

Practical catechesis for a postmodern faith community: Ploeger's religious pedagogical methodology for practical catechesis

Gordon Dames

Abstract

This article focuses on the question *How should the postmodern person be formed in the Christian faith?* The life views of people are fragmented and a-religious mentalities characterise life in a postmodern society. This article proposes Ploeger's religious pedagogical methodology to inform catechesis in a postmodern context. Ploeger proposes an interdisciplinary approach in the light of pervasive secular challenges in the Netherlands. His "*drieslag plus één humaan-spirituele*" (three plus one human-spiritual) pedagogic forms the basis of this methodology and it bridges the gap between theology and the general sciences. Ploeger helps to integrate and interpret the Christian faith and life and empowers learners with a personal public witness and meaningful life in a postmodern context. With a discipleship and missional life orientation the youth may be helped to develop meaningful life-forming practices. Faith communicative, discipleship and missional actions can orient our youth for meaningful living within familial-communal settings.

1. Introduction

Deep changes in the world views of older persons, young people and children characterise their lives in a postmodern world. The authority in homes, churches, schools and society is being questioned. In North America "at risk" behaviour of the youth and disappearance of the tradition of "passing on the faith at home" are some of the pervasive issues of our time (Strommen & Hardel 2000:1-5). Religious pluralism has become a fact of life. We need to ask *Which religious educational approach should be applied to guide a "new generation of youth and children"?* The life views of older persons are constantly being challenged by a younger generation. Postmodernism makes society incomprehensible -- society is in constant transition and change (cf Burger 1995). The role and relevance of Christian education are being questioned.

2. Christian education for the postmodern person

In the light of the above picture this article seeks to answer the question *How can the postmodern person be formed in the Christian faith?* Religious pedagogy has undergone deep changes during the last decades, mostly due to the poor transference of faith in a secularised society. Religious education in the Netherlands, for example, forms part of the school curriculum -- but with unmotivated learners. A variety of educational practices for learners in different life phases forms the norm (Heitink 1993:257-258). The Centrum voor Godsdienstige Vorming represents, for example, 35 different educational institutions which support schools and churches with different religious formational programmes. These programmes aim to support and reinterpret the actions of the modern person in terms of a Christian world view, ethics and a multicultural context (Centrum voor Godsdienstige Vorming 1993:26). In South Africa, traditional Christian education in schools was replaced with pluralistic religious education. Young people who are not exposed to Christian church education have little chance of acquiring any faith formation in our public schools. The Christian faith does not necessarily form part of people's general world view today. Instead, in a postmodern society, the world views of people are fragmented and they demonstrate a growing a-religious mentality. Faith actions are increasingly being viewed as isolated occurrences. Reality is perceived as "*onsacraliseerd*" (non-sacred) (Jonker 1996:90). Religious pedagogy, however, is a science of faith formation *and* identity development which fosters healthy life views. Christian education ought to be a progressive and formational process "... that helps people face life" (Seymour 1996:2).

This article seeks to propose a practical methodology for religious formation in the light of changing and varied pedagogical, ethical and multicultural challenges. Ploeger (1995), who struggled with similar questions in the Netherlands, offers an important answer to religious education in terms of postmodern societal challenges. An interdisciplinary approach which deals with faith challenges in a secularised society is required. The contextualisation of Ploeger's religious pedagogy for South Africa can make a valuable contribution. The South African society is changing rapidly into that of a secularised state. Ploeger becomes a prerequisite for dialogue about faith formation,

especially in the light of a secularised, multicultural and multireligious society (Jonker 1996:90).

3. Ploeger's religious pedagogic

Ploeger's religious pedagogy within a specific historical and social context represents a broader framework than traditional theology (catechesis). He focuses on the study of life view formation as life sense or life orientation (Ploeger 1995:139). Religious education deals with different developments (within and beyond practical theology). Christian faith is not the primary point of departure, especially within a pluralistic context. It is on the other hand part of a broader life view or multireligious focus. However, post-Christianity can be regarded as a meaningful and transformational agent of world religions – "with an unique vocation: calling people to new meanings and new ways of living" (Seymour 1996:3).

The action field of religious education is not limited to formal religious education at schools. Its focus is faith formation in the family, church and youth work (Heitink 1993:257; Ploeger 1995:207). The "three plus one" human-spiritual pedagogy forms the basis of his approach and converges the tension between theology and general science. His religious pedagogy works with a life view about responsible socialisation, emancipatory and anthropological dimensions (Ploeger 1995:208-212). Human-spiritual pedagogy deals with values and norms. It is an emancipatory learning process. Learners participate personally in their formation as independent and responsible persons. It is a spiritual life-view approach and is not about an overemphasis on performance and achievement. This shift in emphasis is of crucial import for education, with the aim of values for life and creative intersubjectivity (focus on interpersonal relationships) as a key focus in a postmodern society (Ploeger 1995:58-59). Suffice it to say that the dominance of productivity in a secularised society is costly for basic human relationships and values.

