

## Higher Education, Stakeholder Interface and Teacher Formation for Church Schools

Journal:	<i>International Journal of Christianity and Education</i>
Manuscript ID	IJCE-19-0008.R1
Manuscript Type:	Original Article
Keywords:	stakeholder theory, Christian higher education, Christian teacher formation, stakeholder interaction, Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies, research case study
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## Higher Education, Stakeholder Interface and Teacher Formation for Church Schools

### Abstract

Christian universities operate with increasingly complex roles and functions when engaging with multiple stakeholders in the provision of higher education. This paper asks how to understand and analyse the interactions when church universities are among the multiple stakeholders in Christian teacher education. What frameworks of analysis or tools of evaluation can be employed? Stakeholder theory is shown to support the identification of various community interests and involvements and enable clarification of whose perspective or priorities are to be taken into account. From a recent UK research case study, the need for greater understanding and management of stakeholder interests and activity within Christian teacher education is highlighted.

### Keywords

Stakeholders; stakeholder theory; stakeholder interaction; higher education; Christian teacher education; Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies

### Introduction

Universities today engage with many sectors and organizations in the provision of higher education and lifelong learning. They adopt multiple roles and form relationships with a wide range of constituencies and stakeholders. New models of research and knowledge exchange occur not just internally among traditional academic communities of staff and students but externally through collaboration and partnerships with wider organizations and societies (Jongbloed et al, 2008). Research funding increasingly requires useable knowledge, the monitoring of impacts, and the articulation of research outcomes in ways that policymakers or practitioners find relevant and useful (Slunge et al, 2017). Core functions of teaching and knowledge dissemination bring universities into dialogue with external stakeholders that include government, corporate sponsors, public-service professions and community

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3 associations. Indeed, services for research, training, consultancy, professional development  
4 and continuing education are expected from universities today (Neave, 2000). As Jongbloed  
5 et al. (2008: 306) summarize, “Present day universities are forced to be in constant dialogue  
6 with their stakeholders in society.”  
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11 Within the UK higher education sector, Church affiliated colleges and universities operate  
12 with complex roles and functions that serve multiple stakeholder constituencies, often with  
13 competing and conflicting agendas in a largely secular culture (Arthur, 2008). Many of these  
14 institutions were originally founded by the Catholic, Anglican and Methodist churches for the  
15 purpose of training teachers for both church and state schools. Most have now become fully-  
16 fledged universities and expanded their academic portfolios to cover the full range of  
17 disciplines, but they have traditionally specialised in teacher education. Today, recent  
18 government changes to initial teacher training in the UK allow for both university and school-  
19 based routes. This is bringing the universities into research partnerships and collaborative  
20 knowledge exchange with external stakeholders who include religious sponsoring bodies and  
21 faith communities to support not just academic or professional studies but the ecclesial or  
22 faith dimensions of teacher education. This is a timely and challenging area for discussion.  
23 As demands on university resources become more dependent on market decisions and  
24 performance data, so universities face an increasingly complex choice over which stakeholder  
25 interests to prioritise and how to manage them. It is an issue that is especially pertinent to  
26 Christian universities, whose foundational ethos and mission needs to find relevance and  
27 articulation in the secular academy and marketplace.  
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43 This paper does not set out to evaluate the longstanding role and contribution of higher  
44 education colleges and universities to Christian teacher formation. Instead, the paper takes up  
45 a different discourse by asking about the complex nature of the interaction when church  
46 affiliated universities are among the multiple stakeholders involved in the provision of  
47 Christian teacher education. This brings the universities into networks of relationships that  
48 extend beyond their own immediate staff and students and into involvement with wider  
49 church community and its schools and practitioner bodies. So the first question to be  
50 addressed is how to understand and analyse such interaction. What frameworks or tools of  
51 evaluation might be used to understand the complex intersection of collaboration and  
52 partnership? (Wicks, 2014) By way of response, the paper firstly introduces some insights  
53 from interdisciplinary stakeholder theory. Then it presents a recent UK research case study,  
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3 which involves a number of Catholic higher education institutions in the delivery of a  
4 longstanding national course of adult theological formation that is commonly undertaken by  
5 both new and serving teachers. The case study offers an example to illustrate the nature and  
6 challenges pertaining to the role that the universities play within a multiple stakeholder  
7 provision of teacher formation for church schools. Finally, conclusions are drawn about the  
8 need for greater understanding of stakeholder activity and its significance within Christian  
9 teacher education.  
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17 It is important from the outset to state the modest claims of this paper. Much of the literature  
18 on stakeholder theory emanates from and is intended for business management or economic  
19 theory. This is not the expertise of this author, nor is it the thrust of this paper. So it is a valid  
20 question to ask about the relevance of employing ideas from stakeholder interaction theory as  
21 a framework for discussing the role of the universities in Christian teacher education.  
22 Stakeholder theory emerged initially from the world of commercial and financial thinking,  
23 although it has now been taken up by other sectors and academic disciplines including  
24 healthcare, environmental and social sciences (Andriof et al, 2002). Some have questioned  
25 whether the thinking behind stakeholder theory is relevant or even antithetical to religious  
26 and spiritual undertakings. Indeed, a separation thesis where the idea that religious and  
27 business or organizational management have nothing in common has been somewhat  
28 prevalent (Wicks, 2014). Stakeholder theory has thus not previously been associated with  
29 Christian teacher education. Critics may well object to what could appear as misappropriation  
30 of theories and concepts from a discipline that lies outside the realms of both education and  
31 ecclesiology.  
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45 However, this paper suggests that while there is risk of criticism in taking stakeholder theory  
46 into an interdisciplinary arena that goes beyond its original boundaries, nevertheless it argues  
47 that there is value in drawing upon some of its core ideas in order to help conceptualise the  
48 changing nature of how universities are involved with religious and professional bodies in  
49 forming teachers for church schools today. It is hoped that this will be of interest and  
50 relevance to those involved in Christian higher education research, mission and practice.  
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### 57 **Insights from Stakeholder Interaction Theory**

