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IS NOW AND EVER SHALL BE?

Authentic Catholic Primary Education in Postmodern Ireland

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I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Doctorate in Education is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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ABSTRACT

The Catholic Church in Ireland is Patron of over 92% of national primary schools. In the context of postmodern, pluralist Irish society, this situation is becoming ever more challenging, ever more unsustainable and ever more untenable.

This thesis examines the implications – both practical and moral – of the multi-faith, multi-cultural and increasingly secular context of Irish society for the Catholic Church's control and management of the Irish primary school sector. Drawing on the theoretical framework of the concept of authenticity, the work proposes a renewed conception of authentic Catholic education for contemporary Ireland.

At the outset, the enterprise of Catholic education in Ireland is located in relation to the social and political environment in which Catholic primary schools developed and the contemporary cultural and political climate in which they now operate. Then, through an analysis of the literature on Catholic education in general, and the official documents of the Magisterium in particular, the research draws out the commended principles, defining characteristics and philosophical underpinnings of Catholic education in the modern world. It attempts to articulate an authentic understanding, for postmodern society, of three key constructs of Catholic education viz. - evangelisation, commitment to the common good and the relationship between faith and culture.

In presenting a clear picture of the authentic principles of Catholic education, the thesis ultimately proposes a model of transforming Catholic primary school for contemporary Irish society. The espoused model is based on a fundamental expression of Catholic values but is explored in terms of how the model may interface authentically with crucial socio-cultural issues facing Catholic education in Ireland today, particularly in relation to school ethos, admissions policy, curriculum content and staff appointments.

It is argued that the Catholic Church must respond to the challenges of postmodern society in ways which serve both the Catholic school community and the wider Irish society rather than out of a concern for control or self-preservation. A key conclusion of the work is that the lack of alternative school places, along with Catholic education's fundamental commitment to the common good, make it imperative that non-Catholic pupils can secure places in Catholic schools on an equal footing with their Catholic neighbours. It is argued that this does not mean abandoning core Catholic principles but rather is an example of where social context and authentic Catholic school identity actually meet.

A further conclusion of the work is that maintaining the status quo in Irish primary education is no longer an option. It is argued that the Catholic Church must acknowledge the difficulties resulting from its majority control of the primary school system and must move beyond a rhetoric of plurality of patronage to actively address the urgent need for a diversity of school types to serve the needs of a religiously and culturally diverse Irish society.

Ultimately, the thesis concludes that the Catholic Church in Ireland must consider radical proposals for changes to its control, management and running of Catholic primary schools as to neglect to do so would be the very antithesis of authenticity.

INTRODUCTION

Religion and schooling have been intertwined in Ireland for over two centuries.

Following Catholic emancipation in 1829, the model of school management that

emerged was a national network of primary schools, under the patronage of

different religious denominations, predominantly Roman Catholic[1]. This

patronage system exists to the present day. In spite of the enormous changes that

have taken place in Irish society in the intervening years, 92% of national

primary schools remain under the patronage and control of the Catholic Church.

For postmodern, pluralist and increasingly secular Irish society this is becoming

ever more unacceptable and ever more unsustainable. And, for the Catholic

Church, in a society where the consequences for primary schools as a result of

the very different external conditions – religious, socio-economic and

ideological – in which they now operate are at once pressing and enormous, it is

ever more challenging, ever more untenable – and perhaps ever more

unauthentic.

The situation of Catholic primary education in Ireland is unique, particular and

entirely different from other international contexts of denominational education.

In most discussions on Catholic education, the argument is for the right of

Catholic parents to send their children to Catholic schools, where frequently

Catholic schools are in a minority and without State funding. For example,

McLaughlin (1996), arguing against the notion that a secular form of liberal

education is the only defensible education experience which can be offered in

modern society, states that it is a right of parents in a democratic and pluralist

society to shape the education of their children according to the beliefs, values,

[1] The term Catholic is used in the remainder of the text to signify Roman Catholic.

principles and ideologies which they regard as important. However, in Ireland, it is the parents of non-Catholic children (and also some Catholic parents) who are arguing for their right to send their children to non-Catholic schools, and there is now a significant and rapidly growing demand among parents for more pluralist provision of primary education. Hence, the situation in Ireland merits particular consideration.

The tensions and dilemmas that occur when Catholic school values, which are themselves in a process of change, encounter rapid social, cultural and ideological shifts require careful exploration. Furthermore, how this traditionally authoritarian, monopolistic and relatively insulated educational tradition responds to the challenges of secularisation, multi-culturalism, and relativism, requires thoughtful reflection and consideration. Hence, this thesis explores a conception of Catholic primary education that is more suited to contemporary Irish society and that is more authentic in the face of the societal issues operative in twenty-first century Ireland.

This thesis adopts an intra-Catholic stance. While recognising that the very question of denominational education is a contentious issue in postmodern society and while acknowledging the literature which calls into question such an intra-Catholic hegemony, the overall aim of this thesis is to explore the role and place of authentic Catholic primary schools in liberal, pluralist Ireland. It is not the intention of this work to criticise or devalue the Catholic Church's education legacy or to suggest that the Church does not have a role to play in primary education in contemporary society. The approach taken is to adopt what Grace (2002) terms a "roots with critical openness" (p.15) process. The purpose of

critique and deconstruction is to examine and understand the past in order to seek new syntheses for the future of Catholic education. This will allow Catholic educators to meet authentically those challenges of contemporary Irish society that oblige one "to make ethical decision, to say: here I stand...here and now I face an other who demands of me an ethical response" (Kearney, 1988(a), p.361).

However, Grace (2002) points out that a significant understanding of contemporary Catholic schooling must involve some engagement with the historical contexts which have shaped and influenced its development. Therefore, Chapter 1 locates the enterprise of Catholic primary schooling in Ireland in relation to its cultural and political contexts, past and present.

In the first instance, the Chapter outlines the development of Catholic primary schools in Ireland since the establishment of the national primary school system in 1831, and traces the history of Church/State relations in relation to control of the primary education sector. The Chapter then explores, in detail, issues facing Catholic primary schools in Ireland today, with particular focus on recent responses of both Church and State to these challenges.

Overall, Chapter 1 explores the role of the Catholic primary school in Ireland as it sought in the past, and continues today, to seek to live out its mission and its theological, social rationale – i.e. "to keep alive and to renew the culture of the sacred in an [increasingly] profane and secular world" (Grace, 2002, p.5). In this regard, two key operational methods of Catholic schooling, which have been employed at different stages since the foundation of the national school system,

are explored, i.e. - cultural retreatism and cultural imperialism (Grace, 2002). However, it is argued that the analysis in terms of retreat and mission must now be augmented by an analysis in terms of authoritarianism and authenticity – i.e. whether the Church's management of primary education, past and present, represents the authoritarian stance of the most powerful and dominant player in primary education or an authoritative reflection of an authentic Catholic philosophy of education.

The thesis argues that the concept of authenticity is fundamental to any articulation or vision of Catholic education. In contemporary Ireland, there is now an urgent need for the Church to speak and to act with authenticity However, for an institution that traditionally did not speak about authenticity but about absolutes – the concept may present particular problems and challenges but also, it is argued, particular insights and imperatives. In light of this, the thesis has at its fulcrum the concept of authenticity.

While review of a more general literature on Catholic education is inter-woven throughout the thesis, Chapter 2 provides an overview of the literature on Catholic education in relation to three key issues, viz.: ethos and identity of Catholic schools, challenges facing Catholic education - with particular emphasis on the issue of diversity, and research. Overall, this element of the review highlights the dearth of literature and analysis available on what constitutes authentic Catholic education, particularly in the Irish context, and also points to the absence of in-depth analysis of the Vatican decrees on education, again specifically in the context of Catholic primary schools in Ireland.

Having recognised the lack of authenticity in some manifestations of Catholic education past and present and having undertaken a focused review of the literature on Catholic education, the intention in Chapter 3, is to examine precisely what is meant by "authenticity". The concept of authenticity is analysed in detail as it is found in works by various authors, but with a key focus on the work of the Jesuit philosopher Bernard Lonergan (1958, 1967, 1971, 1974, 1979, 1985) and the writings of Charles Taylor (1989, 1991, 2004), both of whom place a high value on the search for human and institutional authenticity. Braman (2008, p.98) notes that "authenticity for Taylor and Lonergan is the experience of a profound transfiguration in one's being and doing" and Chapter 3 explores the way each elucidates the path to this "profound transfiguration".

Chapter 3 also acknowledges that the concept of authenticity has its critics. But while exploring a number of postmodern paradigms which challenge and complexify the very core of the concept of authenticity, ultimately Chapter 3 argues that there is a normative conception of authenticity and that authenticity addresses contemporary concerns. Consequently, a critical dialogue is created between authenticity and postmodernism for the purpose of recognising its challenges, strengths and weaknesses and moving to new insights.

Having identified where authenticity and/or authoritarianism have featured in the history of the Church's involvement in primary education in Ireland, explored the literature on Catholic education, and developed an understanding of

the concept of authenticity within a postmodernism milieu, Chapter 4 moves to explore key principles of authentic Catholic education.

As noted earlier, very little in-depth analysis has been undertaken of the Vatican documents on education in the context of Irish primary schools and this is seen as a major lacuna in the literature. But, as will be understood from the Chapter on authenticity, in order to be authentic, we must know who we are - and as official documents of the Magisterium are the authoritative voice of the Church, Chapter 4 undertakes a detailed examination of the formal publications and declarations on Catholic education by the Congregation for Catholic Education, since the Second Vatican Council. The Chapter draws out the commended principles, key constructs, and philosophical underpinnings of Catholic education in the modern world. The espoused principles of Catholic primary education in Ireland are also delineated through an exploration of documents and discourses within the local Church which have projected the Irish Church's aspirations for Catholic education. Based on this, the Chapter elicits the defining characteristics and unique attributes of Catholic schools, in keeping with authenticity's diktat that articulation of one's qualitative distinctiveness is crucial in being truly authentic. Chapter 4 engages these key characteristics of Catholic education in dialogue with aspects of contemporary society, and includes an exploration of an authentic understanding, for postmodern society, of evangelisation, commitment to the common good, and the relationship between faith and culture.

Finally, while it will be evident that Catholic primary education has its own set of requirements, the Chapter acknowledges that contemporary Irish society also

has its own legitimate expectations from State-funded Catholic education. Thus, Chapter 4 explores the respective responsibilities of both Church and State in the provision of primary education and aims to commence a dialogue between the authentic principles of Catholic education and the legitimate requirements of democratic, pluralist Irish society.

With the groundwork laid, Chapter 5 shifts focus from theoretical conceptions of authenticity to policy possibilities. It teases out the implications of an authentic conception of Catholic education for postmodern Ireland and ultimately proposes a model of transforming Catholic primary school which this thesis considers has the potential to bring an authentic vision of Catholic education to fruition. The espoused model of Catholic primary education is based on a fundamental expression of Catholic values but is explored in terms of how this new vision of Catholic primary school may interface authentically with crucial socio-cultural issues facing Catholic education in Ireland today, particularly in relation to school ethos, admissions policy, curriculum content and staff appointments.

Finally, Chapter 6 identifies key issues emerging from the preceding analyses for the future direction of Catholic primary education in Ireland. It begins with an identification of areas in need of research in Catholic education in Ireland and proceeds to highlight issues to be placed on an agenda for dialogue. This dialectic is crafted in an open-ended, invitational manner that seeks to be consistent with the foregoing critique and analysis and seeks to balance authenticity and distinctiveness with openness and inclusivity.

Overall, this study argues that maintaining the status quo in Irish primary education is no longer an option - to do so would be the very antithesis of authenticity. A new model of authentic Catholic primary school must be envisioned, based on a renewed and authoritative understanding of Catholic education relevant to contemporary Ireland and illuminated by the concept of authenticity in the postmodern world.

This study gains in significance due to the seismic social and cultural changes taking place in Irish society. The work, therefore, has a particular timeliness and authenticity as it identifies and articulates the significant crossroads which Catholic primary education in Ireland is now at. In addition to providing signposts towards constructing the future of Irish Catholic primary schools, it has also potential to make a more modest contribution to the more general international literature on Catholic education.

While the work is largely of a theoretical and philosophical nature, clearly one important way of understanding Catholic education in Ireland is to understand it through the eyes and voices of prominent players in the Catholic Church. To this end, two key interviews were conducted in the course of research with two leading Church figures in Catholic education in Ireland, i.e. the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Diarmuid Martin and the Chair of the Episcopal Commission on Education, Bishop Leo O'Reilly. The interviews were transcribed, analysed, interpreted and compared by the researcher. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and the interview schedule is contained in Appendix A. Insights from the interviews are woven throughout the text.

It is anticipated that the commingling of these "voices of authority" with an analysis of the social and political environment in which Irish Catholic primary schools developed, the contemporary culture, political mores and societal norms in which they now exist, with a review of relevant literature - and an overarching focus on authenticity - will allow the phenomenon of Catholic primary education in Ireland to be understood from various points of view and from diverse ways of knowing (albeit from an intra-Catholic perspective) in order to move to new insights.

Few would deny that Catholic primary education in Ireland is facing a testing time. It is at a crossroads and its future will be affected not only by the decisions taken now but also by failure to take decisions. Change is inevitable and the Catholic Church, as Patron of 92% of national primary schools, must look to its future and must engage with change in a spirit of ethical authenticity suitable for postmodern Ireland. As Groom (2003) succinctly puts it :

> there is ample evidence that the 'reality of experience' at this time poses a deep crisis for Ireland and for Irish education...for there is much riding on how we negotiate our way through this time of seismic shifts and transitions. Irish education is likely at a make-or-break point, when the socio-cultural forces at work could prove terribly destructive or lend a lease of new life. (p.35)

I undertake this work in the interest of a new lease of life.

CHAPTER 1

READING THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES:

A HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL OVERVIEW OF
CATHOLIC PRIMARY EDUCATION IN IRELAND
SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF THE NATIONAL SCHOOL SYSTEM

"The creative exercise of imagining a way forward for Catholic education will only succeed if it is connected to the work of memory" (Lane, 2003).

1.1 Introduction

While it is one thing to explore the issue of Catholic education, it is another to explore the issue of Catholic education in Ireland where a unique set of historical, social, cultural and economic circumstances have combined to bring the Catholic Church to where it finds itself today as Patron of over 90% of national primary schools. Thus, any examination of the future of Catholic primary education in Ireland must consider the historical contexts which have shaped and influenced its development and the political and social context in which it now operates.

Firstly, an empirical exploration of the socio-cultural conditions from which it emerged is essential to an understanding of how the Catholic Church came to play such a critical and dominant role in the provision of primary education in Ireland and, secondly, any articulation of how authentic Catholic primary education should function in Irish society today must be informed by an objective understanding of the contemporary cultural and political mores and societal norms in which it now operates.

This Chapter is in two parts. The first part explores the development of Catholic primary schools in Ireland since the establishment of the national primary school system in 1831, highlighting the history of Church/State relations and its effect on control of the primary education sector. The second part then elucidates contemporary issues and challenges facing Catholic education in twenty-first century Ireland, as identified by the author. It also examines how both the Church and State are responding to these challenges.

Grace (2002) contends that the dialectic of retreat and mission shapes and patterns Catholic schooling in different societies and across different historical periods. "Retreat" is understood as the Church in defence mode – establishing schools "as citadels and fortresses for the preservation of the faith in a hostile external environment characterised by a dominant...[non-Catholic] order,....anti-Catholic prejudice and the growing influence of secularisation" (Grace, 2002, p.7). "Mission", on the other hand, implies both "the mission of universal access" (Grace, 2002, p.10) i.e. the provision of a place in a Catholic school for every Catholic child, and also the mission of evangelisation – to transmit and renew the sacred truths of the Catholic faith to society.

I consider this lens of retreat and mission to be particularly appropriate when analysing Catholic primary education in the Irish context. This Chapter, while locating the enterprise of Catholic primary schooling in relation to its theoretical and cultural contexts, past and present, also traces the tension between retreat and mission in the context of Irish Catholic primary schools - from the formation of eighteenth century schools as bastions of Catholicism in unsympathetic cultural conditions, through the nineteenth century and the

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demands of a more self-confident Church demanding separate, State–supported education for Catholics as a right, to a Church faced with the most powerful challenge of all – the development of secularisation in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

The analysis in terms of retreat and mission is then augmented by an analysis in terms of authoritarianism and authenticity i.e. whether the Irish Church's management of primary education reflects a pragmatic desire to gain and maintain control of the education system at any cost or whether its involvement is based on criteria that are at once rational and authentic. It might even reflect a hybrid of both operational methods – in historical and in current socio-political contexts. Part 1 begins with the past.

PART 1 – READING THE SIGNS OF TIMES PAST

1.2 Catholic Primary Education in Ireland from the 1830s to the 1980s

Fuller (2002) points out that "political, social and religious developments in the course of the nineteenth century hold the key to understanding both the prestige of Irish Catholicism and Catholic education up to the 1970s and the enormous change in the Church's standing in the intervening years" (p.ix). Furthermore, Lonergan (1985(d)) considers that "it is through the meanings we accept and the values we embrace that we constitute both ourselves and our communities, our authentic and unauthentic traditions, our heady bursts of progress and our head-long periods of decline, of breakdown, of dissolution and decay" (p.215). Thus, before attempting to explore an authentic vision of Catholic primary education for contemporary Irish society, a brief but frank appraisal of the Catholic Church's engagement with education and with the State over the last two centuries is required.

1.2.1 The Principle of Denominational Education and the Struggle for Control of the Primary Education System

1.2.1.1 Catholic education in Penal Times

In Ireland, prior to the nineteenth century, the State maintained a hostile approach to Catholicism with the notorious system of penal legislation prohibiting much Catholic practice. One of the first of the Penal Laws specified that "no person of the popish religion shall publicly or in private houses teach school, or instruct youth in learning within this realm...". While Lecky (1913, p.148), the Protestant historian, notes that "the legislation on the subject of Catholic education may be briefly described, for it amounted simply to universal, unqualified and unlimited proscription", Walsh (2008) wryly comments that "a law so unjust as this pleaded to be defied and the Irish of the eighteenth century were equal to the challenge".

Although the English Government sponsored schools in Ireland which were open to Catholic children, the majority of the Catholic population refused to send their children to these schools. It is significant that, even the under threat of the penal laws, the Catholic population sought to provide Catholic education for Catholic children and founded what were known as the hedge schools or pay schools[2].

On the one hand, the setting up of the hedge schools is reflective of Catholicism in retreat mode – retreat from the influence of the State schools which were viewed as proselytising, Anglicizing and only for those who could afford them. However, it is also reflective of Catholicism in missionary mode – ensuring that, even in this extremely hostile environment, all Catholic children could access Catholic education. And, finally, perhaps the era is also reflective of a Church motivated by an authentic desire to provide primary education for the poor of Ireland. Among others, Nano Nagle defied the Penal Laws to open Presentation Schools for the children of the poor in the mid-1700s, followed by Edmund Rice who opened schools for the poor in 1802. As shall be seen, this complex interplay between retreat and mission is evidenced throughout the history of Catholic primary education in Ireland.

1.2.1.2 The establishment of a national school system
Following the Act of Union in 1800/1801, the new education policy adopted by the State supported the combined education of pupils of different denominations. In 1831, Lord Stanley, the Chief Secretary for Ireland,

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[2] Such schools were more common than is often realised – with a Commission of Inquiry reporting in 1826 that of the 550,000 pupils enrolled in all schools in Ireland, 403,000 were in hedge schools.

announced the institution of a Board "to superintend a system of education, from which should be banished even the suspicion of proselytism, and which, admitting children of all religious persuasions, should not interfere with the peculiar tenets of any" (Stanley Letter, 1831). The national primary school system was thus inaugurated on this State-aided, multi-denominational basis. However, while pupils were to be educated together for secular subjects, elaborate arrangements were made for separate provision for religious instruction. The State also established two teacher training colleges - in Marlborough Street, in Dublin, in 1838, for male students, and in Talbot Street, in Dublin, in 1842, for female students. These Colleges were conducted also on a mixed denominational basis.

From the outset, the Catholic Church's reaction to the State initiatives in education was largely, with some notable exceptions[3], one of opposition. The bishops were adamant that the preservation of Catholic religious culture required separate school provision and, in 1850, the Synod of Thurles declared strong opposition both to the State's involvement in education and to the mixed denominational nature of primary schools and teacher training colleges. The Catholic Church began to take its own initiatives in the area of primary education. In 1875, the Church established St. Patrick's Teacher Training College, in Dublin, and, in 1877, Archbishop (later Cardinal) Cullen became manager of the new Sisters of Mercy Training College in Baggot Street, in Dublin. These were Catholic colleges for Catholic male and female student teachers respectively and operated as counter institutions to those already

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[3] One such exception was Dr. Murray, Archbishop of Dublin, who accepted the invitation of the Government to be a member of the Board. Other members of the hierarchy, notably Bishop Doyle of Kildare and Leighin, encouraged their clergy to apply to the Board for aid for their schools (Hyland, 1987).

established by the State. Also, from the early nineteenth century, religious orders began to establish primary schools throughout Ireland – as noted earlier, Nano Nagle founded the Presentation Sisters in 1782, Edmund Rice: the Christian Brothers in 1802; Mother Mary Aikenhead: the Sisters of Charity in 1816, Frances Ball: the Sisters of Loreto in 1822, and Catherine McAuley: the Sisters of Mercy in 1827.

The Catholic Church was not alone in its objections to multi-denominational education. From the outset, there was also opposition to the mixed denominational basis of the primary school system from the other main Irish Christian churches, viz. – the Presbyterian and Anglican Churches. In 1840, accommodations were made whereby Presbyterians were allowed to conduct their schools along distinctly more denominational lines and yet stay within the system. This in turn also made the national system more acceptable to Anglicans and from the 1850s most Church of Ireland schools (largely due to financial pressures), entered the system.

Ironically, however, those who stood to gain most from these concessions were Catholics. Demographics dictated that the bulk of national schools were attended by Catholics. So, schools which were in theory mixed, became denominational *de facto* by mid-century. Furthermore, by organising the local applications for schools, Catholic priests were able to become managers of national schools. Thus, while the system still fell short of the denominational education sought by all Church authorities, the framework for national primary schools was tolerated and pragmatically accepted and worked by the Catholic Bishops.

Hence, more and more over time, it came to resemble an ideal situation from their point of view and gave the Church a great deal of control over primary education. In 1900, the Bishops' pastoral letter stated that: "the system of National education…is now, in fact, whatever it is in name, as denominational almost as we could desire. In most of its schools there is no mixed education whatsoever" (cited in Coolahan (2006), p.93). And so, almost from its origins, the national primary system of education in Ireland was denominationally based.

While certainly it can be argued that the Church's resistance to the proposed multi-denominational basis of the national school system is reflective of cultural retreatism and a desire to establish Catholic schools in the mode of "cultural and faith bastion[s] against the potentially polluting effects of hegemonic Protestantism" (Grace, 2002, p.8), ironically, it is clearly also evident that the Church was in zealous mission mode – growing in self-confidence and fighting for and succeeding in establishing the principle and practice of Catholic schools for Catholic children. Now the challenge was to maintain control of the system.

1.2.1.3 Catholic primary education post-independence

Given that by the middle of the nineteenth century, the Churches had effectively taken control of primary schools from the civil authorities, Church confidence was high and remained so into the twentieth century. The Catholic Church strongly protected its control of the primary education system. An increasingly authoritarian approach now began to overshadow the missionary mode. For example, in the years running up to the Act of Independence in 1922, the Catholic Church was strongly opposed to a proposed Education Bill; as from the

Church's point of view it involved ceding some controls, which had been hard won, to a new control agency and county committees. The measure was eventually withdrawn in December 1920. However, the acrimonious debate cast a long shadow of an increasingly powerful and dominant Church over the future of education in Ireland and served as a warning to the new State that it would undertake change in education at its peril.

On the eve of independence, in October 1921, the Catholic Primary Managers' Association (CPSMA) declared:

> We feel confident that an Irish government established by the people for the people...will always recognise and respect the principles which must regulate and govern Catholic education. And, in view of pending changes in Irish education, we wish to assert the great fundamental principle that the only satisfactory system of education for Catholics is one where Catholic children are taught in Catholic schools by Catholic teachers under Catholic control. (CPSMA Minutes, October 1921).

Following independence, as Coolahan (2006) observes, what is most striking about State-Church relations regarding education is the "extraordinary harmonious accord" (pp.95-96) which occurred for the next four decades. One of the most outstanding features of Irish Catholic culture in the post-independence era was the extent to which the State, by the actions, words and public appearances of its representatives, legitimated the Catholic ethos of society in general and of education in particular. And the Church-State alliance can be seen to be a mutually reinforcing one. The bishops were prepared to support the new State and endorse its political legitimacy (which was being contested by the anti-treaty Republicans), and the rulers of the new State were not disposed to question the authority of the Church in matters to do with health or sexual morality, or, in particular, education. The Catholic Church jealously

guarded its control over education viewing it as a vital means of transmitting Catholic cultural heritage. Symbiotically, a ready-made school system held inestimable practical and financial advantages for the native government seeking to establish itself.

Eoin Mac Neill, the first Free State Minister for Education, set the tone for his successors when he deplored what he called "statism" in education. The same attitude was reflected right up to mid-century when, in 1956, Richard Mulcahy made famous reference to his role as Minister for Education as being that of a "kind of dungaree man" or "plumber" who would "take the knock out of the pipes" but would refrain from "pontificating" on the deeper philosophical issues of education. He was also careful to point out that teachers, syllabuses and textbooks in every branch of education should be informed by the "spirit" underlying the Catholic conception of education. (Dáil debates, July 19, 1956).

This delimited role of the State in relation to education continued for four decades post-independence. O'Buachalla (1988) has shown that successive governments between 1922 and 1957, irrespective of party politics, approached educational issues with a deep caution and sensitivity. In 1937, in the drafting of the new Constitution, Taoiseach, Eamonn DeValera, engaged in extensive consultation with key Church personnel, in particular Dr. John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin. Article 42 of the Constitution comprises a summary of Catholic teaching on education, emphasising parents' role as the primary educators of their child, and going on to assert that "the State shall not oblige parents in violation of their conscience...to send their children to schools established by the State or to any particular type of school designated by the

State" (Bunreacht na hÉireann, 1937). Thus, with the implied support for denominational schools within the Constitution (which subsequently has been confirmed by judicial rulings (Glendenning, 1999)), the rights of the State with regard to education became heavily circumscribed.

As noted earlier, the Catholic Church in Ireland in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century was in both retreat and mission mode. On the one hand, in what could be deemed cultural retreat mode – it was absolute in its conviction of the need for Catholic schools for Catholic pupils in order to protect them from the influences of Protestant society. On the other hand, in mission mode, it was insisting on the provision of a place in a Catholic school for every Catholic pupil. Post-independence, and for the next fifty years, the Church continued to insist on separate denominational education in the belief that, in the words of Archbishop McQuaid in 1953, "no matter what safeguards [are] provided, the Catholics take on the colour of the Protestant mentality and morals" (cited in Fuller, 2002, p.180)

However, the situation in the post-independence years is more complex. While continuing to promote and provide for denominational schools, one could hardly identify a Church whose primacy was asserted in the Constitution of the land and whose doctrines and teachings were reflected in Irish law and in all aspects of Irish life - as being "in retreat".

There was no longer a need for retreat mode – Catholic culture was the culture of Irish society and the vast majority of primary schools were firmly under Church control. There was no longer a need for missionary mode – there was a

Catholic primary school in every parish in Ireland. Now the battle was between authoritarianism and authenticity.

In such an environment - a Church in the ascendant perhaps inevitably became more authoritarian and absolutist – not least in relation to Catholic education. Whyte (1971), commenting on the reluctance of the State to interfere in educational matters, observes that

> this is not because the Church's claims have been moderate; on the contrary, it has carved out for itself a more extensive control over education in Ireland than in any other country in the world. It is because the Church has insisted on its claims with such force that the State has been extremely cautious in interfering in its domain. (p.21)

And if the State were reluctant to take on an authoritarian Church – then even more so the Catholic laity who, pre the Second Vatican Council, unquestioningly followed the Church's directives on education – particularly in relation to Catholic education for Catholic children. Indeed, the Bishops' attitude towards multi-denominational education continued to harden. In 1956, they imposed an outright ban on Catholics attending Trinity College declaring this prohibition to be "under grave obligation"; and, in 1963, Archbishop McQuaid (Irish Independent, 1963, p.6) reminded parents, in his annual Lenten regulations, that "the Church forbids parents and guardians to send a child to any non-Catholic school, whether primary or secondary or continuation or university".

However, to accuse the Church of simply adopting an authoritarian and autocratic stance may be overlooking a more complex reality. Akenson observes that the "true triumph of the Catholic Church in the field of education was not that it gained such extensive control over the schooling process; rather the

triumph was its hegemony was won not by the repression of popular sentiment but by articulating ideas and attitudes compatible with the popular will" (p.108).