3.1. Framework of Ploeger's "three plus one" human-spiritual pedagogy

Ploeger's (1995:150) religious pedagogy focuses on the development of people in terms of the "three plus one" human spiritual pedagogy. Human-spiritual pedagogy works with the human subject as its core praxis. His methodology deals with reciprocal learning within a spiritual-diaconal life view (Ploeger 1995:59). The objective is the emancipation of the citizen, the poor and rich, women, young and old, in their pedagogical relationship with each other (Ploeger 1995:258). Spiritual pedagogy focuses on values such as solidarity, independence, responsibility and reciprocal learning (Ploeger 1995:59,216-220). This methodology deals basically with the difference between ideal and reality. The "three plus one" human-spiritual framework constitutes Ploeger's religious pedagogical methodology. This approach focuses on a *learning process of meaning making*. Ploeger (1995:111) views *meaning or sense making* within a sense-making framework of life orientation, which consists of particular life views, objectives and independent unconscious influences. This sense/meaning-making learning process develops by acquiring cognitive knowledge, embracing a social life and through personal formation and experience. The fourth component, "plus one", focuses on action learning and critical reflection on that action (Lanser-van der Velde 1995:4) within a circular process of life, learning and formation (Kolb 1984). Young people should be guided towards a better understanding of their own life in society, culture, particular social context and experiential world. Their unique biographies, faith experience and conceptual world are crucial curricula for religious education (Ploeger 1995:62).

Ploeger (1995:17-19) distinguishes between two components in his "three plus one" methodology: reflection to choose (or not to choose) for a certain faith belief or action, and faith formation as essentially a lifelong intergenerational process. We learn continually from reciprocal learning processes due to constant cultural changes (Ploeger 1995:18). The contemporary catechetical crisis in terms of the transference of religious traditions to new generations relates to the absence of practical reciprocal faith learning practices and processes (cf. <<>> Lanser-van der Velde 2000). The relation between spirituality and life view can only be realised by an individual *and* communal conscious (cf. <<>> Freire 1973) life view. To focus on the rational only is wrong

(Ploeger 1995:116). Life orientation/faith develops out of the life view of a person – always based on the “three plus one” approach. *Knowledge* (thoughts) refers to a particular aspect of someone’s culture which represents a specific cognitive basis: the Bible, the Christian tradition, traditions of faith experiences and ritual actions. It deals mainly with the culture within the specific living context of a person. *Behaviour* (will/consciousness) refers to the sum total of social relationships in the community within which people grow up. *Feelings* (hope) focuses on personalities, inclusive individual existential experiences and needs. The biography of a person consists of all these three and of the process of human life (Ploeger 1995:117). The “three plus one” deals with learning about certain traditions in terms of a life view and a religious framework within the contemporary world. People learn differently, at times only cognitively and at others more socially (with a cognitive feature, more or less in the background); and then again, they will learn more subjectively (with a cognitive feature in the background). This rhythm and combination vary from person to person and from situation to situation. The whole process can be evaluated by critical hermeneutical and communicative action (Ploeger 1995:333-339; Groome 1980). The theoretical background (tradition and culture), social networks (relationships, society and faith community) and subjective experience relate to reciprocal holistic meaning-making development. Faith seeking knowledge consists of cognitive, moral, affective and social-religious development. This orientation-learning process is not only rational, but also a living process which includes the social and the emotional. Sources of knowledge are drawn from the specific tradition, language, habits, ritual actions and culture. Sources of experience about personal and communal experiences, general and occasional events, and aesthetic and ecological experiences form part of these sources of knowledge (Ploeger 1995:245-247; Groome 1980; Dewey 1951). Ploeger’s methodology focuses thus on sensory, relational, contextual, hermeneutical reflection, on anthropology, and on spiritual and transformational dimensions.

4. An interdisciplinary religious pedagogical methodology for catechesis

Ploeger offers a broader discussion on the interdisciplinary application of religious pedagogical categories, especially for catechesis. South African theorists are also building a similar bridge (cf. <<etc>> De Graaf 1969:16). Pedagogy is essential for catechesis due to its universal-pedagogy character. Deep changes in the church and society during the last decades, and a need for a better understanding of teaching/learning, have resulted in the implication that church teaching practices ought to be more than catechesis (Heyns 1994:160).

