

TRAINING OF PRIMARY TEACHERS IN THE INTEGRATION OF FAITH IN THE ROMANIAN LANGUAGE CLASS

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Abstract

This qualitative action research study, employing a case study approach, explores the integration of faith into teaching practices within Romanian Adventist schools, aiming to enhance both intellectual and creative student development through a biblical lens. Utilizing Interpretivist and Socio-Constructivist paradigms, the research combines multiple qualitative methods—observations, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and experiential journals—to examine how faith integration impacts students' critical thinking and the learning environment. The findings underscore the significance of deliberate planning and teacher roles as facilitators and role models in embedding faith throughout all phases of education (pre-training, during training, and post-training). The study highlights the important role of teacher commitment to ongoing improvement and provides insights into effective strategies for integrating faith into teaching practices, ultimately contributing to a more holistic and enriching educational experience.

Keywords

Integral education, levels of integration, teaching strategies, role of the teacher, Romanian language learning

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, different educational models have been established to respond to various human ideologies. The educational process includes curriculum and didactics, which reflect the values and principles of the society in which it occurs. The curriculum determines what the student will learn, and didactics determines how the student will learn (Ionescu, 2013; Păun & Ionescu, 2018; Toma, 2015). The curriculum in the teaching of Romanian language and literature is determined by a series of factors, such as the values and principles of society, the political, religious, and cultural impact of selected literary works, and the national literary tradition (Păun & Ionescu, 2018; Toma, 2015).

In Romania, institutional forms of higher education emerged in the second half of the 19th century, inspired by the French system (Radu & Ghidău, 2013). The rise of the Soviet system in the late 1940s led to a drastic reorganization of education, with an emphasis on political and ideological education (Coman et al., 2020). After the revolution of 1989, with the fall of communism, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Romania began to develop a network of educational institutions.

The Adventist educational system in Romania is still developing but faces a significant obstacle: most teachers have not been educated in Adventist institutions, leading to a limited biblical understanding of education. The worldview of teachers and students depends on their own understanding of the Bible (Sandsmark, 1998). If teachers do not have a deep understanding of the Bible, they are unlikely to be able to convey a biblical vision of education to students (Sharp & Clark-Soles, 2012; Wachlin, 1998). As a result, there is a risk that the Adventist educational system will be influenced by other views of education that may conflict with Adventist values. Hence, the key question is: how can a clear biblical vision of

education be ensured in the Adventist educational system in Romania?

Since the searches carried out found no research done on the topic of faith integration in Romanian language teaching for the primary level, the aim of this study is to describe the existing knowledge on faith integration in Romanian language classes and to create a preliminary plan for teacher training. It will contribute to the understanding of faith integration and to the improvement of Romanian education from this perspective. The objective of the study is achieved using qualitative research that integrates case study methodologies with a practical action research component. The study is based on existing theoretical and practical research and focuses on the development of biblical foundation following Adventor M. Trye's theoretical proposal (Trye, et al., 2019), integrated curriculum, pedagogical practices, and classroom learning environment as essential elements for pedagogical development in an Adventist school, the contributions of John Wesley Taylor and Sonia Krumm (Krumm, 2018; Taylor, 2001) to faith integration, Korniejczuk's levels of faith integration implementation model (Korniejczuk, 1994), and contributions to didactics by McCarthy and McCarthy (2006) and Eugene Brewer (Brewer, 2015).

This study is organized into the following sections: an introductory section presenting the context of the problem, research questions, objectives, and the study's significance; a section reviewing specialized literature with the theoretical framework of the study; and a section describing the methodology used.

The study comprises two main parts. The first part is theoretical, where data were collected from the authors mentioned in the introduction and others. In the second part, the practical aspect, a series of interdisciplinary micro-lessons were presented with my teaching colleagues from other disciplines involved in this research. After each micro-lesson, observations

and analysis were conducted to enhance the quality of faith integration. These micro-lessons were conducted both online and in-person during a meeting in Cernica (Romania). The practical part continued in the classroom with second-grade students at the Adventist school where I work. These classes were recorded on video and observed by the teachers guiding the research. Several classes were recorded, from which 20 successful lessons were selected to ensure adequate integration of faith into language and communication lessons (Joyce & Showers, 2002).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The objective of integrating faith into the curriculum of Adventist schools, according to Rasi (1993), is to ensure that students “at the end of their studies have freely internalized beliefs and values and a biblical vision centered on Christ, oriented towards service, the Kingdom, knowledge, life, and destiny” (p. 1). To achieve this goal, Rasi (1993) proposes that a systematic and intentional effort is needed from all stakeholders in the educational system.

