

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

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## **1. Introduction**

Deep changes in the worldviews 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 the 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: What 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 1995b). 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 chapter seeks to answer the question: *How can the postmodern person be formed in the Christian faith?* Religious pedagogy has undergone deep changes over 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 worldview, ethics and a

multicultural context (Centrum voor Godsdiensstige Vorming 1993:26). In South Africa, traditional Christian education in schools has been 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 worldview today. Instead, in a postmodern society, the worldviews 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 chapter 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. South African society is changing rapidly into that of a secularised state. Ploeger thus becomes a prerequisite for dialogue on faith formation, especially in the light of a secularised, multicultural and multi-religious 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 multi-religious 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 of 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. Ploeger's 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). The "three plus one" human-spiritual framework constitutes Ploeger's religious pedagogical methodology and deals basically with the difference between the ideal and reality. 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 and 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, a particular social context and experiential world. Their unique biographies, faith experiences 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 in terms of which one may choose (or not choose) a certain faith belief or action, and faith formation as, essentially, a lifelong intergenerational process. We learn continually from reciprocal learning processes as a result of 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 relationship between spirituality and life view can only be realised by an individually *and* communally conscious (cf. Freire 1973) life view. To focus on the rational only is wrong (Ploeger 1995:116). Life orientation/faith develops out of a person’s life view – 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 a person’s specific context. *Behaviour* (will/consciousness) refers to the sum total of social relationships in the community in which people grow up. *Feelings* (hope) focuses on personalities, and inclusive individual existential experiences and needs. A person’s biography consists of all of 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 varies 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 that 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 and 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. In addition, South African theorists are building a similar bridge (cf <<etc>> De Graaf 1969:16). Pedagogy is essential for catechesis owing to its universal-pedagogy character. The profound changes that have taken place in the church and society during the last decades, and a need for a better understanding of teaching/learning, have resulted in the realisation 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 to edify the church and guide it in its doctrine. Symbols and rituals are valuable catechetical 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" is thus required that can translate this hidden reality in order to experience this revelation. Accordingly, 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). Catechesis is thus a communicative action in service of the Gospel (Prins 1992:139; Firet 1987:260) that focuses on faithful believers and unbelievers and develops catechesis in order to focus on multicultural contexts. The interdisciplinary function of theology should engage with religious pedagogy to establish a comprehensive catechetical methodology that will do away with 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), which can make a bigger practical contribution to catechesis. Catechesis is embedded in all of the “didactical” actions of the faith community and should have an impact on 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 accordingly 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, for example, focuses on a subject–subject relationship that dissolves the traditional subject–object tension in education, consequently balancing 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. From the start the learner is involved in the learning content through his or her active participation. Learners consequently become more receptive to the learning content and react personally in both a spiritual and missional-diaconal 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 thus 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 a grassroots level. Relevant transformational meaning-making frameworks in a confusing world, and a life of meaning in the face of pluralistic worldviews, 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 live meaningful lives, witnessing personally 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 theologically 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, the Christian tradition, the faith community and the public witness of the church. The young person should embrace his or her own faith declaration of, experience of and participation in 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 Firet'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 by definition learners or disciples of Christ (Dingemans 1986:138–139). *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 a practical exercise; that which has to be done must first be taught! This

happens in the praxis of following Christ. In the New Testament the relationship with the Lord is central in this perspective of “learning”. 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. Firet (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). Discipleship theory is a key perspective in practical theology (Matthew 29:19–20; Richards 1975:30; Metz & Schillebeeckx 1989:26; Dingemans 1986:15-16; Nel 1994:84-85; Burger 1991a:75-76; De Lange 1993:29; Ploeger 1995:326,328). Discipleship is a vocation that involves solidarity with poverty and the poor (Warren 1992:255–256). “Following” or “discipleship” function primarily 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” as

... 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 is 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 in which one commits 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 Christian praxis enacted through concrete observation and self-employment or action (Westerhoff 1992:271). The outcomes of catechesis consist of the values of good citizenship and discipleship with “dual responsibilities” for church and society (Boys 1989:xi–xiii; Botman 1993). The primary task of pedagogy is the

meaningful adaptation of young people in their social and cultural environment. At this point there is a catechesis vacuum that should not be ignored (Combrink 1977:147–148). Pedagogy is in general the elucidation of the full human potential in the learner's total life experience (Combrink 1977:144–145).