Catechesis deals with an understanding and knowledge about faith content as a lived and applied praxis. Catechesis aims to form the personal faith of baptised members, as well as the edifying of the church and guidance in its doctrine. Symbols and rituals are valuable catechesis material and processes in the formation of faith and life (Hanekom 1994:111; De Vaux 1980:50). Catechesis is about faith formation from the perspective of the revelation of God. A “language” that can translate this hidden reality is required in order to experience this revelation. Symbols and ritual actions are communicative elements which imply more (the sensory, conative and emotive) than just the cognitive. An interdisciplinary approach for catechesis is therefore required (Ackermann 1993:26). It is communicative action in service of the Gospel (Prins 1992:139; Firet 1987:260) by focusing on faithful believers and unbelievers and by developing catechesis to focus on multicultural contexts. The interdisciplinary function of theology should engage with religious pedagogy to establish a comprehensive catechetical methodology – to break the silo approach in catechesis (Beukes 1995:4; Prins 1990).

Insightful Biblical concepts can help to inform catechesis. The concept of “*didaskhein*”, for instance, is a comprehensive description of knowledge transference and skills development (Kittel 1983:143-144). It can make a bigger practical contribution to catechesis. Catechesis is embedded in all of the “didactical” actions of the faith community and should impact church members on every level. Catechesis within the total church ministry framework should aim to form people in an alternative way of living. People should be taught to unlearn old patterns and to re-learn or learn new ways of

living in terms of God's transformative and healing power (Guder 1998:152). Dialogue and hermeneutics can improve effective and practical communicative faith action in catechesis. Dialogical communication focuses on a subject-subject relationship that dissolves the traditional subject-object tension in education. It balances relational life and cognitive learning. Catechesis that only works with objective knowledge becomes redundant. "Active participation" is descriptive of the participation by both the sender and the receiver in communicative action. The learner is involved in the learning content from the start through his or her active participation. Learners consequently become more receptive to the learning content and react personally in both a spiritual and missional-diaconical way. This learning process is an agogic experience (Firet 1968:13ff; 1987:337). An agogic moment refers to a moving force of change around hermeneutics and the context (Firet 1968:131). Catechesis becomes a missional communicative action in service of the Gospel. The relevance of the Gospel lies in the meaning and practical implication the Word of God has for the concrete daily lives of young people. We, therefore, deal with faith formation and life formation which focus on the spiritual, missional and public life – instead of on individual cultural formation!

5. Practical implications for a new faith formation methodology

It is clear from the above argument that relevant catechesis for the postmodern person should materialise in practical and concrete practices on grassroots level. Relevant transformational meaning-making frameworks in a confusing world, and a life of meaning in the face of pluralistic world views, can only succeed if catechesis applies a sound critical approach. The challenge is to help young people to be theological (in their faith and lives) in daily relationships and communication (Seymour 1996:2). True catechetical learning happens within a hermeneutical catechetical model (Van Niekerk 1994:56). Young people need guidance with their interpretation and integration of the Christian faith in their life world, and to be empowered to life-meaningful personal-witnessing lives in a postmodern context (Seymour 1996:10).

The aim of catechesis is therefore to make lifelong disciples for Jesus Christ. It is about *God's* service – instead of fostering theological rational beings. Dingemans

(1986:233) captures the aim and nature of catechesis by illustrating that the ultimate objective is to put young people in touch with God. This encounter happens through the Bible, Christian tradition, faith community and the public witness of the church. The young person should embrace his or her own faith declaration, experience and participation of the faith through individual, familial and communal critical reflection. “Christian education is a conversation for living, a seeking to use the resources of the faith and cultural tradition to move into an open future of justice and hope” (Seymour 1996:10). It should also include people in the faith community who want to serve God by serving both the church and society in an integrated and critical way.

Dingemans’s (1986:139) definition correlates with Furet’s (1968; 1987) communicative action theory and Ploeger’s (1995) “three plus one” human-spiritual methodology. The concept of Dingemans’s “learning” refers to a “relationship with” or “*mathètès*” or “community with”. Faith-seeking learning is a lifelong relational process in “following Christ”, *akoloutheo*. Believers are per definition learners or disciples of Christ (Dingemans 1968:138-139). *Didaskein* and *didaskalia* refers to teaching about the way to wisdom, an introduction to the Life with God, and practical knowledge of walking with the Lord in the ordinary everyday life. The Hebrew concept of “*lamad*” on the other hand refers to practical exercise; that which has to be done must first be taught! This happens in the praxis of following Christ. The relationship with the Lord is central in this perspective of “learning” in the New Testament. Learning is to engage in a relationship (cf <<>> Combrink 1977:137). Learning is to follow, live and grow with Christ in faith and in His service. Furet (1987:82ff) connects the New Testament concept of “learning” with the mission command of Matthew 28:18-20 and defines learning as “disciple-living”, a life of following. A sending missional life focus is more than an individualistic focus – it has a public transformative implication. The concept of “learning” refers to “following”, “discipleship” or “being sent” and describes the most essential function of catechesis. To be a learner or disciple is to define the learning process of the entire faith community (Dingemans 1981:3). The discipleship theory is a key perspective in practical theology (Mathew 29:19-20; Richards 1975:30; Metz & Schillebeeckx 1989:26; Dingemans 1986:15-16; Nel 1994:84-85; Burger 1991:75-76;