According to White (2013), “True learning and development originate in the knowledge of God” (p. 14). The Bible reveals truth directly and without adornment, meeting the requirements and aspirations of the human heart, inspiring charm and fascination in the most cultivated minds, while similarly captivating the simplest minds and those without formal education. Additionally, the Bible illuminates the course of existence (Sinambela et al., 2022). The teacher is key to the harmonious development of the student (O’Flaherty & McCormack, 2019; Spaseski, 2018). “A true teacher does not settle for substandard work. They do not settle for guiding their students towards a lesser ideal than the maximum achievable for them. Their goal must be to instill in them the principles of truth, submission, honor, integrity, and purity, principles that

will make them a positive influence for building and strengthening society. Above all, they want them to learn the great lesson of life, that of service through self-sacrifice” (White, 2013, p. 29).

Moullin et al. (2020) acknowledge the advantages of a framework as a means to describe and guide the translation of interventions and studies into practice, analyze implementation influences, and evaluate implementation efforts. Such a framework presents the stages of deliberate integration of faith into disciplines developed by Korniejczuk (1994). These have been applied in various research studies examining the process of faith integration and learning (Ramirez et al., 2020). The levels of unintentional integration are: level 0, when the teacher does nothing about it because they are not convinced it can be done in the subject they teach; level 1, when the teacher understands the importance of integration and seeks solutions to achieve it; level 2, when the teacher knows how to integrate in certain subjects and deliberately plans to do so at a specific time. The levels of deliberate integration are: level 3, when the teacher integrates superficially, irregularly, and unplanned; level 4, when the teacher integrates faith steadily but does not change strategies, without involving active student participation; level 5, when the teacher varies implementation strategies, involving students; and level 6, when the teacher cooperates with students and colleagues to promote a coherent Christian worldview (Korniejczuk, 1994).

Another important source is the contribution of Trye et al. (2019) with a configuration map of faith integration as innovation. The study identifies 10 components of the configuration map of faith integration in learning practices. For this study, five aspects that are most closely related to a teacher’s direct activity in the classroom will be considered: biblical foundation, determining if practices are firmly grounded in the Bible; integrated curriculum, allowing for the identification of deliberate integration evidence; pedagogical practices, ranging

from modeling to interactive learning methods; learning environment, establishing a conducive life context for biblical integration; and critical thinking, reminding teachers to engage students in professional and spiritual connections in the teaching and learning process. The result of implementing these practices by teachers would lead to greater modeling of integration in current and future students.

A third contribution considered for this study is the analysis of different active learning strategies with faith integration, developed by Taylor (2001), which emphasizes the importance of creative and critical thinking inherent in Scriptures. Taylor provides educational examples drawn from the Bible and evaluative examples of how to maintain a lifestyle consistent with Scriptures. According to Kim (2020), faith integration involves a progression of advanced cognitive skills that enhance students' analytical reasoning ability. When educational experiences are designed to facilitate analytical reasoning, students improve their understanding, retention of content, and ability to apply conceptual knowledge.

With mastery, White (2013) asserts that true education seeks to “make of youth thinkers and not mere reflectors of other men’s thought” (p. 16). The strategies used will dictate the learning skills necessary for future success, preparing students to view the world through a biblical lens. According to Pilpe (2020), teachers can use constructivist theory in their teaching practice when based on a biblical worldview. This theory, active and inductive by nature, promotes skills such as collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking.

A fourth significant contribution to this research will be based on how the learning cycle developed by Taylor and Brewer (2014) and the 4MAT model developed by McCarthy and McCarthy (2006) unfold. This proposes a synthesis of how the learning cycle develops, considering how teachers organize teaching moments. The teacher knows that the brain’s

two hemispheres constantly interact and that each hemisphere has its specific function. Therefore, teachers attempt to provide opportunities to stimulate the aesthetic creative dimension (processed by the right hemisphere) and the rational dimension (belonging to the left hemisphere) in each of the four situations necessary for meaningful learning to occur. In addition to being developed in a content structure that may require multiple encounters, these instances are also implemented in each teaching and learning session. These stages propose the following basic ideas: experimentation, conceptualization, application, and creation (Brewer, 2015). By restructuring personal attitudes and values, teachers can create a facilitating attitude that fosters a special psychological climate of acceptance and supports the development of students' creativity and rationality (Parrales et al., 2020).

Regarding the integration of biblical values into the learning environment, Krumm (2018) proposes that the classroom, the emotional climate generated by the teacher, and many other circumstances surrounding learning scenarios provide numerous opportunities for the student to naturally feel comfortable and drawn to practicing virtuous values and habits daily. To enhance school effectiveness, a more interactive and contextualized approach to teaching and learning is essential. The educational framework should encourage exploration, critical thinking, and the acquisition of practical skills to enable students to apply their knowledge in real-life scenarios (Krumm, 2018).

