This reality not only affects who the beneficiaries are, but also influences the type of evangelisation which organisations engages in. The faith development side necessarily changes when the beneficiaries of the services do

not belong to that religious group. In these cases, different strategies for evangelisation take place. Brunn (2015) also found that the growth in secularisation “has pushed some Christian NGOs to downplay their religious identity” (p. 3118). In these contexts, some Christian FBOs have felt compelled to change their strategies from explicit to implicit. In other cases, almost completely doing away with the religious elements of their programmes and being practically indistinguishable from comparable secular NGOs. This raises the question of whether these organisations should still identify themselves as FBOs with a religious affiliation.

Religious leaders, beyond the need to know whether these affiliated FBOs are working as an efficient method for providing social services to the needy, have a dual concern for the operation of these faith-based organisations. Firstly, that they are serving as an outlet for their religious congregation to express their faith through works. Secondly, that these affiliates are operating in a manner that evangelises faithfully and effectively, in accordance with the mission of the religion, using either explicit or implicit strategies. Herein lies the need to have effective, reliable and accurate measures of the spiritual components of the work of Catholic educational institutions and other FBOs.

## **Measures of Evangelisation**

With the increase of the demands on accountability within the nonprofit sector over recent decades, a strong push towards professionalisation has been witnessed across the board. With this, higher demands have been placed on all institutions to reliably demonstrate the effectiveness of their programs. Fischer (2004) notes how this has driven organisations towards predominant use of outcome measurement as a means to display programme effectiveness (p.31). In what is one of the most comprehensive reviews of the literature on FBO effectiveness Johnson, Tompkins, & Webb (2008) found that “measures of religious commitment, religiosity, or a quantifiable measure of the key independent variable that defines the nature of the FBO, are still a surprisingly undeveloped area of research” (p.21). This finding is repeated consistently throughout the academic literature and is surely the most poignant conclusion of the review of the literature of FBOs. Thus, Johnson et al. (2008) concludes the need for the academic community to take care in developing measures that adequately reflect the degree to which faith is included as a structural element of programs (p.21). Researchers have found that this phenomenon is not limited to the faith-based sector, but prevalent too in the social services sector where like

maturity in other human characteristics, difficulty is experienced in measuring the development of personal characteristics without a comprehensive psychosocial analysis, which lies far beyond the capacity of most FBOs (Johnson & Siegel, 2008). Furthermore Fischer (2004) agrees when he concludes that “both the environment and type of work done in human service environments makes rigorous evaluation approaches infeasible or even unacceptable” (p.7).

Notwithstanding the dearth of available research on the topic, researchers found that church attendance, however imperfect this measure may be, has most often been utilised as the measure of “religiosity” (Johnson & Siegel, 2008, p. 8). They go onto present what they believe to be the most reliable, whilst potentially still unsophisticated, measure of the effect of evangelisation (p.9). They identify a method of analysing the outcome of evangelisation which includes both a behavioural element - religious service attendance, as well as an attitudinal one – the perceived importance of one’s religion in one’s life. They do this in order to negate some of the weaknesses of using religious attendance as a sole proxy for effective evangelisation and in so doing bolster the capacity to truly understand the beneficiary’s self-perceived growth in religious fervour. This attitudinal indicator was tested using the question “How strong a role does religion play in your life?” Response categories were: very strong; strong; somewhat strong; weak, and none” (Johnson & Siegel, 2008, p. 9).

This simplistic dual indicator model is therefore the most comprehensive that has been found in the academic literature with respect to the evaluation of the outcomes of the evangelisation component of faith-based organisations. Similarly, there is an absence of academic literature on the evaluation of the outcomes of evangelisation in the Catholic educational setting. In the subsequent results section, the findings of the literature review will be used to assist in understanding and comparing the conclusions drawn from the questionnaires to a sample of practitioners in the field.