58 Freeman (1984), one of the first contributors to the stakeholder discourse, defined  
59 stakeholders in broad terms as individuals or groups who can affect or who are affected by an  
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3 organization's purpose or activities. While there seems to be little universally accepted  
4 definition of the meaning or application of the term 'stakeholder', a growing body of  
5 theorists set out to explain how organizations function with respect to the various  
6 constituencies with whom they are involved (Andriof et al, 2002). Two aspects of stakeholder  
7 thinking can be briefly outlined in this section of the paper. One aspect enquires as to who are  
8 the stakeholders in any given enterprise and this, in turn, emphasises the need for clear  
9 identification of the individuals and groups involved. As each stakeholder group may have  
10 their own unique set of attributes, demands, priorities and objectives, so the mapping and  
11 subsequent management of these interdependencies and possible conflicts of interest is  
12 paramount (Andriof et al, 2003). Stakeholder theory emphasises the importance of  
13 relationship, seeing that this cannot be overlooked but rather must be understood as a  
14 complex interplay of shifting, sometimes ambiguous and contested connections between and  
15 within diverse organizations who, nevertheless, all invest some form of human, academic,  
16 spiritual, financial or professional capital into the enterprise. Therefore, stakeholder theory  
17 sees that collaborative strategies are needed to go beyond traditional corporate interest or  
18 linear movement of activity to invite partnership, dialogue and communication among the  
19 key players.  
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34 In addition to identifying who has a stake, the concept of salience offers a further contribution  
35 to identifying stakeholder characteristics and claims for engagement. This classifies  
36 stakeholders according to their relative importance and distinguishes between their authority  
37 and power to influence an organization, the legitimacy (or relevance and appropriateness) of  
38 their relationship with the organization, and the urgency or seriousness of their claim for  
39 attention and activity in the organization. These attributes, and the varying degrees to which  
40 they may be present or lacking among diverse stakeholders, help determine the priority of  
41 their claims and interests. From this, stakeholders can be classed as either definitive (high),  
42 expectant (moderate) or latent (low) salience (Mitchell et al, 1997). This model helps to  
43 identify and explain different stakeholder behaviour.  
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53 In outlining some core underlying concepts from stakeholder theory, it is important to state  
54 that this way of thinking has been largely missing from the discourse concerning religion and  
55 spirituality (Carrascoso, 2014). However, limited examples can be referenced. Wicks (2014)  
56 promotes stakeholder theory to scholars of religion and spirituality for asking searching  
57 questions such as what kind of work or vocation should be sought or promoted, what are the  
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3 terms on which co-operation and work with others should be built, how can such  
4 relationships be evaluated, and how can organizations (religious or otherwise) constructively  
5 support dialogue about human flourishing. Another aspect of stakeholder theory seeks the  
6 normative core i.e. the purposes or reasons why an organization exists and the set of  
7 operating principles that shapes what it is about and what it does. When the normative core is  
8 grounded in religious tradition, then this should impact the way an organization acts ethically,  
9 professionally, educationally, financially etc. (Wicks, 2014).