The choice of qualitative research is justified by its ability to capture phenomenological complexity from multiple perspectives (Whitley & Crawford, 2005; Zarestky, 2022). This approach involves the researcher at every stage of the process, facilitating a deep and contextualized understanding (Lavis et al., 2023). The interpretivist paradigm, as proposed by Goffman (1959), emphasizes the importance of understanding social experiences from the actor's perspective. In this sense,

qualitative research offers an appropriate framework for exploring faith integration in Romanian language teaching, as suggested by the work of Piñero et al. (2020). Additionally, action research, promoted by Lewin (1946), emerges as a pragmatic approach to addressing complex social problems. This approach, according to Erro-Garcés and Alfaro-Tanco (2020), fosters collaboration between researchers and participants, which is crucial in constantly changing educational contexts.

In summary, qualitative research, along with interpretative and action-oriented approaches, provides a robust framework for exploring faith integration in Romanian language education, thus opening up new perspectives for understanding and improving educational practices (Alvarado & García, 2008). The GLATER model, proposed by González and Hernández, along with Merriam and Tisdell's approach, provides a solid framework for systematizing and analyzing qualitative evidence (González & Hernández, 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Piñero et al., 2020). Additionally, Sagor (2000) and Joyce and Showers (2002) offer valuable insights into the effective implementation of action research in educational settings. Participatory research, advocated by Creswell (2007, 2008), Mertler (2017), and Merriam (2009), emerges as a powerful tool for generating relevant outcomes and promoting collaboration between researchers and co-researchers.

A study of religion and morality is necessary to lay a solid foundation for the future of young generations (Șîrbu, 2013). The need for faith integration in Adventist schools in Romania has been and continues to be the subject of study in several master's theses at this university, demonstrating Romanian students' interest in this topic. One such contribution is that of Mark Szallós-Farkas. The results concluded that there is a greater need for materials for teachers to understand the biblical worldview and how it relates to education (Szallós-Farkas, 2018). Regarding the biblical foundation for teaching and learning Romanian language, a biblical study was conducted

on the assumptions of the Romanian language topic in knowledge. They compared their findings with those written and published by other authors (Habenicht, 2008; Korniejczuk, 1994; Krumm, 2018; Rivera, 2009).

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research has been chosen for its ability to gather and examine data from different perspectives, allowing for a broader understanding of the phenomenon (Whitley & Crawford, 2005; Zarestky, 2022). Additionally, qualitative research has been chosen because the researcher is personally involved and committed at every stage of the research process (Lavis et al., 2023).

Research questions

1. What are the experiences of integrating faith into the teaching of Language and Literature employed by teachers at the basic levels in five Adventist schools in Romania?
2. What were the practices employed by Language and Literature teachers before participating in the faith integration training for their classes?
3. What are the perspectives of teachers after receiving training on integrating faith into the teaching of language and literature classes at the basic levels in five Adventist schools in Romania?
4. How does my receiving the training and understanding the experiences of my co-researchers contribute to the improvement of my faith integration practice as a geography teacher?
5. How does receiving the training course and understanding the experiences of my fellow researchers contribute to improving my integrated faith practice as a language and literature teacher?

6. How is the implementation of faith evident in teaching and learning language and literature throughout the entire process?
7. How does a training plan for implementing integrated faith teaching of the Language and Literature discipline at the basic level in five Adventist schools in Romania contribute to improving reality?

Research design

The epistemic experientialist approach grounds its findings in the everyday experience of research participants considered alongside current facts (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In this specific case, the everyday professional experiences of the co-researchers will be considered to understand and interpret the integration of faith into Romanian language teaching programs.

Combining two methodological models, the interpretivist paradigm in the case study design and the socio-constructivist paradigm for action research design, has been used to fully capture the complexity of the topic. The interpretivist paradigm focuses on the social actor to understand their perspective on real facts based on experience (Goffman, 1959). For this particular case, the structure articulating the phenomenon in relation to the implementation of faith in Romanian language teaching practice at Dr. Luca Secondary School in Brăila, Romania at the primary level has been identified and understood.

Framing the study under two paradigms generated knowledge based on the interests and needs of Romanian language and communication teachers at the primary level. The aim was to establish community-level actions and to build a future vision contributing to the improvement of quality within the field of action (Alvarado & García, 2008). Events were interpreted, and the perspective of the facts was

uncovered. The data were reformulated in light of integrating faith into educational practice.