## **Results - Questionnaires**

Questionnaires were submitted to individuals who were identified as leaders in the field of Catholic educational projects, in three geographically dispersed regions of the world – Grand Rapids (Michigan), Belem (Brazil), Nairobi (Kenya) as well as Cape Town and Johannesburg (South Africa). These interviewees occupy the following positions: religious education teacher, religious education director, director of family, youth and young adult ministry at a diocesan level, head of formation in Africa for a religious order focused on

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education, head of development and planning for a province of a religious order focused on education, head of youth ministry for a province of a religious order focused on education, auxiliary bishop of a large Catholic archdiocese. These interviewees, although in no means a representative sample of the population of Catholic educational institutions, have a vast range of experiences and expertise on the subject matter, together with a diversity of roles in the Catholic education sphere in various regions. Their responses can be found in the Appendix to this article. Two questions were asked of each interviewee:

1. Do Catholic social projects that you are involved with measure/track the evangelisation component of their work?
2. If so, what measures do they use?

The purpose of these questions was to elicit responses which would allow us to answer the four research questions of this study:

1. What role does evangelisation play in the work of Catholic educational centres?
2. Do Catholic educational centres measure the evangelisation component of their work?
3. What tools are most commonly used to measure the inputs, outputs and outcomes?
4. Do differences exist between the methods for evangelisation and tools for measurement used across different geographies?

The answers were then analysed both individually and collectively (per geographic region) to allow for comparison both with the existing academic literature and between the regions.

### **USA**

There were three responses received from the USA. Of these responders two worked in different Catholic schools in Grand Rapids, one as a religious education director and the other as a religion and social sciences teacher. The third respondent works as the director of family, youth and young adult ministry for the Catholic Diocese of Grand Rapids. The responders from the Catholic schools both replied with similar answers to the questions - that Catholic schools

in the area, along with a growing number around the country, have their students take standardised tests which measure their faith development in 5th, 8th and 10th grade.

These evaluations, known as the NCEA ACRE tests, are designed and promoted by the National Catholic Education Association (NCEA) as a means to standardise the evaluation of the level of faith formation taking place at Catholic schools across the country. These tests are notable in that they are a clear sign of a move by Catholic educational centres in the USA towards measuring some outcomes of the evangelisation element of the work they perform. According to the responses of the religious education director, “the ACRE Test gives them some data to gauge the faith development (doctrine & morals) of their students.” This information is then used to “grasp how well the schools are handing on the faith to their students.” There are several important conclusions that can be taken from these answers. The first, is that although the academic literature contains large gaps in its description and understanding of the work of Catholic and other FBOs, this does not mean that evaluation of the elements of evangelisation is not taking place. The second, is the advantage of having a national association which allows for the creation of a standardised national test which can provide easily comparable results from year to year as well as amongst different institutions. These comparable results allow institutions and decision makers to quickly identify the effectiveness of a programme in their effort towards evangelisation. Most notable, as indicated by the religious education director, is the indication that these tests allow an institution to understand the development of “doctrine and morals.” This assertion links directly with the findings in the literature review that catholic evangelisation should develop “knowledge of the faith and moral formation” along with the four other dimensions. Upon further research of the NCEA ACRE tests it was found that they are also able to measure “attitudes, and practices among the youth” (Archdiocese of Newark, n.d.). This is significant as it aligns with the findings of (Johnson & Siegel, 2008) that measuring the attitudes and practices of beneficiaries is the most effective known way in the academic literature to measure the effectiveness of a program.

The response from the director of family, youth and young adult ministries of the Diocese of Grand Rapids provided a complementary, yet far different answer to the questions relative to the two school-based respondents. This answer focused more on the documents that have been created by the USCCBs, as well as those of the universal church, which underline the need for evangelisation, the goals of evangelisation and the method of evangelisation; the

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objectives, inputs and activities of evangelisation in Catholic educational centres. The respondent was however unaware of the actual tools or indicators used within the field to measure the progress towards this. A referral was made to a colleague who unfortunately was unable to be reached. This response highlighted several findings recognised in the academic literature – the identified third goal of evangelisation by the USCCB which “reflects that social action springs from having been evangelized and in turn engagement in social action is a witness to our faith.” Furthermore, the respondent quotes the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church, which states that the social work done by the church is in itself a form of evangelisation. They further referenced this when stating that the work of Catholic organisations form “part of the Christian message, since this points out the direct consequences of that message in the life of society and situates daily work and struggles for justice in the context of bearing witness to Christ the Savior” (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, para. 67). Therefore, whilst these two sets of answers were significantly different, they each shed light to the understanding of the evaluation of evangelisation in Catholic educational centres in the Grand Rapids area.