During each developmental life stage everyone needs certainty, security and a framework for a meaningful life (Ter Horst 1997). During the adolescence phase young people are influenced by a limited meaning framework. During this time 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 areas of practical focus and concrete application in terms of the "three plus one" human-spiritual and intergenerative-communicative methodology. Ploeger's methodology offers the adolescent a framework for security, safety and sound meaning 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 step 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 to define catechesis as a comprehensive process and calls for its original objective. Reformed churches in particular apply only the catechetical practice as an 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 on 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. Rather, 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 is 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 the 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 one” pedagogy offer to contemporary catechesis? Ploeger holds that catechesis is comprehensive. The concept of “learning”, παιδαγωγός, refers to the provision of assistance and guidance to a child (Furet 1968:133). Ploeger also holds that catechesis 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. Consequently, mainline churches are in a crisis concerning traditional catechesis as these churches have failed to face contemporary challenges. A catechesis paradigm shift is thus necessary that tackles the issues of catechesis and the postmodern challenges of our time. Reformed churches need to re-evaluate and reconstruct new practices for catechesis (Groome 1980:183).

Informed planning is therefore 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. Accordingly, through a hermeneutical three-dimensional approach, religious pedagogy in a postmodern era can help the youth to make decisions and reflect on their faith and life actions reciprocally (Ploeger 1995:331–314). This is especially the case in light of the fact that faith is no longer a natural phenomenon in the Netherlands -- suffice it to say that the same is becoming a reality in South Africa. It is therefore essential that faith communities, in addition to cognitive learning about God, search for reciprocal processes of faith experiences. Meaningful intergenerational learning about life in North America, for instance, “connects silent generations” (the 65 year olds), “the most church-ed in history to the millennial kids” (who do not know God’s grace and love and their relationship with their lives) (Strommen & Hardel 2000:1–5). We can learn from this perspective and, subsequently, focus future research on this. Cognitive learning should never be separated from the intrinsic experience and people’s choices (Ploeger 1995:311–314). Ploeger (1995:315) views education and learning from a hermeneutical approach within the faith community (notwithstanding 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). Thus, 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 so that people can live together meaningfully 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 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 purely cognitive to an actively 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. However, religious pedagogical or practical theological dimensions did or do not feature in this practice in the light of a changing and pluralistic society. Ongoing transformational processes in society, the church and faith should be assessed (Ploeger 1995:320, 235–236) and traditional catechesis should be replaced with a contextual catechetical 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 systems theory and action theory have been integrated by Ploeger and other 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). Communicative action theory offers a dynamic catechetical and dialogical praxis (Heyns & Pieterse 1991:54-56). A hermeneutic-communicative learning concept is thus 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 a “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 in facing contemporary challenges with discernment and a public witness.

In terms of this methodological shift, the theory of “*mathétés*”, the doctrine of discipleship, needs to be integrated with catechesis. 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 1991a:75–76; Richards 1975:30). On a practical and concrete basis, missional discipleship can also guide catechesis in our contemporary society 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**

In the faith community (in terms of the life experiences of young people within catechesis in psychological, socioeconomic, cultural and political and ministry systems) a catechetical methodology is required for concrete and practical catechesis. Such a methodology should be process oriented and systematic with a hermeneutical focus. A catechetical praxis as an orienting process and hermeneutic action relates to the influence, understanding and interpretation of the *theological* in functional and existential ways. Ploeger's view on the applicability of 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 thus 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. According to Ploeger (1995:207), this is important because general pedagogy is an accountable and tested science which deals with all facets of human life. Accordingly, the educational work in the church can draw on this view. He therefore suggests that the general pedagogical principles and methodology are 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, in particular, 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 “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, true to life 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 and serve as the foundation of faith content for catechesis. The external orientation, on the other hand, focuses on social or diaconal involvement in the existential plight of people in society. Catechesis ought thus to become a holistic-comprehensive, living reality based on a communicative and missional diaconal-spiritual discipleship approach.

Catechesis therefore needs to focus on lived reality, the 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. This happens in relation to the faith community in the form of liturgical action and a comprehensive and systematic curriculum which is missionally diaconal and spiritually oriented to new meaning and new possibilities in life. A meaningful life and intergenerational and multicultural actions and systems are now more relevant than before for catechetical practices.

## 10. Conclusion

This chapter 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 catechetical context is of essential import for relevant catechesis. Religious pedagogy now needs to focus more on the family, the faith community and society than has traditionally been the case. The human-spiritual methodology dissolves the tension between theology and the general sciences. The “three plus one” approach thus offers new and meaningful catechetical possibilities. Catechesis focuses intentionally and continuously on, for example, 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 so as to act meaningfully within their milieu. The ability to reflect critically on their life and faith actions is thus 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. 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. In addition, intercultural relations and interpretations can also be materialised. Learning and life thus become one process that is descriptive of discipleship. Hence, discipleship and the “three plus one” human-spiritual methodology function 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. This offers important didactical dimensions, especially in terms of intergenerative, multicultural and communicative perspectives (Ploeger 1995). Subsequently, the contemporary practice of catechesis should become meaningful,

concrete and transformational. It is only then that people can be formed within their milieu as schools of living in order to live with their fellow citizens in multicultural contexts, and in being socially involved in the plight of the other. This will then be possible, within a new meaningful and lived framework, in a formational social context and communicative faith action that is in the service of the Gospel!

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