

Institution: Newman University
Unit of Assessment: Theology and Religious Studies
Title of case study: Making More Effective Use of the Bible in Schools in the West Midlands
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Dr Susan Docherty's research has greatly impacted on the teaching of Religious Education and on the practice of collective worship in schools through two avenues: first, through her work in training teachers at Newman University, one of the major providers of Initial Teacher Education in the West Midlands; and second, through her contribution to the design and delivery of the biblical studies components of the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies programme (CCRS), a course taken by the majority of teachers in Roman Catholic primary schools within the Archdiocese of Birmingham (comprising the counties of West Midlands, Oxfordshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire) as well as by teachers working in the Church of England and maintained sectors.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Dr Susan Docherty has been employed full time at Newman University Birmingham since September 2000, as Senior Lecturer in Biblical Studies (01/09/2000–31/07/2005) then Head of Theology (01/08/2005 – present). She was promoted to Reader in Biblical Studies on 01/01/2013. Her main area of research throughout this period has been the reception of the bible, or the ways in which biblical passages and themes are interpreted and later re-used in new contexts. She has published a monograph (2009) and several articles (2002-2014) on the reception of the Jewish Scriptures in the New Testament and early Christianity. These employ a new descriptive-analytical methodology, first developed for application to the rabbinic literature, in order to identify and describe more precisely and fully than in existing studies the specific techniques used to interpret the bible. The edited volume on Genesis to which she contributed (2012) forms the first complete study of the way in which this Old Testament book is used in the New Testament. The significance of her work in this field was recognised by her election as Chair (from March 2013) of the Annual International Seminar on the Use of the Old Testament in the New. Her particular contribution to the development of knowledge lies in her linking of the disciplines of Jewish Studies and New Testament Studies, taking serious account of both the early Jewish context of the New Testament and of methodological developments in research into post-biblical and rabbinic Jewish literature.</p>
<p>3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)</p> <p>Relevant Publications</p> <p>Docherty, Susan E., "Joseph the Patriarch: Representations of Joseph" in O'Kane, M. (ed.), <i>Borders, Boundaries and the Bible</i> (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplements Series 313) 2002, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, pp. 194–216.</p> <p>Docherty, Susan E., <i>The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews</i> (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament II/260) 2009, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck</p> <p>Docherty, Susan E., "Genesis in Hebrews" in Moyise, S. and Menken, M.J.J. (eds.), <i>Genesis in the New Testament</i> (Library of New Testament Studies Series 466) 2012, London: T&T Clark, pp. 124–148</p> <p>Docherty, Susan E., "The Reception of Tobit in the New Testament and Early Christian Literature With Special Reference to Luke-Acts" in Verheyden, J., Koet, B. and Moyise, S. (eds.), <i>The Scriptures of Israel in Jewish and Christian Tradition: Essays in Honour of Maarten J.J. Menken</i> (Novum Testamentum Supplements Series 148) 2013, Leiden: Brill, pp. 81-94</p> <p>Docherty, Susan E., "Moses in Hebrews" in Steyn, G.J. and Human, D. (eds.), <i>Portraits of Moses</i> (Library of Biblical Studies Series) New York/London: T&T Clark (in press: forthcoming 2014)</p>

Grants Awarded to Susan Docherty

Bible Society Grant £6,000 awarded 31/03/2012 as contribution towards a PhD studentship in “The Use of the Bible in Schools” to further the work of bringing current biblical scholarship to bear on the theoretical framework for the teaching of the bible within Primary School Religious Education, on the development of new RE syllabuses, and on teacher training.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Docherty’s research highlights the need to read the New Testament as an essentially Jewish text, and also the benefit to New Testament scholarship of engaging seriously with methodological developments pioneered in the scholarly field of Jewish Studies. As Head of Theology and Religious Education at Newman University since 2005, she has brought this research to bear on the task of designing the Biblical Studies curriculum for all the ITE (Primary) students studying at the University, and thereby impacted on the subject-knowledge base and professional practice of a significant number of teachers within the West Midlands. In addition, she has been responsible since 2000 for developing and teaching the Biblical Studies component of the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS). This part time course is taken over two years by both trainee and serving teachers from across Birmingham and the wider West Midlands region who wish to develop their subject knowledge in Christianity and apply this learning to their practice in school. A total of 325 students have successfully completed the CCRS at Newman between September 2008 and June 2013, and a further 154 are currently (as at 12/07/2013) enrolled on it. In 2001/02 Docherty was asked by the Board of Religious Studies of the Catholic Bishops Conference to act as a reviewer of the curriculum and course materials for the Biblical Studies units of a new on-line CCRS course which has been offered throughout the Census period to those working in Roman Catholic schools and parishes who are unable for geographical reasons to regularly attend designated CCRS Centres.

In July 2013 a sample of those who had recently completed the CCRS were contacted as part of an exercise to assess the enduring impact of the course on the professional practice of former students. The responses (via e-mail) were uniformly positive and include the following comments:

“The CCRS was amazing - it really had an impact on the way I mapped the provision for RE across the whole school and on the way I prepare assemblies and liturgies...The course has had a huge impact upon the children too...” (Headteacher, St John Bosco Primary School, Birmingham).

“Exploring the Bible in detail was particularly interesting, and it has provided me with a wealth of knowledge which has helped me plan and deliver my RE lessons. The CCRS course enabled me to reconsider some of the approaches I use in RE and how to use a wider range in order to probe children and develop their understanding of the Bible further.” (KS2 teacher, Rosary Primary School, Birmingham) .

“...I now feel confident in talking to the children about how and why the Gospel accounts differ.” (RE co-ordinator, unnamed Primary School Birmingham).

In 2012 Docherty successfully applied for funding from the Bible Society to offer a funded studentship in “The Use of the Bible in Schools” to build on her existing work, and to develop and further disseminate it. This project seeks to provide a new theoretical framework to underpin the teaching of the Bible in CofE Primary Schools throughout England.

Subsequently, a Higher Education Academy Grant of £5,000 was awarded to Docherty for a one-year project (start date 01/09/2012) to produce a series of podcasts and on-line materials to help bridge the gap between academic biblical studies and the wider public. These materials were piloted with Initial Teacher Education (Primary) students at Newman University in 2012-13.

Impact case study (REF3b)**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. Dean of Studies and Bible and Church Consultant, the Bible Society:
<http://www.biblesociety.org.uk/>
2. CCRS Biblical Studies Units participant evaluation questionnaires (hard copies held at Newman University)
3. RE 415 Introduction to Biblical Studies module evaluation questionnaires (hard copies held at Newman University Birmingham)
4. Emails from CCRS participants assessing the effectiveness of the Biblical Studies units for their classroom practice (July 2013; held on file at Newman University Birmingham)