### **Brazil**

The Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Belem, Brazil was the only respondent from the survey who was from Brazil. This conversation was translated to and from Portuguese. The questions of whether measures exist was not answered. The respondent chose instead to outline the difficulty in doing so, the components which should be measured and that what one can measure is the fruits of this faith. The respondent noted that faith, not being a material substance, cannot be measured in and of itself. However, the way we can measure its development is through measuring the attitudes, behaviours, knowledge and virtues of individuals exposed to it. What is most striking about this Brazilian auxiliary bishop’s response is its similarity to the views as expressed by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops. His response intertwines scriptural passages with several of the dimensions of Catholic evangelisation as also described by the USCCBs. This is insightful in that it allows us to see that in practice, there appears to be an alignment between the views of Catholic bishops in different areas of the world with respect to the key elements for evangelisation of the Catholic faith. Whilst this response does not allow us to draw any conclusions as to whether measures of success of evangelising are being used in

the region, they provide useful insight nonetheless. Furthermore, these dimensions, which have been listed as the most appropriate to be measured, are the very ones which are sought to be measured by the NCEA ACRE evaluations. This allows us to conclude that it is possible that transference of these tools to other regions could be done with a strong likelihood of success.

### **Southern Africa – Kenya, South Africa and Others**

There were three responses from Southern Africa, each from a priest working in a different part of the region. Each of these priests serve in a missionary Catholic order which focuses on educational projects for at-risk youth. The order – the Salesians of Don Bosco, have a stated mission to educate and evangelise to youth, especially those who are poor and at risk (Salesians of Don Bosco, 2020, para. 2). These educational centres range from universities and high schools to vocational education and workplace readiness centres.

The three responses received point a light to the lack of a standardised measurement of the outcomes of the evangelisation component of projects in the region. One respondent stated the difficulties in reliably obtaining data on the faith formation of participants, as well as the difficulties in evangelising in non-Christian environments. Another respondent indicated that he was unaware of any level of measurement being conducted but did make a referral to an individual in a better position to answer. This third person was the final respondent from the region and he acknowledges that in some projects only informal measurements are used whilst in others some degree of formal evaluation is conducted.

What is overwhelmingly clear is that the measurement of the faith element of the projects in this region is certainly not standardised, unlike what was seen in the USA. To add to this, the first respondent indicated the difficulty and in fact “impossibility” of measuring this faith-based element in some projects. The particular projects that he refers to are projects where beneficiaries have a very limited time of as little as two weeks where they are involved with the program. The respondent proposes that in this situation, it may be inappropriate to attempt to measure the level of faith development. This respondent is the head of formation for a religious order in a region which includes many countries. From this position he highlights the difficulty experienced in evangelising as a Catholic FBO in countries which utilise Sharia law or where certain religious groups rebuff their work. Furthermore, the response sheds light that small doses of implicit evangelisation are still present even in these mission areas where

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Christian actions are controlled and looked down upon. This mirrors some of the findings of the literature review which indicate that in areas where the FBO's specific religion is dominated by another religious group then FBOs by necessity move toward the "secular" side of the religiosity spectrum.

On the other hand, this same respondent highlights how in environments conducive to the Catholic educational centre moving up the religiosity scale, evangelisation is being done with great fervour. The respondent provides the example of students of high schools in Tanzania and Kenya where students attend Mass, multiple prayers and other religious activities every day. In those settings, even the non-Catholics participate, and he indicates how there are conversions every year. He reiterates that this would not be possible in other environments.

What is therefore clear from the Southern African perspective is that the level of implicit evangelisation of the faith varies dramatically depending on the circumstances the institution finds itself in. Furthermore, some level of measurement is being done, even if just informally via sporadic observance of church records.

### **Conclusions**

The questionnaires assisted in shedding further light on the real-world application of evangelisation and evaluation of such in various regions of the world. These responses, although miniscule in their number relative to the size of the FBO and Catholic education population, showed evidence in line with and contradictory to that of the academic literature. Perhaps the most surprising discovery was that of a highly professional and nationally used NCEA ACRE assessment for evaluating the spiritual development of Catholic school children in the USA. This system, which is widely used by schools, parents and Diocesan administrators to understand the strengths and shortcomings in their children's faith formation, was completely absent from the academic literature. What was evident along every step of the literature review is the great gap in academic research being performed on FBOs, organisations which global role players such as the UN have identified as being critical to the global development agenda (United Nations Refugee Agency, 2014).