While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the wider demographic and socio-economic contexts and dynamics which allowed a Catholic hegemony to take hold of Irish society, in order to fully understand the Church's unquestioned and unchallenged control over education, it must be remembered that there was an almost instinctual association of Catholicism with all aspects of the Irish way of life (see, for example, Fuller 2002, Fennell 1968).

In many ways, between 1922 and the 1960s, the national identity took on Catholic identity. Catholic culture was *the* popular culture in most of the Republic of Ireland and many aspects of society gave public expression to that culture, speaking volumes about taken for granted assumptions, shared meanings, high levels of social solidarity, and a world view informed by the spirit of Catholicism which was reflected and reinforced in the essentially cohesive nature of the community.

To say that there was no indication or sign of secularisation in the Ireland of the 1950s would be, in Fuller's (2002, p.70) view, an understatement. However, the 1970s heralded three-fold change. Firstly, in the era of mass communications, people's horizons were greatly expanded. Authoritarianism and the right of people to dictate to others were in question. A new era was dawning when people were becoming more independent-minded, more open to all manner of influences and less passive and less conformist in their thinking. Openness,

transparency and accountability began to be demanded of a Church which had enjoyed an aloof authority and unquestioned respect for over a century. While Ireland maintained a large Catholic population, Fuller (2002) notes that the essence of Catholicism in terms of its outlook, how it influenced its adherents, how it influenced the Irish cultural landscape, how it was presented, and perhaps most importantly of all, how it was interpreted and translated into the way of life of Irish Catholics was utterly transformed.

Secondly, change was also happening within the Church. In the post-Conciliar atmosphere of freedom of conscience, the Bishops finally issued official statements, in the 1970s, to the effect that they did not expect the civil law to uphold the Catholic moral order. An amendment to the Constitution was carried, unopposed by the Catholic Church, to delete two sub-sections of Article 44 of the Constitution which referred to the "special position of the Holy Catholic Apostolic and Roman Church".

Thirdly, and finally, the post-1960 period also involved an era of extensive and accelerated social, economic, political and cultural change. Gradually, from the early 1960s, the State assumed a more active and assertive role in educational policy in structural, curricular and managerial areas.

While, as noted earlier, in the 1950s Minister Mulcahy had characterised his role as Minister for Education as "a kind of dungaree man" who would "take the knock out of the pipes", Minister Hillary, in the early 1960s, used the more apt metaphor of being captain of the ship. And, in 1968, in a celebrated and highly significant article in the publication *Studies*, Mr. Seán O'Connor (1968),

Assistant Secretary of the Department of Education, addressed the "problem of Church-State relations in respect to education" and asserted that

> I believe a change must be made...No one wants to push the religious out of education; that would be disastrous, but I want them in as partners, not always as masters. I believe that there is need for dialogue at the highest level between Church and State on the problems in education now surfacing...The dialogue must be frank and range over a wide area. (pp.233-249

Indeed, dialogue did begin to take place and, despite surface difficulties, the Catholic bishops proved to be not alone agents of great symbolic power but also adroit political negotiators for the rights of denominational schools[4]. However, while in certain respects, Irish education has become increasingly democratised in the last four decades at both local and national level, Fuller (2002, p.161) notes that State influence has not become as all-pervasive in the primary as it has in the secondary sector. As will be shown in Part Two of this Chapter, while the Church has maintained its control over primary education through the 1980s and 1990s and into the twenty-first century, huge pressures are now mounting on the Church to review its control of the primary school sector in light of liberal developments in Irish society and the contemporary reality of a multi-cultural and pluralistic society.

In such circumstances, the imperative to develop a more relevant contemporary Catholic approach to education is non-negotiable. Neither cultural retreatism nor cultural imperialism will suffice. What is required is cultural realism. The Church must now faithfully interpret the signs of the times. In so doing, the first

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[4] For example, while not pertaining to primary education, in the early 1970s the considerable power that the bishops still wielded was evidenced by the influence they were able to exert on the character of the newly proposed community schools, so that they approximated as closely as possible to the Catholic ideal of education in management structures, ownership and staffing.

step is to objectively acknowledge the issues facing Catholic primary education in contemporary Irish society, followed by imaginative and authentic action. Part 2 now identifies these challenges and examines the current response of Church and State.

PART 2 – READING THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES PRESENT

1.3 Issues and Challenges Facing Catholic Primary Education in Ireland Today

While the Catholic Church, as Patron of over 92% of primary schools in Ireland, still commands an overwhelmingly dominant position in controlling the primary education system, it is now operating in a society where radically new forms of power and ideology significantly curtail its influence. At this time in the history of primary schooling in Ireland, many powerful and influential voices, both in Irish education and in Irish society in general, are speaking out on the issue of school governance - amid increasing concern that the current Church-based school patronage system, dating back nearly two centuries, does not reflect the diverse nature of postmodern Irish society. The Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN) has observed that "changes to school governance structures are inevitable in response to a New Ireland" (IPPN, 2008, p.1); the general secretary of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO), John Carr (2008) has stated that "....given the limited potential of denominational schools to accommodate fully Ireland's new diversity and the limitations of the exchequer to provide an unlimited choice it is time to consider how best to provide for a changing population"; the former Minister for Education and Science, Ms. Mary Hanafin, has stated that "we must plan now for the emerging diversity of needs across the primary education system" (DES, 2008); and a National Conference on the future of school governance in Ireland was held by the Department of Education and Science (DES), in June 2008, "to consider the implications of the new societal diversity on the future organisation of our schools" (DES, 2008).

While Catholic bishops may still see themselves as guardians of the distinctive mission of Catholic schools and articulators of the Catholic position on issues such as curriculum, enrolment policy, and management, clearly, pressure is mounting from a variety of sources regarding the future governance of primary schools in a multi-cultural and increasingly secular Irish society.

It must be noted, however, that while many in Irish society now question the legitimacy of the existing Patronage system and seek to secure changes in the existing structures, Akenson points out that "lest the arrangement of Irish educational institutions to suit the Church be misinterpreted as a clerical dictatorship, one must hasten to add that the overwhelming majority of the laity seem to have been satisfied with the situation" (p.97). Secular Ireland did not assert its authority nor its responsibility regarding State provision of an adequately pluralist system of primary education throughout much of the twentieth century. It could legitimately be argued, therefore, that it is the State rather than the Catholic Church which now faces the biggest challenge. Given the historically dominant role of the Catholic Church in primary education – and in the interests of acting with authenticity – the Church can now play its role in collaboration with the State and contribute to the creation of a new and equitable system of primary education.

I have distilled the challenges facing the Catholic Church's central involvement in primary education at this time to six key issues:

1.3.1 Declining Resources of the Catholic Church

The declining numbers of priests and religious, allied to the rapidly ageing profile of those in-service, have forced the Catholic hierarchy and religious congregations increasingly to transfer the management of Catholic primary schools to lay principal teachers, lay Chairpersons of Boards of Management and School Trusts run by lay people.

There was an 18% decline in the number of Diocesan priests between 1981 (3,762) and 2006 (3,078) and, if current trends continue, the number of priests will fall to just one-third of current numbers over the next twenty years. Today, over one-third of Chairpersons of Boards of Management of Catholic primary schools are lay men and women, and many religious congregations are currently in the process of handing over trusteeship of their schools to charitable Trusts run by lay people e.g. the Christian Brothers[5].

Clearly, the resources of the institutional Church are weaker at this time than ever before, both in terms of its personnel resources and also in terms of its social and cultural capital where a succession of scandals has bruised the Catholic Church. The publication of the Report of the Ferns Inquiry in 2005, the Cloyne Report in 2008 (NBSCCC), and, in particular, the publication of the Ryan Report in May 2009 cataloguing the widespread abuse of children in institutional care in the State in industrial and reform schools run by religious orders, has led many in public life, and in the media, to call for new secular

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[5] Alternatively, some religious congregations are joining together to form one Trust to govern all of their schools e.g. twelve religious congregations, with trusteeship of over 60 schools, have joined together to form the Le Céile Trust to "carry out the legal and inspirational role of trusteeship that has, up to now, been done by individual congregations" (Le Céile, 2008).

management structures for schools (See, for example, Senate Speeches, November 10, 2005; Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Science, Ferns Report Discussion, March 23, 2006; O'Donnell, 2005; Carey, 2009; O'Toole, 2009).

While some of these developments may be conceived as having positive outcomes, for example, in empowering more lay people to play an active role in the Church, Tuohy (2007) points out that while "the first generation of lay Principals taught alongside religious and imbibed by osmosis the value system...the second generation of lay Principals, raised immediately after Vatican II, will have a very different grounding in Catholic education" (p.279). In interview, Bishop Leo O'Reilly (2008) commented on "how much knowledge and expertise" the local priest had as Chairman of the Board of Management of primary schools, in comparison to lay people - particularly in relation to "technicalities and appreciation of the Catholic ethos". Thus, the decline in the number of priests and religious is seen as having major implications for leadership succession in Catholic schools and the continuation and nurturance of the Catholic ethos of primary schools.

1.3.2 Declining Numbers of Irish Catholics and Increasing Numbers of Non-Irish National Pupils

Along with declining numbers of priests and religious, results from Census 2006 (Central Statistics Office, 2006) show that the number of lay Catholics in Ireland is also declining, from 91.6% of the population in 2002, to 86.8% in 2006. In tandem with this, the proportion of couples choosing a civil over a religious

marriage ceremony has increased sixfold over a 14 year period, to 22.5% in 2005[6].

Census 2006 also shows that 10% of the Irish population are now of a nationality other than Irish – up from 5.8% in 2002. While approximately 50% of the non-Irish national population are Catholic, there is also an increasing number of members of other religions and none - for example, the Islamic population, while still relatively small, now stands at 32,500, up by almost 70% on 2002.

It should be noted that there are currently no composite statistics available for the number of non-Catholic children attending Catholic primary schools in Ireland. However, in the absence of available alternatives, clearly the number of non-Catholic pupils in Catholic schools is increasing and will continue to increase. Thus, a major challenge facing Catholic primary schools is how to deal authentically with an increasingly multi-denominational pupil population in a denominational setting.

1.3.3 Staffing in Catholic Schools

A further challenge in the context of declining numbers of Catholics pertains to teachers in Catholic schools. All primary school teachers in Ireland are, in the first instance, educated in a largely denominational College system of teacher education, regardless of their own denominational background, beliefs or practice, and they must then work in a predominantly Catholic system of

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[6] At the present rate of change, it is expected that within approximately seven years, one third of all marriages will involve civil ceremonies and that stage has already been reached in all major cities in Ireland (e.g. in Limerick in 2005 it was 38%).

primary schooling. Tuohy (2007), commenting on the Irish situation, states that "it would appear that many teachers have not made a conscious decision to teach in Catholic schools because of the mission of that school" (p.278). Indeed, a survey undertaken by the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO), in 2002, indicated that at least 10% of surveyed primary teachers do not wish to teach religion and that many fail to inform their school of this due to fears regarding employment, job mobility and career prospects. Dunne (1991, p.44) considers that this leads to a situation in which what is at stake is not simply "teachers' rights" but rather "the integrity of our whole system" and it is an issue which must be addressed.

1.3.4 Struggle for Control and the Demand for Pluralist Primary Education

The last decades of the twentieth-century demonstrated quite dramatically the limitations of Irish Catholic power in education given the changed cultural, social and political conditions. Two examples serve to illustrate this:

Firstly, the beginning of change in control of education, and a move towards a more democratic model, was evident in the establishment of a Board of Management system for national primary schools in 1975. Prior to this, each school had been managed by an individual manager – usually the local clergyman. However, Tussing (1978) observes that initially the Boards effectively remained patron-controlled, and it was not until 1998 that the Education Act gave full expression to a move away from total Patron-control to a recognition of the importance of partnership with other participants in the education process. Boards of Management now comprise a partnership of parents, teachers, community representatives and Patrons' nominees.

Secondly, dramatic change was also evident in a comparison of the philosophy, ideology and religious adherence espoused in the Primary School Curriculum of 1971 and that of the revised Primary School Curriculum of 1999. In outlining the core aims of primary education, the 1971 Curriculum states that "each human being is created in God's image. He [sic] has a life to lead and a soul to be saved" (DES, 1971, p.12); and it further states that "a religious spirit should inform and vivify the whole work of the school" (DES, 1971, p.23). Indeed, one of the guiding principles for the construction of the new integrated Primary School Curriculum of 1971 was that "the separation of religious and secular instruction into differentiated subject compartments serves only to throw the whole educational function out of focus" (DES, 1971, p.19).

However, the revised Primary School Curriculum of 1999 states that "since [1971] there has been a combination of educational, economic, social and cultural developments in Irish society" and that "these developments have been taken into account in [the] revision" (DES, 1999, p.2). The revised curriculum makes no mention of God, of a "religious spirit" permeating the work of the school, of each pupil having "a soul to be saved", or indeed of religious education - except to state that "the development and implementation of the curriculum in Religious Education in primary schools remains the responsibility of the different Church authorities" (DES, 1999, p. 2) thus reflecting a clear separation of responsibilities between the Church and the State in relation to religious education.

Allied to the State's challenges to the Church's previously unquestioned control of primary schools, in postmodern Ireland, there is a customer culture apparent which manifests itself in new ideologies of market forces, individualism, and consumer choice. In relation to schools, this is apparent in increased parental power; parental choice can be seen as the legitimate driving force behind the increase in the number of multi-denominational schools which have been established in recent years. A relatively small but growing number of multi-denominational schools have now been established in response to local parental demand. A company limited by guarantee, Educate Together, is currently the largest Patron of multi-denominational schools in Ireland with 56 primary schools in operation. More than two-thirds of new schools established since 2005 are multi-denominational or Irish language schools.

There is now a significant and rapidly growing demand among parents for pluralist primary education – first and foremost as a right, and, also, even for Catholic parents, as a philosophical ideal. This is verified in recent surveys which show that 73% of parents now consider that they should have the right to choose from a variety of publicly funded schools for their children (ICBC 2008, Iona Institute 2008). While this is a challenge primarily for the State – and not necessarily for the Catholic Church – again, in an attempt to be truly authentic, the Church must examine the feasibility, legitimacy and authenticity of maintaining control of over 90% of primary schools.

1.3.5 Defending Denominational Education

In tandem with these external, societal forces of the declining priest and religious population, the declining number of lay Catholic pupils, the position of

non-Catholic teachers, and the increasing demand for plurality of school patronage, pressure for change can also be seen to be emanating from within the Church itself. For many years, radical Catholics, such as Eagleton (1967) and Hirst (1976), have considered that a separate system of Catholic schooling maintains a stance of theological, social and educational exclusivity when what is required is greater inclusivity, the breakdown of religious divides and integration. Indeed, Eagleton (1967, p.8) claims that maintaining separate Catholic schools is "an inauthentic expression of the sacramental Christian community"[7].

Thus, a fifth challenge for the Church today is to justify and defend denominational education – or perhaps to clarify its philosophy and role in the face of accusations of exclusivity and of not being reflective of, and therefore not appropriate to, our increasingly pluralist society.

All of the above educational changes and challenges – structural, curricular and pedagogical – fundamentally altered the nature of Catholic schooling in Ireland and Fuller (2002) points out that they heralded an end to the conformity which had typified Catholicism and Catholic schools in the 1950s, '60s and '70s. However, notwithstanding these pressures and challenges, undoubtedly, the issue which most highlighted and called into question the suitability of the Catholic Church's patronage of over 92% of national primary schools in

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[7] Such calls have also been made in Ireland - for example, in 2007, the founder of the Immigrant Council of Ireland, Sr. Stanislaus Kennedy (2007) called on the Catholic Church to "plan to withdraw from running schools", stating that the new diversity of the Irish population should be reflected in the education system, and that it was for the State, and not the Church, to plan for those evolving needs.

postmodern Ireland was the shortage of school places which occurred in Balbriggan, in North County Dublin, in September 2007.

1.4 The "Balbriggan Crisis"

At the commencement of the school year 2007/2008, up to 90 children of school-going age could not secure places in their local national schools, in Balbriggan, Co. Dublin. Almost all of the children concerned were Irish-born of African parents. As a result, two new "emergency" schools were opened to deal with the situation. However, both had an enrolment which was almost exclusively made up of black and minority-ethnic pupils.

Many, and particularly some key voices in the Irish media (see Figure 1 below), blamed the Dublin archdiocese's school enrolment policy - of places for Catholic children first - as the cause of the problem, and the "Balbriggan Crisis", as it became known, led many to conclude that Catholic schools are exclusive, divisive and even, in the words of the leader of the Opposition, a form of "education apartheid...[where] a baptismal certificate [had] become a latter day pass book" (Gilmore, 2007).

FIGURE 1 – The Media Debate

> *Extracts from articles by leading Irish social commentators and journalists*
> "The Balbriggan school problem has arisen from the conflict between the rapidly changing religious character of Irish society and the confessional character of our educational system". *Former Taoiseach, Garret Fitzgerald (Irish Times, 08/09/2007)*
>
> "We now have schools being opened on an emergency basis to cater for the children of immigrants. Did we witness the end of Apartheid in Africa, only to see the day when, here in Ireland, a baptismal certificate would become a latter day pass book".
> *Eamon Gilmore, Leader of the Labour Party (quoted in Irish Times, 17/11/2007)*
>
> "Under Canon Law, the Roman Catholic Church has two duties in education: to preserve and to proselytise..... Being inclusive, liberal, and open to outside influences is not part of the package. Time....for the State to move to end religious dominance (or as it is called, "Patronage") of the primary school system".
> *Emer O'Kelly (Sunday Independent, 23/09/2007)*
>
> "The recent crisis over primary school places in Balbriggan underlines the urgent need for a fundamental restructuring of our primary school system to ensure equality of access for all children. It is time for religion to be left outside the school door".
> *Senator Ivana Bacik (Irish Times, 27/09/2007)*
>
> "We are so used to the absurd situation of primary education in Ireland that we forget how crazy it is that one of the most basic tasks of modern States is left to a ramshackle network of over 3,000 private institutions....What is completely absent is any acknowledgement that the current model doesn't work anymore".
> *Fintan O'Toole (Irish Times, 18/12/2007)*
>
>
> *Sample of Broadsheet Headlines (September 2007 - April 2008)*
>
> Faith before Fairness *(Irish Times 08/09/2007)*
> Why Religious Bias Should Not Be One Of The Three Rs
> *(Sunday Independent, 20/09/2007)*
> Patronage System Unable to Meet Needs of Modern Society
> *(Irish Times 16/10/2007)*
> Culture Clash As Education Sector Struggles With Modernization
> *(Irish Times, 11/12/2007)*
> Equal Education For All Children – As Long As They're Catholic
> *(Irish Independent 14/01/2008)*
> Now is the Time to Reconsider Who Runs our National Schools
> *(Irish Times 29/01/2008)*
> Men in Black will Fight till End to Control Education
> *(Sunday Independent 30/03/2008)*
> Is Denominational Education Suitable for 21st Century Ireland?
> *(Irish Times 07/04/2008)*

In response to the crisis, the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Diarmuid Martin (2007(a)), was firm in his conviction that the shortage of school places was the result of bad planning for school provision by the Department of Education and

Science (DES) and Local Authorities, and stated that it was "grossly unfair" to blame the Archdiocese's enrolment policy. In a robust defence of Catholic primary schools, he commented that "no places were available in the Church of Ireland, Gaelscoil or Educate Together schools either" and he pointed to the multi-ethnic and multi-faith composition of all of the schools in the area, including the Catholic schools[8].

However, the Equality Authority issued a statement which expressed concern at the "emergence in effect of segregated primary school provision for black and minority ethnic students" (Equality Authority, 2007) and stated that the enrolment policy of Catholic schools might breach some provisions of the Equal Status Act 2000[9] and also Article 12 of the European "Race" Directive (2000)[10].

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[8] The Archbishop's position was supported at the time by the General Secretary of the INTO, John Carr (2007), who commented that "one totally unfair consequence of the failure to plan for school places in Balbriggan...is the impression that some primary schools...do not treat all children equally or fairly. Nothing could be further from the truth"; and by Paul Rowe, Chief Executive of Educate Together (Rowe, 2007), who stated that "Catholic schools and their enrolment policies are not the cause of school place shortages.....Neither are they the cause of religious discrimination in the system".

[9] Section 7(3)(c) of the Equal Status Act 2000 provides that an educational establishment does not discriminate under the Act "where the.....objective of the school is to provide education...which promotes certain religious values, [and] it admits persons of a particular religious denomination in preference to others" - as in the case of over-subscription, or "it refuses to admit as a student a person who is not of that denomination and, in the case of a refusal, it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school". The Authority suggested that while the exemption might appear to allow a restrictive enrolment policy, in practice giving priority to pupils of the school's religious denomination may be open to challenge.

[10] Article 12 of the European "Race" Directive (2000) forbids direct or indirect discrimination. The Directive states that "an apparently neutral provision, criteria or practice [that] puts persons of a racial or ethnic origin at a particular disadvantage compared with other persons [is discriminatory] unless that provision, criteria or practice is objectively justified by a legitimate aim and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary". The Authority argued that the exemption in Section 7(3)(c) of the Equal Status Act could not, therefore, be relied on by denominational schools where indirect discrimination on the ground of race, which is prohibited by the Race directive, is the result.

Following legal opinion, the Catholic Primary Schools' Managers' Association (CPSMA) was resolute that enrolment policies that favour Catholics do not contravene the Equal Status Act and they refuted the suggestion that Article 13 of the European "Race" Directive might further limit the restrictions set out in enrolment policies stating that "the principle of denominational education.....would be deemed to comprise a 'legitimate aim' within the means of the race directive". CPSMA further argued that "no child has been excluded from [Catholic] schools on the ground that such an exclusion was necessary to maintain the school's ethos" - rather they held the Archbishop's line that the problem was due to "overcrowding" (CPSMA, 2007).

However, whether or not denominational schools' enrolment policy was a contributory factor, in analysing the "Balbriggan crisis", the crisis can be seen to have had two major ramifications, the effects of which may herald the most significant change in the structure and provision of primary education in Ireland since the foundation of the State. In the first instance, the crisis highlighted the stark reality that the State had traditionally adopted a largely subsidiary role - essentially ceding responsibility for provision and control of primary education in the main to the Catholic Church, while at the same time underpinning the costs of provision. Despite an influx of immigrants from different religious backgrounds and a growth in the number of parents seeking alternatives to denominational education, the State was exposed as having provided no alternative to a school management system largely controlled by the Catholic Church.

In the second instance, the phenomenon of the "all black" emergency school forced all involved in the provision of primary education, and not least the Catholic Church, to give serious consideration to their policy and practice. It generated a complex debate among key players in education on the challenges that a changing society presents for both new and existing schools in considering issues such as ethos, inclusion, and enrolment policy, and also on the future patronage and management of Irish primary schools.

In sum, the "Balbriggan Crisis" fuelled a growing consensus – among both those in favour of denominational education and those against - that the current system, in which the Catholic Church manages over 3,000 of the 3,280 primary schools in the State, cannot serve the needs of a pluralist society.

Clearly, the main players in primary education – the Catholic Church as the Patron of 92% of national primary schools and the State as pay-master of the system and as the entity charged with responsibility for planning the provision of appropriate education for the children of the State had to respond. The next Section outlines the response of Church and State to date and analyses these responses on the retreat/mission, authoritarian/authentic spectrum.

1.4.1 The Catholic Church Response

In the wake of the "Balbriggan crisis", the hierarchy of the Catholic Church was swift to reply and forthright in its response. In September 2007, the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Diarmuid Martin (2007(a)), gave a ground-breaking interview in which he stated that he would be "very happy to see a plurality of patronage and providers of education" at primary level and that he had "no ambition to run the

entire education system in Dublin". The Archbishop also said that he could envisage "divesting current Catholic schools in areas where there was a demand for a plurality of patronage". Citing the example of an area with five schools, the Archbishop proposed that this situation could be "rationalis[ed]" to ensure "a sufficient number of schools with Catholic and other patrons".

The Archbishop was widely commended for his "open minded approach" (Flynn, 2007) which was heralded as "a welcome and pragmatic acceptance of reality" (Irish Independent Editorial, December 14, 2007). And while the Archbishop's comments could have been construed as a knee-jerk reaction to a crisis situation in the Dublin diocese, where multi-culturalism was a de facto reality and where the majority of multi- and non-denominational schools are being established, one month later, in October 2007, the Bishops' Commission for Education launched a seminal document entitled *Catholic Primary Schools: A Policy for Provision into the Future* (Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference (ICBC), 2007).

At the launch of the policy, Bishop Leo O'Reilly (2007(a)), Chair of the Commission, echoed the Archbishop's words, stating that the Catholic Church in Ireland had "no desire to be the sole provider of education for whole communities" and that "pluralism of provision is very important in modern society". The Policy itself is similarly unequivocal in acknowledging the need for greater plurality of provision in the primary school system and states that "the Catholic Church accepts that there should be choice and diversity within a national education system" (ICBC, 2007, p.6). However, it also maintains that a "vibrant, publicly funded denominational school system is a basic human right

for parents who wish to have such for their children" and points out that this right is supported by national and international agreements.

In tandem with an acceptance of the need for a plurality of patronage in the primary education sector in general, the Church also had to grapple with the issue of enrolment policy in Catholic schools, given the accusation that Catholic admissions policy had led to the exclusion of non-Catholic children from their local schools. On this issue the Church's position was not as unequivocal. In September 2007, the Director of Education for the Archdiocese of Dublin, Ann McDonagh (2007), stated that the Archdiocese had "no desire to provide an education for children of parents who are not interested in a Catholic education"; and she further commented that "we must stick to our enrolment policy of providing an education for Catholic children and siblings first", noting that "this enrolment policy has been public and unchanged since the Education Act, 1998". But, in the realpolitik of twenty-first century Ireland, where the vast majority of parents do not have a choice regarding the type of schools to which they send their children and in the midst of unprecedented discussion and debate on inclusion and integration, this position was clearly not a tenable one. And one month later, the new policy document was to reveal a far less trenchant position. While holding the line that "the children of Catholic parents have first claim on admission to Catholic schools" (ICBC, 2007, p.3), the policy also states that Catholic enrolment policy "...will incorporate the Catholic school's commitment to diversity and inclusivity" (p.5).

How this commitment to diversity and inclusivity in Catholic primary schools was to be achieved, was not made explicit in the policy or translated into

specific criteria for admissions. However, in January 2008, the Archdiocese of Dublin announced the initiative of adjusting the enrolment policy for two parish schools, in Porterstown and Clonsilla, in Dublin 15. From September 2008, Catholic children were to be offered up to two-thirds of places available in these schools and the remaining one-third of places offered to children of other faiths and none. Archbishop Martin (2008(a)) said that while maintaining the clear Catholic ethos and identity of the schools, he was keen to ensure that, "in the absence of an adequate number of school places in the area and of sufficient alternative patronage models", these particular schools would continue to be "good examples of integration", and he considered that the new enrolment measures would "help to ensure that schools, while maintaining their Catholic ethos, would establish a realistic mix of religious and ethnic make-up more or less in line with the overall mix of the area". Once again the initiative was widely welcomed as "a genuine desire to be more inclusive and as an effort to ensure that the schools reflect the multicultural nature of the age" (Irish Times Editorial, January 24, 2008).

However, while it must be assumed that the Church devised the revised policy in good faith and in full knowledge of the prospective enrolment statistics for the two schools in question, its ongoing response - in light of demographic developments, the provision of schools in the area under other patronage bodies, and the possibility of Catholic parents seeking redress under the Education Act if their children do not secure a place in the schools in question - will be followed with interest.

Overall, the Catholic Church's response can be summed up as being open to a plurality of patronage at national level, and evolving in the development of admissions and enrolment policies at local level, while also maintaining the right to retain denominational schools. Authenticity, however, demands more.

Three points can be made. Firstly, an enrolment initiative, innovative though it may be, involving just 0.06% of Catholic primary schools clearly does not address the national issue of enrolment in Catholic primary schools in postmodern Ireland; a policy document which gives "first claim on admissions" to children of Catholic parents does not address the issue of equality of access for the increasing numbers of non-Catholic children seeking primary school places. Secondly, giving a commitment to "diversity" and "inclusivity" in a policy document but remaining silent on how Catholic schools should relate to pupils of other denominations and none in terms of inclusion, curriculum and religious education does not authentically address the challenge of the contemporary Irish primary school classroom; neither does it answer critics' questions regarding legitimation of denominational primary schools in multi-cultural Ireland. Thirdly, welcoming plurality of patronage and speaking of "divesting" some Catholic schools but without detailing how, under what conditions, and when, does not address the issue of the Catholic Church's control of over 90% of primary schools in Ireland.