Happel & Walter 1986:12-13; De Lange 1993:29; Ploeger 1995:326,328). Discipleship is a vocation of solidarity with poverty and the poor (Warren 1992:255-256). “Following” or “discipleship” function primary in the communicative faith action of the Gospel – a missional focus offers a practical and public transformative action for healing, reconciliation and justice (cf Botha & Naude 1998 on *The Confession of Belhar*). Dykstra (1999:160) refers to “educational mission”:

... to teach people that Christ sends them into all the foreign places of this world and of our lives, where justice is not done, where mercy’s name is not known, where despair sickness unto death, where love is a stranger, and where the hunger for bread and for righteousness is not being fed. To send people and guide people as they struggle to find ways to be living reminders of the presence of God where they go.

Discipleship is a purposeful vocation to commit to poverty and the plight of suffering people (Warren 1992:255-256). The *how* question can be answered with discipleship “apprenticeship” (Westerhoff 1992:271). Apprenticeship is the practical exercise (*lamad*) of the Christian praxis enacted through concrete observation and self-employment or action (Westerhoff 1992:271). The outcomes for catechesis consist of good citizenship values and discipleship with “dual responsibilities” for church and society (Boys 1989:xi-xiii; Botman 1993). The meaningful adaptation of young people in their social and cultural environment is the primary task of pedagogy. There is a catechesis vacuum at this point that should not be ignored (Combrink 1977:147-148). Pedagogy is in general the elucidation of the full human potential in the total life experience of the learner (Combrink 1977:144-145).

Each person requires certainty, security and a framework for meaningful life during each developmental life stage (Ter Horst 1997). Young people are influenced during the adolescence phase by a limited meaning framework. They develop a greater sense of abstract concepts than practical knowledge. The self is firstly oriented by the peer group and other role models, and only then by the individual’s parents -- which in itself leads to greater confusion (Ploeger 1995:166). Catechesis must, therefore, work with practical focus areas and concrete application in terms of the “three plus one” human-spiritual and intergenerative-communicative methodology. Ploeger’s

methodology offers a framework for security, safety and a sound meaning framework to the adolescent in a confusing society. As a result relationship building, meaning making and critical reflection on their applied knowledge, attitudes, behaviour and actions are enhanced.

6. Traditional catechesis

The traditional church continues to apply a traditional catechesis methodology today. There are, however, also examples of positive developments during the last decades. The classic definition of catechesis is

Catechesis is an ancient Christian word, but in later years it came to be used almost exclusively by Roman Catholics. In recent times, however, it is being used more frequently by Protestant educators as well. The word *catechesis* comes from the Greek verb *katéchein*, which means “to resound”, “to echo”, or “to hand down”. Thus the etymology of the word implies an oral instruction. It is used in the New Testament as an oral instruction in which a very simple explanation (one stop beyond the kerygma) was given to the people, as milk rather than solid food is given to small children (cf Heb. 5:12-14; I Cor 3:1-3). The message was to be taught and spoken accurately (Acts 18:25) (Groome 1980:26-27).

Groome (1980:26-27) opposes attempts which define catechesis as a comprehensive process and call for its original objective. Mainly reformed churches apply only the catechetical practice as instrument for faith and life formation. I depart from Groome on this point because a broader expansion of catechesis in terms of the “*lamad*” – and “*didaskalia*” – traditions is necessary. De Lange (1993:18-20) offers an interesting view about the traditional concept of “catechesis” and the potential of new insights. The intention was not to introduce a silo concept for teaching in the Christian church. The aim of catechesis is the preparation of persons for practical life changes. According to the Lexicon of Suidas the prefix “kata” should not be interpreted literally, in the sense of “from above”, but spiritually transferable as “deep from within”. The concept of “*katèchéo*” refers instead to a determined call to a welcoming speech. The foundational meaning of the concept of “catechesis” is “in-the-ear-and-in-the-

heart-echoing-sound". The concept of "catechesis", in this sense, refers to an intersubjective communicative action (cf <<>> Crawford & Rossiter 1986:34). The combination of "katèchéo" and the missional communicative faith action in service of the Gospel can promote practical reciprocal catechesis. It can help children and young people in a secularised society to apply Christian traditional values in a meaningful and practical way in their lives.