The case study is an alternative approach for situations with particular characteristics (Merriam, 2009), aiming to understand the dynamics of a distinctive group and highlight social transformation alternatives. It allows for description, interpretation, and evaluative reflection on a research strategy assumed as a “case” (Stake & Visse, 2022). The research followed a procedural proposal with ontological, epistemological, and methodological agreement (Merriam, 2009; Piñero et al., 2020). The research included exploratory, narrative, and interpretive stages. The methodological design of action research integrated theory and practice to address important situations and generate knowledge (Piñero et al., 2020).

The action research component is present not only for methodological approach but also for its significant contribution to expanding activities and integration into the studied reality. This design aims to strengthen relationships among co-researchers (Erro-Garcés & Alfaro-Tanco, 2020). Practical action research (Creswell, 2012), addressed in this research, classified under the umbrella of action research, has gained recognition as an alternative strategy for addressing social needs. Given the complex circumstances we currently face, characterized by rapid changes in our contexts, especially in educational environments, this approach becomes particularly relevant. The approach involves identifying a situation as the object of study, with the intention of producing positive changes in the addressed reality. This requires the generation of ground-based methods that substantially contribute to transformative outcomes.

The action research component is based on Sagor’s postulates (2000) with specific steps. In the initial phase, the research approach was determined, and the purpose and research questions were defined. The next phase involved articulating theories through literature analysis and observations.

The third stage included data collection through an action plan and testimonies. Finally, it involved reflection, presentation of findings, and taking measures to improve the plan.

Regarding the execution of the action plan, training is essential for change and transformation (Carabajo, 2008; Piñero et al., 2020; Van Manen, 1990), following the Joyce and Showers model (2002). The theoretical model of this training focused on the deliberate implementation of faith integration (Korniejczuk, 1994) and active learning strategies (Taylor, 2001). Emotional climate and learning environments were important to support virtuous practices (Krumm, 2018). The configurational map of faith integration (Trye et al., 2019) and the 4MAT model (Taylor & Brewer, 2014) were also considered.

Seven sections were planned in the initial action plan. From July to November 2020, 11 online sessions were planned to introduce the topic of faith integration, explore the theoretical framework, and review relevant literature. During this period, the research topic was focused on, and the Skepsis presentation was conducted. At the end of this period, Dr. Marcos Enrique Flores González qualitative research specialist joined the team, with whose help the research design was established in the following virtual sessions, from April to July 2021. Thirteen online sessions dedicated to defining research methodology were planned in the third section, starting in August 2021 and culminating with the Anaptixy presentation in November.

Starting from January 2022, the initial plan included the collection of concentrated testimonies from co-researchers, after which, until May 2022, seventeen virtual training sessions were scheduled for planning, modeling, and implementing micro-classes with faith integration components. These micro-classes, as well as the classes that followed in subsequent phases, followed the guide designed by Dr. Raquel Bouvet de Korniejczuk (Appendix). Each training concluded with co-researchers' reflections sharing.

The next stage was planned to be carried out physically at Adventus University, Cernica, in July 2022. Ten micro-class sessions (two for each co-researcher) were scheduled. This stage includes the review of micro-class plans by Dr. Raquel Bouvet de Korniejczuk, self-reflections, and observations on co-researchers' participation.

In the final period, from August to November 2022, classes worked with students from co-researchers' schools were scheduled. It included the review of lesson plans by Dr. Raquel Bouvet de Korniejczuk, observations, and self-reflections. Each co-researcher was supposed to conduct over thirty observations and twenty self-reflections. In this stage, one co-researcher requested four additional micro-classes, which were observed physically and virtually.

Finally, examining each methodological procedure offered benefits in terms of improving critical analysis skills (Kemmis et al., 2014). This reality required a focus on dialectical, dialogical, and reflexive truth at every moment of the research process (Piñero et al., 2020).

Data collection

For this study, various techniques were used, including focused testimonies, also known as focused interviews, which revealed personal insights regarding previous experiences with the studied phenomenon (Piñero et al., 2020). This technique was used in the pre-training stage and focuses on in-depth exploration of the topic, eliciting rich and nuanced details. In the next stage, the training stage, experience diaries were used. These journals allow participants to record their experiences as they unfold, providing researchers with an authentic and detailed perspective (Martínez, 2007). Observation was also employed, considering teaching quality, feedback, learning styles, student participation, and levels of thinking. Anecdotal recording with a matrix was used to document details, relevant

aspects, and emotional atmosphere (Marzano et al., 2011). Furthermore, a documentary analysis of curricular documents for the integration of faith into Romanian language teaching was conducted. Lesson plans, planning documents, and pedagogical journals were examined to distinguish experiences before and after the action plan (Flick, 2010; Martínez, 2007; Marzano et al., 2011; Piñero et al., 2020).