Implicit in these compromises is a recognition that as the dominant provider of primary education the Catholic Church has to be part of the solution. The larger question as to whether or not such compromises are acceptable from a liberal democratic perspective remains, however, a critical issue - for the Church but,

first and foremost, for the State. A brief synopsis of the State's response in light of the growing multi-cultural and multi-ethnic nature of Irish society follows.

1.4.2 The State Response

In the early years of the twenty-first century, the State has also come under increased pressure from a variety of national and international sources to review the governance of primary schools with both the UN and the Council of Europe issuing direct recommendations to the Irish State to act to ensure that alternatives to faith-based schools were more readily available to Irish parents[11].

However, while public pressure had been mounting and while external voices of concern had been applying pressure on the State to take more control in the planning and delivery of primary education, once again it was the "Balbriggan Crisis" which acted as the main catalyst for change and accelerated the process of establishing a State-run patronage system for primary schools.

In 2006, the Minister for Education, Mary Hanafin, had announced the establishment of a new State-run primary school system, but the first school operating under the new system was not expected to open for several years. However, in December 2007, just three months after the opening of the two emergency schools in North County Dublin, the Minister announced that the new State model of community national school, under the patronage of County

[11] In 2005, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed its concern that non-Catholic children of immigrants could be discriminated against in schools' admissions policies where there was a shortage of places, and called on the Government to "promote the establishment of non-denominational or multi-denominational schools". And in a similar vein, in May 2007, the European Commission on Racism and Integration called for the establishment of beginning the process of establishing more schools in Ireland which embrace all faiths or are secular.

Dublin Vocational Education Committee (CDVEC), would be piloted in two locations – the Phoenix Park, and Phibblestown, Dublin 15 – from September 2008; and a further school, Scoil Choilm, in Diswellstown, Dublin 15, which opened under the temporary patronage of the Catholic Church in September 2007, would transition to the new community model after a two year period.

The Minister (DES, 2007) stated that the new schools will be "inter-denominational in character, aiming to provide for religious education and faith formation during the school day for each of the main faith groups represented". While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine whether it is possible to offer parity of esteem to various religious denominations in denominational, inter-denominational and/or multi-denominational schools, the new model of State primary schools is unique in this regard in the primary school sector in Ireland[12].

The proposal to establish new State-run primary schools was deemed "a defining initiative in the history of Irish education" (Moriarty, 2007), and, once more, the Catholic Church welcomed the initiative, with Bishop Leo O'Reilly (2007(b)) again stating that "the Catholic Church welcomes choice and diversity within the national education system", and with the Archbishop of Dublin (2007(b)) welcoming the beginning of "plurality of choice in our national school system" and welcoming in particular the decision for the "provision for religious education and faith formation during the school day".

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[12] While Catholic schools consider themselves "inclusive" (ICBC, 2007, p.5) and while Educate Together schools offer "equality of access and esteem to all children irrespective of their social, cultural and religious backgrounds" (Educate Together, 2005, p.4) neither system of Patronage offers a variety of religious education during the school day in a single environment as it is envisaged the new schools will.

As noted earlier, when the national school system was established in 1831, it was intended to provide a multi-denominational primary education system which would bring together children from many denominations while providing for separate religious instruction. As we have seen, however, from its origins, however, the system came under attack from the different religious groupings in Ireland, and it materialised into a system of Patronage of national primary schools on a denominational basis. Almost two hundred years later, it would appear that this is an idea whose time has finally come - with the State once again proposing the establishment of a national system of multi-denominational primary schools, with separate religious education, commencing with two schools in September 2008. This time however, there are two notable differences. Firstly, the new schools will exist side-by-side with the existing patronage system and, secondly, the proposal has been welcomed by the mainstream Churches.

1.4.3 Reaction to the Church / State Proposals

While most commentators welcomed the proposal for the establishment of a new model of multi-denominational State primary school, there was also concern that a plurality of providers will mean increased expenditure, fragmentation of provision and could become a catalyst for an even more segregated system. Fears were expressed that a plurality of patronage could lead to the creation of a two-tier system where the middle-class of old Ireland would gravitate towards the traditional, well-established Catholic schools while the majority of newcomer children would attend the new State-run schools, given

that only 25% of Irish people of African ethnic origin, and only 30% of the Irish-Asian population, are Catholics (CSO, 2006).

Ironically, the Catholic Church's continuous call and welcome for a plurality of patrons in the primary system also served to heighten concern regarding the development of a two-tier system. The General Secretary of the INTO stated that the Archbishop's proposal that more education providers were needed required "careful consideration" and he posed the question - "does this proposal envisage a policy of retrenchment by the Catholic Church which would see enrolment in a smaller number of schools restricted to those who attend services or make financial contributions?" (Carr, 2007(B)).

Furthermore, while the Catholic Bishops publicly welcomed the proposed new State schools, suspicions were aroused when it emerged that, in private talks with the DES, the Church had listed a series of "protocols" which they would like effected in the new schools, viz.:

> i) that teachers delivering religious instruction to Catholic students be duly qualified and approved by the competent religious authorities;
> ii) that Diocesan advisers be allowed support, evaluate and have inspection roles in the schools;
> iii) that there be visiting rights for parish clergy and pastoral workers to support sacramental preparation, to provide links with parishes and, where appropriate, to offer pastoral care; and
> iv) on the characteristic spirit of the new schools, that there would be "an emphasis on promoting right relationship with God, self, others and creation".

The fact that these protocols were released to the Irish Independent newspaper, under the Freedom of Information Act (Walsh, 2008), again raised concern regarding the true intentions of the Catholic Church, with Paul Rowe (2008), of Educate Together, stating that the documents left the "suspicion in many minds that the [new] model is being configured primarily to facilitate the withdrawal of the Catholic Church from the management of primary schools, while bestowing on it a privileged position in the new model". Whether or not this is the case, it is clear that important issues such as how to ensure that the emerging system – consisting of State patronage and Church patronage - is fair and equitable to all students, and how to involve the Churches in the governance and religious education dimensions of the new multi-faith schools, have yet to be resolved. In addition, what position the Church will adopt in relation to enrolment policy in Catholic schools in areas where public schools are also located remains to be seen.

1.5 The Catholic School of the Future: Retreat or Mission?

In the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic Ireland of the twenty-first century, it has become increasingly evident that the school ownership system, dating from the nineteenth century, is struggling to meet the challenges posed by rapid social change and the complex needs of schools in postmodern Ireland. In many ways, the events of the first week of September 2007, in Balbriggan, County Dublin – where 90 non-Catholic, non-Irish-national children could not secure places in their local primary schools - offered a microcosm of the changes in Irish society and of the challenges facing Catholic primary schools.

During the ensuing debate, largely played out in the national media, many considered denominational schools to be socially divisive and exclusive and so not suitable for the much changed Ireland of the twenty-first century. However, others considered denominational schools to be an integral part of Irish culture and educational heritage and argued that society must support parental choice regarding their children's education (a principle supported in the Irish Constitution, the Education Act (1998) and in international codes of rights). A poll carried out in April 2008 (Iona Institute, 2008) appeared to mirror accurately the national debate – confirming that Catholic schools remained the most popular choice of parents at 49%, but also finding that 73% of parents considered that they should have the right to choose from a variety of publicly funded schools for their children. With the Catholic Church itself calling for and endorsing a plurality of patronage for the primary school system, one thing is certain - the time has come for change.

The existing structure of primary schooling in Ireland has not kept pace with the rapidly evolving nature of Irish society. Clearly, the State can no longer cede responsibility for the planning and provision of primary education to the Churches but rather has to consider what is a) desirable and b) possible for the future of the primary school system in Ireland. Clearly, now, the Church also has to consider what is authentic, possible and pragmatic in the provision of Catholic primary education in postmodern Ireland.

In a State where for two hundred years, primary education has been provided largely by the Catholic Church, the proposal for a system of multi-denominational State schools poses a serious challenge to the Catholic Church's

control of primary education and may herald an end to the Church's dominance in an area previously under their direct power and influence. In this context, the Church's welcome for the new proposal and its acknowledgement that it is over-represented in the management of schools for the new demographic of Ireland, represents a dramatic new policy approach.

Realistically, in the Ireland of the twenty-first century, defence of the old model of school patronage – hewn out of the vigour and ambition of nineteenth century Irish Catholicism and institutionalised in the apparatus of the State since independence – would seem untenable and out of place, even to the Catholic Church. However, the Church's response, albeit from a position of dominance and control, must be viewed as a defining moment in the history of Irish education and, indeed, Irish society. It must be analysed to ascertain what it reflects regarding the Church's approach to its role in education in a multicultural, multi-ethnic and increasingly secular society.

Firstly, the Church could be viewed as adopting a retreatist position – whereby having acknowledged the need for, and welcoming, multi-denominational schools to cater for non-Catholic pupils they will now retrench to a position where they will run Catholic schools for Catholic pupils only - with the expectation that all non-Catholic children will attend State schools. In this scenario, Catholic schools can retreat from the multi-cultural nature of Irish society - which in the absence of public schools they are currently forced to engage with - and once again become bastions of "defence and separation from a profane world that [is] seen to threaten their [Catholic] integrity" (Grace, 2002, p.8) or in the less provocative but unmistakingly retreatist words of Archbishop

Martin (Martin, 2008(a)) "allowing the specifically Catholic school to be more distinctively Catholic".

In the second instance, the Church's blessing for the new model of State school could be viewed as a realistic acknowledgement and acceptance that secularisation and pluralism have irrevocably changed Irish society and that major systemic change is not only necessary, but desirable, in postmodern Ireland. In this scenario, the Church will engage with the multi-ethnic, multi-faith nature of contemporary society. It will continue to manage Catholic primary schools in areas where this is warranted by parental choice, but will adopt enrolment and admissions policies which are inclusive and reflect the community which they serve, while maintaining their Catholic ethos.

Thirdly, and finally, the church's welcome for the proposed new schools could reflect a purely pragmatic arrangement. The synod of Thurles in 1850, presided over by Archbishop Cullen issued several decrees warning about the dangers of the National School System and stated clearly that the "separate education of Catholic youth is in every way to be preferred to it". However, notwithstanding such ideological objections, the Catholic Church was also able to take a pragmatic view of things. This was captured in Cullen's observation that, while the national System was very dangerous when considered in general because its aim was to introduce a mingling of Protestants and Catholics, "in places where there in fact are no Protestants this mingling cannot be achieved". In a similar vein, in the Ireland of the twenty-first century, given that 86.8% of the population remain Catholic and that the Catholic Church is currently Patron of over 92% of the existing primary schools throughout the country, the Church

could once again take a pragmatic view of the situation and accept the proposed new schools as a development which will not necessarily change the status quo. It could simultaneously endeavour to influence the ethos and religious education programme of the new minority State school system by setting out protocols to be agreed by the DES.

Rather than taking a purely pragmatic stance or adopting a policy of retrenchment, it is the contention of this thesis that - in the face of the greatest change in primary schooling in Ireland since the foundation of the State and the greatest challenge to the Church's control of primary education - the Catholic Church must "interpret this present time" and adopt a position of cultural realism and act with authenticity.

Catholic primary education in Ireland is at a crossroads and the deep heart's core of Catholic philosophy of education must now be excavated in order to move discourse and practice towards an end based on criteria that are at once rational, ethical and moral. Operating in a new educational landscape, with a plurality of patronage and providers of education, the Church can thus clearly stand over its mission and respond to any issue - inclusion, enrolment, pluralism or ethos - not from a knee-jerk, pragmatic, defensive or retreatist basis - but rather from a clearly espoused vision of authentic Catholic education in which faith, culture and life are brought into harmony.

Change will not be easy. The roots of the Church's involvement and control of the primary school system in Ireland lie deep in history. But acting with integrity will allow critical and courageous decisions to be made by the leaders of

Catholic education in Ireland. Catholic primary schools can then truly promote the common good for the age in which they are operating.

The concept of authenticity is crucial to this process and will now be explored in the following two Chapters – in the first instance in Chapter 2 as authentic Catholic education is defined in the literature on Catholic education and in Chapter 3 as a philosophical ideal but one complexified by postmodern notions of relativism and subjectivity.

CHAPTER 2

A REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE ON CATHOLIC EDUCATION:

PERSPECTIVES FROM IRELAND, BRITAIN AND THE USA

2.1 Introduction

This Chapter provides an overview of key elements of the literature on Catholic education. While it aims to synthesize key issues pertinent to Catholic schools in contemporary society, it is important to note that some further critical aspects of the literature are woven throughout other Chapters of the thesis - for example, an examination of the Vatican documents on education as they relate to primary education is contained in Chapter 4 along with an examination of the appropriate role of Church and State in the provision of education; and models of Catholic schools proposed by different authors are outlined in Chapter 5.

This Chapter reviews the literature on three key aspects of Catholic education, viz.: the ethos and identity of Catholic schools, challenges facing Catholic education (with particular emphasis on the issue of diversity), and research. These elements are chosen as they address key aspects of the work of this thesis, viz. defining an identity for Catholic schools in contemporary Irish society, and responding to issues of central concern such as enrolment, integration and difference in the context of current best practice and research.

At the outset, three observations are made on the literature in general as it relates to the specific question in hand, i.e. authentic Catholic primary education in postmodern Ireland. In the first instance, it is observed that, throughout the

literature, relatively little has been written in relation to the three chosen themes from an Irish perspective.

In the second instance, it is noted that even less has been written on the themes from the specific perspective of primary education, both in the Irish, and indeed, global context. Yet, as Feheny (1998) observes, the history, management and administration of Catholic primary schools, as well as the challenges facing them, are so different from those relating to second-level schools that the former "would require a separate volume". It would appear that that volume has yet to be written. In the context of Irish primary schools, Kieran and Hession (2005, 2008) have recently published two books focussing on primary level, the concern of both books being religious education in schools rather than Catholic primary education *per se*.

Finally, it is noteworthy that while there is much analysis of Vatican documents in relation to guiding principles for Catholic education, very little analysis of the documents has been undertaken in relation to primary level. McLaughlin (1996) points out that, throughout its history, the Church has been concerned to clarify and to emphasise the distinctiveness of its educational vision through the publication of various decrees on Catholic education from the Congregation for Catholic Education. The absence of material based on the Vatican decrees specifically pertaining to primary level education is a major *lacuna*.

This review of the literature focuses largely on experience and interpretation of Catholic education in Ireland, Great Britain and the USA. In this regard, while the historical and contemporary context of Catholic primary education in

Ireland has been outlined in Chapter 1, it is important to note the broad context of denominational education in the other jurisdictions, viz.: in Great Britain religious schools comprise a prominent part of the publicly funded education system, while, conversely, in the USA, denominational schools are all privately funded.

There is a long history of State-funded, or substantially State-funded, faith schooling in Britain. Catholic schools in England (called Catholic voluntary-aided schools) provide ten per cent (10%) of all maintained school places, while thirty per cent (30%) of pupils in Catholic schools are from non-Catholic backgrounds (Catholic Education Service, 2009). In Scotland, Catholic schools are funded and managed by the Local Authorities with Church governance relating to two key areas, i.e. staff appointments and the content of the religious education curriculum. Catholic schools comprise eighteen per cent (18%) of all primary schools and cater for twenty-one per cent (21%) of the school population in Scotland.

In the USA, Catholic schools are State-certified but privately funded. They comprise approximately seven and a half percent (7.5%) of schools at elementary and secondary level, and account for approximately ten per cent (10%) of the school population. Non-Catholic enrolment comprises thirteen per cent (13%) of the pupil population in Catholic schools at elementary level (The National Catholic Education Association). Between 2000 and 2009, 1,429 or seventeen and a half per cent (17.5%) of all Catholic schools closed in the USA, with the Centre for Education Statistics reporting that "the most seriously

impacted have been elementary schools" (National Centre for Education Statistics, USA).

It is of interest and pertinence to note that Catholic school statistics for England and Scotland are not far out of line with the percentage of Catholics in each country. Eight per cent (8%) of the population of England and Wales is Catholic (Census 2001) and Catholic schools cater for ten per cent (10%) of pupils nationally; while in Scotland, sixteen per cent (16%) of the population are Catholic and Catholic schools cater for twenty-one per cent (21%) of pupils nationally. When adjusted to allow for non-Catholic pupils attending Catholic schools, the figures equate almost exactly. While twenty-two per cent (22%) of the population of the USA are Catholic and Catholic schools cater for just ten per cent (10%) of the population, the fact that all Catholic schools are fee-paying clearly impacts on numbers attending. Thus, with Catholics comprising eighty-seven per cent (87%) of the population in Ireland (Census 2006), the fact that ninety-two (92%) of schools are under the Patronage of the Catholic Church may not be as disproportionate and unbalanced as might initially be thought. However, clearly choice of school remains a critical issue.

2.2 Research in the Field of Catholic Education

Grace (2002) observes that, apart from a substantial body of scholarship in the USA, the systematic investigation of post-Vatican II Catholic schooling is remarkably underdeveloped considering the scale of the Catholic educational mission. Archbishop Michael Miller (cited in Grace and O'Keefe, 2007), Secretary to the Congregation for Catholic Education in Rome, considers there to be a "pressing challenge of fostering serious studies that further the common

good of Catholic schooling" in order to gain "empirically based perspective on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges faced by Catholic schools across the globe" (p.1).

In the Irish context, this challenge is perhaps particularly pressing. Grace (2002) points out that "the Catholic Church in Ireland exercises a degree of control and influence in educational policy and practice which is probably unprecedented in contemporary Europe" (p.108). Nonetheless, Tuohy (2007) observes that there is no tradition of research on specifically Catholic education because the Catholic dimension of education has remained, until recently, unproblematic. Hence, few studies of significance have been carried out on Catholic schools in Ireland. Tuohy outlines a research agenda for Catholic education in Ireland comprising three core issues for examination, i.e. identity, charism and impact. While agreeing with Tuohy on the importance of examining these areas, research is needed also on the more specific areas of enrolment, inclusion, and the religious education curriculum in Catholic primary schools in contemporary Irish society.

In the international context, while many writers contend that much more research is needed on the current mission and effectiveness of Catholic schools, Grace and O'Keeffe (2007) conclude that

> the evidence provided....[in the International Handbook of Catholic Education] shows, Catholic schools are contributing significantly to the common good of all societies in which they are located. They provide an educational, spiritual, and moral culture which benefits the future citizens of each country. (p.10)

During the 1980s, a spate of research studies chronicled the unusual effectiveness of Catholic high schools in America (see Coleman, Hoffer and Kilgore, 1982, Greeley, 1982, Coleman and Hoffer, 1987). Since then, O'Keefe and Scheopner (2007) observe that studies have found that Catholic schools have lower dropout rates and produce higher levels of academic achievement, especially for disadvantaged students.

Perhaps the most cited piece of research into Catholic education throughout the literature, although now fifteen years old, is that of Bryk, Lee and Holland (1993) - whose major study of Catholic schooling in the USA is entitled *Catholic Schools and the Common Good*. In sum, Bryk et al's research found that Catholic schools make a major contribution to the common good of American society, especially where schools are located in disadvantaged urban communities.

Bryk et al identify four basic qualities which they believe make the Catholic school more effective than public schools in terms of their contribution to the common good:

    i)   a focused academic curriculum for all students, with an emphasis on academic achievement for all;

    ii)   a communal organisation with highly committed teachers who play an "extended" role in relation to pupils, i.e. a concern for both the kind of people their students become as well as the facts, skills and knowledge they acquire;

    iii)   decentralised management;

    iv)   an inspirational ideology which comprises a shared sense of moral and educational values which articulate the work and life of the school, a shared set of beliefs about what students should learn and

about how people should relate to one another, and a shared understanding of the role of schools in advancing social justice. Personalism and subsidiarity, identified as central concepts in the inspirational ideology, call respectively for humaneness in the hundreds of mundane social interactions that comprise daily life, and for instrumental considerations about work efficiency and specialisation to be mediated by a concern for human dignity.

Bryk et al (1993) find that, after the Second Vatican Council, the charter for Catholic schools shifted from protecting the faithful from a hostile environment to pursuing peace and social justice within an ecumenical and multicultural world. They state that Catholic schools now educate a diverse race, ethnicity and social class and, furthermore, instruction is not narrow, divisive, or sectarian, but rather is informed by a generous conception of democratic life in a postmodern society. Bryk (1996), therefore, concludes that "Catholic schools serve the common good and the public has a stake in their preservation" (p.40).

Bryk et al's notion of "inspirational ideology" in Catholic schools in the USA is similar to Grace's (2002) research finding of a "dynamic spiritual capital" in Catholic schools in England. Grace defines this spiritual capital as "resources of faith and values devised from commitment to a religious tradition" (p.110).

It must be noted that the transferability to the Irish context of Bryk et al's and Grace's findings on the spirit of renewal in Catholic schools post the Second Vatican Council is questionable for a number of reasons. In the first instance, Fuller (2002) notes that, post-Council, the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. John Charles McQuaid had an "unenthusiastic attitude towards the spirit of renewal" and gave his assurance to Catholics that "no change would worry the

tranquillity of [their] Christian lives". Given such attitudes at the highest level of the hierarchy, along with the hegemonic position and managerial control of Irish primary schools by the Catholic Church, Catholic schools in Ireland may have been less affected by the Council's spirit of *aggiornamento* than their counterparts elsewhere.

Findings from recent research undertaken in Ireland appear to confirm this hypothesis to some extent. Data from qualitative research on school culture and ethos (Marino Institute of Education, 2000), carried out in both primary and post-primary schools, found that parents and teachers consider "academic performance" to be the trait which schools *actually* value most in pupils. Moreover, out of the list of ten possible traits which schools value, a focus on "Christian values" was ranked in eighth position by teachers, parents and pupils. Furthermore, research carried out in 2008 by the Episcopal Conference in Ireland (ICBC, 2008(b)) found that, for parents, "choice of school is...determined by factors other than...the importance given to the religious, moral and spiritual educative elements of the curriculum" (p.32).

Such findings do not suggest that an inspirational ideology or dynamic spiritual capital are either a) apparent or b) necessarily seen as desirous by parents of pupils in Catholic schools in Ireland. The overall lack of research on the actual character and identity of Catholic primary schools in Ireland, and whether and how inspirational ideology and spiritual capital permeate Catholic education, remain areas requiring research and investigation.

Grace (2002) argues that the spiritual capital of the Catholic school system in England (and by implication elsewhere) is what has provided the dynamic drive of its mission in the past and helped it to preserve, in the main, its mission integrity in the face of contemporary challenges. Clearly, the renewal of spiritual capital or inspirational ideology is a crucial question for the continuance of the Catholic school's *distinctive* mission and requires particular consideration in the context of Irish Catholic primary schools.

In an international context, research on Catholic education claims that, at a time when the school system is increasingly dominated by the values of the market place, radical individualism and the pursuit of economic reward, Catholic schools offer society as a whole an alternative, more humane vision of how schooling might be organised. This leads to the question of identifying what precisely the ethos and distinctive features of Catholic schools are.

2.3 Ethos and Identity of Catholic Schools

2.3.1 Ethos

Norman (2003) contends that while the phrase "Catholic ethos" is often used to describe the particular character of Catholic schools, in reality, the phrase means many things to many people.

In an attempt to define ethos, McLaughlin (1999, p.71ff) considers that Catholic schools have an explicit and distinctive culture embodied in a distinctive institutional framework, a distinctive mission, as well as a distinctive curriculum in areas such as catechesis and religious education. Kieran and Hession (2005) argue that the existence of a Catholic ethos in schools depends

on a willingness to engage teachers, parents and management in ongoing conversation about the beliefs, values, attitudes and ways of acting they wish to promote in the school. Then, out of this shared understanding, different embodiments of the values shared emerge, creating a style of education that is faithful to the Catholic tradition at its best. When considering how ethos is to be arrived at, Kieran and Hession's view is in tandem with contemporary society's focus on dialogue and participation.

In exploring the concept of an educational ethos in general, Dunne (2006) focuses on the notion of the "hidden curriculum" i.e. what is learned tacitly and unreflectively just by participation in a particular kind of situation or environment. He argues that the attitudes and dispositions learned in this way are all the more deeply and enduringly internalised for being carried through the medium of interaction rather than being stated as explicit messages. He then goes on to ask specifically "what is a Catholic ethos?" and contends that it is one in which students, in developing their character or identity, are significantly affected by Christian understandings (p.204).

It would not appear that Kieran et al's understanding of the importance of dialogue in arriving at school ethos or Dunne's basing of Catholic ethos on Christian understandings, have been to the fore in the context of Catholic primary schools in Ireland. Norman (2003) considers that an examination of the educational documents of the Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council reveals an understanding of ethos that is dynamic, that is concerned with dialogue and the integration of faith, culture and life, and that places the full development of the human person at the centre of the mission of the

Catholic school. However, he considers the Irish Church's understanding of ethos to be "significantly different from that of the post-Conciliar documents" (2003, p.11).

Having undertaken an examination of the presentations made by the Irish Catholic Bishops and the Conference of Religious in Ireland (CORI) to the National Education Convention in 1993, Norman considers both to have an understanding of ethos which is "legalistic and paternalistic" (2003, p.12). He argues that both the Bishops and CORI perceive the role of school leaders as maintaining a tradition, which they receive in trust for future generations, without any concern for developing a dialogue with that tradition or allowing the present school community to achieve a new synthesis of faith, life and postmodern culture in the light of that tradition. He considers that "the Irish Catholic Church's understanding of ethos is strongly associated with its ability to control and manage schools" (p.33), and that the school's role is reduced to one of adherence to officially sanctioned standards and requirements. Norman concludes that, for Catholic second-level schools in Ireland, this results in "an ethos of compliance rather than commitment" (p.14). While Norman does not analyse the Church's vision of ethos at primary level, it would appear from the historical analysis of Catholic primary education undertaken in Chapter 1, that, traditionally, and to the present day, ethos has been something passed on from generation to generation, or mandated by school authorities/trustees and has been unquestioningly accepted rather than being seen as an interactive work in progress.

Despite some views to the contrary[13], Tuohy (2007) concurs with this view ascribing it to the fact that, in Ireland, we have inherited school models of governance that are hierarchical and bureaucratic. Tuohy contends that the temptation for the Church is to try "to define the Catholic school as a product or a franchise, rather than a living and evolving reality" (p.280). He postulates that if the fear of the bishops and religious congregations in the past was of a hostile take-over, the fears in the current age "are those of aged parents who need to handover the family business to their children, unsure of what values the children may bring to the enterprise" (p. 282). In the context of Catholic primary schools in contemporary Irish society, Tuohy's metaphor needs to be taken a step further. In many instances, the handover has happened already with many Catholic primary schools now managed and run by lay people. The more pressing and particular fear is perhaps that of "the children" - charged with running the family firm, but unsure as to whether they must continue to run the business as it was or whether they have a mandate to change the business in order to adapt to and address the contemporary challenges of postmodern Irish society.

Overall, however, regardless of whether ethos is seen as evolving and dynamic or static and unchanging, a key question is how Catholic ethos is manifest in the day-to-day life of Catholic schools i.e. what the common and distinctive characteristics of Catholic education are. This aspect of Catholic education and Catholic schools is debated extensively throughout the literature.

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[13] For example, Feheny (1998) refers to the "enlightened leadership" of religious congregations in Ireland, pointing out that Trustees "are not considering abandoning their Catholic schools...but are actively involved in devising ways in which, despite the absence of a physical presence, they will be able to exercise the role of trustees...so that their Congregation's religious and educational philosophy is a significant source of influence in the schools" (p.209).

2.3.2 The Distinctive Identity of the Catholic School

Many authors allude to the fact that very little effort has been devoted to articulating a Catholic philosophy of education (Grace, 2002, Fuller, 2002; Feheny, 1998; Haldane, 1996; McLoughlin, 1996; Pring, 1996; Lane, 1991; Dunne, 1991). Yet, McLaughlin (1996) observes that, since the Second Vatican Council, Catholic education has faced a continual demand for clarification of the precise respects in which it is, or should be, distinctive. He considers that the lack of a coherent statement of a Catholic philosophy of education deprives the Catholic educational community of important resources with which to confront questions of distinctiveness.

The question of the distinctive identity of the Catholic school is asked in many different ways: for example, Dunne forthrightly poses the question "what, we may ask, is the Catholic school?"; Haldane asks "what makes a school Catholic?"; Groome (1996) asks why the qualifier "Catholic" at all?; while the Congregation for Catholic Education ask all Catholics to consider "the Catholic school's fundamental reasons for existing" (1977).

In attempting to delineate the contours of a distinctively Catholic conception of education, many writers focus on the ecclesial dimension of the Catholic school. For example, Miller (2006) contends that the Church proposes certain constant elements in her teaching regarding the specific ethos of Catholic schools, irrespective of situation or context. He identifies five "non-negotiables" of Catholic identity, i.e. that it is:

   i) inspired by a supernatural vision;

   ii) focused on Christ;

   iii) permeated by a Catholic worldview;

iv) sustained by the martyrology of teaching (by which he means a giving of oneself); and

v) imbued by a spirit of prayer (p.66ff).