7. The value of Ploeger in a postmodern society

What can Ploeger's "three plus óne" pedagogy offer to contemporary catechesis? He holds that catechesis is comprehensive. The concept of "learning", παιδαγωγό□, refers to the provision of assistance and guidance to a child (Furet 1968:133). Ploeger also holds that it is an introductory and guiding process in terms of religious traditions and public responsibility. This interpretation of education refers to more than what was traditionally understood and practised. Mainline churches are in a crisis concerning traditional catechesis. These churches fail to face contemporary challenges. A catechesis paradigm shift is necessary that tackles the issues of catechesis and the postmodern challenges of our time. Reformed churches need to reevaluate and reconstruct new practices for catechesis (Groome 1980:183). Informed planning is required (Ploeger 1995:331) to establish the balance between the various church ministry practices (Ploeger 1995:328-340). The ideal is an integrated, intergenerational and multicultural congregational pedagogy. Religious pedagogy in a postmodern era can help the youth in decision making through a hermeneutical three-dimensional approach -- to reflect on their faith and life actions reciprocally (Ploeger 1995:331-314). Especially so, in light of the fact that faith is no longer a natural phenomena in the Netherlands -- suffice it to say the same is becoming a reality in South Africa. It is therefore essential for faith communities, apart from cognitive learning about God, to search for reciprocal processes of faith experiences. Meaningful intergenerational life learning in North America, for instance, "connects silent generations" (the 65 year olds), "the most churched in history to the millennial kids" (who do not know God's grace, love and the relation with their lives) (Strommen & Hardel 2000:1-5). We can learn from this

perspective -- and focus future research on this. Cognitive learning should never be fragmented from the intrinsic experience and choices of people (Ploeger 1995:311-314). Ploeger (1995:315) views education and learning from a hermeneutical approach within the faith community (albeit Dewey 1951 within broader relations), in which participative guidance functions (Jonker 1992). Reciprocal dialogue can establish healing and liberating communicative actions through the process of self-reflection (Ackermann 1996:26). Religious education should be intergenerational and communicative (Ploeger 1995:317). Catechesis is essentially an intercultural activity, especially in the light of missional and diaconal religious education (Strommen & Hardel 2000; Dykstra 1999:159-161). Educational values and norms can be learnt from other cultural groups and transferred to meaningful living with people in a postmodern society (Ploeger 1995:331).

8. A methodological shift in terms of a postmodern society

On an international level the study of Ploeger indicates a certain methodological shift in the reflection on catechesis. The human-spiritual pedagogy serves as an instrument to link the human subject with social and religious pedagogy. A synthesis between different pedagogical approaches is possible through a critical pedagogy. This shift refers in both general and religious pedagogy to a shift from a pure cognitive to an active reflective and relational/experiential approach. Christian religious education presupposes that religious pedagogy should remain true to the Christian message and a Biblical understanding of how we learn about God.

We have already referred to the static traditional catechetical approach of the mainline churches. Dingemans (1986:13) holds that traditionally catechesis focused mainly on young people. Religious pedagogical or practical theological dimensions did or do not feature in this practice in the light of a changing and pluralistic society. Continuous transformational processes in society, the church and faith should be assessed (Ploeger 1995:320,235-236). Traditional catechesis should be replaced with a contextual catechesis process of a life-and-person orientation, as a comprehensive, continuous and relevant praxis (Dingemans 1986:13). Catechesis should foster “an engaging”

interdisciplinary and systems approach (Dingemans 1986:17-24). Both the systems theory and action theory were integrated by Ploeger and practical theologians (Heyns & Pieterse 1991:53; Ackermann 1996:21-36). Catechesis can therefore form an interactive communication system with other actions (care, liturgy, service and preaching) (Heitink 1993:17) within communicative action in service of the Gospel (Prins 1993:85; Heitink 1993:17). The communicative action theory offers a dynamic catechetical and dialogical praxis (Heyns & Pieterse 1991:54-56). A hermeneutic-communicative learning concept is proposed (Ploeger 1995:322). "Facing the world" (Seymour 1996:2-3) requires reciprocal dialogue between faith and reality and a clear interpretation of the theological and teleological implications. It is about communicative actions and life-view communicative actions from the "three-dimensional" perspective: "*Als wij met elkaar spreken, lopen theoretische, normatief/sociale en subjectieve uitspraken (kennen, willen, voelen/hopen) door elkaar heen*" (Ploeger 1995:305). Young people are in need of help with the hermeneutical and communicative skills and knowledge that can support them to face contemporary challenges with discernment and a public witness.