The findings of both the literature review and the questionnaires show that clear goals for evangelisation have been laid out for Catholic FBOs, both by the universal church bodies and through individual Bishops' Conferences. This is visibly evident in both the USA and Brazil, but little evidence was found of this

in the three answers from Southern Africa respondents. The study also found that evangelisation plays a critical role in the work of Catholic FBOs as direct extensions of the work of the church. This evangelisation as a practice can take different forms, from very explicit to implicit and it was found that this depends very much on the environmental context of the individual organisation. Evangelisation as an objective also varies from being the sole purpose for the existence of the organisation to being exclusively expressed through the practice of a social service. With some Catholic organisations concluding that the act of social service itself is seen as both a form and a measure of evangelisation itself. This is especially relevant in environments where Catholic organisations are not allowed to or have limited time to explicitly evangelise. This is particularly prevalent in regions where certain religious practices may be frowned upon or open to experience hostilities. In these cases, evaluation of outcomes is considered implausible by practitioners.

Importantly, the research found that there are clear dimensions of the faith which can be categorised and broken down for comprehensive Catholic formation. These six elements are directly derived from the life and teachings of Jesus. This is a critical finding as it sets clear what the faith element of Catholic formation should be. Indicators for growth within these categories can and have been found in practice to be good measures of faith formation and evangelisation in Catholic schools in the USA via the NCEA ACRE assessment. At this moment in time professional evaluation tools such as this are not believed to be widespread. The research did not find any other such tools in the academic literature nor in the Brazilian and Southern African regions where participants were interviewed. According to the primary and secondary research conducted it is apparent that in many scenarios there is an absence of measurement of this crucial and distinctive element of the work of Catholic educational centres globally. It was found that some institutions loosely measured their efforts, at times through indicators such as church attendance, or records of those receiving First Holy Communion or Confirmation, whilst others do not use any evaluative measures at all.

In conclusion, these findings make it evident that there are Catholic educational centres around the globe who view evangelisation as a part of their mission. These organisations have been given clear guidelines and measurable outcomes for formation from the Church. Furthermore, professional tools to measure the progress towards these outcomes now exist and are being used across the USA. Therefore, based on this research, it is highly recommended that Catholic educational centres who view evangelisation as a critical part of their

organisation's mission should seek to ensure that this is being objectively measured through some of the professional tools available today. It is further recommended that church leaders across the globe seek to invest in and promote the use of these tools in order to fruitfully spread the benefits that effective evaluations can bring to their evangelisation efforts.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

There are a large number of potential avenues for further study in this field. The most pressing with respect to this topic would be to perform a widescale investigation into the other available tools and measurement methods used by FBOs around the world. A particular emphasis could be placed on Catholic FBOs and even more so on educational institutions as they play a primary role in formation. The second potential research path would be on the aspects of culturally responsive evaluation that need to be taken into account and developed in order for effective evaluation practices to be sustained in faith-based organisations. A further potential research path would be on the most successful dissemination avenues for the knowledge of these methods and development of these tools and skills. Doing so would provide a platform from where universal sharing of such tools could take place to enable students, teachers, religious education directors, principals, parents and Bishops, to easily measure the progress of spiritual development achieved in centres across the world.

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# About the Author

Pedro was born and raised in Johannesburg, South Africa. After studying towards an Honours degree in Finance and Investments he began his career in Johannesburg's financial sector. After transitioning into the nonprofit sector, Pedro accumulated experience at over a dozen nonprofit organisations in various parts of the world. These included a youth center in the Brazilian Amazon, working as the project manager for the Salesian and Porsche Training and Recruitment Center in Cape Town, and as a house father in a home for street youth in Johannesburg. Pedro has a particular interest in faith-based nonprofit organisations, where the majority of his experiences have been. He has recently completed a Master's degree in Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership at Grand Valley State University and is currently working at Catholic Charities West Michigan.