Haldane (1996) is also concerned to emphasise that the distinctiveness of Catholic identity is partly, but essentially, constituted by authority and dogma, and that the primary function of Catholic schools is to transmit the "essential doctrines and devotions" of Catholicism (p.127). He criticises the "inspirational ethic" which Bryk et al (1993) identified as the key feature of Catholic schools on the grounds that it inadequately embodies the distinctively theological elements. In a similar vein, Hayes and Gearon (2000) consider that "no emphasis other than the theological – 'a caring atmosphere', 'a community spirit', 'the concern for social justice', nor even a concern for spirituality – makes Catholic education distinctive: for all of these and other concerns are shared by secular schools" (p. vii). Rather, they contend that "the Catholic Christian worldview – the universal understanding of human beings as beings created by God for a divine purpose, contextualised in community – is the only thing which makes Catholic education distinctive from a secular education" (pp.vii-viii).

Against this, writers such as McLaughlin (1996) provocatively pose a number of questions which challenge such emphases, and which are, I consider, particularly pertinent in the context of contemporary challenges facing Catholic primary schools in Ireland, for example:

i) is the major purpose of the school the formation of Catholic believers, or can wider purposes be discerned consistent with, and perhaps required by, Catholic principles of social justice?

ii)   has the Catholic school a role to play in relation to pupils who are not Catholics?

iii) what is the proper form which Catholic religious education should take in multi-cultural society?

iv)   is there a case for keeping open Catholic schools in areas of urban deprivation where the number of Catholic pupils on roll may have declined but where the school may be seen as witnessing to Catholic educational values in a new way?

Writers such as Groome (1996), Grace (2002) and Tuohy (2007) seek to synthesize both the theological and human features of the Catholic school. For example, Tuohy (2007) considers that Catholic schools must have both a humanistic approach to education while also making explicit the role of faith formation in the dynamic of education. Grace (2003) considers the issue of "mission integrity" as the central and distinctive concern. Mission integrity involves "fidelity in practice and not just in public rhetoric to the distinctive and authentic principles of a Catholic education" (p.109). He identifies these principles as a priority status for spiritual, religious and moral formation and "a service to the poor, or those who are deprived of family help and affection, or those who are far from faith" (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977).

Groome (1996) contends that the particular and distinctive features of Catholicism itself should constitute the distinctiveness of the Catholic school. He identifies five distinguishing theological characteristics of Catholicism and three "cardinal" characteristics and he translates these into educational imperatives for Catholic schools, viz.:

i)   a positive anthropology of the person: which promotes students' dignity and educates them to live responsibly;

ii)   a focus on the sacramentality of life: which involves encouraging students, regardless of what they are studying, to employ the critical and creative powers of their minds (reason, memory and imagination);

iii)   a communal emphasis: through which students find their identity and true selves in relationship with others in the school community and are educated in social responsibility as members of the public community;

iv)   Catholic tradition: which requires that students are intentionally catechised in the Christian story and vision, but are also formed to be personally influenced and enriched by Catholic faith;

v)   an appreciation of rationality and learning: which encourages students to think for themselves, to trust their own discernment and decision making.

Furthermore, Groome considers that Catholicism offers:

i)   an ontological concern: which embraces a commitment to students' personhood, to who they become and their ethic of life. Thus, Catholic education "aims not only to influence what students know and can do but also the kind of people they will become" (Bryk et al p.10). Groome points out that this characteristic is not to be taken for granted as it is, in fact, counter-cultural to much of modern education;

ii)   a sociological concern: which reflects a commitment to "basic justice". Hence, students are formed with a critical social consciousness to see that Christian faith has serious social responsibilities; and

iii)   a universal concern: which reflects commitment to "catholicity". Groome suggests that the best synonym for "catholic" is "inclusive" rather than the often used "universal" for he considers that the latter can mean one aspect dominating everything else and excluding or destroying all that is "other". "Catholic", on the other

hand, means to include and welcome all, and in Catholic education to embrace diverse "others", in a participative and bonded community.

Groome (1996) contends that this collage of characteristics constitutes education that is truly "Catholic". It must be observed that such a comprehensive, positive and authentic view of Catholic education may, particularly from the history of Catholic education in Ireland, be considered overly positive, ignoring the system of Catholic education which has often preached a negative anthropology, practised a system of domination and exclusivity and discouraged critical reflection. Groome himself acknowledges this but considers that the fact that it has been much sinned against in its history does not lessen the authenticity of such a vision of Catholic education.

McLaughlin (1996) explores a number of central issues which arise from such attempts to address the distinctiveness of Catholic education and which generate difficult questions which he considers are often "not pursued with sufficient rigour" (p.148). The main issue is that each of the elements of Catholic education which are identified require interpretation and judgement. For example, a move away from dogma to an emphasis upon the importance of human relationships, human justice and the formation and use of conscience can be disputed as an appropriate form which Catholic religious formation should take and vice versa. Bryk et al (1993) also note that a tension exists between different emphases in the role of the Catholic schools. Some schools value academic goals and the development in students of qualities of compassion, tolerance and a commitment to justice more highly than the "more traditional"

elements of religious formation such as knowledge of, and commitment to, Church doctrine and moral teaching.

The major point is that the interpretative task which is required in relation to such matters can uncover deep seated differences of emphasis and view. McLaughlin (1996) observes that "the clarification of the distinctiveness of Catholic education is an important task" but that "undertaken with the appropriate degree of rigour...it can be a demanding and painful one" also (p.151). It is a process, however, that has never been comprehensively undertaken in the context of Catholic education in Ireland and, thus, a major challenge for Irish Catholic primary schools is identifying their distinctive Catholic identity. From a review of the literature, however, this is but one of the challenges facing contemporary Catholic schools.

2.4 Challenges Facing Contemporary Catholic Education

Almost all writers on Catholic education acknowledge the fact that Catholic schools face major challenges in contemporary society. In the Irish context, Kieran and Hession (2005) identify several "emerging issues" for Catholic schools, including - a state syllabus for religious education; the Catholic Church's majority control of the primary school sector; provision for non-Christian members of the Catholic school community; teachers' willingness to evangelise; the desirability of an exclusively confessional approach (p.146).

Feheny (1998), also writing in an Irish context, outlines the challenges facing Catholic schools at second level. He argues that the two most profound questions are the nature of the educational mission being realised in the schools

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in an age of market culture, and the nature of Catholicity being realised in the schools in a more secular and pluralistic age. Finally, in the Irish context, Miller (2006) defines what he terms the "downright difficulties" that face Catholic schools as aggressive individualism, privatisation of faith, clerical scandals and decline in sacramental practice (p.63).

In a global context, fifty-nine researchers and analysts working in thirty-five societies across the world, report on the challenges facing Catholic schooling systems in contemporary conditions, in the *International Handbook of Catholic Education* (Grace & O'Keefe, 2007). Ten challenges are identified:

i)   secularisation in culture and society in the 21st century;
ii)   the impact of global capitalism and of its values;
iii)   the changing nature of Church–State relations i.e. the political context of Catholic schooling;
iv)   responding to the Second Vatican Council - principles of renewal of the mission, with special reference to "the preferential option for the poor";
v)   the responses of contemporary students to Catholic schooling;
vi)   issues of faith formation in a context of rapid change;
vii)   Catholic schooling and the changing role of women;
viii) leaders and teachers in Catholic schooling: challenges of recruitment, formation and retention;
ix)   moral and social formation in Catholic schooling;
x)   financing the educational mission in changing circumstances (p.2).

How three of these challenges are delineated and debated in the literature on Catholic education is now explored, viz.: teacher formation and leadership; postmodern values of secularisation and technical rationalism; and the issue of diversity, inclusivity and the "preferential option for the poor". These three

issues are considered by me to be particularly pertinent to the situation of Catholic education at primary level in Ireland.

2.4.1 Support and Formation of Teachers and Leaders in Catholic Schools

Tuohy (2007) contends that a key element for the future of Catholic schools is the commitment of teachers to the educational mission asserting that what is needed are not only Catholic teachers who are practising their faith but teachers who are willing also to give an appropriate form of witness to it as part of their professionalism. Furthermore, Kieran et al (2005) argue that the Catholic teacher needs to be grounded and literate in the Catholic tradition yet capable of proclaiming the Catholic faith in a post-modern context (p.350). In this context, writers on Catholic education (Grace, 2007; Lane, 2006; Norman, 2003; Lacey, 1996) identify a number of specific challenges, viz. - ensuring a sufficient supply of Catholic teachers who possess these qualities, examining the distinctive character of Catholic teacher formation, and, particularly, the continuing professional development of Catholic teachers especially those in leadership positions who are seen to "stand at the crucial juncture of theory and practice" (Lacey, 1996, p.258).

The transition in stewardship of schools from religious leaders and teachers to that of their lay colleagues, is regarded as having many consequences for Catholic education. In the Irish context, Tuohy (2007), Lane (2006) and Feheney (1998) consider that lay people have not been nourished at a theological level, particularly in a theology that reflects on professional experience and that this has serious implications for Catholic schools. Given the history of the clergy's dominance of school management in Ireland, and given

that all three commentators are speaking as priests and/or members of religious congregations, such comment could be considered as somewhat biased and as an attempt to make the case for the continuance of clerical control of Catholic schools. However, in research carried out by Tuohy, lay principals themselves comment that their religious formation finished at the end of secondary school and that they thus feel "very inadequate in leading the spiritual dimension of the school" (Tuohy, 2007).

Wallace (2000), considering the same situation in the USA, observes that "the dramatic shift from religious to lay personnel raises the question of whether or not some Catholic schools are becoming private schools with a religious memory but secular presence" (p.191). For England, Grace (2002) concurs and considers that what he terms the "strategic subsidy" of religious congregations - in providing spiritual, cultural and economic capital for the schooling mission and a supply of school personnel at both leadership and classroom level - is weakening over time (p.87). Concurrently, school principals consider that they face a whole range of moral, ethical and professional dilemmas of a kind not encountered by their predecessors (Grace, 1996). Grace concludes that the formation of school principals who are "heirs of a tradition of spirituality established by religious orders" is a major issue facing Catholic schools worldwide (p.75) - and perhaps particularly so in Ireland.

The extent of the challenge is perhaps best summarised by Grace and O'Keefe (2007) who consider that the faith formation of the next generation of school leaders and teachers is a critical issue for Catholic education. If faith formation of teachers is weakening over time, it can be expected that faith formation of the

students will follow a similar pattern. Thus, "the distinctive Catholicity of the whole school system may be at risk" (p.7).

2.4.2 The Impact of Postmodern Conditions and Values on Catholic Schools

Giroux (1994) points to the tensions between schools as modernist institutions and the fractured conditions of postmodern culture. Grace and O'Keefe's (2007) research confirms this tension. They identify, as a permeating challenge for Catholic schools worldwide:

> the moral and social formation of students in Catholic schools in a globalised culture which is increasingly preoccupied with individualistic personal "success", with a cult of "celebrities", with materialistic values, with commodity worship and with an explicitly hedonistic and sexualised media and entertainment culture amplified in every location. (p.9)

Dunne (2006) considers that, in contemporary, postmodern society, Catholic schools, at least at post-primary level, are subject to conditions which make it very difficult to sustain a Catholic ethos. He identifies one such condition as the rise in technicist logic. Dunne considers that schools face the challenge of participating in huge technological change without being colonised by "an unholy alliance of technical rationality, market culture and acquisitive individualism" (p.211). The important task, he writes, is to ensure, in response to this challenge, that a vision of education as a humanising engagement should be continually renewed. Buetow (1988, p.28) also considers that utilitarian philosophies such as technicist rationalism potentially pose enormous threat to the goals of a Christian school in that "they construct meaning systems that may conflict with the vision of God for humanity, as they prioritise market-driven forces of economic efficiency" (p.28).

In addition to the challenge posed by technicist rationalism, Grace (2002) identifies the development of secularism in contemporary society as a particular challenge for Catholic schools. They struggle to bring young people to a knowledge and experience of God in a world which seems increasingly indifferent to these questions. Grace considers that "secularisation represents the denial of the validity of the sacred and of its associated culture and its replacement by logical, rational, empirical and scientific intellectual cultures in which the notion of the transcendent has no place". Thus, major challenges for Catholic education are the market-driven forces of economic efficiency or technical rationalism. They sever people's "knowing" from their "being", reduce knowledge to a technical rationality (or a "know how" for productivity), urge schools to regard parents as customers, students as consumers of knowledge and schools as institutions of educational throughput rather than Christian communities of learning – both technical and moral (Dunne, 2006; Grace, 2002, Buetow, 1988).

While this is clearly an issue more at second-level than at primary-level, even in primary schools in Ireland a focus on academic learning and preparation for second-level education can be increasingly seen as key guiding principles. There are demands for greater accountability from schools with the publication of whole school evaluation reports and a growing movement towards a public management culture or what one commentator has called "an input-output approach....[or] league table culture" (Walsh, 2009). Further manifestations of this influence in primary schools in Ireland include:

    i)   the recent introduction of compulsory standardised testing in all primary schools;

ii)   research findings indicating that, for parents, "religious factors are not as important as more formal pedagogical factors" in school choice (ICBC, 2008(b) p.33); and

iii)   primary school principals considering that they are "over-loaded" with a "myriad of activities and responsibilities that have very little to do with a child-centred educational system" (IPPN, 2006, p.51).

Thus, the maintenance of a Catholic ethos against the tide of technical rationalism and economic efficiency is a major challenge for Catholic education in postmodern Irish society.

2.4.3 Diversity, Difference and Inclusivity

A major concern for writers on Catholic education worldwide is that of serving both the poor and non-Catholic members of an increasingly multi-cultural and pluralistic society.

O'Keefe (1996) develops a case for seeing provision for the needs of the poor and the fostering of diversity as crucial aspects of the vocation of Catholic schools but not all writers on Catholic education are in agreement.

Getting to the heart of the issue, Zipfel (1996) poses the question to Catholic schools - "who do we serve?" This is similar to the question posed by Giroux (2004) in the larger arena of critical pedagogy - "whose future, story and interests does the school represent?" Zipfel considers that a variety of answers could be advanced for the Catholic school, viz.:

- we serve and represent the Catholic community;
- we serve and represent the whole community;
- we serve and represent especially the poor and marginalised.

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Zipfel points to the contention, held by many, that by educating Catholics to be responsible citizens Catholic schools are serving the wider community, and by educating them to be committed to social justice they are serving the poor and marginalised. But for most commentators, while this is important, it is not enough. The question "who do we wish to serve?", therefore, addresses a very important and unresolved tension that runs through the literature on Catholic education internationally. Some writers consider that a Catholic vision of education is one in which Catholic schools are non-discriminatory, welcoming of all and committed to anti-racist, inclusive education (e.g. Sullivan, 2001) while others (e.g. Vale, 2007) view inclusivity as a possible "reduction of distinctiveness.... to an amorphous homogeneity".

Tuohy (2007) articulates well the nub of the issue. He reflects that there has been a shift from seeing schools as a means of *educating Catholics* in closed, protected environments to offering a *Catholic education* for all. He identifies the challenge, therefore, as the need to find a balance between "a defensive building up of the ramparts, developing an open dialogue with the emerging cultural paradigms, and avoiding a position where the message of the gospel is swamped by a secular culture in such a way that it becomes ineffective" (p.281).

In the Irish context, Miller (2006) observes that the issue of diversity and integration in the "new Ireland" has not been fully worked out, especially at primary level (p.64); and Kieran and Hession (2005) identify the issue of diversity as "the most urgent contemporary challenge" facing primary education in Ireland (p28).

The debate and challenge is perhaps most keenly observed in the USA, where Catholic schools, supported entirely by the Church, are faced with declining numbers of Catholic pupils and increasing numbers of immigrant and non-Catholic children, particularly in lower socio-economic inner-city areas. They are faced, therefore, with the dilemma of either closing or of continuing to provide Catholic schools for mainly non-Catholic children. In this context, O'Keefe and Scheopner (2007) note that over two hundred and twenty Catholic schools closed in 2006, many of which were in deprived urban areas.

Commenting on the situation, O'Keefe (1996) provocatively writes:

> If the contemporary rationale for Catholic schools is grounded in the values of the affluent, ethnically assimilated, suburban, secularised and generally content Catholic majority, the data on school closings are not problematic. On the other hand, if the rationale…is a clear and compelling vocation to provide for the needs of the poor and to foster appreciation of the human family in its rich diversity – the closing of even one school in an inner-city area is intolerable. (p.178)

This debate over pluralism and multi-culturalism in Catholic schools clearly leads on to the question of Catholic schools' enrolment policy. However, strangely, this issue is not prevalent in the literature. While many writers identify the issue of diversity in Catholic schools as a challenge, there is not a large body of research on the issue of inclusion and there is "a paucity of information" on non-Catholic students in Catholic schools (Kieran et al, 2008; Kent Donleavy, 2007). Furthermore, in the Irish context, a comprehensive debate on the inclusion of non-Catholic pupils in Catholic primary schools has never taken place except perhaps in knee-jerk media reaction to the issue of access to local schools in the Dublin suburb of Balbriggan, as outlined in Chapter 1.

Commenting on the situation in England and Wales, Hypher (1996) points out that one difficulty in formulating a coherent education and admissions policy is that there is no full or accurate information on the different trends regarding the admission of pupils of other faiths in Catholic schools, nor the reasons for the admissions. Nor is there information about what is actually happening in Catholic schools with regard to pupils of other faiths and with regard to multi-faith education. There are not even any figures on how many pupils of other faiths are in Catholic schools (p.218). The same situation pertains in Ireland.

Grace (1996), in his study of Catholic school principal teachers in England and Wales acknowledges that among the challenging issues for principals is "the difficult issue of school admissions"; he considers the issue to be "fundamental to the constitution and nature of the Catholic school as a community" (p.77). Throughout the literature, dilemmas of admission are seen to relate to the conflict for schools in wishing to be "open" to the Catholic communities and to non-Catholic communities in the locality without weakening the Catholic ethos of the school. However, Grace (1996) and Hypher (1996) note that while this can ostensibly be the issue, it may also encode a range of other issues relating to the social class and ability characteristics of pupils and issues of race and ethnicity.

Norman (2003) considers that, due to the largely homogeneous nature of the student population in Irish schools, it can be hard to assess if non-Catholic students experience religious or racial intolerance. However, some recent research seems to suggest that there is evidence of religious prejudice in Irish Catholic schools. As a result of one small-scale research study into how parents

and children of minority faiths experience Irish primary education, Lodge (2004) concludes that Ireland's denominational and confessional primary school system "does not allow for equal recognition or respect for difference" and contends that "the values, practices and perspectives of the dominant group [i.e. the Catholic Church] are expressed as cultural and institutional norms in Irish primary education" (p.32). Lodge further concludes that "differences in belief are denied in the denominational primary system and those whose beliefs are different are rendered invisible and subordinate" (p.32). However, this was small-scale research and whether such experience is widespread in Catholic primary schools in Ireland has never been researched.

In relation to difference and inclusion, while not writing specifically on the theme of education, Taylor (1994) points out that the importance of, and demand for, "recognition" as a vital human need is now universally recognised in what he terms "the politics of multiculturalism" (p.25). Taylor observes that, according to a widespread modern view, equal recognition is not just the appropriate mode for a healthy democratic society, its refusal can inflict damage on those who are denied it.

Taylor explores two different interpretations of the politics of equal recognition. On the one hand, a politics of universalism emphasizes the equal dignity of all human beings and the content of this politics is the equalisation of rights and entitlements for all citizens. On the other hand, a politics of difference emphasises that everyone should be recognised for his or her unique identity. But recognition here implies something more. While with the politics of universalism what is established is universal rights and immunities for

everyone, with the politics of difference, it is the unique identity of the individual or group that must be recognised and acknowledged.

Like the politics of universalism, that of difference denounces discrimination of any form; all must have equal access, equal opportunity, equal treatment. But once inside, as it were, its demands are hard to assimilate to the politics of universalism for it insists that acknowledgement and status are given to something that is not universally shared. Where universalism fights for forms of non-discrimination and is "blind" to the ways in which citizens differ, the politics of difference redefines non-discrimination as requiring that distinctions are made as the basis of differential treatment (Taylor, 1994).

Thus, for Catholic education, the internal debate on what "inclusivity" and the "preferential option for the poor" demands and entails in practice is clearly enriched, challenged and complexified by the external debate in contemporary, multi-cultural society on the implications of the politics of recognition. It is my opinion that both must be given serious consideration and due regard in arriving at a position on difference, inclusivity and distinctiveness for Catholic primary education in Ireland. This point will be developed in the particular discussion on primary education in Ireland in Chapter 5.

There is, of course, also in the broader literature on multi-culturalism, discussion about the desirability of denominational schools in liberal democracies. The British Journal of Religious Education dedicated an entire issue (Spring 2003) to the case for and against denominational schools in which Jackson presented a review of the arguments. On the one hand, those who

oppose the State funding of denominational schools consider that they restrict the personal freedom of pupils by presenting a narrow view of the particular faith; they use State funding to proselytise; they cause divisions in society by separating people of different religions and non-religious backgrounds; they disadvantage other schools by means of selection procedures that give priority to the most able pupils and those from stable families. Supporters of denominational schools, on the other hand, claim that they promote justice and fairness for children, parents and religious communities; they offer education of a high quality; they promote social cohesion and the integration of minority communities and they provide a positive response to racism. To these could be added Dunne's (2006) argument that education as a humanising activity could be considered to be weakened if engagement with "substantive" goods – such as adherence to a religious tradition – is foreclosed, perhaps to the ultimate loss of society (pp.220-221).

Having reviewed the arguments, Jackson concludes

> that the undesirable practices referred to by opponents are not intrinsic to a faith-based education and that all schools should promote social justice (including religious tolerance), knowledge about religions, the development of pupils' skills of criticism, independent thinking and also dialogue and interaction between pupils of different backgrounds. (p.89)

2.5 Conclusion

This review of selected literature on Catholic education has raised several key issues. In the first instance, it serves to highlight the dearth of literature on Catholic education in the Irish context and the dearth of literature on Catholic education at primary level at both national and international level. Furthermore, while "inspirational ideology" (Bryk et al, 1993) and "dynamic spiritual capital" (Grace, 2002) are identified as crucial aspects of Catholic schools in the USA

and England, whether such an impelling philosophy and active spiritual life exist in Irish Catholic primary schools is an area in need of definition and research.

As has been seen from the literature, attempts to define the Catholic school vary from a key focus on transmitting Catholic truths and Catholic values to a focus on community spirit and a concern for social justice, or, in some instances, a synthesis of both elements. Clearly, in Ireland, in a situation where the Catholic Church controls 92% of primary schools, the question of religious distinctiveness cannot be divorced from the wider context of an increasingly diverse society. Neither can be ignored. For Catholic schools, the question of how Catholic pupils are educated in the faith and for society is of key and central importance – yet how children of other faiths and none are accommodated in Catholic schools is clearly also one of the most urgent issues facing Catholic education in contemporary society.

Thus, Catholic school leaders face a range of dilemmas – both moral and ethical – intimately linked with questions of admission and enrolment, the appointment of teachers and the integrated nature of the curriculum. All of this points to the need for coherent education policy – Catholic schools need support and guidance to resolve the tension implied between faithfulness and openness, between unity and diversity. The following Chapters attempt to begin the task of addressing these issues in relation to Catholic primary schools in Ireland.

It is my contention that in order to agree an identity for Catholic education and to contend with challenges such as pluralism and multi-culturalism, there is a

need to be truly authentic and to "return to one's own faith tradition as a source of guidance and nourishment" (Kieran et al, 2008; p.19). Thus, the next chapter explores the concept of authenticity following which Chapter 4 explores the foundational texts of Catholic education, i.e. the decrees from the Congregation for Catholic Education, in order to gain direction and insight on a conception of authentic Catholic primary education for contemporary society.

CHAPTER 3

ACTING WITH AUTHENTICITY:

PERSPECTIVES ON THE CONCEPT OF AUTHENTICITY FROM BERNARD LONERGAN, CHARLES TAYLOR AND SELECTED POSTMODERNISTS

3.1 Introduction

The challenges facing Catholic education in Ireland today are at once pressing and enormous. On the one hand, traditionalists exalt the ideal of Catholic schools for Catholic pupils, and favour a form of retreat from secular society, while, at the other extreme, voices despairing of the notion of segregated schools call for a non-denominational approach to primary education. In this context, Catholic education needs to reflect on and articulate its role, purpose and position in contemporary and future Irish society.

The argument advanced here is that the concept of authenticity is fundamental to any articulation or vision of Catholic education. This Chapter explores precisely what is meant by the ideal of "authenticity" based largely on the work of Bernard Lonergan and Charles Taylor. Both Lonergan and Taylor contend that it is possible to attain objectivity in human judgement and action. Both authors consider authenticity as a transcendent moral ideal which, when achieved, allows one to act as one ought and not merely as one wants.

This ethic of authenticity forms the critical framework for this thesis in the conviction that if the Church explores what authentic Catholic education entails in the Irish context, seeks to discover what is authentic and inauthentic in

current Catholic primary schools' structures, policies and practices, then it can proceed to act with integrity and authenticity.

It must be acknowledged at the outset, that the notion of authenticity is not without its critics. For example, Lasch (1991) equates it with a form of narcissism and the collapse of the public self, and Adorno (1973), perhaps one of its chief critics, views what he terms "the jargon of authenticity" as a magical and impoverished form of theological discourse. Adorno considers that authenticity has become a sacred word with a sacred content. As such, it diminishes religion because "the cult of authenticity" is seen to be its own religion in which one need only profess belief - it makes little difference what one actually believes. He contends that authenticity ultimately glorifies the person who claims to be authentic and that "under the mask of the jargon any self-interested action can give itself the air of public interest of service to man" (p.67). The jargon of authenticity supports a self-centredness that can actually cover over "the suffering of the human condition by its own unreflected self-righteousness" (p.67). Authenticity, for Adorna, is a type of pseudo-religion which is actually a cover for subjective, self-interested action. The idea of authenticity is also discounted by postmodernist thinkers such as Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, and Rorty – because, for postmodernists, the term "conveys the illusory myth of a totalising, harmonious, unitary self" (Ferrara, 1993, p.9). Such challenges to the concept of authenticity for postmodern society are explored later in this Chapter.

In spite of ongoing criticism, and while acknowledging that a number of postmodern paradigms challenge and complexify the very core of the concept

of authenticity, in this thesis I argue that sustained authenticity addresses contemporary concerns. The argument proposed is that there is a normative conception of authentic human life that overcomes postmodern issues such as moral relativism, narcissism, individualism and the collapse of the public self.

Finally, the Chapter teases out how the concept of authenticity, usually considered in terms of individual integrity, can be applied to institutions in general, and to the institution of the Catholic Church in Ireland in particular. While as seen in Chapter One, the Catholic Church traditionally did not speak about authenticity but about absolutes, the argument advanced here is authenticity can now form the backdrop and conceptual framework for the Church in considering how to meet the challenges facing primary education in Ireland today.

The Chapter begins with an exploration of the concept of authenticity based on the work of Bernard Lonergan, interwoven with further insights on the concept from Charles Taylor.

3.2 The Concept of Authenticity

For the Jesuit philosopher Bernard Lonergan, authenticity consists in self-transcendence at three levels - intellectual, moral and religious. Authentic human existence resides in objective human knowing, indubitable human action and religious conversion. These three interlocking components of authenticity are now explored.

3.2.1 Objective Human Knowing

For Lonergan, the concept of authenticity is rooted in his cognitional theory - i.e. how one comes to know what objectively is the case - as Lonergan contends that without objective knowing there can be no authentic action.

Lonergan (1980) considers, in fascinatingly simple terms, that "the ideal of knowledge is oneself as intelligent, as asking questions, as requiring intelligible answers" (p.15). He contends that different kinds of act combine together in a particular order to constitute a single piece of human knowing, viz. - experience, understanding, and judgement. Coming to know begins with experience, with the flow of memories, anticipations, feelings, perceptions. From such experience there emerges the effort to understand, to unify and to relate intelligently the data of experience. As this effort succeeds, insights accumulate to complement and correct one another and eventually to constitute a grasp, an understanding of the situation.

However, as Lonergan (1974) points out, if one can understand it is possible also to misunderstand - so on experience and understanding there emerges a third level of operations, on which one doubts, reflects, weighs the evidence, and finally judges with certitude or probability that this or that is or is not so. Lonergan believes that there is an internal drive which pushes ahead these three distinct phases until one arrives at a state of knowing which is recognised as objective. Thus, cognitional self-transcendence is attained – the starting point of authentic human living.