The theory of "*mathétés*", the doctrine of discipleship, needs to be integrated with catechesis in terms of the methodological shift. The theory of *being a learner* in a discipleship approach (the learning process of Christians) is a key element in practical theology (Dingemans 1981:3; Dingemans 1986:15-16; Burger 1991:75-76; Richards 1975:30). Missional discipleship can also guide catechesis in our contemporary society on a practical and concrete basis to provide a balanced framework of meaning for young people. The Christological vocation of the church asks for new meaning and new ways of living to form a visionary and formative pedagogical framework for meaningful living.

9. A catechetical methodology for a postmodern context

A catechetical methodology is required for concrete and practical catechesis in the faith community (in terms of the life experiences of young people within catechesis in psychological, socioeconomic, cultural and political and ministry systems). It should be

process oriented and systematic with a hermeneutical focus. A catechetical praxis as an orienting process and hermeneutic action relate to the impacting, understanding and interpretation of the *theological* in functional and existential ways. Ploeger's applicability for a catechetical methodology is based on his pedagogical shift, his pedagogy, his human-spiritual theory and critical reflection on post-action. Ploeger's religious education and Dingemans's (1986) discipleship theory offer important perspectives for a catechetical methodology. Ploeger (1995:18) does not work from practical theological theories in the light of secularism, but applies general pedagogical theories. It is important, according to Ploeger (1995:207), because general pedagogy is an accountable and tested science which deals with all facets of human life. The educational work in the church can draw on this view. He therefore motivates the general pedagogical principles and methodology as essential for responsible religious pedagogy. Consequently he seeks to apply religious pedagogy to faith education/formation in the family and the church community (Ploeger 1995:56). His "three plus one" methodology secures a holistic personal and contextual approach. Communicative action in service of the Gospel provides a framework in which catechesis can apply the contributions of, especially, pedagogy, sociology and developmental psychology (cf Prins 1992:141). There is growing consensus that catechesis forms part of the total religious pedagogical work of the church. Schippers refers to the total faith community as a "learning-community, parish pedagogy, formation for maturity, emancipatory process" (Heitink 1993:272). De Lange (1993:16) regards the faith community as a house of pedagogy and argues that catechesis deals with the total learning activity in the church. Catechesis can only be distinguished from religious pedagogy by the focus on learning within the faith community (Heitink 1993:273; cf Hendricks 1995:142ff). The life of the church is based on Christian education (Astley & Crowder 1996:xvi).

Discipleship as a strategy for catechetical formational work offers an important point of departure. The Christian faith is applied to communicative and liturgical actions and social involvement (human-diaconal/spiritual approach). This learning action applies to a holistic, hermeneutical and missional approach in terms of reciprocal communicative action in service of the Gospel.

The import of the “three plus one” diaconal-spiritual and discipleship approaches are instrumental for practical catechesis -- as a holistic, communicative and systemic action. Discipleship forms part of a dynamic dialogue and interdisciplinary approach which is comprehensive, life-realistic and permanent. Discipleship functions in and outside of the church as a liturgical-ecclesiological and missional-ecclesiological praxis. The internal orientation focuses on the total life within the faith community. Liturgical actions function as a celebratory, learning, formative and orienting practice (Koopman & Vosloo 2002) dimension serves as the grounding of faith content for catechesis. The external orientation focuses on social involvement or diaconal involvement in the existential plight of people in society. Catechesis ought to become a holistic-comprehensive, living reality -- based on a communicative and missional diaconal-spiritual discipleship approach.

Catechesis needs therefore to focus on lived reality, formation of disciples and citizens and the application of hermeneutical communicative faith action -- focusing holistically on children/young people or older persons in their life milieu. It happens in relation to the faith community in terms of liturgical action and a comprehensive and systematic curriculum which is missionally diaconal and spiritually oriented towards new meaning and new life possibilities. Meaningful life and intergenerational and multicultural actions and systems are now more relevant than before for relevant catechetical practices.

10. Conclusion

This article sought to contribute to traditional catechesis in terms of new religious pedagogical insights. Ploeger regards religious pedagogy as holistic and contextual religious education within a particular historical and social context. The appropriation of a specific catechesis context is of essential import for relevant catechesis. Religious pedagogy needs to focus on the family, faith community and society more than it has been traditionally. The human-spiritual methodology dissolves the tension between theology and the general sciences. The “three plus one” approach offers new and meaningful catechetical possibilities. Catechesis focuses intentionally and continuously,