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17 Carrascoso (2014) develops the notion of stakeholder normative core in connection with the  
18 core tenets of Catholic social teaching, such as options for the common good, human  
19 development, and solidarity with the poor, to reframe them as norms to be applied by  
20 associated organizations and individuals. What is significant in his approach, which is  
21 primarily still aimed at a business readership, is the broadening of aspects of stakeholder  
22 theory into the religious domain. This is also evident in the discussion of stakeholder theory  
23 by Ray et al. (2014) who argue that the construction of principles drawn from religious faith  
24 traditions offers a compelling normative core to carry into stakeholder relations. In calling for  
25 further research, they seek more analysis on how belief systems manifest in the commitments  
26 of specific denominations, faith communities and religious organizations might further shape  
27 stakeholder theory. They see that exploration of the way that organizations, religious and  
28 otherwise, operate as stakeholder groups is useful for understanding their motives, missions,  
29 priorities and activities.

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41 The above mentioned literature is primarily articulated from within business and  
42 organizational management discourses. Jongbloed et al. (2008) apply stakeholder theory to  
43 the higher education context and the need for every university to pay attention to the many  
44 communities and relationships it holds. The stakeholders associated with a university are  
45 multiple and diverse. The community of scholars, academic staff and students, is the core  
46 internal constituency without which any university cannot properly function. But the core  
47 functions of the university's programmes, mission, outreach and engagements are likely to be  
48 also expressed in wider public domains. So while traditional stakeholders include students,  
49 academics and researchers, governing bodies, funding organizations and research or  
50 practitioner sponsors, other relationships exist with commercial, industrial or professional  
51 partners (Jongbloed et al, 2008). For Christian universities engaged in teacher education, this  
52 may well include working with and alongside national church agencies and local schools or  
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3 dioceses. We now turn to a UK research case study to explore the complex academic,  
4 ecclesial and professional relationships that exist within the provision of teacher education  
5 and the part that a number of Catholic universities and higher education institutions play in  
6 this.  
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### 10 11 12 **Research Case Study**