Lonergan acknowledges the fact that objective knowledge and contact with one's own inner nature is not always either really desired or easily attained. In the first instance, Lonergan (1958) calls attention to the fact that there exists the possibility of either raising or suppressing questions; there is also a pull between desiring to know the truth or fleeing from that possibility by refusing to raise issues and hence unwanted insights. If one does not want to attain objective knowledge, then, what Lonergan terms a "scotosis" (1958, pp.210-211), – a blindspot – is employed which occludes any new avenues of understanding that may call into question the contrast between what one claims to be and what one is. In other words, if an insight appears to be challenging or threatening to the subject's psychic security, this "blind spot" will ensure that it is rationalised away, ignored, or repressed.

In the second instance, Lonergan draws attention to a person's context – what he calls their horizon. Both Lonergan and Taylor use the term "horizon" for the givenness of the boundaries of what one knows and what one values. Each person's horizon is limited and is only as large as one's area of concern. Thus, in a situation of personal or social decline, possible remedies will be missed because of the limitation of a particular horizon. In Lonergan's (2001) forthright words, "they'll be looking for all kinds of remedies and cures and ways of fixing things up but the one thing necessary is what they'll miss and they'll miss it because their thinking is within the limitation of a given horizon" (p.315). He considers that there is a real resistance to moving beyond the familiar and accessible, because to move beyond one's horizon involves "reorganisation of the subject" and :

against such reorganisation of the patterns of the subject there come into play all the conservative forces that give our lives their continuity and their coherence. The subject's fundamental anxiety, his deep distress is over the collapse of himself and his world; tampering with the organisation of himself gives rise to dread (1993, p.90).

To continue to equate what is true and real with one's own concerns is to keep one from the fullness of authenticity. Thus, a person – or an organisation - who finds themselves in a situation in which their horizon conflicts with that of society must explore the possibility of discovering the means of moving beyond their limited position. For Lonergan, this going beyond the limits of one's horizon, the expansion of one's interests and concerns coincides with the exigency of authenticity. If a more truth-filled existence is to be achieved, horizons must be broadened and prior horizons must be subsumed, without being abolished.

While Lonergan considers objective knowing to be the starting point for authenticity, Taylor considers the starting point of authenticity to be contact with, and the discovery of, one's own original way of being. In Taylor's (1991) words – "I am free when I decide for myself what concerns me, rather than being shaped by external influences (p.27). However, similarly to Lonergan's notion of moving beyond one's comfort zone, one's "horizon", Taylor does contend that the question of being an authentic person cannot reside outside the context of human relationships, and more specifically outside the community. For Taylor, a general feature of authenticity, properly understood, is its fundamentally dialogical character. As languaged beings, the self can never be properly understood outside the context of a dialogical relationship and the very definition of one's identity, and hence one's authenticity, one defines always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, significant others in the

community. Hence, engaging with contemporary society and ever broadening one's horizons, one's social understanding, and one's dialogical relations with others is crucial to a contemporary conception of authenticity.

Returning to Lonergan, neither the existence of blindspots nor the givenness of one's "horizons" can negate fully what he terms the "unrestricted desire to know" (1958, p.350). In other words, there is an urge within towards the ideal which is objective knowledge. This innate desire to know is not satisfied until it has gone beyond what might be, what is one's opinion, what it suits one to think, what could possibly be the case, to reach what really, truly and actually *is*. For Lonergan, therefore, knowledge is more than a subjective, relative opinion, as many in postmodern society claim. Rather, the component parts of a complete act of knowing – experience, understanding and judgement – assemble themselves into a full construct – a new piece of human knowing.

For Lonergan, objective knowing, as has been outlined above, is always at the service of something greater, i.e. human living. However, he considers that "without objective knowing there can be no authentic living" (1967(a) p.237). So, for Lonergan, objective knowing is the foundation stone of authentic living. Thus, truly objective knowing, which is not about power or equated merely with one's own concerns, is what is required in relation to primary schools in contemporary Irish society as the first step in the Catholic Church's quest for providing truly authentic Catholic education. For Lonergan contends that it is through the process of coming to know that the subject moves to a further dimension of consciousness as "concern shifts from knowing being to realising the good" (pp.237-238).

3.2.2 Authentic Human Action

For Lonergan (1958) authenticity is actuality and activity. To be truly authentic demands "consistency between what we know and what we do" (p.581). Thus, authenticity is realised when judgements of value are followed by decision and action – when knowing what is truly good leads to doing what is truly good. To know, to do and to choose what one comes to know as objective good is genuine self-transcendence -authentic living.

Lonergan's (1985(b), p.82) definition of authentic living is to live according to the precepts – be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible. The fruit of authenticity is progress - long-sustained attentiveness notes exactly what is going on. Intelligence repeatedly grasps how things can be better. Reasonableness is open to change. Responsibility weighs in the balance short- and long-term advantages and disadvantages, benefits and defects. The fruit of inauthenticity is decline; the absence of authenticity opens the way to a harshness of human life that results from a ruthless exercise of power.

At this level of authenticity, as "concern shifts from knowing being to realising the good", Lonergan (1967(a) p.237) considers that people, or organisations, both constitute themselves and make their world. Lonergan is clear that there is a dynamic longing within the person for such authentic wholeness and completion, or in Taylor's (1989) words – "an orientation to the good", which resides in the question - what kind of person do I wish to be? Then, through one's decisions and choices, one reveals oneself to others - reveals the type of person one is at that moment; reveals the ideal that informs one's way of living;

and reveals what one considers to be worthwhile, true, real, and valuable in terms of human living.

Taylor (1989) considers such revelation to be of utmost importance. He also takes the notion a step further contending that if the question of authenticity is to be properly and reasonably addressed, then what is called for is actual "articulation" (p.80). Taylor considers that what is vital, significant for the individual or the community can exist only through articulation – making explicit what is implicit. For Taylor, expressing precisely what the individual or the community holds dear and "articulating our qualitative distinctions" is crucial in being truly authentic and in setting out the point of our moral actions (p.80). For Lonergan, the condition of possibility of the collective subject also lies in communication.

However, consistent with authentic human knowing, Lonergan (1985(f)) points to some of the inherent difficulties with acting authentically. He considers that while it is one thing to know what should be done, it is quite another to actually choose to do what is truly worthwhile, valuable or good. He notes that there are three elements involved in efforts to avoid acting as one knows one should. Firstly, as already noted, one seeks to avoid self-knowledge, which results in a refusal to raise questions concerning who we are and why we do what we do. Secondly, there is the act of rationalisation. Lonergan notes that the average mind can invent lies about matters of fact, it can trump up excuses, and can allege extenuating circumstances that mingle fact with fiction. Thirdly, there is the fall into despair, where failings are willingly admitted but there is no hope of being able to overcome them.

Taylor (1989) too is very much aware of the problem of self-deception and the ongoing struggle of trying to understand which is a more "illusion-free interpretation" (p.36) of one's self. However, he considers that this ongoing struggle for an "illusion-free interpretation" is in fact an inherent tension within the ideal of authenticity itself. On the one side are all the factors, social and internal, that drag the culture of authenticity down to its most self-centred forms; on the other side, are the inherent thrust and requirements of this ideal

Finally, in looking at authenticity as self-transcending human action, Lonergan (1971, 1985(i)) considers the concept of authenticity in the context of the tradition that nourishes the person, for example, a religious tradition. Taylor (1989) calls such a guiding principle a "constitutive good". For example, love of God may be a constitutive good. He contends that a constitutive good is a fundamental moral source that orients and ranks all other goods and shapes one's notion of who and what one is – i.e. one's notion of authenticity. Such a notion of a constitutive good overcomes the relativism and the instrumentalisation of human reason, by revealing to the human agent meanings and values that transcend the limitations of self-concern, or the utilitarian understanding of reason.

Braman (2008) points to the neo-Nietzschean critique of such goods. The critique usually suggests that constitutive goods are "cover stories for various forms of social exclusion and domination" (p.40). Lonergan (1985) acknowledges that traditions and constitutive goods have indeed been cover

stories for oppression. However, he considers that this can only happen when a tradition is misappropriated and misunderstood.

The problem, as Lonergan sees it, is that the person is usually unaware of the difference between what he or she claims as the tradition and what indeed is the fact. The subject may misuse the language of the tradition, thereby devaluing and distorting it, in order to appropriate their mistaken understanding of what that tradition is. It is, therefore, the inauthenticity of individuals that generates the inauthenticity of the tradition. The converse is also true. If a tradition has indeed become corrupted, then a person can take only the current tradition and its norms as their standard; if these standards and norms have become debased, the subject tries to appropriate truthfully what has become corrupted or inauthentic. Thus a vicious cycle is perpetuated. The task then is to discover what has been corrupted in the tradition itself. In order to do this, questions must be raised concerning how the tradition was formed and transmitted. Whether the authentic tradition of Catholic education has been misappropriated - through crusades of retreat and mission, through attempts to protect Catholic pupils from outside influences and through efforts to provide a Catholic education for all - is a key question and of central importance. It is my contention that it has and that an act of retrieval vis-à-vis the authentic tradition of Catholic education is required or, as Taylor (1989) terms it, a recovery of our proper heritage.

3.2.3 Religious Conversion

Following objective human knowing and human action based on this knowledge, Lonergan (1985(d) p.217) considers that the culmination of the

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process of achieving authenticity is within religion. One seeks understanding and God is all intelligent; one seeks sufficient evidence for one's judgements and God is all knowing; and one seeks moral excellence and God is goodness and love. For Lonergan, the fulfilment that is God's love is the fulfilment and completion of what it means to be an authentic human being, and this fulfilment overflows into love of one's neighbour as oneself. One's whole world is changed and re-oriented around the mystery of absolute love. In short, for Lonergan, being in love with "the divine ground" (1985(d) p.217) is a collaboration and co-operation with God and others to sustain and realise the order of the universe. It is the love of God that is now the ultimate ground and source for all intentional activity. Taylor (1989) also sees a large element of hope in religion. For Taylor, this hope is grounded in the "central promise of a divine affirmation of the human, more total than humans can ever attain unaided" (p.520).

In sum, for Lonergan and for Taylor, authenticity consists in a three-fold conversion – intellectual, moral and religious. However, crucially, Lonergan (1967) considers that whether authenticity

> will grow and triumph, or whether it will wither to insignificance, depends in no small measure on the clarity and the accuracy of its grasp of the external cultural factors that undermine its past achievements and challenge it to new endeavours (p.237).

Thus, if the promise of authentic human living is to be fulfilled, in which humans are responsible individually for the lives they lead and collectively for the world in which they lead them, it is imperative to identify and engage with voices which challenge and threaten authenticity. To this end, aspects of postmodernism are now engaged with core principles of the concept of authenticity.

3.3 Challenges to Authenticity in Postmodern Society

Postmodern philosophers and thinkers challenge many of the notions on which

the conception of authenticity is based and even the notion of authenticity itself.

As we have seen, however, both Lonergan and Taylor, rather than ignoring such

challenges consider that to be authentic means engaging with reality. Thus, the

interface between authenticity and postmodernism must be open and dialogic.

One of the difficulties but perhaps also one the strengths of postmodernism is

its sense of fluidity and open-endedness. Giroux (1994) points out that the

postmodern debate has spurned consensus, preferring a great deal of confusion

and animosity. It resists being conveniently summarised and refuses to lend

itself to any single definition. That being said, the major themes of

postmodernism, particularly as they apply to the matter being discussed here,

can be defined in terms of:

i)   a questioning of the concept of objective knowing;

ii) a replacement of the notion of fixed and unified identity with a call
     for narrative space that is pluralized and fluid;

iii) scepticism about metanarratives and about the idea of progress
     towards the perfect human situation;

iv) suspicion of philosophical principles of canonicity and the notion
     of the sacred;

v)   an erosion of conventional distinctions between high and low
     culture.

In its simplest formulation, Floyd (2007) describes postmodernism as

relativism: where everyone's perception of reality, of truth, has an equal

opportunity of being legitimate due to either personal or cultural circumstances.

But perhaps Lyotard's (1984) argument that there is no great blueprint which

binds all "language games" together, no reason to believe that different pieces of knowledge share conceptual ground or ultimately contribute to one vast human enterprise, best captures the mood of postmodernism. Preferring the image of chaos to that of progress, Lyotard pictures a world in which all of the grand ideas collapse. One cannot speak in the name of universal human principles and expect them to form a fixed standard by which to judge other people's perspectives; ideas like morality, justice, enlightenment or even human nature can no longer be expected to form a globally agreed basis for progress.

Instead of assuming that postmodernism has vacated the terrain of values, Giroux (1994) considers it more useful to address how it accounts for the manner in which values are constructed historically and relationally, and how they might be critiqued and improved. In Giroux's analysis, there are clear echoes of authenticity's call to reclaim the tradition which inspires.

Following Giroux among others, authenticity must, by its very nature, enter into a critical dialogue with postmodernism, explore and recognise its challenges, strengths and weaknesses and move to new insights. Three of postmodernism's key challenges to authenticity – to objective knowledge, unified stable identity and universality - are now explored.

3.3.1 The Challenge to Objective Knowledge

For postmodernists, meanings are never absolute, objective or universal. For example, the French philosopher, Derrida, questions what we might call the meaning of meaning. While particular traditions present meanings and truths as obvious, Derrida (1981) argues that meanings and truths are never absolute or

timeless but are always framed by socially, politically and historically specific conditions of knowledge. This means that all belief systems however 'rational' they may appear are available for critique. For Derrida, deconstruction discovers the hidden assumptions about 'objective knowledge', and the more a point of view presents itself as 'rational', 'natural' or 'normal', the more Deirrida wants to deconstruct it.

In general, postmodernism has abandoned the idea that any knowledge or value is founded on a single, objectively existing stable ground. Since this gives rise to the idea that there are no firm truths, but only versions of the truth, critics of postmodernists such as Derrida find in his work a kind of nihilism. They see it as an anything goes, nothing is real philosophy in which everything is equally meaningless and so it is no longer possible to have an opinion on anything and political and moral values are neutralised.

Taylor (1991) contends that, what he terms, "the trendy doctrines of 'deconstruction'" (p.67) involve an over-emphasis on opposition to the rules of society and potentially to what we recognise as morality. They also resist any form of dialogical thrust which binds us to others in society.

Derrida's ideas possibly have a more progressive potential in the sense that they ask us to:

    i) look for the assumptions embedded in widespread beliefs and dogmas;

    ii) always question the grounds on which we feel able to make value judgements;

    iii) be aware that we always think and act from a particular position;

    iv) always remain open to new possibilities.

I consider that such concepts and nuances, challenge and enrich, rather than nullify the search for objective human knowledge.

3.3.2 The Challenge to a Unified, Stable Identity

For Lonergan and Taylor, being authentic leads to a recognised, stable identity. There is assumed to be a real, innate self underneath the public roles one plays and the struggle is to find it and be true to it. However, many postmodernists propose that the unified stable self is an illusion. In place of the modernist search for the deep authentic self, in postmodernity there is a recognition of, and sometimes a celebration of, disintegration, fragmented desires, superficiality, and identity as something you shop for.

Whatever one's viewpoint, in a society where identity is fluid and increasingly released from all previous social bindings, one is forced to ask questions about how we define terms like identity and selfhood. While values may have been what previously determined one's way of living, in today's world choices are more likely to be based on pragmatic and/or frivolous concerns such as enjoyment or image. It is understandable, therefore, that many postmodern commentators suggest that there is no "deep down" to identity. This accusation has also been levelled at Catholic identity where one can no longer assume homogeneity among Catholics about beliefs and values and where the expression "a la carte" Catholic is most often employed as a derogatory term implying Catholic identity to be fluid and adaptable to suit one's lifestyle.

Hence, for postmodernists, the idea of a real deep self is replaced with a collage of social constructs and, as Goffman (1959, p.223) states, there is no single essential self beneath all the faces one shows to the world. For postmodernity, the question then becomes whether one's various performances successfully promote one's social survival. Striving to be authentic, however, the question of whether the self is genuine or not is challenged and broadened by a greater awareness of the various social roles and identities offered by consumer culture and by an understanding that "a la carte" does not have to reflect a lack of values but rather may reflect an understanding that a single, unconsidered, predetermined lifestyle may in itself be inauthentic.

While recognising the multiple, fractured and superficial self which may exist, authenticity's image of the whole, unified and profound self, albeit functioning over a complex network of social forces, and its belief in individuals as independent, individual sources for the expression of unique insights must be upheld also as an ideal worth striving for.

3.3.3 The Challenge of Relativism

A key figure in postmodern philosophy, Friedrich Nietzsche (in Norman, 1984, pp.129-143) rejects the idea that there are objective moral values. Morality, Nietzsche believes, is a social phenomenon, which changes over time with the historical development of human societies. There is no such thing as a privileged standpoint from which to achieve purely objective knowledge and understanding. All thought, all knowledge, is an active process of ordering and organising one's experience, and, therefore, all knowing is knowing from a particular perspective.

Linked to Nietzsche's rejection of the notion of objectivity, there is a pervasive view in postmodern society that everyone's life choice is their concern and that, therefore, no one has the right to criticise another's values. While this view can be based on the principle that everyone should have the right and capacity to be themselves, Taylor (1991) considers that it is actually a soft relativism masquerading as the ideal of universal right and mutual respect. What Taylor (1991) considers missing from such a contemporary formulation of the ideal of authenticity are horizons of significance.

Taylor (1991, p.37) uses the simple but effective example of the equality of difference. Both the culture of postmodernism and the culture of authenticity demand equal opportunity for everyone to develop their own identity, which includes the universal recognition of difference, in whatever modes this is relevant to identity, be it gender, race, religion, sexual orientation etc. What underlies the postmodern notion of the equality of value is simply the fact that people *choose* different ways of being. But this is actually an affirmation of choice itself – all options are equally worthy because they are freely chosen and it is choice that confers worth.

Conversely, Taylor, (1991) considers that "affirmation of the power of choice as in itself a good to be maximized is a deviant product of the ideal" (p.22). He asserts that mere difference cannot itself be the ground of equal value. What underlies authenticity's notion of the equality of value is based not on difference but on some properties, common or complementary, which are of value e.g. reason, love, memory, or dialogical recognition. So recognising

difference requires a collective horizon of significance, whereby "some things are worthwhile, others less so and still others not at all" (1991, p.38).

For the ideal of authenticity, relativism and the consequent exaltation of choice as a good in itself is a dead end. The idea and ideal of universal values cannot be avoided and the challenge for authenticity in postmodern society lies in how to marry such values to respect for diversity. Authenticity in postmodernity has to somehow reconcile necessary "principles of exclusion" (i.e. not all points of view can be tolerated) with recognition of, and respect for, difference and dissent; has to position itself between "absolutism and anything goes" (Harvey, 1989. p.8), between the mantra of "all different all equal" and the call for a return to traditional cultural forms, conservatism and religious fundamentalism; between silent acceptance of values as given and choice as the ultimate value. The Catholic Church in postmodernity has to act with integrity while honestly facing the challenges and conditions operative in contemporary Irish society. In such circumstances, legitimate compromise may go hand in hand with authenticity.

3.4 Authentic Action in Social Institutions

Having examined the concept of authenticity and explored some postmodern challenges to the idea, in the final section of this Chapter I consider how the concept of authenticity is to be made relevant to social institutions in general – and to the Catholic Church as the key institution in primary education in Ireland in particular.

In Lonergan's (1985(f), p.15) view, authentic progress for a social institution is a cyclic and cumulative process. A situation gives rise to an insight. The insight generates policies, projects, plans, courses of action. The courses of action produce a new and improved situation. The new and improved situation gives rise to further insight and so the cycle recommences. Conversely, the fruit of inauthenticity is decline. The policies, projects, plans, courses of action that come from creative insight into the existing situation may run counter to vested interests and so doubts are raised, objections formulated, suspicions insinuated, compromises imposed. Policies, projects, plans, courses of action are modified to make the new situation not a progressive product of human authenticity but a mixed product partly of authenticity and partly of obtuseness, self-interest and self-preservation. Hence, as with any institution, the authenticity of the Catholic Church in managing primary schools in Ireland comprises a history, a cumulative process, in which there is both advance and aberration, progress and decline.

Large institutions, such as the Catholic Church, are particularly prone to suffer from defects as they give precedence to universals, display little tolerance for adaptation and critical reflection, and can overlook the evidence for change (Lonergan (1985(g)). When inauthenticity creeps into such an institution, it loses its common aims and can begin to operate at cross-purposes. It loses its common judgements so that different groups inhabit different worlds. Different groups advocate different policies. Different policies entail different plans, and the different groups deploy all of their resources for the implementation of the plans that accord with their policies with resultant incoherence and confusion.

It could be argued that this is the case in Catholic primary schools in Ireland. Firstly, while the Church advocates a universal admissions policy of "Catholics first", myriad local admissions and enrolment arrangements exist in the face of complex local circumstances. Secondly, the Church's control of over 90% of national primary schools has forced some members of the hierarchy to speak of "divesting" some Catholic schools, without, however, an articulated rationale or agreed policy on same. Thirdly, while some schools seek Baptismal certificates as an entry requirement, others offer after-school facilities for religious education classes for children of other denominations, while not yet offering alternative denominational education during class time. While such diverse responses could be interpreted as authentic local reactions to particular needs, they can also be seen to reflect confusion and lack of direction, and can leave the Church open to question about what it actually embraces as an authentic way of operating Catholic primary schools in contemporary Irish society.

The evidence for change is overwhelming. In the first instance, the Church would do well to engage with others in the search for objective knowledge of the current situation regarding Irish primary education and, to paraphrase Taylor (1989, p36), to adopt "an illusion free interpretation of itself" as Patron of over 90% of national primary schools. It could then act upon this objective knowledge and take action, firstly, to run Catholic schools that truly reflect authentic principles of Catholic education and, secondly, to build, in conjunction with other key players within the Irish school community, a primary school system that truly reflects the needs of contemporary Irish society.

The issue is not tradition, rich or impoverished, good or ill - the issue is the struggle of authenticity against institutional blindness, the tensions between historical anomalies and the exigency of change. An authentic concern for the future will draw on human experience, human intelligence, human judgement, human decision and resolute action. The good is never an abstraction. Always it is concrete. It will be in the measure that the Church's living, its aims and its action are a response to objective knowledge and judgements of value, that authenticity will be effected in the field of Catholic primary education in Ireland.

3.5 Conclusion

As elucidated in Chapter 1, while Catholic primary schools in Ireland have long relied upon the prevailing moral, political, and social culture to legitimate them, they must now meet a new postmodern culture marked by difference, plurality and multiple narratives. This new reality calls for authentic change.

In keeping with Lonergan and Taylor's notion of authenticity, the first task for the Church will be to define its conception of Catholic education and to determine in what its originality consists: in Taylor's (1989) words, to make explicit what is implicit. Thus, in Chapter 4, I will attempt to articulate an authentic understanding of the Catholic Church's vision of education and to outline its qualitative distinction, based on the Vatican decrees on education.

CHAPTER 4

TOWARDS A CONCEPTION OF AUTHENTIC EDUCATION FOR CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS:

PERSPECTIVES FROM THE DOCUMENTS OF THE CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION AND REQUIREMENTS OF DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

4.1 Introduction

Catholic primary schools have left a major legacy in Irish education and continue to play a key role in Irish society. However, as outlined in Chapter One, a confluence of different events has put the spotlight on denominational schools; many influential voices now consider that State-funded Catholic schools have no role to play in an increasingly secular and multi-cultural Irish society. Lane (2006) declares that Catholic education, within this new social context, must become "more self-conscious and self-aware of its own particular identity" (p.129). On a broader scale, Pope Benedict XVI (2008), in a recent speech to Catholic educators, acknowledged that many now question the Church's involvement in education, and also considered that the time has come "to reflect on what is particular to our Catholic institutions [and] how...they contribute to the good of society".

Earlier chapters explored the literature on Catholic education and examined the concept of authenticity in contemporary society. Part One of this Chapter now explores key principles of authentic Catholic education based on the decrees of the Congregation for Catholic Education since the Second Vatican Council. As noted in Chapter 2, there has been little indepth analysis of the Vatican documents on education specifically in the context of Irish primary schools. As the official documents of the Magisterium are the authoritative voice of the

Church they must be examined in order to appreciate the Church's own understanding of authentic Catholic education. As Taylor (1989) points out such articulation of one's "qualitative distinctiveness" is crucial in being truly authentic and in setting out the basis of one's moral actions. The espoused principles of Catholic primary education in Ireland are also explored as delineated in the documents and discourses on education issued by the Irish Bishops. Based on this, the Chapter elicits the defining characteristics and unique attributes of Catholic schools and highlights the issues such principles raise for Catholic primary schools in contemporary Irish society. It begins with an exploration of how a Catholic philosophy of education developed before the Second Vatican Council with the emergence of the personalist school of thought.

While it will be evident that Catholic primary education has its own set of requirements in terms of "the Church's primary mission of evangelisation", contemporary Irish society also has its own legitimate set of expectations from State-funded Catholic education - from the need for autonomy and critical reflection demanded by liberalism to the requirement for tolerance and respect for difference demanded by pluralism. Thus, Part Two of the Chapter also explores the respective roles of Church and State in the provision of education for democratic, multi-cultural Irish society. Overall, in this Chapter I aim to commence a dialogue between the authentic principles of Catholic education and the legitimate requirements of multi-cultural Irish society.

PART ONE – AUTHENTIC CATHOLIC EDUCATION: CHURCH PERSPECTIVES

4.2 The Foundations of a Catholic Conception of Education

4.2.1 The Emergence of the Personalist School of Thought Prior to the Second Vatican Council

Throughout the nineteenth century, the institutional Church remained largely silent about human problems and social issues and encouraged individual spirituality and a withdrawal from the secular world. This "otherworldly" stance was affirmed in 1868, when the First Vatican Council endorsed Pope Pius IX's declaration that "the Pope cannot and should not be reconciled and come to terms with progress, liberalism, and modern civilization" (Syllabus of Errors, 1864). That Council also asserted the dogmatic authority of Church teachings with the aim of insulating its members from threats posed by modern society. Thus, "retreat" mode was the clearly preferred and explicitly promoted operational method for all Catholic institutions.

It was not until Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) succeeded Pius IX that the Church finally began to engage with the dilemma posed by modernity. The new Pope, in his encyclical, *Aeterni Patris,* written in 1879, called for a renewed study of the works of Thomas Aquinas. This renewed study – i.e. neoscholasticism or neo-Thomism - sought to recover fundamental truths, what it termed Natural Law, in order to bring these perennially valid principles to bear on the moral dilemmas of the day such as relativism, subjectivism and individualism. In so doing, Bryk et al (1993) point out that Neoscholasticism accomplished a great deal for the Church "by drawing on reasoned arguments from Natural Law in articulating the Church's positions on social and personal morality, rather than

simply making proclamations based on divine revelation, Catholic teachings became open to examination and debate"(p.36). Thus, Neoscholasticism moved the Catholic Church towards engaging with contemporary social and political problems.

Neoscholasticism's insistence on the capacity of human reason to arrive at ethical truth laid the foundation for the emergence of a renewed Catholic philosophy of education – particularly influenced by the personalist school of thought which began at this time. The philosopher Jacques Maritain was pre-eminent in applying personalism to Catholic education.

In sum, Maritain's philosophy of Catholic education builds upon the natural law tradition of Aristotle and Aquinas and is based on three key principles:

i) that humans are social creatures and are constituted as persons through their relationship with others;

ii) that humans, through their capacity for reason, have the ability to arrive at objective, ethical truth; and

iii) that common agreement on moral norms and principles in social life, involving the idea of the common good, are of essential importance to the social ethic.

Maritain saw the growing secularisation of education as a threat to the common good and criticised the instrumental rationality that directed it. He also was concerned that if humans abandoned the pursuit of objective truth as the unifying principle for society and accepted relativism, then everything would devolve into competing interests and ultimately to the dominance of the most powerful. Thus, as early as the 1940s, Maritain had identified two of the key

issues which contemporary writers, as seen in Chapters 2 and 3, recognise as "postmodern" threats to authentic Catholic education, viz.: technical rationalism and relativism. For Maritain, the answer to such threats lay in ensuring that every aspect of schooling, from its basic structure and curriculum to the nature of teachers' work and their roles, should be directed towards advancing the common good and should be informed by some larger conception of a properly human social order.

Maritain's work had a major influence upon the Second Vatican Council and its subsequent decrees on Catholic education and his ideas represent a significant backdrop to contemporary conceptions of Catholic education.

4.2.2 The Second Vatican Council and an Evolved Conception of Catholicism

The Second Vatican Council has been described as "revolutionary...and profoundly affecting virtually every aspect of Catholic life" (Bryk et al, 1993, p.46). The Council was convened by Pope John XXIII in an attempt to give to the Church "an aggiornamento"- a call to the Church to heed the "signs of the times".