Processing, analysis, and interpretation techniques

For the analysis of evidence, we used the GLATER model to systematize and analyze qualitative evidence (data), employing content analysis (González & Hernández, 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Piñero et al., 2020). This model allowed for the organization and interpretation of data based on codes, descriptions, categories, and interpretations. Codes were assigned, and data were organized according to themes with greater conceptual weight. Meanings were assigned to human actions based on comprehensive interpretation. The chosen model takes into account evidence and legitimation techniques, demonstrating its versatility in the field. Interpretation for conclusions was carried out considering the findings, theoretical foundations, and interpretations of the researchers. In this regard, I applied the triangulation technique (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) to reveal convergence and legitimize the phenomenon (Gonzalez & Hernández, 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Piñero et al., 2020).

Participants and sampling procedure

The participants in this research were referred to as co-researchers. They consisted of six teachers from the Romanian language department of schools belonging to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Qualified educators in primary education in schools located in central and southeastern Romania, with at least five years of experience. It is important to mention

that, in accordance with the objective corresponding to a practical research, the aim was to enhance and improve one's own teaching practice (Creswell, 2012). As the principal researcher, involvement in training was integral, and following established methodologies, 20 class sessions were conducted with 15 students from the second year of Dr. Luca Secondary School, with whom collaboration is ongoing. It is necessary to highlight that although the described students were not direct participants in the study, permission was obtained from their parents, representatives, and guardians to apply what was learned during the training in class sessions. Additionally, it should be emphasized that besides Romanian language and literature teachers, teachers from other disciplines also participated in the training, significantly contributing to the execution of the proposed study.

Ethical considerations

The identity of the participants in the study was protected at all times. The research does not compromise the integrity of the subject. The Ethics Committee of the University of Montemorelos reviewed the proposal. Consent was obtained from the Department of Education of the Romanian Union, and permission was requested for the study in schools and with selected teachers. Authorization was also requested and obtained from the directors of the participating schools. Informed consent was obtained from the involved teachers. Data collection poses no risk to the co-researchers. Professionals retain the freedom and autonomy to withdraw from the study at any time.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

There were three moments of the research: Pre-Training, During Training, and Post-Training. In the “pre-training interpretation moment” section, the first two questions posed at

the beginning of the research were answered: What are the experiences of integrating faith into the teaching of Language and Literature employed by teachers at the basic levels in five Adventist schools in Romania? and What were the practices employed by Language and Literature teachers before participating in the faith integration training for their classes? The technique applied for this moment was focused testimony applied to co-researchers, Romanian language and literature teachers.

From the understanding for this moment, five categories were highlighted that describe the dynamics of faith integration in Romanian language classes. Namely: Empirical Mode for Integrating Faith; Bible-Based Learning Activities with Moral Applications; Bible-grounded Actions without Responding to a Specific Plan; Teamwork Reflections and Favorable Learning Environment.

These categories, originating from our own observations as well as those of my research colleagues, have allowed me to interpret the reality of faith integration in Romanian language classes before training, as follows: Romanian language and literature teachers at the basic level in Adventist schools in Romania, who participated in the study, prior to training, focus their practice of faith integration in their classes on Bible-based activities with moral applications grounded in an understanding of the concept of faith integration. These activities, although based on biblical principles, are not intentionally planned. They are dominated by the use of biblical stories and selected texts with clear moral teachings. Co-researcher Simon states: “In addition to the texts from the textbooks we study, I try to bring to their attention (the students) biblical stories.” (Cif: CLRSC-5-SS-MF) Teachers attempt to lead reflection through teamwork (collaboration) to extract lessons where faith is transferred into everyday situations. Dinu mentions that the pedagogical practices used are: “conversation, storytelling, memorization, experimentation, teamwork, or pair

work” (Cif: CLRDB-6-D-MF). The teacher encourages the development of critical and reflective thinking so that the student can experience spirituality.

Furthermore, there is a prevailing belief that one of the ways to develop a conducive learning environment to encourage active student participation is to use questions as a learning strategy (Krumm, 2018) during morning devotions, which emphasize faith integration, all in an empirical manner. Simon states: “Every morning I spend quality time with my students where we have devotional, share prayer requests, pray for each other, and sing,” as a pedagogical practice to promote faith integration. Thus, sometimes during the teaching of specific subject matter, connections between the subject studied and faith arise spontaneously; in these cases, teachers do not know whether it is appropriate to capitalize on these connections or, even more so, to plan them. This lack of knowledge justifies teacher training so that they can implement significant changes in faith integration, based on biblical and pedagogical knowledge, beyond the empirical momentary approach.

Finally, unintentionally integrating faith, with limited focus on biblical foundations, without specifying pedagogical practices in a defined model, leaving the spontaneity of the moment’s connection with the content programmed for Language and Literature, almost renders the use of critical thinking (Taylor, 2001) by students nonexistent. This legitimizes the need for a change of approach to improve one’s own practice as a teacher.