13 The next section of this paper connects the preliminary ideas presented from stakeholder  
14 theory to findings drawn from a recent research report on the Catholic Certificate in Religious  
15 Studies (Stuart-Buttle, 2019). The CCRS has provided theological education across England  
16 & Wales since 1991-92 to adults wishing to deepen their formal knowledge of the Catholic  
17 faith tradition. Since the year 2000, over 20,000 adults have been registered onto the course.  
18 The largest participant group to date has been teachers and those training for or working in  
19 the education sector, often undertaking the course for professional development or to secure  
20 employment in a Catholic school. Research indicates that those working in education roles  
21 comprise the majority (87%) of the overall participant cohort. The CCRS has thus acted as  
22 both vehicle and benchmark for theological formation for teachers across the country since  
23 the early 1990s. Course standards and curriculum requirements are laid down by the national  
24 awarding body, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales Board of Religious  
25 Studies. Eight modular components are required with fixed contact time and mandatory  
26 assessment. Six core modules cover Old and New Testaments, Christology, Ecclesiology,  
27 Sacraments and Morality while two elective specialist modules allow a more practical  
28 application as determined by local specification.  
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43 In light of the twenty-fifth anniversary since the CCRS began, a research project was set up  
44 to enable educational conversation and theological reflection about the nature and provision  
45 of adult theological education in contemporary religious, political, socio-cultural and  
46 educational contexts. Since its inauguration, the CCRS has developed policies, curriculum  
47 enhancements and teaching and learning strategies while the Board of Religious Studies  
48 leadership as well as the local providing bodies and student audiences have changed over  
49 time. The wider educational, religious and cultural contexts facing the CCRS today are  
50 different to those of twenty-five years ago. Particular concerns over how to maintain a  
51 commitment to the Christian educational mission in schools given a diminishing number of  
52 committed or actively practising Christian teachers has occupied recent attention. Some form  
53 of theological formation is seen as desirable both in preparing new entrants for the profession  
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3 and as continuing development for those already serving in our schools (Robinson, 2002;  
4 Engebretson, 2014; Stuart-Buttle, 2017). Teachers need to be professionally qualified and  
5 pedagogically skilled, not just in their academic disciplines but to enable their participation in  
6 and contribution to the distinctive Christian nature and mission of the school (McKinney and  
7 Sullivan, 2013).  
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13 The research project set out to seek a systematic exploration of the CCRS to take account of  
14 both the participant experience and stakeholder expectations. Core questions were asked  
15 about the role and purpose of CCRS, what sort of theological learning occurs, why people  
16 study, what impact is made and what is needed for the future. The research design consisted  
17 of two phases. A Phase One online survey was targeted at past and present course participants  
18 but the actual number of the target population was impossible to ascertain due to the way  
19 national and local records are kept. For this reason, CCRS participating dioceses and local  
20 centres were asked to disseminate an online survey link to their past and current students.  
21 This attracted a sample population of just short of 1500 responses, from which quantitative  
22 data for statistical analysis as well as qualitative data coded and categorised for thematic  
23 analysis purposes, was drawn. The Phase Two interviews were conducted with CCRS  
24 stakeholders, who included bishops, diocesan education directors, CCRS tutors and head  
25 teachers in primary and secondary schools. The interviews were recorded using digital voice  
26 recording apparatus before then being professionally transcribed and saved in electronic form  
27 for subsequent thematic coding and analysis. Reporting of all data from both project phases  
28 was kept anonymous so as to be in keeping with ethical guidelines and good research  
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44 The final research report concludes that there is much to value and celebrate in the  
45 contribution of CCRS to adult formation across England and Wales. The majority of  
46 participants testify that they study CCRS in order to enhance their knowledge and  
47 understanding of Christian faith. They speak of the positive impact of gaining theological  
48 knowledge and understanding for both personal formation and professional development.  
49 When asked specifically about this, 86% affirm that CCRS helped them explore their own  
50 faith and beliefs; 90% say it informed their knowledge and understanding of Catholic faith;  
51 81% say it deepened their critical reflection about their faith; 80% say it gave confidence in  
52 communicating and articulating faith to others; 69% said the course helped them to integrate  
53 theology with their professional practice; 77% said it contributed to their spiritual  
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3 development and 70% said it motivated them to further action in school or parish. The  
4 stakeholder interviews largely concur with and support these findings. While both sets of data  
5 from across the two project phases also indicate areas of tension and challenge from both  
6 course participant experience and stakeholder perspectives, the overall data from the research  
7 case study confirms the CCRS to be a valuable resource for supporting teacher education  
8 across the country.  
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### 15 **Connecting Stakeholder Theory with the Research Case Study**

16 We have already seen that stakeholder theory fundamentally assumes the existence of a  
17 relationship between an organization and its stakeholders that is based on some form of  
18 mutual interest and activity (Andriof et al, 2003). When considering this in light of the  
19 CCRS, the universities involved in delivering the course are both providing institutions with  
20 their own set of internal audiences, priorities and demands, but, at the same time, are  
21 embedded into a wider network of relationships with other CCRS providers. Some key  
22 questions can be asked concerning the stakeholders in CCRS as to what is their particular  
23 stake and where do the universities fit in. Furthermore, what sort of stakeholder salience do  
24 the universities themselves present to the CCRS in terms of specific claims and priorities?  
25 What contradictions of purpose or urgency might exist? The remainder of the paper now sets  
26 out to explore such questions.  
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#### 37 ***Who are the stakeholders in CCRS? Where do the universities fit in?***

38 The management, provision and delivery of the CCRS involves an array of stakeholders from  
39 across church, higher education, school and professional sectors. In terms of central function,  
40 the CCRS registration, curriculum, assessment and certification policies are overseen by the  
41 Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales Board of Religious Studies. This  
42 awarding body is comprised of representative members from Catholic Education Service of  
43 England and Wales, Diocesan Schools Commissioners, the National Board of Religious  
44 Inspectors and Advisers, Catholic higher education providers, regional diocesan  
45 representatives and distance learning providers. The day-to-day delivery and provision of the  
46 CCRS takes place in a local context. Research indicates that this includes all twenty-two  
47 Catholic dioceses of England and Wales alongside five Catholic universities<sup>1</sup> as well as two  
48 additional Catholic higher education institutions, two specified distance learning centres and  
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59 <sup>1</sup> Four of these universities have a Catholic foundation while the fifth is an ecumenical university with both  
60 Catholic and Anglican heritage. All five universities express a rich Christian ethos, mission and values.