The Council spoke unequivocally on a variety of themes. However, for the purposes of this thesis, I elicit four as being particularly pertinent to the emerging Catholic conception of education and of key relevance to any articulation of a vision of Catholic schooling in postmodern society, viz.:

i)   the Church's affirmation of itself as an organically developing entity that changes to meet the needs of the times;

ii)   the emphasis on Ecumenism, dialogue with other religions and the principle of religious freedom, all of which have implications for the separation of Church and State;

iii)   the replacement of the notion of global uniformity with an appreciation of the differences among regions and cultures and an acknowledgement that, for the Church to function vitally in the modern world, Catholics in each nation must retain the ability to express Christ's universal message in ways that are meaningful to them;

iv)   the acknowledgement of the importance of pursuing human rights and social justice as an expression of divine immanence, in contrast to a focus on transcendence which had been in the ascendancy beforehand.

As will be seen in the next Section, the Council's commitment to these four key principles of aggiornamento, religious freedom, authentic cultural diversity and subsidiarity, and social justice are reflected throughout the twentieth century in various Vatican decrees on Catholic education.

4.2.3 Official Church Teaching on Education

The Second Vatican Council contributed specifically to the continuing understanding of Catholic education in its Declaration on Christian Education – *Gravissimum Educationis* – which was issued at the close of the Council in 1965. *Gravissimum Educationis* can be considered as providing a synthesis of traditional Church teaching regarding education (as presented by Pope Pius XI in *Divini Illius Magistri* in 1921) and Maritain's philosophy of personalism. In what Bryk et al (1993, p.51) describe as "humane and altruistic language", *Gravissimum Educationis* called for a new school environment enlivened by

Gospel values and urged Catholic educational institutions to act as the "leaven of the human community" - a phrase which holds a depth of meaning for Catholic educators in twenty-first century society.

Since this initial Declaration on Christian Education in 1965, the Catholic Church, through the Congregation for Catholic Education, has issued six specific decrees concerning Catholic education which provide a focused and detailed insight into the Church's vision. These are:

i) *The Catholic School* (hereafter CS): Over a decade after the publication of *Gravissimum Educationis*, *The Catholic School* was issued in 1977 in the light of some Catholic schools becoming somewhat vague in the context of pluralist societies. *The Catholic School* seeks to counter this growing tendency with concrete guidelines on the characteristics of Catholic schools.

ii) *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* (hereafter LCSWF): Recognising the continual decline in the number of priests and members of religious orders working in Catholic schools, the Congregation issued *Lay Catholics in Schools* in 1982. This document seeks to motivate and empower lay Catholic teachers to uphold the true identity and heritage of Catholic schools.

iii) *The Religious Dimension of Education in the Catholic School* (hereafter RDECS): In the decades following the Second Vatican Council, there was some confusion over what is really meant by a "Catholic School" and a minimal sense of identity led to concern that some Catholic schools were little different to those of the State. *The Religious Dimension of Education in the Catholic School* was issued in 1988 and the document is a clear call back to Catholic identity and to the religious dimension of a holistic education which sees the whole person, body and soul, as the

subject for an education. The document calls upon all Catholic schools to review and renew the vitality of the religious ethos of their school.

iv) *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millen*nium (hereafter CSTTM): As the twentieth century approached its close, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* was issued in 1997 in response to the perception of a radical identity crisis in Catholic schools which had led to behaviour patterns so inconsistent with one another as to undermine any concept of community of identity. Within this context, CSTTM focused attention on the nature and distinctive characteristics of a school community that would present itself as Catholic.

v) *Consecrated Persons and their Mission in Schools: Reflections and Orientations* (hereafter CPMS): Within the context of the profound changes both in the Church, with declining vocations, and in the wider context of society, *Consecrated Persons and their Mission in Schools* was issued in 2002 in order to urge priests and members of religious communities to continue their ministry of education and to give due consideration to the importance of their presence in schools.

vi) *Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful* (hereafter ETCS): Once again, in 2007, in their decree *Educating Together in Catholic Schools*, the Congregation focused on the challenge of the Catholic educational experience which transpires from the context of the social, cultural and religious complexity in which young people are growing up today. The decree describes the Catholic school as the establishment of "a real educational community, built on the foundation of shared projected values" which must aspire to be a truly Christian community.

Many writers (for example Byrnes (2002); Grace (2002); Elias (1999)) point out that the decrees on education issued from the time of the Second Vatican Council onward do not attempt to present a Catholic philosophy of education. However, the major principles influencing the theoretical bases of Catholic education are clearly delineated in the documents and they jointly cast light on the context, role, priorities and purposes of the Catholic school. Grace (2002) notes that official post-Conciliar Church teaching can be seen to present an incrementally developed and largely consistent vision of the nature of Catholic education. In sum, the documents call for a new mode of Catholic schooling to meet the challenges of a modern and secular culture and contend that there is something quite distinctive about the Catholic school i.e. "its attempt to generate a community climate in the school that is permeated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity" (GE, 1965).

Crucially, and of particular relevance in terms of developing a vision of authentic Catholic primary education for contemporary Irish society, the Congregation for Catholic Education leaves the task of discerning the implications of its decrees for renewal of schools to Bishops at local and national level. As witnessed in the review of the literature on Catholic education in Chapter 2, this has resulted in subjective interpretations of the documents and in diverse and sometimes conflicting views of what constitutes the authentic identity of Catholic schools. Following the publication of decrees, some local Episcopal Conferences do issue interpretations of the documents to schools by way of policy documents - e.g. in 1972, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in the USA published the directive *To Teach as Jesus Did* which

fleshed out *Gravissimum Educationis'* (1965) theme of active, publicly engaged schools acting as instruments of social justice.

It is noteworthy that from the time of the Second Vatican Council until 2007 the Irish Bishops did not issue commentaries on any of the Vatican decrees on education. One interpretation of this is that the powerful, authoritative Church, in control of over 90% of Catholic primary schools, saw no need to consider new directions or to give guidance to a compliant, homogenous school system. However, the lack of guidance and interpretation and the abandonment of the work of constructing an explicit policy on Catholic education for Irish primary schools left a vacuum which has, in turn, left Catholic schools struggling to find an agreed basis to support their work and can be seen to have led to divergence of views about such issues as enrolment policy and provision of religious education for non-Catholic pupils, among others.

The fact that the Irish Bishops have issued two formal statements on Catholic education in the present decade speaks volumes about the situation in which Irish primary education in general, and Catholic primary education in particular, now finds itself. When asked in interview about this, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin (2008(c)) contended that, in Ireland, such was the strength of Irish Catholicism in society, that Irish culture itself was the vehicle for generating and supporting the faith, and as schools were an integral part of that culture there was no perceived need for policy documents on Catholic education. He considered that it is only in the relatively recent context of a diversified Ireland, with different attitudes to religion and different understandings of the term

"Catholic", that there is a pressing need for coherent policy documents on Catholic education. Or, in the forthright words of Bishop O'Reilly (2008), "it is only when challenged you have to think about things".

This Chapter now attempts to distil the fundamental tenets and distinguishing characteristics of Catholic education inherent in the Vatican documents. It highlights the issues they raise for the "local situation" - Ireland in the twenty-first century.

4.3 Developing a Conception of Authentic Catholic Education based on Official Church Decrees

Pope John Paul II (1987(b)) spoke of the "pressing challenge of clearly identifying the aims of Catholic education" (p.154) and Pope Benedict XVI (2008(a)) recently identified as "an emergency in education" the fundamental uncertainty about the deeper purpose of education in an increasingly pragmatic and utilitarian world. Archbishop Diarmuid Martin (2008(c)) commented in interview that, in the Irish context, there is a particular need to develop reflection on Catholic education "as we arrive at a crossroads regarding educational policy, and as we arrive at that crossroads at a time in which financial constraints may tempt us to think only in narrow pragmatic and utilitarian terms".

What is needed, I contend, is a vision of Catholic education which engages contemporary issues and ideas in dialogue with the rich heritage of the past and which would allow the Catholic educational community to explore and embrace their distinctiveness within a postmodern society.

In discerning and elucidating such a vision, McLaughlin (1996) highlights an important enemy in general educational literature – what he terms "edu-babble" (imprecise and platitudinous rhetoric) – which offers to educators "a kind of spurious clarity in the form of slogans" (p.138). He argues that while such slogans sound intuitively plausible and appealing, they have become a substitute for sustained thought and their truth is unclear. McLaughlin also contends that there is a distinctively Catholic variant of edu-babble, which is typically forged out of phrases drawn from the various documents of the Church. Phrases such as "the school should be based on the values of the gospel" can sometimes bring discussion of the Catholic distinctiveness of the school to an end and give the impression that the matters at stake have been satisfactorily dealt with.

Having considered the literature on Catholic education in Ireland, I believe that there is a particularly *Irish* Catholic variant of edu-babble. While one could point to the two recent documents from the Irish Bishops' Conference - *Catholic Primary Schools: A Policy for Provision into the Future* (ICBC, 2007) and *Vision '08: A Vision for Catholic Education in Ireland* (ICBC, 2008) - as outlining a conception of education for Catholic primary schools, key phrases in the documents must be interrogated in order to elicit their true meaning. For example, how is the statement that "the Catholic School is based on an educational philosophy in which faith, culture and life are brought into harmony" to be understood in postmodern Ireland?; or how does the statement that "the Catholic school welcomes diversity and strives for inclusivity" rest

with the statement in the same document that "the children of Catholic parents have first claim on admissions to Catholic schools"?; and how is, or, indeed, is, the statement that "faith...forms the foundation of all that we do and the horizon of all that takes place in the school" actually realised in Irish Catholic primary schools?; and, if it is realised, how, from a practice perspective, is it reconciled with inclusivity?

The sort of clarity which is needed in relation to the distinctiveness of Catholic education needs to go beyond "edu-babble". There must be a serious attempt to clearly delineate an overall substantial conception of Catholic education. This Chapter now proposes central tenets of a Catholic conception of education. It then outlines critical and distinctive features of Catholic schools and highlights the issues they raise for Catholic primary schools in Ireland today.

4.3.1 Central Aspects of a Catholic Conception of Education

Based on Neoscholastic thought, personalism and a considered reading of Vatican documents on education, and bearing in mind the need for any philosophy of education to be relevant to contemporary society, this Chapter highlights four points of departure for a Catholic conception of education. In sum, authentic Catholic education celebrates and nurtures, as the visible fruits of Catholic faith:

 i)   the dignity of the person;
 ii)   the importance of community;
 iii) the moral commitment to social justice and the common good; and
 iv) the importance of spiritual life.

These particular four points of departure are of key importance as they address the market-inspired forces of individualism, relativism, utilitarianism and

instrumentalism that at present impinge on much of education. The centre of Catholic education is a coherent, integrated vision of the person and society and of the meaning of life based in a God who is love. Catholic education intends to inform and form the very being of its students, to mould their identity and agency – who they are and how they live. In traditional philosophical terms, its intended learning outcome moves beyond the epistemological to the ontological, without leaving the former behind. Or, in the words of the Vatican decree (CS, 1977, p.127), the school assists in "the development of human intelligence, the formation of values and the interpretation of human experience". These characteristics cannot be taken for granted - they are in fact counter-cultural to many modern conceptions and definitions of education which range from the Christian humanist to the utilitarian instrumental. Education cannot be neutral - it is directed either towards the dignity of the student and the humanisation of society or towards another social agenda. In Catholic schools, the aim is to assimilate skills and knowledge, intellectual methods, moral and social attitudes, all of which help to develop students' personality and lead them to take their place as active members of the community.

It is important also to state, as an evident but basic and fundamental principle, that Catholic education is founded on and derives its direction from the person of Christ. The Church is committed to education by virtue of her conviction that "the person of Christ, his praxis and vision of life, is of absolute significance to the well-being of individuals and the transformation of society" (Lane, 1991).

In sum, Catholic education seeks to serve society by forming human individuals who, in turn, will change society for the better, or, in the words of the Vatican document, the *Catholic Church on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (CSTTM, 1997), "...the Catholic school should be able to offer young people the means to acquire the knowledge they need in order to find a place in a society which is strongly characterised by technical and scientific skill. But at the same time, it should be able, above all, to impart a solid Christian formation".

Based on this vision of education, the next Section identifies distinctive features of Catholic schools.

4.3.2 Distinctive Characteristics of Catholic Schools

As noted in Chapter 2, what is unique about a Catholic school is often summed up in the term "ethos", namely the spirit and pervading atmosphere of the school. However, because the term ethos is elusive, it is important to be able to spell out some of the distinctive characteristics of the Catholic school in concrete terms.

From an examination of official, post-Conciliar Church decrees on Catholic education, I highlight what I consider to be the three over-arching characteristics of Catholic schools discernable in the documents, viz. - evangelisation, commitment to the common good and the integration of faith, life and culture. Each of these is now explored.

4.3.2.1 Evangelisation

The most obvious characteristic of a Catholic school, though not always articulated, is that its goals should be aligned with the educational mission of the Church i.e. to evangelise. As stated in *Evangelli Nuntiandi* (1975, (14))

> the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church....Evangelising is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelise.

In all of the principal Vatican documents on education, it is made clear that the Catholic school exists as an integral part of the Church's mission and that the Catholic school's primary purpose is evangelisation. There can be no ambiguity about it - the fundamental function of Catholic schools is to transmit Catholic truths and Catholic values. Thus, the primary distinguishing characteristic of the Catholic school is its religious dimension.

While, as seen in Chapter 2, different authors place different levels of emphasis on this aspect of Catholic education, it is clear that, even in a climate of growing secularism, the Catholic school must be distinguished by faith and its evangelical dimension which is "a fundamental part of its very identity and the focus of its mission" (Treston, 1998, p.68). However, the concept of evangelisation does not always sit easily in multi-cultural, multi-faith societies.

In the first instance, the word "evangelisation" often conjures up negative associations with proselytism, colonialism and indoctrination. Images of evangelisation often centre around a clerical, imperialistic and aggressive imposition of a set of beliefs and practices. Furthermore, in the context of the wider world, the history of Christian mission is a sombre reminder of how

easily the ideals of evangelisation can be perverted by religious ideology and a lack of respect for indigenous peoples, cultures and religions.

In the second instance, a further problem with the concept of evangelisation and "school as Church", is the less than ideal reality of Church life. Some see the Church as a "compromised institution, one with too much blood on its hands, spiritual fat on its body, and too many skeletons in its closet" (Sullivan, 2000, p.99). Indeed, in the wake of the latest Church scandal in Ireland with the publication of the Ryan Report (May, 2009) cataloguing the child abuse which took place over many decades in institutional reform and industrial schools run by religious orders, there have been renewed calls for the Church to withdraw from the education of children altogether.

So for a variety of reasons, various other roles of the Catholic school, such as providing a holistic education, sit more comfortably with some people of a post-modern consciousness than evangelisation. Nonetheless, the Catholic school must uphold its essential character of evangelisation and it is my contention that Catholic education can only run into the danger of so-called proselytism, or religious intolerance, if Catholic educators misunderstand the true meaning and methods of authentic evangelisation. It is contended, therefore, that what is needed is a modern understanding and approach to evangelisation for a culture and Church in rapid transition. Heeding McLoughlin's (1996) advice to avoid "edubabble", a clear, precise definition of what is intended when the Catholic school is spoken of as an agent of evangelisation is required.

Treston (1998) contends that evangelisation has different emphases for people in different circumstances, viz. - for people who are actively involved in their Christian faith, evangelisation is an appeal to ongoing conversion; for those who have withdrawn from the practice of their Christian faith, it is a call to reconciliation; and for those of no religious faith, evangelisation is an invitation to accept the Good News. However, this statement is limited in its vision of evangelisation and comprises just one element of authentic evangelisation, namely catechesis. Indeed, endorsing this view, in interview, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin (2008(c)) made the observation that "Irish children are among the most catechised in Europe" but posed the pertinent question – "are they the most evangelised?" While this statement is open to question on many levels, it reflects the Archbishop's perception of evangelisation as comprising more that mere catchesis. From exploration of the Vatican decrees on education, two key aspects are identified as crucial to the contemporary Catholic school's evangelisation process, viz. – firstly, catechesis, but also, and of particular importance in today's post-modern and multi-cultural society - religious empathy. Each of these are now considered

(a) Catechesis

In the first instance, commitment to evangelisation means ensuring that Catholic students emerge from Catholic schools sufficiently informed about Catholic faith in all its dimensions. All of the Vatican documents state that the Catholic faith must be presented in its entirety under the guidance of the Magisterium and stipulate that the Catholic school has as its specific duty "the

complete Christian formation of its pupils" (CS, 1977). The decree Evangelli

Nuntiandi (1975 (44)) states that

> the intelligence, especially that of children and young people, needs to
> learn through systematic religious instruction the fundamental teachings,
> the living content of the truth which God has wished to convey to us and
> which the Church has sought to express in an ever richer fashion during
> the course of her long history.

In the Irish context, the Episcopal Conference (ICBC, 2008) states that

"...religious education, designed to confirm and deepen an understanding of the

faith, forms an essential part of the curriculum in Catholic schools and functions

at its core".

From the many definitions and descriptions of catechesis throughout the

literature (Kieran & Hession, 2005; Sullivan, 2002; Treston, 1998; Arbuckle,

1990), I propose that catechesis in Catholic primary schools consists in Catholic

beliefs, narratives and practices being taught in a systematic, reasoned,

comprehensive, and age-appropriate fashion, while at the same time

endeavouring to enable students to develop a personal relationship with Christ

through the fostering of prayer and drawing upon the richness of the Catholic

liturgical tradition.

However, while traditionally Catholic schools transmitted Catholic teaching to

children from Catholic families, residing in strong Catholic communities, this

comprehensive model of evangelisation in the Catholic school is clearly

increasingly under strain in the new multi-cultural, muti-faith classrooms of

postmodern Ireland. While, in theory, one could assume that when parents

choose to send their children to a denominational school they do so with the

explicit understanding that their children will be formed in that faith, as noted earlier this is not assured in the Irish context due to the lack of choice of primary schools for many families. In Irish Catholic primary schools, children are increasingly drawn from multi-faith, or non-faith, backgrounds and how schools fulfil their primary purpose of evangelisation in this context must be given serious consideration. Furthermore, even in predominantly "Catholic" classrooms, the commitment of professedly Catholic parents to the faith is often an issue which schools must grapple with. In attempting to fulfil their catechetical role, the school is often faced with a lack of prior faith conscientisation of pupils and a lack of parental support for education in Catholicism. Thus, key areas for consideration include:

i)   how to cater for the multi-faceted level of commitment among Catholic parents and how to support Catholic adherence in a much weakened Catholic community;

ii)   how to impart the Catholic faith in classrooms where at times, Catholic pupils may be in a minority;

iii) how to accommodate respect for non-Catholic pupils in the context of the integrated nature of the Irish primary school curriculum whereby catechesis is interwoven throughout the curriculum of the Catholic school; and

iv)   how to respect the wishes of non-Catholic parents in relation to their children's religious education.

The Irish Bishops (ICBC (2007) have stated categorically that Catholic schools cannot relinquish their freedom to proclaim the Gospel and to offer a formation based on the values of a Christian education. However, they go on to state that while the Catholic school provides religious instruction and formation in the Catholic faith, it also seeks to co-operate with parents of other faiths who wish

to provide religious instruction for their children in their own tradition. Clearly, the implications of such a statement must now be clearly spelt out in concrete and specific terms. In the absence of guidelines on how to promote the Catholic faith while respecting the religious "other", Catholic schools in contemporary Irish society must continue to wrestle with the challenge of reconciling the role of catechesis with the reality of the multi-faith classroom. To paraphrase Groome (2002), Catholic schools must be empowered to "claim our home but not in a hegemonic way" (p.xx).

Pope Benedict XVI (2008 (c)) recently stated that a school's Catholic identity is "a question of conviction", and provocatively asked "is the faith tangible in our universities and schools?" Perhaps a more searching question would be "*how* is the faith tangible in our universities and schools?", for it is not just through formal catechesis, prayer, liturgy and sacraments that Catholic schools make "the faith tangible" but also through witness to the fundamental tenets of Catholic education as elaborated earlier, viz.: an ethical orientation to the good, commitment to social justice, an ethos of community and welcome, and religious empathy.

(b) Religious empathy

Since the decree *Nostra Aetate* (1965) of the Second Vatican Council, significant developments have taken place in the area of inter-faith dialogue. Pope John Paul II, in particular, advanced the cause of interfaith dialogue and understanding. He brought the major religions of the world together at Assisi in 1986 and again in 2002; and throughout the Jubilee Year 2000, he made many

prophetic gestures vis a vis Islam, and also visited the Western Wall in Jerusalem. The ecumenical imperative has important implications for Catholic education.

The Catholic decrees on education make it quite explicit that the Catholic school must recognise and respect the ecclesial character of other Christian Churches and must value the elements of truth and grace within other world religions (GE, 1965; CS, 1977; CSTTM, 1997). While helping students grow within their own faith tradition, the Catholic school, as an integral part of its mission to evangelise, must also help students to learn to respect the ideas and beliefs of others. Thus, religious empathy and religious humility form a critical aspect of the school's mission to evangelise.

In spite of some contemporary views in the media to the contrary, e.g. "being inclusive, liberal and open to outside influences is not part of the package...of the [Catholic] primary school system" (Kelly, 2007), the Catholic school is not sectarian but is ecumenical and formally committed to inter-religious dialogue. The primary aim of this kind of inter-religious learning is empathy, tolerance and mutual understanding and Catholic schools should be, therefore, leading the way in this regard in the newly emerging multi-cultural and multi-faith society of Ireland.

The Vatican decree *Consecrated Persons and their Mission in Schools* considers that "difference, rather than being a threat, can become, through respectful dialogue, a source of deep understanding of the mystery of human

existence" (CPMS, 2002), and, furthermore, the Vatican decrees also teach that Catholic schools should be "places of apprenticeship in a lively dialogue between young people of different religions and social backgrounds" (CSTTM, 1997). The Irish Bishops (ICBC (2007)) state that the Catholic primary school sees diversity as "an opportunity for dialogue and understanding with those of different faiths". However, while such interaction and dialogue are crucial to fostering religious empathy and while one could consider that opportunities for such dialogue abound in the many multi-cultural classrooms of today's Ireland, clearly very often the structures are not in place to support and encourage this dialogue and teachers are not sufficiently confident or trained to do so.

Feinberg (2006) contends that it is never too early to help students to develop an awareness of the religious pluralism of their society and that even in the primary school students should be helped to develop powers of empathy and sensitivity to adherents of other religions and none. However, while the Irish Catholic primary school does address the issue of religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity through a variety of curricular areas – in particular SESE (Social, Environmental and Scientific Education) and SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education), the Church, through the National Catechetical Programme - "*Alive-O*", has not translated into specific curricular content or methodologies how inter-religious dialogue could be fostered or conducted. Nor has it included comprehensive information on diverse faiths or world religions. Clearly, an ecumenical stance and an emphasis on religious empathy must now be integrated into the national catechetical programme in an explicit, detailed and comprehensive fashion.

To be Catholic today necessitates being inter-religious - especially in the light of the multicultural reality of the new Ireland. Ecumenism and religious empathy are not optional extras within Catholic schools, rather they are an essential element within the school's mission and should be inscribed in the Mission Statements of Catholic schools. In this way, through direct catechesis and a fostering of religious empathy, young people will be brought to a deep knowledge of their own religion and an understanding and appreciation of the religious "other".

In exploring the evangelical imperative, Bryk et al (1993) researched the extent to which Catholic schools placed emphasis upon evangelisation and religious distinctiveness. Although the schools did not lack religious activities in addition to their formal religious curriculum, Catholic teachers reported that they valued traditional academic goals and the development in students of qualities of compassion, tolerance and a commitment to justice more highly than the "more traditional" elements of religious formation such as a knowledge of, and a commitment to, Church doctrine and moral teaching. While research of this nature has not been carried out in the context of Catholic primary schools in Ireland, it is likely that the evangelical mission is one of the most challenging aspects of Catholic education in postmodern society and one meriting serious consideration and reflection. It is also likely that the second key characteristic of the Catholic school is generally more acceptable and more accepted than evangelisation in Catholic primary schools i.e. – commitment to the common good.

4.3.2.2 Commitment to the Common Good

Throughout the ages, philosophers and policy makers have identified commitment to the common good as an integral part of democratic society. Over 300 years before the birth of Christ, Aristotle's understanding of the human being was as a social or political animal (zoon politikon), whose good is essentially bound up with the good of the polis, and, in the twenty-first century, Stone (2002) contrasts the concept of the public good of the polis with the self-interest of the market economy which leads to competitive individualism.

In simple terms, the principle of the common good enjoins all human beings to strive for justice and peace and to combat affronts to human dignity. A just school endeavours to raise consciousness about issues of justice and to empower its pupils to work for the good of the community rather than individual self-interest. Tarnas (1991, p.422) points out that today, the common good also can be seen to embrace wider issues of justice such as – care of the environment, a critique of the ideology of capitalism and the rise of feminist consciousness.

In today's world, it has become increasingly difficult to sustain a vision of the common good. In a pluralist society, people hold diverse understandings of the meaning and purpose of human life, they disagree about issues of personal and social morality, about ethical and political issues and about the larger questions of meaning that are addressed by religions or competing philosophies of life. Furthermore, the preoccupation with individualism and self-interest in postmodern society leaves little room for public discussion of, or working

towards, the common good. Yet, as Hollenbach (1996) points out, in the face of numerous problems that plague our complex social world, the need for a stronger sense of community, for a recognition of our *de facto* technological, political and economic interdependence, and for virtues of mutual co-operation and mutual responsibility, are all the more urgent. Hollenbach (1996) observes that "recovery of confidence that we both need and can attain a shared understanding of the lineaments of what a good life together might be is an urgent necessity in pluralist democracies today"(p.94). As explored in Chapter 3, the concept of authenticity holds that, through the process of coming to know, one can gain insight into the objective and common good - education is seen as a key way of attaining this.

The promotion of the common good is intrinsic to the Catholic faith. It involves a form of duty towards the larger community of one's fellow beings and Catholic thought has long held that the common good is the overarching end to be pursued in social and cultural life – including education. Indeed, Bryk et al (1993) consider that it is this vision of the common good – of "reaching out" and "other-directedness" - which most characterizes Catholic schools. While many schools coming from a social humanist ethic have a strong social justice agenda, for the Catholic school, a policy of working for the common good is undertaken as working for the building up of the kingdom of God. The Vatican decree, *The Catholic School* (1977), states that schools must help young people

> to overcome their individualism and discover, in the light of faith, their specific vocation to live responsibly in a community with others. The very pattern of the Christian life draws them to commit themselves to serve God in their brethren and to make the world a better place for man to live in.

The fostering of a concern for and commitment to the common good involves a move away from individualistic concern for the private good to a more social concern for justice and the good of the larger community. For contemporary society, the Catholic commitment to the common good involves a recognition that *all* people are living images of God and, as such, links Catholic Christians with the larger community of non-Catholics, non-Christians and non-believers and enjoins all to work for a social justice which is "opposed to every form of imperialism, hegemony, greed, or unrestrained quest for power, trampling upon the basic rights of the human person; and racial, cultural and religious discrimination" (Pope John Paul II (1992) pp.38-39).

This understanding of the common good puts it in direct continuity with Aquinas's understanding of the premier moral virtue as the promotion of justice, which directs a person's actions toward the good of fellow human beings and in line with Lonergan's contention that humans, through their capacity for reason, have the ability to arrive at an objective, ethical conception of the common good which is of essential importance to the social ethic. Clearly, the Catholic community possesses a long tradition - from Aquinas to Maritain to John Paul II - that, in its renewed contemporary form, positions it to make a potentially unique contribution to the education of individuals and ultimately to society by ensuring that pupils in Catholic schools are nurtured in ways that enable them both to understand the meaning of justice in society and to work for its achievement and thus contribute to the common good.

Specifically, the Church (CSTTM, 1997), in explaining how Catholic schools can promote the common good, encourages Catholic educators to cultivate attitudes in their students based on Christian values, and it lists such attitudes and values as including - a freedom which includes respect for others, conscientious responsibility, a sincere and constant search for truth, a spirit of solidarity with and service toward all other persons, a sensitivity for justice, and a special awareness of being called to be positive agents of change in a society that is undergoing continuous transformation.

Clearly, this work is all the more necessary in postmodern society where many communities are becoming rapidly multi-cultural and pose new challenges for the protection of human rights, respect for diversity and the fostering of social cohesion. The explicit role of the Catholic school in this regard, through fostering pupils with a deep concern for social justice and the common good, is succinctly summed up in the Vatican decree *Lay Catholics, Witnesses to the Faith* (1982) – and bears complete quotation here, viz.