Similarly, regarding the second stage called “interpretation moment during training,” it responds to the following questions: What are the perspectives of teachers after receiving training on integrating faith into the teaching of language and literature classes at the basic levels in five Adventist schools in Romania?; How does my receiving the training and understanding the experiences of my co-researchers contribute to the improvement of my faith integration practice as a

geography teacher?. For this stage, the technique of experience journals was applied (Erro-Garcés & Alfaro-Tanco, 2020) at the end of each training session to Romanian language and literature co-researchers.

In this stage, four categories emerged: Planning and Implementing an Active Class with this Faith Integration Approach; The Class with the Integration Approach Based on Four Crucial Biblical Facts; Teacher Model with Intentional Planning of Faith Integration, and; Focusing Learning in Service of the Kingdom of Christ.

At the beginning of the training, there was a great curiosity to discover what contributions it would bring to the faith integration we were carrying out in our Romanian Language and Literature teaching practice.

Initially, the most important reason for integrating faith became very clear, which is the key distinction of a Christian school: focusing learning in service of the kingdom of Christ: “It is my duty to teach children to want to do!” (Cif: CLRDB-6-D-C), “...I can help the child cultivate a healthy habit, ...an education that has Christ at the center leads to the transformation of characters.” (Cif: CLRVB-2-V-C).

Learning about the difference between secular teaching and teaching based on the Bible and faith, focusing the class in service of the kingdom of Christ, and understanding the philosophical ideas that support different pedagogical approaches were highlighted. The relevance of knowing how to plan and implement an active class with this faith integration approach was emphasized. There was a clear understanding that the class with the integration approach is based on four crucial biblical facts: creation, fall, redemption with the crucifixion of Christ, and the restoration of a new world. Each teaching theme is connected to one or more of these four crucial biblical facts. Additionally, the idea prevailed that teaching work in Christian schools aims for students to develop their thinking based on the Bible so they can make wise decisions.

Finally, this training made participants aware of the importance of the teacher model and how vital intentional planning is for proper faith integration (Korniejczuk, 1994). Cora says: “Everything starts with a good plan and good organization.” (Cif: Geo-3-CI CS-MF) and Simon: “I want to plan my activities very well starting tomorrow so that my students discover God.” (Cif: CLRSC-5-S-MF). It has not only been an academic day but also a spiritual revival experience for all participants. This training has served to generate transformative learning experiences for students by applying what was assimilated in the training sessions.

For the third stage, called “post-training time,” the last three questions were addressed: How does receiving the training course and understanding the experiences of my fellow researchers contribute to improving my integrated faith practice as a language and literature teacher?; How is the implementation of faith evident in teaching and learning language and literature throughout the entire process?; How does a training plan for implementing integrated faith teaching of the Language and Literature discipline at the basic level in five Adventist schools in Romania contribute to improving reality?

There were planned approximately twenty language and literature lessons (Joyce & Showers, 2002) with faith integration, taking into account everything that was learned (Appendix). In this stage, six categories emerged: Faith Integration in a Planned Manner (Cora stated: “Lesson planning was done by addressing the topic from the perspective of faith integration,” (Cif: Geo-3-CS-CDOF)); Favorable Learning Environment (Krumm, 2020), (in another lesson, one observation was: “A pleasant learning environment was created based on the desire to discover.” (Cif: Geo-3- C-CDOF)); Development of Critical Thinking (Kim, 2020). (Octavia pointed out: “Students’ critical thinking is constantly stimulated by learning activities presented by Didina and by questions that encourage deep reflection by students.” (Cif: MOS-3-OPO-CDOF);

Application of Biblical Principles, Foundations, and Values in Life; Adjustment Period for Everyone; Positive Feedback from Students (A colleague mentioned: “Students are very excited about the experiment and actively participate in answering questions that generate conflict between prior and current knowledge.” (Cif: IIP2-ACM-CDOF)).

Observations and on-site evaluations were made for this stage (Joyce & Showers, 2002). Observers were trained in faith integration and experienced the process both for the Language and Literature discipline and for other subjects, being trained as teachers and familiar with the Romanian educational system. In total, four people presented their observations on this topic.

They emphasized that integrating faith in teaching for any field must be done in a planned manner, seeing it now in the practice of learning in a real scenario (Krepf & König, 2022). This result coincides with that obtained by Korniejczuk (1994). Thus, the structure of lesson plans should show how each aspect of the curriculum content is linked. In addition to this, a suitable environment must be created for teaching and learning processes to be experienced, providing a favorable environment for completing the activities proposed earlier, similar to the findings made by Krumm (2018).