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3 one association for those with a specific learning need. Participants taking the course through  
4 a local diocese comprise 56% of the survey population; those undertaking the course through  
5 the universities comprise just over 30%, with the remainder studying through one of the other  
6 options mentioned above.  
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11 The universities and higher education institutions represented in the research report jointly  
12 comprise one constituency on a CCRS stakeholder map. However, each of these individual  
13 institutions has its own unique set of characteristics, priorities and objectives which affect the  
14 prominence and provision it gives to the course. For example, factors such as whether the  
15 CCRS is made available as undergraduate or postgraduate provision, the number and type of  
16 students the course is open to, how the course is scheduled and timetabled, whether the  
17 course is accredited by the university or set as optional professional development, the  
18 integration (or lack) of the CCRS with other programme demands or curricular opportunities,  
19 the profile of the course among local schools and diocese, such factors influence and  
20 determine how the CCRS is provided and received at local level. In addition, the universities  
21 and higher education settings identified in the CCRS research report are located in different  
22 geographical regions across the country, with different diocesan relationships, unique  
23 institutional histories and priorities, and their own internal and external stakeholder  
24 communities. This means that the relationship between and among the higher education  
25 constituency involved in the CCRS is in itself complex.  
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39 The complexity is heightened when a broader CCRS stakeholder map is envisaged. The  
40 research case study includes Phase Two interview data from senior church leaders, primary  
41 and secondary school head teachers, diocesan directors of schools, diocesan advisers in adult  
42 formation and religious education, and CCRS course providers. This indicates a wide range  
43 of stakeholders with differing interests or involvement in the CCRS and who collectively  
44 represent different ecclesiological contexts and professional positions from around the  
45 country. For example, some stakeholder groups are directly responsible for or directly  
46 involved in the oversight or provision of the CCRS as senior church leaders or diocesan  
47 officers and, as such, carry a particular remit for supporting the ecclesial dimensions of  
48 Christian education through various initiatives in their schools and dioceses. Other  
49 stakeholders, such as school head teachers, may hold less direct involvement in course  
50 delivery but represent active practitioner perspectives that carry particular concern for the  
51 initial training and ongoing professional development of teachers as faculty to staff their  
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3 schools. This indicates variation between groups of stakeholders, borne out in the Phase Two  
4 interviews over what are perceived as the core academic, professional and pastoral  
5 dimensions of the CCRS. Historically there has been a divide between dioceses who offer the  
6 CCRS primarily through pastoral initiatives and the universities who offer it within academic  
7 programmes or teacher training school-based partnerships. This is heightened in the gap  
8 between stakeholders who view the role and purpose of the CCRS as aligned with theology  
9 or ecclesiology and those who view it more in terms of function or usefulness for school  
10 pedagogy or a classroom practitioner role. Further data from the stakeholder interviews also  
11 indicates mixed and, at times, diverse observations about the CCRS that vary according to  
12 local factors such as organizational structures, perceived needs and priorities, availability of  
13 support from diocese or local schools, and local profile and participant uptake. Such factors  
14 can be influential determinants of differing types of stakeholder engagement.  
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26 Another key group of CCRS stakeholders is, of course, those who study the course - the  
27 student body. This again represents a complex stakeholder grouping. Demographic data from  
28 Phase One of the research report demonstrates a diverse student population where 81% of  
29 those who take CCRS are female and 19% are male. The age range runs from 18 years to  
30 over 65 years, with a majority aged between 26 and 55 years. There is some discrepancy  
31 between those in education and other roles. For example, of those in a school role, 60%  
32 occupy the younger 26-45 age group while for those in a parish role, the largest group 55%  
33 are aged over 55 years. Among the majority of 87% participants who declare a school-based  
34 role are teachers in Catholic primary schools (41%), teachers in Catholic secondary schools  
35 (6%), Catholic school leaders (16%), trainee teachers for primary education (5%), trainee  
36 teachers for secondary education (1%), other Catholic school education roles (4%), teachers  
37 in non-Catholic primary schools (4%), teachers in non-Catholic secondary schools (2%), and  
38 school governors (1%). In terms of religious affiliation, the population indicates an 80%  
39 majority who state themselves as practising Catholic with those who declare as 'non-  
40 practising Catholic' (8%) and the rest from other Christian denominations alongside a very  
41 small number from other (non)religious backgrounds. The general education level shows that  
42 89% are educated to degree level but the remainder do not possess a higher education  
43 background. So, taking gender, age, role, religious affiliation and general education into  
44 account, the CCRS participant body represents another multifaceted stakeholder grouping.  
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3 What emerges from this provisional mapping of stakeholders indicates a diversity and  
4 complexity of relationship between and among the various stakeholders associated with the  
5 CCRS. This suggests that when universities and higher education institutions are involved as  
6 partners in supporting the ecclesial or faith dimensions of teacher education in collaboration  
7 with wider religious and professional sponsoring bodies, then close attention to stakeholder  
8 identification and analysis of differentiation can help both the understanding and  
9 management of the needs and priorities of all concerned.  
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17 ***In terms of stakeholder salience, what claims and priorities do the universities present?***