> the vocation of every Catholic educator includes the work of ongoing social development; to form men and women who will be ready to take their place in society, preparing them in such a way that they will make the kind of social commitment which will enable them to work for the improvement of social structures, making these structures more conformed to the principles of the Gospel....Today's world has tremendous problems: hunger, illiteracy and human exploitation; sharp contrasts in the standard of living of individuals, and of countries....along with many other examples of the degradation of human life. All of this demands that Catholic educators develop in themselves, and cultivate in their students, a keen social awareness and a profound sense of civic and political responsibility.

Thus, in the first instance, commitment to the common good in Catholic schools involves students being nurtured in an unstinting commitment to the good of

society which means, from primary level onwards, raising their awareness of issues of social justice and fostering in them an ability to act authentically to make the world a better place. As Chittester (2003) states:

> They must leave us able and willing to envision something better for the world than power and profit at any cost....They must have the commitment to question its social axioms rather than simply comply with them. (p.23)

A second key constituent of the principle of the common good is the Catholic Church's fundamental call to be of service to the poor.

All of the Vatican documents on education outline the preferential option for the poor as a key priority for schools stating that "first and foremost the Church offers its educational services to the poor" (CS, 1977). In 1992, the Church went further, stating that in today's society it is incumbent upon affluent communities to have a preferential concern also for those who flee political or economic conditions that threaten their lives and physical safety (Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, 1992, p.10). In 1998, the Congregation for Catholic Education (CSTTM (1997)) elaborated still further on what is meant by "the poor" stating that the preferential option for the poor leads to "avoiding *all forms* of exclusion" and that the Church does, in fact, mean to offer its educational service "*in the first place* to those who are poor in the goods of this world or who are deprived of the assistance and affection of a family or who are strangers to the gift of faith" (own emphases). This is echoed by the Irish Bishops' directive (ICBC (2008)) – which states that

Catholic schools are "called to serve others, above all those who are victims of poverty and injustice of any kind".

These statements are powerful in their directness. The question must now be asked as to how they are to be interpreted in the context of Irish Catholic primary schools.

Without question, in contemporary Ireland, the preferential option for the poor must be given renewed and urgent consideration. Today, in Ireland, poverty continues to be a persistent reality despite the greatly increased wealth generated by the years of the "Celtic Tiger". Statistics from the latest EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions, compiled in 2006 when the Irish economy was at its height, show that 14% of all children in Ireland under 14 years of age are living in consistent poverty and that 20% of children are at risk of poverty. Furthermore, latest census figures (Census 2006) show almost half a million non-Irish nationals now living in Ireland, and a Report from the Central Statistics Office states that "non-Irish tend to belong to the lower social classes compared with the Irish" (Census 2006 (a)).

The implications for Catholic schools seem obvious and unequivocal - if any school is to have an authentic Catholic ethos then it must make extraordinary efforts to include the poor, the marginalised and the excluded - who in today's society tend to be minority ethnic groups and the socio-economically disadvantaged. The Church is unequivocal on this point. While recognising that "unjust situations often make it difficult to implement this choice", they also

acknowledge that "sometimes, however, it is Catholic educational institutions themselves that have strayed from such a preferential option" (CSTTM, 1997). Clearly, the preferential option for the poor demands that Catholic schools play their part in rectifying the social fragmentation that exists perhaps more than ever before in Irish society today.

Concern for the common good must be witnessed to and lived out in the life of the Catholic school – both by what it teaches its students in terms of solidarity and social justice and also by how it acts as an institution in society in terms of its structures, policies and procedures. In sum, commitment to the common good must permeate Catholic education. The Catholic school must strive to develop each student's capacity to reflect on and respond to difficult and complex moral issues and help to develop a deep understanding of the demands of justice, truthfulness, reconciliation, solidarity and integrity of conscience. Furthermore, the Catholic school must act as an organisation whose structures and policies – perhaps particularly in the area of admissions - reflect the overarching Catholic concern for the common good and an unequivocal preferential option for the poor.

4.3.2.3 The Integration of Faith and Culture

Finally, a key principle in post-Conciliar teaching on Catholic education is that Catholic schools are called to engage in a creative and critical dialogue between faith and contemporary culture. As *The Catholic Church on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (1997) states "from the nature of the Catholic school also

stems one of the most significant elements of its educational project: the synthesis of culture and faith and a synthesis of faith and life".

Plato understood education primarily in terms of an ongoing conversation and dialogue about the meaning of human experience within existing traditions. Vatican documents on education also use the language of "dialogue", "solidarity" and "conversation" to describe the relationship that exists between the Church and humanity. *Gaudium et Spes* (1965) explicitly exhorts educators to embrace the challenges of the modern world. While acknowledging the negative aspects of many modern trends, particularly egotistic individualism, the persistence of hunger, poverty and illiteracy alongside opulence and wealth, and a shattering of relationship with God through an unfettered desire for independence – *Gaudium et Spes* describes a non-negotiable interrelationship between the Church and the modern world.

The Catholic school aims to integrate faith and life intelligently and ethically and attempts to translate the gospels into a living service to the culture within which they are located. The Vatican decree, *The Religious Dimension of Education in the Catholic School* (1998), sums up both the potential and the dilemma inherent in this goal - on the one hand, a Catholic school is a "civic institution", its aim, methods and characteristics are the same as those of every other school. On the other hand, it is a "Christian community", whose educational goals are rooted in Christ and his Gospel. It is not always easy to bring these two aspects into harmony: the task requires constant attention, so that the tension between a serious effort to transmit culture and a forceful

witness to the Gospel does not turn into a conflict harmful to both. What is clear, however, is that an authentic Catholic school can never represent a retreat from the world – an exclusivist safe-haven – in which Catholic pupils are insulated from the multi-cultural, muti-faith nature of postmodern society. Rather, Catholic schools represent " a sensitive meeting point for the problems that besiege this restless end of millennium" (CSTTM, 1997) and must engage with the reality of postmodern culture, with all of the concomitant complexities and dilemmas which this poses for policy and practice.

Having, explored the central tenets of Catholic education and defining characteristics of Catholic schools, it is clear that following from the very nature of the Catholic school – as a place of, on the one hand, evangelisation in the Catholic faith and, on the other, as an entity committed by that faith to an unequivocal commitment to social justice and dialogue with contemporary society - Catholic schools have a significant role to play in democratic, multi-cultural postmodern Irish society. The respective roles of Church and State in promoting the common good are now given consideration.

PART TWO – AUTHENTIC CATHOLIC EDUCATION: STATE PERSPECTIVES

4.4 Church and State Responsibilities in the Provision of Primary Education in Postmodern Ireland

It is especially daunting to try to bring the Catholic Church and democratic postmodern society together - to stand as it were on the ground where they meet or overlap. Catholic schools make up an important part of this ground space.

In this shared space, denominational schools and the State both have dual responsibilities. Denominational schools, on the one hand, must transmit religious knowledge and ethos and, on the other, must also be a reproductive agent of a democratic way of life on which the survival of the State itself ultimately depends. The State, also has a dual responsibility – firstly in ensuring that a variety of school types congruent with parental choice is available locally; and, secondly, while supporting denominational schools, ensuring that they serve the needs of the State in terms of their education of young people for participation in liberal, pluralist, democratic society.

Feinberg (2006) observes that such a contention takes us from a philosophy of religion to a politics of religion. In considering denominational education in Ireland, as observed in Chapter 2, there is nothing unusual about the intermingling of politics and religion. However, in postmodern Irish society where Catholic primary schools still comprise over 90% of the national education system, the responsibilities and role of both Church and State are brought into ever sharper relief.

Two key issues concerning the respective roles of Church and State in providing appropriate primary education for contemporary Ireland are:

i) the respective role of both Church and State in facilitating parental choice in relation to types of primary school, given the effective absence of alternatives to Catholic schools at primary level;

ii) the role of State-funded Catholic primary schools in serving the requirements of education for increasingly pluralist, secular and multi-cultural Irish society.

4.4.1 Parental Choice

Parents have primary and inalienable (though not absolute) rights over their children's education and this right is upheld by national and international law - viz.:

i) the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) declares that "parents shall have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children" (Art. 26.3);

ii) the European Convention on Human Rights mandates that "...the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching as is in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions" (Protocol 1, Art. 2);

iii) the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) upholds "the liberty of parents ... to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions" (Art. 13.3);

iv) the Irish Constitution guarantees "to respect the inalienable right and duty of parents to provide, according to their means, for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children" (Art. 42.1); and

v) the Education Act (1998) promotes "the right of parents to send their children to a school of the parents' choice" (6(e)).

Thus, the basic premise is that individual parents, rather than having a single State system of schooling foisted on them, should have the right to choose what type of school their children will attend, and, furthermore, that there should be an open market, as it were, to cater for the diversity of these choices.

Given parents' right to choose the education they desire for their children, three questions arise in the Irish context –

i) what actually is the preference of Irish parents in relation to the primary school education of their children?

ii) given demographic and economic realities, what institutional provisions can be made to cater for these preferences? and

iii) does the Catholic Church have a role to play in ensuring that a plurality of patronage exists in Irish society?

In relation to the first two questions, recent research in Ireland (Iona Institute, 2008; ICBC, 2008(b)) has shown that while 47% - 48% of adults would choose a Catholic school for their children, 73% consider that parents should have the right to choose from a variety of school types for their children. As noted earlier, however, given the current recessionary economic climate and cutbacks in primary education (including an increase in the pupil-teacher ratio), it is unlikely that the Irish Government will undertake a programme of establishing large numbers of public primary schools where denominational schools already exist[14]. Furthermore, it is unlikely that the State, even as "paymaster" of the denominational system, could insist on some Catholic schools transferring to

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[14] It must be noted in this regard that the two new State national schools that were due to be opened in September 2008 had "a very difficult launching" (Martin, 2008 (c)) and, in fact, only one was established at that time. Many are of the view that this was, once again, due to poor planning by the Department of Education and Science. It could also reflect a reluctance by parents to send their children to what are perceived as "emergency" schools primarily for pupils with no other alternative.

non-denominational status. On the one hand, practical issues such as the fact that the school buildings are owned by the Church would make such a transfer costly and, on the other, given the long history of Church/State relations in primary education in Ireland (as outlined in Chapter 2), it is unlikely that the State could legally, or would morally, force the Church to relinquish its control of primary schools under its patronage.

In this context, the third question of whether the Church itself has a role to play in ensuring that a variety of school types is available in Irish society becomes highly pertinent and will be considered now in some detail.

In the first instance, official Church teaching concurs with international law on both the inalienable right of parents to select the type of school they desire for their children, and on the duty of the State to provide for such a variety of school types. In its first ever decree on education, the Congregation for Catholic Education (GE, 1965) pronounced that :

> Parents who have the primary and inalienable right and duty to educate their children must enjoy true liberty in their choice of schools. Consequently, the public power, which has the obligation to protect and defend the rights of citizens, must see to it, in its concern for distributive justice, that public subsidies are paid out in such a way that parents are truly free to choose according to their conscience the schools they want for their children.

Gravissimum Educationis (1965) further contends that the State:

> must always keep in mind the principle of subsidiarity so that there is no kind of school monopoly, for this is opposed to the native rights of the human person, to the development and spread of culture, to the peaceful association of citizens and to the pluralism that exists today in ever so many societies.

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Echoing *Gravissimum Educationis,* in *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (1997), the Church states that:

> public authority...whose duty it is to protect and defend the liberty of the citizens, is bound according to the principle of distributive justice to ensure that public subsidies are so allocated that parents are truly free to select schools for their children in accordance with their conscience.

While it is clear that such statements were made primarily for situations where States do not give support to denominational schools, the Vatican pronouncements appear to have special significance for the situation in Ireland, where public subsidies are not "paid out in such a way that parents are truly free to choose according to their conscience the schools they want for their children"; where there is *de facto* some "kind of school monopoly"; and where parents do not "enjoy true liberty in their choice of school".

In the second instance, in *The Religious Dimension of Education in the Catholic School* (1988), the Congregation for Catholic Education specifically states that "Christian education must promote respect for the State and its representatives...and it should not ignore similar appeals coming from recognised international organisations such as UNESCO and the UN". As noted in Chapter 1, both the European Union and the United Nations have criticised the control of the primary school sector in Ireland by the Catholic Church.

Thus, the Church, by her own standards, would appear to have a role to play in supporting the development of a variety of school types in Ireland. While one could argue that the Catholic primary school system in Ireland serves the legitimate needs of Catholic families and that the Catholic Church does not

impede the diversification of school types, ethically and morally, and based on its own espoused principles, the argument being advanced here is that the Church must take a proactive role in actually *promoting* a plurality of patronage in the primary school system in contemporary Irish society.

The Church in Ireland has made supportive statements in this regard, with Archbishop Diarmuid Martin (2008(a)) stating that he believes that "ways can be found to expand the role of other patronage models, where such demand exists, through a form of structured divestment by the Catholic patron, which recognises the rights and interests of all parties"; and the Irish Bishops' Conference (ICBC (2007) states that :

> in some areas where historically there were large numbers of parents who wanted a Catholic school, circumstances may have changed and an existing Catholic school may no longer be viable as a Catholic school. In such a situation an evaluation will have to be made, in consultation with parents and teachers, about the future of such schools. (p.6)

From these statements, it appears that the Catholic Church is considering divestment only if an existing Catholic school "is no longer viable as a Catholic school". One can infer from this statement that the criteria of "viable" being applied in this instance is based on the number of Catholic pupils in the school. Further options must also be given due consideration:

i)   in situations where there are children from non-Catholic backgrounds in a school, the Church should consider entering into a joint patronage arrangement or handing over control to an alternative patron, be it multi-denominational or State school;

ii)   in large urban areas, where there are parents seeking alternatives to Catholic education, the Church needs to give serious consideration to divesting one or more of their schools, even if

these are "viable", in order to witness by word and by deed to the Church's commitment to plurality of patronage;

iii)   in situations where a school is "no longer viable", the Catholic Church should give serious consideration to the socio-economic profile of the area and make a decision, based solely on the common good, as to whether their presence is life-giving or no longer necessary in the community. While clearly such a decision is focused on the Church's perception of its role rather than on the rights of parents, as outlined in Chapter 2, the Catholic Church in America has been accused of abandoning its commitment to "a preferential option for the poor" by closing schools in some of the most deprived inner-city areas. The Church in Ireland must be motivated by an abiding and authentic concern for the common good when making decision about the future of "non-viable" schools. To paraphrase O'Keefe (1996, p.178) – if the contemporary rationale for Catholic schools is grounded in the values of the affluent, ethnically assimilated, suburban, secularised and generally content Catholic majority, then school closings in areas of poverty and need will not be problematic. On the other hand, if the rationale is a clear and compelling vocation to provide for the needs of the poor and to foster appreciation of the human family in its rich diversity – the choice to close a Catholic school in an inner-city areas will need far more indepth consultation and consideration.

When asked in interview "under what specific criteria (financial, numerical or other) is it envisaged that the decision to divest a Catholic school would be made?" - neither the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Diarmuid Martin, nor the Chair of the Episcopal Commission on Education, Bishop Leo O'Reilly, had a clear vision of how, and if, such a step would be undertaken. It is fair to note that Bishop O'Reilly (2008) did not seem very favourably disposed to the idea of

divesting Catholic primary schools, stating that "there is no rationalisation plan – the Church is not like a Hewlett Packard" and that "it is not up to me to close Catholic schools". Archbishop Martin (2008 (c)), on the other hand, stated that divestment "could bring about a rationalisation over time"; and he considered that divestment needed to be "a systematic thing" where Catholic schools in a given area could "evolve into a variety of schools". The Archbishop considered that this would be extremely positive in facilitating choice "on the part of parents and on the part of teachers".

It is clear that despite the policy statement of divesting schools, the Church does not have an immediate, formulated, or agreed plan as to how, and in what circumstances, divestment of a Catholic school might be considered. This is clearly an issue that requires deep reflection, consideration and consultation with a wide variety of stakeholders if it is not to remain at the level of empty rhetoric.

In this regard, the Church could establish a Working Party to make recommendations on the single issue of the divestment of Catholic primary schools. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to suggest terms of reference for such a Committee, clearly it would have to include the compilation of a demographic profile of all Catholic primary schools in Ireland with specific reference to the socio-economic background, nationalities, and religious denominations of pupils. The Working Party would also have to consider among other key issues – under what specific circumstances a Catholic school would be considered for "divestment", how the wishes of Catholic parents in

the school would be facilitated and how the religious education of Catholic children in such a "divested" schools would be facilitated. How such a process would be progressed and managed also will be of key importance for, as Dunne (2006) points out,

> a school in which there has been a long continuity of commitment and service…is not something that should be expected to change its identity with ease…the very historicity and particularity of what we are always concerned with in human affairs should itself be taken as a matter of principle: it tells us something important about the fundamental constitution of the realities we are dealing with and excludes as a method of dealing with them the approach of the social engineer. (p.221)

Notwithstanding the need for serious consideration to be given to the divestment of some Catholic schools, for the foreseeable future it is clear that the vast majority of Irish children will continue to be educated in Catholic primary schools, and so the question of the role of the school in preparing children for life in pluralist, liberal, democratic Irish society must be explored.

4.4.2 Education for Democratic, Pluralist Society

It is useful to explore the respective role of Church and State in the provision of primary education as a set of mutual responsibilities and expectations. Different religious denominations have a prima facie reason to ask that citizens and the State respect and support their religious identity and their right to advance that identity in their children by sending them to denominational schools. Citizens have reason to ask that denominational education respect the fundamental requirements of democratic liberal pluralism. Hence, in Ireland, the State fully funds Catholic education and, in turn, authentic Catholic education must promote a conception of education that is generally consistent with the larger social consensus of liberal pluralism.

Apologists for Catholic schools would claim that education in denominational schools is in itself an education for citizenship as the Christian virtues which it seeks to foster not only do not conflict with democratic values but actually enhance and, as it were, "supercharge" them. For example, the Congregation for Catholic Education (CSTTM, 1997) states that "there is no contradiction between the civic and the religious goals of Catholic education because the promotion of the human person is the goal of both". Furthermore, the Church considers that "as a result of the negative effects of uncontrolled economic and cultural globalisation, responsible participation in the life of the community at local, national and world levels....and [education for] active and responsible citizenship are of increasing importance in Catholic schools". In the Irish context, the Irish Bishops' Conference (ICBC, 2007) states that :

> in the work of education Catholic schools provide an important service to society. In promoting a sense of responsibility and the right use of freedom they help to form students as good citizens. In emphasising the values of community, justice, respect and forgiveness they help students to grow in maturity and to take their place as responsible members of society.

It is clear, therefore, from official Church teaching that the Catholic school is called on to be outstanding with regard to preparation of young people for active and responsible participation in every area of social, economic, professional and civic life. Thus, the Church's view of education would not appear to be in any way opposed to that of the State. However, regardless of this assertion, the aims of State-funded denominational schools in the context of liberal, pluralistic, democratic society must be explicit and transparent.

Feinberg (2006) asserts that the attitudes, skills, and dispositions required to reproduce liberal, democratic society cannot be placed on automatic and grow themselves. The skills are multifaceted, the dispositions deep, and the attitudes complex. They are expressed in the way citizens treat one another. They are embodied in a willingness to evaluate policy from the standpoint of general fairness. They are represented in attitudes towards people of different races, religions, genders and sexual orientations. Thus, they must be nurtured and developed in all publicly funded schools. The State, therefore, has a legitimate interest in the aims of denominational schools – not an interest in altering the religious character of faith-based schools but rather of integrating their aims as well with the aims of liberalism and pluralism.

Liberalism is the political philosophy that emphasises the right of each individual to choose, within broad limits, how to live his or her own life, and pluralism is the view that holds that society must embrace, again within broad limits, many different kinds of beliefs and communities. Feinberg (2006) contends that liberal pluralism requires that schools promote the frame of mind and understandings needed to sustain and reproduce four sets of requirements, viz. - the basic requirements of all societies - reasonable security and safety; the basic requirement of liberalism - autonomy and intellectual growth; the basic requirement of pluralism - reasonable respect for difference; and the requirement of democracy - public accountability. Because these are the conditions for the reproduction of liberal pluralism, they must also be the conditions of any State-approved and State-funded education that espouses such a liberal pluralism.

In relation to pluralism, most denominational schools in fact are part of the pluralist consensus. While students are quite naturally taught to be partial to their own religion, partiality toward a particular conception of the good and a willingness to reproduce it across generations are conditions of pluralism. They create the plurality that pluralism in the concrete requires. But in addition to partiality, pluralism also requires respect for other traditions. In this respect, Feinberg (2006) draws a distinction between plurality and pluralism. In normative pluralism, multiple communities, existing side by side, whose members have equal status regardless of their communal affiliation, are recognised as a desirable social state and promoted both politically and educationally. Mere plurality, on the other hand, may exist where one group maintains political, legal, and economic dominance while providing limited rights to other cultural or religious groups.

Such "plurality" could potentially, and may actually, exist in Catholic primary schools in Ireland where children of minority religious groups are part of the school community but do not have, for example, access to their own religious education classes, while the majority school population does. Furthermore, the Church's pronouncement that they are in favour of plurality of patronage need not necessarily reflect a belief in the fundamental rights of minority groups but could reflect a desire on the part of the Church to maintain the isolation of Catholic children in schools for Catholics only. Thus, mere plurality could exist at the expense of true pluralism for the purpose of maintaining control of the education system at primary level.

Taylor's "politics of difference", as outlined in Chapter 2, is of key importance here where acting with authenticity requires that everyone's unique identity is not just recognised, but acknowledged, given status and afforded differential treatment where appropriate. Thus, in contrast to education under mere plurality, pluralism and the politics of difference has an interest in education that enables students to engage with those whose background and beliefs are considerably different than their own. Thus, the actual presence of pupils from different economic, ethnic and religious backgrounds can be an important element in developing an active standpoint of equality and in weaving a thick web of relationships among different kinds of children. If these are not present because of racial, economic, or religious isolation, the web is thinner and the standpoint of equality and dialogue more difficult to develop. Thus, from Catholic schools' point of view, in terms of fostering religious empathy, concern for the common good and a preferential option for the poor, and from the State's point of view in terms of promoting democratic pluralism, classrooms with children from different economic, religious and ethnic backgrounds are not just to be tolerated but to be welcomed and encouraged.

Finally, teaching respect for difference and tolerance are complex topics. Many writers on the subject have in mind a negative conception of tolerance - where "I let you live and you let me live". However, as noted in Chapter 3, Taylor points out that the limits of this negative conception can be seen as soon as one asks "why should I let you live as you wish to do? Is it because there is something about *you* that requires my respect i.e. - a strong reason for tolerance,

or do I let you live as simply part of the bargain whereby you let me live, i.e. - a weak form of tolerance?

To date, in defending denominational education in Ireland, it would appear that it is often a weak form of tolerance which is supported by the Catholic Church. For example, in an article entitled "The Liberal Case for Religious Schools", published by the IONA Institute in 2008 (IONA (2008(b)), endorsed in its preface by the Chair of the Episcopal Commission on Education, Bishop O'Reilly, Murray argues that there is a rightful place for denominational schools in the Irish education system, as part of a pluralistic system. However, outside of a theological justification for denominational schools, he makes, what he terms, "a strictly philosophical case", for a plurality of school types, viz. –

> if it is possible for Catholics to happily and rightly support non-religious schooling as part of a pluralistic system, without feeling that they are short-changing or denying their faith and their integrity in so doing, then this would suggest that non-Catholics or non-religious people can support denominational schooling as part of a pluralistic education system, without feeling that they are short-changing their integrity, values and beliefs.

Such an argument is clearly based on a negative conception of tolerance. However, as noted previously, authentic Catholic education - at its best and most enlightened – goes beyond such a thin notion of tolerance toward a genuine understanding of other traditions, both religious and non-religious, a deep respect for liberal, pluralistic society and a comprehensive preparation of pupils for life in such a society.

In sum, having explored what constitutes an authentic conception of Catholic education from the Church's perspective, and having examined the legitimate expectations of education from the State's perspective, I find that, premised on a vibrant State sector in education :

i) there is no inconsistency between the substantive commitment to a particular conception of the good as advanced through a Catholic education and the advancement of liberal, pluralist democracy; indeed, authentic Catholic education promotes the well-being of society; and

ii) the central tenets of authentic Catholic education raise a number of substantial issues and have serious implications for Catholic primary education in contemporary Irish society.

These are now explored in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

AUTHENTIC CATHOLIC EDUCATION :

IMPLICATIONS FOR
CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN IRELAND

5.1 Introduction

As noted in Chapter 1, there is a commitment on the part of the Irish

Government, arising from a corresponding concern in contemporary society, to

try to ensure that, as far as possible, parents will be able to choose schools for

their children that reflect their cultural, religious and ethical values. In this

context, it is of crucial importance that the Catholic Church ensures that there is

clarity about the specific ethos of Catholic primary schools so that parents and

teachers can exercise real choice. However, even in the likely eventuality that

plurality of patronage does not become widespread in Ireland in the near future

given the current economic constraints facing Government, the Church must

still, and perhaps even more so, be clear about the distinctive characteristics of

Catholic primary schools and how they operate in terms of key policy areas

such as admissions and integration.

Having explored authentic Catholic education based on Church teaching in

Chapter 4, I now examine the implications of such a philosophy for Catholic

primary schools in contemporary Irish society. I propose a distinct model of

Catholic primary school which I consider brings an authentic vision of Catholic

education to fruition. The espoused model is explored in terms of how this

vision of Catholic primary school may interface with key issues facing Catholic

education in contemporary Irish society, particularly in relation to school ethos, admissions policy, curriculum and staff appointments.

5.2 Defining a Model of Catholic Primary School for Contemporary Irish Society

As noted in the review of the literature on Catholic education in Chapter 2, there is no one homogenous, universally endorsed vision of the Catholic school - and perhaps this is even more so the case in Ireland where Catholic schools are currently struggling to understand their role in the new multi-cultural, multi-faith and increasingly secular context of postmodern society. Indeed, in Ireland, schools with alternative patronage models could be argued to have a more coherent and transparent vision and ethos than many Catholic primary schools. In this regard, the increasingly popular Educate Together model of multi-denominational primary school serves as a pertinent example. The Educate Together network (2008) publishes a twenty-one page information brochure which comprehensively outlines its schools' structure, philosophy, ethos and curriculum. For example, the brochure states that:

> the fundamental legal concept of Educate Together's patronage is that the Board of an Educate Together school is bound to operate a school that delivers equality of access and esteem to all children, irrespective of their social, cultural and religious backgrounds. This very simple idea is the foundation of all policy and practice in the school, whether it is the enrolment policy, the way that the Board carries out its work, the way that a code of behaviour is developed or the manner in which the curriculum is delivered....

Educate Together schools also facilitate "any group of parents who wish to use the facilities of the school outside school hours to organise specific doctrinal instruction classes". Clearly, with the Catholic Church in Ireland moving in unchartered territory, there is no such coherent, comprehensive or agreed model

of Catholic primary school. In this Chapter, I will articulate a model of Catholic primary school. Before doing so, models of Catholic schools proposed by various authors are considered.

5.2.1 Existing Models of the Catholic School

For decades, writers on Catholic education have described and proposed a variety of models of Catholic school. Such models tend to fall at two ends of a spectrum and represent the traditional, conservative Catholic school at one end and the progressive, liberal Catholic school at the other. It should be noted that all models are proposed by writers coming from situations where Catholic schools are in a minority.

At the conservative end of the spectrum lie schools such as Haldane's (1996) model of Catholic school whose primary function "is to provide forms of education through which the essential doctrines and devotions of Catholicism are transmitted". Also at this end is Treston's (1998) "Traditional School" in which the great majority of staff, students and parents are Catholic with a significant level of affiliation to the worshipping Church, the religious education programme is explicitly Catholic, and the evangelisation programme seeks to deepen the faith commitment of its members, as well as faithfully communicating Catholic tradition. At the other end of the spectrum lie schools such as Treston's (1998) "Transforming Catholic School" in which - there is a pluralism of belief, the Catholic ethos is promoted but never imposed, and the multi-faith stances of the students are honoured in theory and practice in the curriculum.