for example, on features such as (1) culture, religious traditions and rituals, life views, the Bible and existential and spiritual faith experiences, (2) The total social relational networks in which people live, (3) personal formation, existential life experiences and needs, and (4) critical reflection on human action and life systems. Young people should be developed in and through their religious traditions with a balanced life view to act meaningfully within their milieu. The ability to reflect critically on their life and faith actions is an added value for a meaningful life. The “three plus one” methodology within a human-spiritual (diaconal) framework constitutes Ploeger’s methodology for religious pedagogy. The human-spiritual diaconal pedagogy is social pedagogy that does not focus on pedagogical programmes only, but also on pedagogical relationships between the rich and poor, old and young, children and women. It provides a creative intersubjectivity between people which helps them to become “complete humans” and to learn from each other in terms of a diaconal-spiritual life view. Intercultural relations and interpretations can also be materialised. Learning and life become one process that is descriptive of discipleship. Discipleship and the “three plus one” human-spiritual methodology functions as a bridge between the contemporary praxis and catechesis. of Ploeger’s (1995) “three plus one” methodology within the framework of human-spiritual or diaconal/missional pedagogy offers important didactical dimensions, especially in terms of intergenerative, multicultural and communicative perspectives (Ploeger 1995). The contemporary practice of catechesis should become meaningful, concrete and transformational. It is only then that people can be formed within their life milieus as schools of living to live with their fellow citizens in multicultural contexts, and in being socially involved in the plight of the other. It is possible, within a new meaningful and lived framework, in a formational social context and communicative faith action that is in service of the Gospel!

Bibliography

Ackermann, D. 1996. *Critical Theory, Communicative Actions and Liberating Praxis*. **Journal of Theology for Southern Africa**. Vol 82, 21-36.

Astley, J & Crowder, C. 1996. *Theological Perspectives on Christian Formation: an overview* in Astley, J; Francis, L.J. & Crowder, C. 1996, x-xix. **Theological Perspectives on Christian Formation: A Reader on Theology and Christian Education.** Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Beukes, M.J. duP. 1995. **Kategetiek: Teorieë met die oog op Vernuwning.** Departement Praktiese Teologie. (*Catechetics: theories for renew. Department Practical Theology. Scientific notes*). Wetenskaplike Notas. Pretoria: Universiteit of Pretoria.

Botha, J & Naudé, P, 1998. **Op pad met Belhar: Goeie Nuus vir Gister, Vandag en Môre (*On route with Belhar: Good news for yesterday, today and tomorrow*).** Pretoria: JL van Schaik.

Botman, H.R., 1993. **Discipleship as Transformation? Towards a Theology of Transformation.** Universiteit van Wes-Kaapland: D.Th, Ongepubliseerd.

Boys, M.C. (red) 1989. **Education for Citizenship and Discipleship.** New York: Pilgrim.

Burger, C.W. 1991. **Die Dinamika van 'n Christelike Geloofsgemeenskap: Nuut Gedink oor Gemeentes (*The dynamic of a Christian faith community: new reflections on congregations*).** Kaapstad: Lux Verbi.

Burger, C.W. 1995. **Gemeentes in transito: Vernuwingsgeleenthede in 'n Oorgangstyd (*Congregations in transit: opportunities for renew in a time of change*).** Kaapstad: Lux Verbi.

Centrum voor Godsdienstige Vorming. 1993. **Samen Scholing: Een overzicht van instellingen die werkzaam zijn op het gebied van de godsdienstige vorming ten dienste van school en kerk.** Fijn van Draat: Harderwijk.

Combrink, A.J. 1977. **Kategese – en sy Verhouding tot die Christelike Opvoedkunde (*Catechesis - and its relation to Christian education*).** Universiteit Stellenbosch: M.Th, Ongepubliseer.

Crawford, M. & Rossiter, G. 1986. **Teaching Religion in Catholic Schools and Practice.** Australia: Christian Brothers.

De Graaf, A. 1968. **The Educational Ministry of the Church.** Toronto: Craig .

De Lange, J.J. 1993. **Vrijwilligers in de Jongerencatechese: Een Praktisch-Theologisch Onderzoek naar Aspecten van hun Begeleiding.** Kampen: Kok.

Dykstra, C., 1999. **Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices.** Kentucky: Geneva.

De Vaux, R. 1980. **Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions.** (Translated by John McHugh). London: Darton, Longman & Todd.

Dewey, J. 1951. **Experience and Education.** New York: MacMillan.

Dingemans, G.D.J., 1981. **Leren bij het Leven: Discipelschap en Moderne Leertheorieën.** 's-Gravenhage: Boeckencentrum.

Dingemans, G.D.J., 1986. **In de Leerschool van het Geloof: Mathetiek en Vakdidaktiek voor Catechese en Kerkelijk Vormingswerk.** Kampen: Kok.

Firet, J. 1968. **Het Agogisch Moment in het Pastoraal Optreden.** Kampen: Kok.

Firet, J. 1987. **Spreeken als een Leerling: Praktische-Theologische Opstellen.** Kampen: Kok.

Freire, P., 1973. **Pedagogie van de Onderdrukten.** Anthos: Baarn.

Groome, T.H., 1980. **Christian Religious Education: Sharing our Story and Vision.** New York: HarperSanFrancisco.