18 The CCRS is commonly positioned in the Catholic universities and higher education  
19 institutions identified in the research, as an opportunity for those undertaking initial teacher  
20 training or continuing professional development (CPD) to gain theological knowledge for a  
21 role in a church school. The concept of stakeholder salience, modelled in three ways by  
22 Mitchell et al. (1997) as previously discussed, helps to further conceptualise the complexities  
23 involved. The first defining attribute of stakeholder salience concerns the level of authority or  
24 the extent to which these institutions are able to impact and influence the CCRS. Here, the  
25 research case study confirms that the five universities have traditionally provided for  
26 participants in teacher training or already serving in the profession. Historically and  
27 collectively these universities have played a key role, not just in the original conception and  
28 subsequent provision of what was formerly the Catholic Teachers Certificate taught at local  
29 teacher training colleges, but also when the CCRS was launched in 1991-92 through their  
30 joint participation and continued influence and longstanding membership of the Board of  
31 Religious Studies and regional committees. The universities and higher education colleges  
32 have provided academic insight and quality assurance standards, often supporting in practical  
33 ways the needs of smaller dioceses and informing national policy over such things as learning  
34 and teaching pedagogies, course resources, and improved assessment practices. In this sense,  
35 the universities might be perceived as definitive rather than expectant or latent stakeholders  
36 in a typology of stakeholder salience because of the overall joint contribution they have made  
37 to policy, practice and provision of the national CCRS course over the past twenty-five years.  
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57 However, a second characteristic of stakeholder salience concerns the legitimacy that these  
58 universities themselves invest in the CCRS and here the picture becomes more varied and  
59 less definitive. For example, some of the universities have offered CCRS for academic credit  
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3 within their regulated degree programmes while others have left the course as an optional  
4 undertaking or non-accredited CPD for their teacher trainees. Both options carry underlying  
5 tensions. When the CCRS is accredited then it has to meet the UK higher education  
6 qualification and credit frameworks and comply with university academic systems. This can  
7 risk subsuming the CCRS into formal academic study and restrict the opportunities for  
8 personal faith dimensions or spiritual formation. Alternatively, when the CCRS is offered in  
9 the university as optional CPD for a church school role then there is risk of distance or  
10 separation from mainstream academic or professional activity and possible disregard or  
11 suspicion for what might be perceived as specialised activity that only meets the needs of a  
12 specific group of students or that which is seen to privilege the claims of religious faith in the  
13 academy.