Furthermore, developing critical thinking in students is highlighted as a valuable task that has contributed to analyzing information to make a connection with the desired integration for this discipline. This coincides with Taylor’s statements (Taylor, 2001).

In the practice of integration, the highlighting of the relationship between the contents of the Language and Literature discipline and the four events recorded in the Holy Scripture prevails: Creation, Fall, Crucifixion, and Redemption, considering, in turn, in didactic practice, biblical principles and values, identifying connections of interest with the discipline, in

this case, with the programmatic content of this discipline. This is also present in Ramirez's study (Ramirez, 2020).

Additionally, from the observations made by colleagues, recognition of the work well done emerged, along with the visibility of a noticeable change both in my conception of integration as a Language and Literature teacher, as they have followed alongside me throughout the entire training process and have highlighted my evolution in this regard. Octavia declared: "I have noticed something very interesting and extremely useful for the children, which is their ability to understand concretely what service means: listening, protecting, caring, and helping each other are forms of service. All these conclusions were drawn from the lessons taught by Didina in the second grade. It's a fantastic idea to present the value of service in this way, with concrete and specific nuances! Bravo, Didina!" (Cif: MOS-3-OD-CDOF)

However, we are in a period of adaptation that, after these first 20 experiences with the group I led, seems to be shaping up to consolidate significant contributions to knowledge. Similarly, from the observations made by the described co-researchers, recognition of the smooth conduct of the activity and visibility of an evident change in the integration concept within class sessions due to the practices of a Language and Literature teacher were evident. Additionally, there is a prevailing perception of how natural faith integration was, how creative the learning process was imbued with values such as gratitude, responsibility, the value of and love for character formation (Saputro et al., 2022), generating a pleasant learning environment based on the desire to put into practice the qualities that each individual possesses.

The limitations of this study revolve around its focus on a specific setting and the requirement to validate the results in alternative educational settings. Nevertheless, it establishes a valuable basis for future research on improving the incorporation of faith in language and literature teaching.

CONCLUSIONS

The process of integrating faith into the teaching of Language and Literature in Adventist schools in Romania evolves significantly through planned and structured training (Korniejczuk, 1994). Before training, teachers tend to integrate faith empirically (Jang, 2018) and without intentional planning, limiting the development of critical thinking in students. However, after training, teachers show a deeper understanding of how to integrate faith in a planned manner, focusing on biblical principles and values, and establishing clear connections between Language and Literature content and crucial biblical events. This change leads to a more enriching and transformative learning environment, where students experience comprehensive character development and increased commitment to service and love (Sinaga et al., 2022).

The study's practical implications are clearly presented through the three stages of research: pre-training, during training, and post-training. Initially, it highlights the empirical methods teachers used for integrating faith in Romanian language classes, which were largely spontaneous and not intentionally planned. The need for structured training to enhance intentional faith integration is identified, leading to transformative learning experiences and a more conducive learning environment. The research underscores the significance of planned lesson structures and a favorable learning atmosphere, emphasizing the necessity for teacher training in faith integration.

The conclusions of the study are closely tied to its purpose and contributions. The research sought to understand and improve the integration of faith in language and literature teaching in Adventist schools. The study effectively demonstrates the transition from an empirical, unplanned approach to a structured, intentional practice of faith integration through teacher training. This shift highlights the importance of

planning, critical thinking, and creating a favorable learning environment, which aligns with the study's goal of enhancing faith integration in educational settings.

Results supporting conclusions and recommendations

The results of the study directly support its conclusions and recommendations. The findings from the pre-training stage illustrate the existing practices and their limitations, justifying the need for training. The during training stage shows the positive impact of structured training on teachers' perspectives and practices. Finally, the post-training stage confirms that planned and intentional faith integration leads to improved teaching practices and student engagement. These outcomes validate the study's recommendation for structured teacher training programs to achieve effective faith integration in education.

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APPENDICES

Guide for planning a faith-integrated class

Teacher's Name: Didina Bratu

Lesson Theme: Words with Similar Meaning Using Similar Words in New Sentences Calligraphy Writing

Value: Service Habit of Serving Principle: Cultivating the Desire to Serve

Supporting Text: The Ten Commandments

Subject: Romanian Language and Literature

Educational Level: Primary

Step One: Focusing on Faith Integration in Class

1. Identify a central idea that addresses the lesson content from God's perspective based on one or more biblical principles underlying the entire subject and/or unit. This central idea should answer an essential question that arouses the curiosity and desire of the student to discover God and engage in living according to His will.