Guder, D.L. (red.) 1998. **Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America.** Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Hanekom, A.R. 1994. *Ritueel en Simbool as Kommunikasiemedia* in van Rensburg, G & Happel, S. en Walter, J.J. 1986. **Conversion and Discipleship: A Christian Foundation for Ethics and Doctrine.** Philadelphia: Fortress.

Heitink, G. 1993. **Praktische Theologie: Geschiedenis – Theorie-Handelingsvelden.** Kampen: Kok.

Hendricks, J. 1995. **Terug naar de Kern: Vernieuwing van de Gemeente en de Rol van de Kerkeraad.** Kampen: Kok.

Heyns, L.M., 1994. *Geloofsonderrig en die Toekoms (Faith-teaching and the future).* **Practical Theology in South Africa.** Vol. 9, 155-164. Pretoria: Universiteit Pretoria.

Heyns, L.M. & Pieterse, H.J.C. 1991. **Eerste Treë in die Praktiese Teologie (First steps in Practical Theology).** Pretoria: Gnosis.

Jonker, E.R. 1992. **Aan het Woord Komen: Hoe Gemeenteleden van 17 jaar en ouder in Gesprek Raken met de Bijbel. Bouwstenen en Gebruiksmateriaal.** Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum.

Jonker, E. 1996. *Godsdienspedagogiek, Catechetiek en Godsdienstdidactiek (Religious pedagogy, catechesis and religious didactics).* **Praktische Theologie. Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Pastorale Wetenschappen.** Vol 1, 90-102.

Kittel, G. 1983. **Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.** Vol. 2. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids.

Kolb, D.A., 1984. **Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development.** Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.

Koopman, N. & Vosloo, R., 2002. **Die Ligtheid van die Lig: Morele Oriëntasie in 'n Postmoderne Tyd.** Kaapstad: Lux Verbi.

Lanser-van der Velde, 1995. **“Wederkerig Geloofsleren” (Reciprocal learning to believe.** Amsterdam: VU. (Ondersoekvoorstel).

Lanser-van der Velde, 2000. **Geloven leren: Een theoretisch en empirisch onderzoek naar wederkerig geloofsleren (*Learning to believe: a theoretical and empirical study on reciprocal faith-learning*)**. Kok: Kampen.

Metz, H.B. en Schillebeeckx, E (red.) 1989. **Concillium: World Catechism or Inculturation?** Edinburgh: Clark.

Nel, M. 1994. **Gemeentebou (*Congregational development*)**. Johannesburg: Orion.

Prins, J.M.G. 1992. *Kommunikatiewe Handelinge in Diens van die Evangelie – Implikasies vir die Kategese (Communicative actions in service of the Gospel)*. **Practical theology in South Africa**. Vol 7 (2), 137-146.

Prins, J.M.G., 1990. *Geïsoleerde Onderrig – die Dilemma van die Kategese (Teaching in isolation - the dilemma of catechesis)*. *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal*. vol. 31 (1), 72-81.

Prins, J.M.G., 1993. *Vertrekpunte en Riglyne vir Vernuwning van die Kategese (Perspectives and guidelines for renew of catechesis)*. *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal*. vol. 34 (1), 81-91.

Ploeger, A. K., 1995. **Inleiding in de Godsdienstpedagogiek (*Introduction to religious pedagogy*)**. Kampen: Kok.

Richards, L. O., 1975. **A Theology of Christian Education**. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Seymour, J.L. (red.) 1996. **Mapping Christian Education. Approaches to Congregational Learning**. New York: Abingdon.

Strommen, M.P. & Hardel, R.A., 2000. **Passing on the Faith: A Radical New Model for Youth and Family Ministry**. Minnesota

Ter Horst, W., 1997. **Mogelijkheden voor een Christelijke Opvoeding in een Post-Christelijke Sameleving (*Posibilities for Christian education in a post-Christiandom society*)**. Den Haag: Koninklijke Bibliotheek.

Van Niekerk, D.L. 1994. *'n Hermeneutiese Kategesemodel (A hermeneutical catechesis model)* in van Rensburg, G & Hendriks, J (red.) 1994, *Vernuwing in Jeugbediening. Gemeentes aan die Woord (Renew in youth ministry. Congregations in conversation)*. Pretoria: Engedi; 111-119.

Westerhoff, J.H. 1992. *Fashioning Christians in Our Day* in Hauerwas, S & Westerhoff, J.H. 1992, 262-271. **Schooling Christians: "Holy Experiments" in American Education**. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Warren, M. 1992. *Imitating Jesus in a Time of Imitation* in Hauerwas, S & Westerhoff, J.H. 1992, 237-261. **Schooling Christians: "Holy Experiments" in American Education**. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.