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15 We have already seen that one core group of stakeholders is the CCRS students themselves.  
16 Regardless of how the CCRS is determined by university providers, the purpose and  
17 challenges of doing the course from the university student perspective are strongly voiced in  
18 the research data. Many students who take the CCRS while at university are working towards  
19 an initial teaching qualification or higher education degree. The higher education students  
20 identified in the Phase One survey sample population represent those who have completed  
21 the CCRS as well as those currently working towards it. Their key concerns emerge over  
22 practical issues such as workload pressures on top of existing academic studies, demands of  
23 family life and other employment, the time and personal commitment involved and the  
24 additional financial cost incurred. But what also emerges is their clear sense of their purpose  
25 for doing the course, where the majority state this is to gain knowledge and understanding of  
26 the Catholic faith to prepare for (or secure) a role in a Catholic school for either classroom  
27 teaching or a school leadership position. This links with what they felt they gained from  
28 undertaking CCRS in terms of theological learning. Here 21% said they had gained a  
29 foundational vocabulary and knowledge about God, scripture, church, sacraments etc. that  
30 was previously missing. Meanwhile 27% stated that their previously limited understanding  
31 and appreciation of Christian doctrine in areas including Trinity, Incarnation, Revelation and  
32 Christian ethics had been developed and enhanced, while 13% felt enabled to relate and apply  
33 theological language and Christian worldview to their real-life professional or pastoral  
34 situations. Furthermore, 29% said all of the above had resulted from taking the course. The  
35 remaining higher education survey participants, who stated that none of the above had been  
36 achieved, echoed either a negative local experience in studying the course or the dissonance  
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3 they felt between studying Christian theology and relating this to their school role or  
4 professional practice. This was also reflected in those students who started but did not  
5 complete the whole course and who cited a lack of relevance or congruence between the  
6 CCRS curriculum and their professional training placements.  
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11 This is particularly challenging when taking a third indication of stakeholder salience into  
12 account, in other words the urgency or commitment to the CCRS that is given by the higher  
13 education institutions. The Catholic universities involved in the CCRS commonly view it as  
14 something that stems from and contributes to their foundational Christian mission. These  
15 universities have been built upon faith-based values and a Christian heritage. They remain  
16 committed to providing a high quality education for all their students, taking seriously the  
17 intellectual, cultural, social, and spiritual needs of the individuals and communities they  
18 serve. But the languages of faith and theology can no longer be taken for granted in the  
19 academy. Nor can it be assumed that there is a Christian foundation on which students' lives  
20 or indeed educational curriculum or pedagogy can be based. In modern educational theory  
21 and its associated fields of the humanities and social sciences, Christian faith and theology  
22 has become marginalised. Before they have even entered university, many of our students  
23 have been subject to cultural and socialization processes that have embedded ideological  
24 elements, many of which prejudice young people against the claims of faith. There is an  
25 assumed public culture that views Christianity as no more than a faded symbol of a departed  
26 heritage (Wright, 2002). We can also point to a rising professionalization of education and  
27 training that restricts religious language to private use while deploying a secular vocabulary  
28 for its dealings in the public and professional domain. What is often advocated is a perceived  
29 neutrality or suspension of religious belief and action, seen as necessary in order to conform  
30 to the supposed norms of professional practice, including teaching and education (Stuart-  
31 Buttle, 2018).  
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50 Furthermore, all universities, both church-affiliated as well as secular, must comply with  
51 government and public regulatory bodies for quality, efficiency and effectiveness. They must  
52 also allocate their human and physical resources in service to the core functions of teaching  
53 and research in the academy as well as to the wider community and public mission  
54 (Jongbloed et al, 2008). Faith-based activity such as the CCRS may well be viewed as  
55 important for a church-affiliated university's ethos, mission and public outreach but this does  
56 not set aside serious questions or challenges relating not just to its internal stakeholders  
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3 including the student body, but also to those responsible for managing curriculum, resource  
4 capacity and institutional goals as well as the relationships with wider partners and  
5 constituencies.  
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## 10 **Conclusion**

11 Jongbloed et al. (2008) state that universities are expected to be excellent in their core  
12 functions of teaching and research in the academy as well as entrepreneurial and pastoral in  
13 their approach to students. At the same time, they are to be collegial yet competitive in  
14 relating to other knowledge providers and both local and (inter)national in their public service  
15 and mission. The changing nature of higher education means that there is an increasingly  
16 complex context for understanding and managing diverse stakeholder relations and interests.  
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24 This paper has suggested that core aspects of stakeholder theory, a well-recognised paradigm  
25 in other disciplines, can offer a useful framework for insight and analysis. So far, there has  
26 been a lack of critical literature to unpack the complexity of stakeholder relations with  
27 application to Christian education and teacher formation for church schools. This is  
28 something this paper sets out to remedy and also to encourage for future research. In  
29 presenting the CCRS research case study by way of one illustrative example, stakeholder  
30 theory can be shown to support the identification of various community involvements and the  
31 clarification of whose perspective or priorities are to be taken into account. While the limits  
32 of deploying stakeholder insights are acknowledged, nevertheless they enable both  
33 conceptualization and evaluation of the complex nature of the interaction when church  
34 affiliated universities are among the multiple stakeholders involved in the provision of  
35 Christian education. This is significant for universities and higher education institutions  
36 whose Christian mission and foundational values lie at the heart of their academic enterprise.  
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