What do you do when you encounter new words in the texts you read? How do you feel in English class when Mrs. Hasel talks to you? (Hasel is a volunteer from Africa, an English teacher, does not speak Romanian) How would you feel if God spoke to you directly? Would you understand? (1 Corinthians 14:11) **When we strive to understand what God is telling us, we demonstrate that we are faithful servants.**

2. Define the biblical perspective. Find connections of the lesson content with some of these biblical concepts: creation (God as creator and sustainer), the fall into sin (the consequences of sin in the world and in human beings, expressed in the great controversy), redemption from sin (the plan of salvation and the payment of sin at the cross), restoration (the promise of restoring the entire creation to its original perfection). You can make connections with biblical stories or verses.

Creation: God created man with the ability to understand His words (Genesis 3:11).

Fall into Sin: After the fall into sin, man no longer understands the words of the Lord (Exodus 20:19).

Redemption: God took on human form and spoke to people through His Son (Hebrews 1:2).

3. Analyze the lesson content from a biblical perspective: Identify the content and activities in the curriculum/textbooks that are in agreement or disagreement with the biblical perspective. In case of discrepancy, decide whether to expose the error or replace the divergent content with others in accordance with the Bible. § Identify if the lesson or unit should include content presented in the Bible but ignored by the state curriculum. Include this content.

God has spoken to people throughout time in ways they can understand.

Step Two: By the end of the hour, the following learning progress is expected:

1. Define the learning outcome: The learning outcome is what is expected for the student to know, to know how to do (skills), and to want to do (attitudes and values derived from the Bible) at the end of the hour. Knowing that some words are new, knowing how to discover the meaning of new words from the given context, and wanting to understand the meaning of new words encountered.
 - a. Choose the principle/value/habit to be taught in class. (The same principle, value, or habit can be developed in several lessons until integrated into the student's life).

The habit of striving to understand the word of God.

- b. Describe how you will intentionally use personal example in what you want to teach.

By explaining whenever they ask for help how to explain the newly encountered words, by guiding them to the dictionary or to understanding the words from the given context.

- c. Describe how you will organize the physical and emotional environment to support learning.

In the classroom, there is a dictionary for students that they can consult whenever needed.

d. Describe how you will encourage students to think deeply. You can use activities targeting the higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy.

We read the text *The Ten Commandments*. **We observe** the new words. **We identify** their meanings from the context. **We analyze** the words and search for words with similar meanings from the children's vocabulary. **We evaluate** how well the students understood how to explain the new words. **We create** new sentences containing the newly discovered words from the text.

2. Define how you will assess the values, beliefs, habits, and other aspects of learning that students have acquired.

Observing their willingness to understand the new words encountered.

Step Three: Planning the Class Sequence

a. Describe how you will organize the lesson following the four steps of the 4MAT and applying the elements of the previous steps.

Motivation: A board with sentences where some words are formed from one part of the word and a drawing that completes the word. I will cover the words and leave only the syllable and the drawing that together make up the new word. I will let them discover the meaning of what they see. We will progressively discover the rest of the sentence. Then they will understand the meaning of the word initially seen composed of a syllable and a drawing representing the rest of the word. The conclusion is that we will discover the meaning of the new words encountered from the context.

At Sinai, the people gathered to hear the Law did not succeed in understanding the words spoken by God. They asked Moses to tell them the Law and promised to listen. God wrote the Law with His finger on stone.

Information: Reading the text. The students will read the text silently and in a chain, then I will do the model reading. While doing the model reading, each child will underline the words they do not understand. We will write the new words in notebooks.

Application: Students grouped in pairs will choose a word from the board and will read the sentence where they found it. They will look for a substitute for the unknown word (word or expression), or they will rephrase the sentence to have the same meaning. We will thus extract the word with a similar meaning and write it on the board next to the appropriate word.

Evaluation: In the same pairs, students will have to formulate new sentences using the underlined words from the text. The new sentences will be read and appreciated by classmates.

b. Use active learning strategies:

- i. Identify where you will use the essential question that arouses the desire to know God through the lesson.

At the end of the Motivation sequence (4MAT)

- ii. Describe how you will draw students' attention to faith.

Through the text read, through interventions made during the hour, and by creating opportunities for students to participate in class.

- iii. Identify what the student will do to develop deep thinking.

By analyzing the text, solving tasks in pairs, identifying new words and finding their meanings by rephrasing the sentence, and then composing new sentences with the same words that seemed incomprehensible at the beginning of the hour.

Step Four: Evaluation and Reflection

- a. Describe how the student will reflect on their learning.

By analyzing the content of the text they have studied and striving to find the most appropriate answers to the questions that arise during the hour. Discovering that a faithful servant must understand the words of God.

- b. Describe how you will reflect on the implementation of the planned lesson. By choosing the most suitable text, I will look for the most appropriate questions and methods to help students discover that it is important to seek to understand what God wants to convey.

Sources for this guide:

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