Perhaps the most well-known models of Catholic school are those contained in James Arthur's proposed schema for the classification of Catholic schools. In *The Ebbing Tide* (1995), Arthur identifies three models of Catholic school – the dualistic school, the pluralistic school and the holistic school. Again, these schools lie along the spectrum from progressive to traditional and a brief description of each follows:

i) At the progressive end of the spectrum, lies Arthur's "pluralistic Catholic school". The pluralistic model considers that all single-faith schools offer an educational setting which is narrow and divisive and this model, therefore, advocates the application of multi-cultural and multi-faith principles to all aspects of a Catholic school's education programme and structures. There is an open admissions policy which encourages pupils of many cultures and faiths to apply. Teachers are appointed who are committed to promoting cultural and religious diversity and a strong case is made for the appointment of teachers of other faiths to reflect the varied backgrounds of the pupils. All religions are taught, with none being placed in a superior position.

ii) Mid-spectrum lies the "dualistic Catholic school". The dualistic school separates the secular and religious aims of the school. Whilst admissions criteria give priority to Catholics, non-Catholic pupils are also admitted. Catholic teachers are appointed for religious education but not necessarily for other subjects. The aim of the religious education programme is to

make pupils aware of the "religious dimension" of life so that they can make their own judgements and there is no attempt to integrate religious faith and secular culture.

iii) At the conservative end of the spectrum lies the "holistic Catholic school" model. The holistic model commits itself to pursuing the meaning, values and truths specific to the Catholic faith. Admissions are controlled in order to safeguard the religious character and identity of the school and some schools founded on the holistic model seek to check that parents are "at least attempting to bring their children up as practising Catholic". The holistic model does not exclude non-Catholics, but they are admitted only if there is a shortage of Catholics applying to the school. The holistic model gives priority to the employment of teachers who are "practising Catholics" and in the curriculum, there is an attempt to understand each subject from the Catholic perspective.

Arthur (1995) endorses the "holistic" model of Catholic school and considers that the years which have passed since the Second Vatican Council have shown how easy it is for Catholic schools, which were founded on the holistic model to become dualistic or pluralistic. He contends that a number of Catholic schools have lost sight of their Christian principles in order to legitimate their own ideas of what makes a Catholic school and he further considers that the documents of the Second Vatican Council overwhelmingly support the holistic model of Catholic education.

I find all of these proposed models of Catholic school to be inappropriate to the context of Irish Catholic primary schools in the twenty-first century. While Treston's (1998) Transforming Catholic School is appealing, he himself acknowledges that in this model "the danger of minimalism is ever present" as the school becomes "so aware of respecting the cultural and religious pluralism, that the ethos and religious thrust of the school may be reduced to the lowest common denominator" (p.68). In relation to Arthur's models, in brief, firstly, the dualistic model is not in keeping with an authentic conception of Catholic education. As elaborated in Chapter 4, an authentic vision of Catholic education demands an integrated vision of both the human person and of curriculum content i.e. what people know cannot be divorced from who they are and how they live, the disciplines of learning are not distinct and separate, and the environment and very life of the school is imbued with values. Secondly, the pluralistic model is clearly a multi-denominational school with no distinctively Catholic principles or ethos and, as evangelisation in the faith constitutes an important aspect of the Catholic school, it cannot be overlooked in any proposed model of Catholic school.

Finally, while Feheny (1998) considers that Arthur's holistic school is, to some extent, another name for the ideal Catholic school, and, while agreeing with Arthur that it is quite legitimate to assume the Catholic faith in Catholic schools, the holisitic model appears to entail a retreat into the safety of orthodoxy in order to protect the school and its beliefs against the threat of the modern world. As such, it represents a withdrawal from postmodern society and, hence, questions must be raised regarding its degree of congruence with the theology of

the Second Vatican Council, particularly in relation to its understanding of evangelisation which, as outlined in Chapter 4, entails a focus on religious empathy and ecumenism as much as on catechesis.

For some, Arthur's analysis suggesting that Catholic schooling of the holistic type is giving ground to dualistic and pluralistic models of schooling, while not actually based on extensive field work research in Catholic schools, has given expression to their deepest fears that Catholic schools are undergoing a process of incorporation into a multi-faith pluralism which will extinguish the rich distinctiveness of the Catholic faith. Such fears can be seen to be given expression in calls in Ireland for the Catholic school to retain its distinctiveness (Iona Institute, 2008(b); Lane, 2006; Martin (2008(c)). While all commentators, including the Irish Episcopal Conference (2007), agree that in contemporary Ireland more school choice must be made available in order to meet the demands of a multi-cultural, multi-faith society, many commentators from within the Catholic school system seem to favour a variety of school patronage primarily because it would enable the Catholic school to become more "distinctively Catholic" (O'Reilly (2008). For example, Lane (2006) writes

> the Catholic Church...should welcome the development of other alternative forms of educational choice ...such diversity of form and choice in education can only be good for Catholic education as it will act as a stimulus to develop what is distinctive about its own identity and ethos. The absence of diversity in education in the past has not always served the best interests of Catholic education. (p.107)

and Archbishop Martin (2007(a)) states:

> the Catholic school will only be able to carry out its specific role if there are viable alternatives for parents who wish to send their children to schools inspired by other philosophies....The delay in provision of such alternative models...makes it more difficult for Catholic schools to

maintain their specific identity and bring their specific contribution to a pluralist society.

Such statements beg the question – what specific and distinctive identity have these individuals in mind for the Catholic primary school in contemporary Ireland? The answer would appear to be a vision of Catholic schools for Catholic pupils. However, the further question must be asked - does this represents an authentic model of Catholic primary education or rather an inauthenic retreat from engagement with the pluralist nature of postmodern society? I contend that it is the latter and further contend that such a model of retrenchment into an exclusivist notion of the Catholic school must be rejected as the common good cannot be achieved by a withdrawal from the complexity and pluralism of postmodern society. Rather, the Church must now begin courageously to imagine a model of authentic primary school for twenty-first century Ireland.

Having rejected proposed models of Catholic school, in the next Section I elaborate key tenets and operational principles of an authentic model of Catholic primary school, based on the Catholic Church's conception of education outlined in Chapter 4, and reflecting an authentic integration of faith and culture for contemporary Irish society.

5.2.2 Towards a New Model of Catholic Primary School

When asked in interview what model of Catholic school they envisaged for contemporary Ireland, the responses from both the Archbishop of Dublin and the Chair of the Episcopal Commission on Education were of interest. Archbishop Martin (2008(c)) stated that he is "grappling with what the reality should look like" and that he "does not have a specific model of Catholic school in mind". The Archbishop stated that he considers the current ethos of Catholic schools to be "ethereal and vague". However, he did consider that:

i) Catholic schools should continue to be locally rooted, and locally managed with the interest of the local community at its heart;

ii) Catholic schools should not be "exclusive" and should "never be solely for Catholics";

iii) parents should be "much more a part of the Catholic school, particularly in religious activities"; and

iv) discussion and dialogue on the issue of Catholic ethos should be encouraged.

In considering the ethos of a Catholic school, Bishop O'Reilly (2008) emphasised:

i) openness to God and openness to faith in Jesus Christ;

ii) the centrality and importance of community;

iii) a sacramental view of reality – which sees God revealed in everyday events;

iv) a link with the parish Church; and

v) social awareness and outreach programmes.

In terms of school admissions, Bishop O'Reilly was in favour of "uniformity of approach". He considered that in the Catholic school there should be no exclusion in admissions and that the school should be open to non-Catholic pupils "if there are places" and "unless they are explicitly undermining the ethos

of the school". While Bishop O'Reilly considered it "in general desirable to have pluralism in the school population if that is the case in society", he also stated that the Catholic school has a duty not just to reflect society but also has "a mission to lead society". In terms of reserving a certain quota of places for non-Catholic children, Bishop O'Reilly (2008) considered that a Catholic school "would not be true to its mission if it ever refused Catholic children"; and Archbishop Martin (2008(c)) considered "social engineering to be something we have to be very cautious of" and that such a move "could be negative and could be challenged if Catholics can't get places".

It is clear that the Irish Bishops do not have an articulated and comprehensive model of the Catholic primary school in mind and reflection is urgently needed on their part on many issues pertaining to Catholic education in Ireland. On any issue, in keeping with the demands of authenticity, in the first instance, the Church must strive to reach an objective knowledge of the situation. For example, on the issue of admissions policy - on the one hand, the Church has first hand experience of the problems and challenges surrounding the issue of admissions to Catholic schools. On the other, as seen in Chapter 1, many in society - the media, members of minority faiths and members of the general public - have served as mirrors to reflect back to the Church the way they experience admissions policies in national Catholic primary schools. For example - regardless of the merits, and even the level of accuracy, of the arguments offered in media commentary in the wake of the "Balbriggan crisis", the kernel of truth, the discomfort, the smudge on the face of Catholic education forces all involved in the management of primary schools to give fresh

consideration to school admissions policies which give priority of places to practising Catholics. For example:

> Refusing young children admission to a school on the grounds of religion is discrimination. That a school can openly have a policy of "no Jews, no Muslims, no Hindus, no Protestants, no Sikhs, no atheists" is bad enough. That we are expected to fund these institutions from public monies is completely unacceptable."
> *(Tom Farrell, Irish Times 05/09/2007)*

> I am dismayed at the impact of the schools crisis in Dublin 15. By May this year, 90 local children, some approaching six years of age, had not received a school place as they did not possess a Catholic baptismal certificate. Catholic children, however, some of whom had just turned four, were offered places in our local schools....With the opening of an emergency school, Scoil Choilm, we now have the sight of small boys and girls boarding a bus outside our surgery every morning to take them to their temporary school premises in Blanchardstown village. These children were discriminated against and they are now segregated.
> *(Dr. Myra Lynch, Irish Times 13/09/2007)*

Such experience of Catholic schools' admissions policies frees the Church from the paralysing effect of self-love. Authenticity then requires, as Lonergan points out, that one moves beyond the gaze of the other and develop an independent stand-point. True understanding must be sought so that judgements can be made which improve practice by making adjustments and which keep the standpoint of another in mind while maintaining core values and principles. Such authentic knowing allows one to see who one is at this moment and to then act with integrity. But it must be undertaken from a reasonably fixed platform of central principles. In terms of any issue facing Catholic schools, an authentic conception of Catholic education provides that platform.

While the Church has been often justly criticised for dogmatically defining every new issue in terms of established and traditional norms and for pursuing

conformity to existing norms rather than consideration of authentically novel experiences, many Church practices are embedded in traditions, so that, even when they become problematic, they are the standpoint from which a possible future with a different tradition can be evaluated. However, authenticity allows that the good can be chosen relatively free from the heavy hand of tradition. It is this tacking back and forth across and between traditions that provides the tensions and the material required for authentic growth and development. As Lonergan points out, authenticity requires a critical examination of accepted principles and operational assumptions. To reflect critically on a situation requires that a traditional and dominant standpoint be dislodged or bracketed as alternative ones are tried out. This does not always result in a different conclusion, but in a more complex, more nuanced understanding.

To continue with the example of admissions policy - while the social costs of a "Catholics first" admissions policy which may exclude members of the local community from the local Catholic school cannot be ignored, neither can the commitment that has been vested in a religious tradition and the desire to provide Catholic education for Catholic children. Thus, the Church, while holding to its core principles, must consider also the wider consequences of its policies and allow for a more social analysis rather than view issues purely in traditional Catholic terms. An authentic solution to any issue facing Catholic education must keep a dialogical balance between the two. Concern for social issues will ensure that the Church responds in ways that honour and promote the Church's commitment to social equality and social justice, and concern for Catholic principles will order responses and give reason to act on one rather

than another should they conflict in certain situations and provide the larger principles that justify the action. It is my belief that the balance between the two will be of particular importance for the Church in Ireland in analysing the authenticity and justification of its position as Patron of 92% of national primary schools.

Thus, the policy statement that Catholic schools serve Catholic children first, while intuitively appealing and loyal to tradition, does not allow for an authentic invention, a new practice to resolve the moral conflict or to address the morally new situation of non-Irish national children who cannot secure school places. A successful authentic invention could open up new experiential opportunities without overthrowing the existing frame.

The model of Catholic primary school now proposed is offered as an authentic reflection of Church teaching on Catholic education, encompassing the integrity and identity of a Catholic school, and meeting the societal conditions operative in contemporary Irish society.

5.3 The Catholic Primary School in Contemporary Irish Society

I propose the concept of a "Catholic school" rather than a "school for Catholics" – i.e. rather than being a Catholic school for Catholic pupils, the school identifies itself as a Catholic and Christian presence in the community – a witness to the Gospel of Christ to the whole community and at the service of all members of that community. The school model is described under four key areas – school ethos, student admissions, staff appointments, and curriculum.

5.3.1 Ethos

Firstly, although seeming tautologous to say so, the Catholic primary school has an explicit and genuine Catholic ethos. The adjective "Catholic" before the word school denotes that in this school an authentic meaning of Catholicism will be witnessed and all within the school will experience what the Gospel means in action.

In the first instance, the Catholic school provides a supportive environment for young Catholic pupils. The school supports its Catholic pupils in their religious formation and in the living out of Christian values. While, in the past, the fundamental cultural community which provided the structural and social support for Catholics was Irish society itself, this is no longer the case. Feheny (1998) describes the "veritable wasteland of religious knowledge and practice" as the collapse of Catholic culture has diminished opportunities for religious socialisation. Without the support of a caring and formative community, as Archbishop Diarmuid Martin (2007(a)) observes, the young person's budding Christian values are in danger of being "gobbled up in the centrifugal spin of a pluralism without an anchor". Thus, in the Catholic school, Catholic pupils will experience a community where they are nurtured and helped to develop all aspects of their Catholic identity in authentic and age-appropriate ways. Crucially, however, the school will not become an illusory safe haven. Pupils also will be educated for life in a liberal, pluralist society and will learn from and about other Christian and world religions. They also will be nurtured in the ways of critical reflection in order to allow them make authentic judgements

about their own faith and aspects of postmodern society which require consideration.

While the protection of such a Catholic school's ethos is both a sacred duty and a legal responsibility of the Bishop as Patron/Trustee, this does not in any way conflict with the obligation to value the freedom of conscience and proper role of each member of the school community. And so, in the second instance, the Catholic school provides a supportive environment for non-Catholic pupils also[15].

Possibly the most searching question about a school's ethos is "how do people experience this school?" Quite simply, in the Catholic school, all of the policies, practices and attitudes of the school will be inspired by the tenets of Catholic education, chief of which - and fundamental to Maritain's personalist philosophy, to the Second Vatican Council's celebration of the human person and to Lonergan and Taylor's notion of authenticity - is the dignity of all persons. In the Catholic school the centrality of the person, the value and importance of the person, and the inherent dignity of the person will influence how the school speaks to, relates to and acts towards all others including children of immigrant parents, and parents and children of other beliefs and none. This means, concretely, that the school, will be welcoming of others who share some dimensions of the Catholic ethos, or who wish to be part of it while maintaining their own beliefs and practices, or, who have no alternative but to be part of it.

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[15] This supportive environment will include supporting the religious adherence of non-Catholic pupils and this is discussed later in this Chapter when considering the issue of curriculum in Catholic primary schools (See Section 5.3.3).

The Catholic ethos will be clearly delineated and will be explicitly espoused in a set of values emanating from the school's central mission – to be a witness to the Gospel values of love of God and love of neighbour, and will be strongly witnessed to in the day to day life of the school. In sum, the Irish Catholic primary school will be one in which all "experience [their] dignity as a person before [they] know its definition" because the school will be "permeated with the Gospel spirit of freedom and love" (CS, 1977).

While ideally Catholic or non-Catholic parents would all choose to support the Catholic ethos of the school, clearly in the Irish context many parents have no choice but to send their children to the local Catholic school. Regardless, the Catholic school aspires to be a participative and inclusive community. Thus, the Catholic school will engage in consultative and supportive dialogue with the parents of children of other faiths and none and the school will respect the wishes of minority faith parents regarding their children's religious education and will seek to support parents in their adherence to their own beliefs and rituals.

The ethos of the Catholic school will support the rights and uphold the dignity of all children attending the school while simultaneously upholding the rights of Catholic children to receive a holistic religious education in the context of a school which upholds a distinct religious ethos.

In keeping with official decrees, the Catholic dimension of the school will be "the leaven" – a pervasive presence in the school – informing all aspects of the

school. This attitude and approach will also be apparent in the school's admissions policies and practices.

5.3.2 Admissions

Notwithstanding the above, the question of what constitutes the Catholic ethos of a school remains a contested area and, as Grace (1998, p.199) observes, for some the issue is necessarily tied to the number of Catholic pupils who are on the school roll. For others, this is a narrow and mechanistic view which fails to take into account the variety of faiths in contemporary society, particularly in inner-city communities - and the need for schools to have a concern for the common good.

In the model of Catholic school now being proposed, it is simply not authentic to define a Catholic school in terms of the numbers of students who "happen" to be Catholic. Rather, the enrolment policy of the school is seen as an important means of implementing and reflecting the Catholic school's commitment to diversity and inclusivity. Official Church teaching could not be clearer on the subject of admissions to Catholic schools, viz. -

> The Catholic school....always promoted civil progress and human development without discrimination of any kind....[and] although clearly and decidedly configured in the perspective of the Catholic faith, [the Catholic school] is not reserved to Catholics only, but is open to all those who appreciate and share its qualified educational project. (CSTTM, 1997)

and again -

> In the certainty that the Spirit is at work in every person, the Catholic school offers itself to all, non-Christians included, with all its distinctive aims and means, acknowledging, preserving and promoting the spiritual and moral qualities, the social and cultural values, which characterise different civilisations....The only condition it would make as is its right

for its continued existence, would be remaining faithful to the educational aims of the Catholic school. (CS, 1977)

In the Irish context, the Bishops' *Policy for Provision into the Future* (ICBC, 2007) states that "the Catholic school is open to people of other denominations and other faiths, welcomes them into its community and respects their beliefs". However, in a rare adaptation of official teaching to local circumstances, the Irish Bishops state that "children of Catholic parents have first claim on admission to Catholic schools". While it may appear intuitively obvious and acceptable that this be the case, such a contention needs careful consideration, particularly in the Irish situation where there are few alternative to Catholic primary schools.

In the first instance, where the Catholic school is the only State-funded primary school in the local area, then it must serve *all* children of the area on an equal admissions basis. In Ireland, under the Equal Status Act (2000, 7(3)(C)), denominational schools have the right to discriminate in their enrolment policy on the basis of religion. However, notwithstanding what the State allows, it is my opinion that equal admission for all children, regardless of their religious background, to their local State-supported primary school is a non-negotiable - mandated for the new model of Catholic primary school by fairness, commitment to the common good and moral imperative.

In the second instance, where there is a choice of school locally, the choice of parents who - in full knowledge of the espoused ethos of the Catholic school - choose the Catholic school for their children must be respected and they should be welcomed into the school.

Admissions policy becomes problematic where there is a shortage of places in a Catholic school. However, even in such circumstances, on the basis of Catholic education's unequivocal commitment to inclusivity, there can be no priority for Catholic pupils. Regardless of the Irish Church's policy of "Catholics first", the Catholic school must be open to all on an equal admissions basis - and most particularly and especially this must be the case where Catholic schools serve in communities of poverty, disadvantage and ethnic minority populations.

The Church decrees on education teach that "in today's complex society, schools are called to witness to the sense of communion among peoples, races and cultures...the itinerary to be followed in educational communities involves passing from tolerance of the multicultural situation to welcome" (CS, 1977); and the Irish Bishops teach that that "the presence of children from other denominations is seen as an enrichment of the educational experience offered by the school and as a practical expression of the commitment to inclusivity" (ICBC, 2008). The question might well be asked is there not a contradiction in giving young people a respect and a reverence for the "other" when some of those who are "other" are excluded from participating in the community of the school because they are not Catholic? The Catholic school cannot authentically communicate and give young people the example of inclusion and respect for others if it does not include and respect, on an equal basis within the community we call school, those who are "other". Indeed, McLaren (1993) contends that a school without a definite commitment to the disempowered and disenfranchised

"only transforms students into vessels for the preparation of new forms of facism and a grand epic of destruction" (p.290).

In the model of Catholic school being proposed, there is no equivocation – the "welcome" is not more for Catholic than for non-Catholic pupils, and the "commitment to inclusivity" is not predicated on there being places available in which to allow for inclusivness. Catholic schools exist for the Church, for the common good of all society and for the poor and the marginalized. The arrival of children and families from other cultures to Ireland provides the authentic Catholic school with an opportunity to fulfil in a new way this critical tenet of Catholic education.

Undoubtedly, a tension exists between such an open admissions policy and the concern to accommodate and educate Catholic pupils in the Catholic faith and Catholic tradition. However, rather than being considered a threat, the Catholic school's commitment to inclusivity, mission, dialogue, and a preferential option for the poor, can be seen to enhance and vivify its parallel commitment to catechesis and formation. While remaining true to the heart of its original purpose, an active concern for the common good must be something that the school not only prepares pupils for, but commits to in the daily life of the school. Thus, admitting those on the margin of society is essential.

Quite simply, Christ's ministry of service was most acutely visible in his care for those at the periphery of society. When there is "no room at the inn", particularly for children of non-Irish parents seeking asylum in Ireland, the

echoes of the Gospel story must stir in the depths of the value system of the Catholic school and endorse it to go to extraordinary lengths to accommodate children seeking places in Catholic schools. This is not to be politically naieve – but to live the Gospel value of welcome for the stranger while at the same time pursuing justice and equality for such families by speaking out and engaging with Government on the lack of choice in the primary school system, by forging ahead with plans to divest some Catholic schools, or by entering into joint patronage arrangements in order to facilitate choice and to reflect authentically Catholicism's commitment to respect for diversity in the primary school system.

5.3.3 Curriculum

The needs of non-Catholic pupils in denominational schools raise particular questions. Some parents of asylum seeking children who responded to a survey in 2001 expressed concerns about religious "assimilationism" in Irish schools (Fanning et al, 2001), i.e. that due to the integrated nature of the curriculum in Catholic schools, children of non-Catholic parents inevitably take on aspects of Catholicism.

Clearly, once a Catholic school admits pupils of other faiths, it must have a clear policy as to how to relate to these pupils, particularly in matters of religion. The school must strive to provide for the religious development of non-Catholic pupils rather than simply expecting them to endure Catholic input and find their faith support elsewhere.

Regarding the religious education programme in the Catholic school, two principles are of central importance:

i) the religious education programme for Catholic pupils must be transparent and the prescribed religious education programme for Catholic pupils must be honoured and adhered to. However, in keeping with the objectives of authentic evangelisation, all religious education must teach the Catholic faith alongside a commitment to religious empathy and a concern for critical reflection;

ii) the religious freedom and the personal conscience of non-Catholic students and their families must be explicitly recognised, respected and accommodated.

The Catholic Education Service in England recently sent guidance to all schools in the Catholic system about the ways in which respect and understanding should be shown to pupils not of the Catholic faith (on average about 30 per cent of the school roll). *The Tablet* (December 6, 2008) notes that "the guidance represents a move from passive tolerance to warm welcome" - for example, by insisting that Muslim pupils and others should have ritual cleansing facilities available to them where appropriate, and space and time set aside for them to pray. *The Tablet* reports that they do so not merely to answer the secularists nor even to make Catholic schools more attractive to parents and pupils of other faith traditions, but rather because the Catholic Church itself teaches that believers in other religions have a right to religious freedom. "Thus", as *The Tablet* observes "the Catholic Church finds itself playing to one of its strengths" (p.2).

In postmodern Ireland, the Church must also play to its strengths and to its commitment to ecumenism and religious empathy. In this regard, the Church should outline a programme of inter-religious education so that children can be given accurate, clear, age and ability appropriate information concerning world religions. In the new model of Catholic primary school, it is envisaged that, in addition to a comprehensive catechesis in the Catholic faith, such a programme could be taught with Catholic and non-Catholic pupils together, e.g. one day per week during the religious education period or, indeed, after school hours. The new model of Catholic primary school would also facilitate parents of non-Catholic children in organising religious education classes for their children and accommodate their needs for religious observance as fully as possible. This could be done by facilitating the running of religious education classes for all denominations simultaneously with Catholic religious education or, alternatively, after school hours. Such a model of religious education would both affirm and strengthen the religious identity, traditions and backgrounds of all pupils, while at the same time enabling pupils to recognise, understand and value not only the difference in beliefs but also the commonalities.

Outside of the specific religious education syllabus, difficulties may arise given the integrated nature of the primary school curriculum and the Church's (CSTTM, 1997) decree that "in the Catholic school's educational project there is no separation between time for learning and time for formation". Clearly, while integration of knowledge is consistent with much educational theory and may be judged to be a good thing especially in relation to young children, the integration of religion with other aspects of the curriculum may also give rise to

a dilemma as it may be in conflict with a child's constitutional right to opt out of the religious programme of the school. In this respect, it must be clearly stated that while Christian faith pervades the whole curriculum, the Church has no desire to hijack individual disciplines for the purposes of apologetics and Vatican decrees on education (GE, 1965; CS, 1977; CSTTM, 1997) clearly state that under no circumstances does it wish to divert the imparting of knowledge from its rightful objective.

5.3.4 Appointments

As *The Catholic School* (1997) observes "the achievement of [the] specific aim of the Catholic school depends not so much on subject matter or methodology as on the people who work there....they reveal the Christian message not only by word but also by every gesture of their behaviour". For this reason, it is envisaged that teachers employed in the new model of Catholic school would be:

i)   aware of the key principles of Catholic education and the distinctive features of Catholic schools;

ii) : committed to the evangelical mission of the school – in terms of catechising students in the Catholic faith and fostering religious empathy and critical reflection;

iii)   committed to serving the common good of the school community by giving of themselves personally and professionally;

iv)   open to inclusivity and diversity within the school;

v)   willing to witness authentically to the Christian principles of the school by upholding a commitment to solidarity and social justice.

Thus, in terms of the appointment of teachers to Catholic schools, the issue of transparency is of vital importance. If the requirements of the teacher regarding

these issues are explicitly outlined, and if it is clear what role the teacher is expected to play in the Catholic formation of pupils, in the upholding of Christian values, in participating in rites and rituals of Catholicism within the school and in witnessing to the gospel message, then anyone who, in good faith, applies for a position in the school and agrees to uphold, support and promote this ethos, must be considered for the position. It is likely, however, given the specific requirements of upholding the Catholic ethos, that applicants would be mainly Catholic.

Groome (1996) points out "being Catholic can vary across many cultural expressions, theological positions and with different degrees and styles of participation in the institutional expression of Catholicism" (p.107). Of most importance to the Catholic school is that the teacher is aware of and shares the appropriate perspectives and commitments. Even in the less than ideal Irish context where teachers do not have a choice of schools to which to apply, this is a non-negotiable principle for Catholic schools.

Outside of recruitment of staff, a key focus for the Church must be on enabling present and future teachers to come to an understanding and appreciation of a Catholic conception of education and distinguishing features of the Catholic school. The concern of the Church must be to ensure that staff has opportunities to engage with the authentic Catholic mission of the school. With such engagement, teachers become authentic witnesses to Catholic education, embrace its philosophy and live it in their interactions with pupils, parents and other members of the school community.

5.4 Conclusion

In sum, the espoused model of Catholic primary school is innovative and distinct from existing models in that it:

i)   has an ethos of inclusion reflected in an open admissions policy which is welcoming of all who wish to attend the school;

ii)   is unequivocal in its commitment to those who are poor or on the margins of society;

iii) nurtures and educates teachers on a continuous basis in an authentic understanding of Catholic education;

iv)   · has an inter-religious education programme for all pupils as well the existing catechetical programme for Catholic children;

v)   engages in consultative and supportive dialogue with parents of other faiths and none in order to foster ways to support the religious adherence of their children;

vi)   facilitates parents of other denominations in providing religious instruction for their children;

vii) is committed in word and deed to diversity and inclusivity;

viii) encourages, enables and offers opportunities for all members of the school community to support and engage with the Catholic ethos and vision of the school;

ix)   is part of a system of Catholic education whose Patronal body authentically addresses the need for a plurality of Patronage in the Irish primary school system by exploring possibilities for divestment of some schools and/or entering into joint Patronage arrangements with other Patron bodies, where necessary and appropriate.

In considering such a revised model of Catholic primary school for postmodern society, it is clear that neither retreat nor mission nor dogmatic authoritarianism will suffice. Rather, it is my contention that the Catholic school in contemporary society must position itself between core restorationism and virulent secularism

– and expect to take criticism from both left and right. And yet this harder-to-balance, harder-to-articulate middle ground seems most authentic for postmodern society. It does not allow beliefs and practices to become just fine words or stuck in tradition – but rather demands that the Catholic school serve the truth of Christianity and defend it by illuminating word and effective deed.

In considering an appropriate title for such a model of Catholic school, various options were considered – the altruistic Catholic school, the authentic Catholic school, the engaged Catholic school, the collaborative Catholic school. However, the term which rings most true is simply the Catholic school – i.e. a school founded on an authentic Catholic conception of education and a school which allows its policies and plans, its priorities and purposes to be illuminated, inspired, guided and challenged by the teaching of the Gospel. A school, in the middle ground, in which practice and theory weave together precisely as an expression of, and fruit of, authentic Catholic faith.

CHAPTER 6

THE FUTURE OF CATHOLIC PRIMARY EDUCATION IN IRELAND:

RUDIMENTS OF A DIALOGUE

6.1 Introduction

Grace (2002) contends that in general "...fundamental questions about the contemporary legitimation of Catholic schools in changed social, cultural and educational circumstances have not been seriously addressed" (p.29). This can certainly be seen to be the case in Ireland where, although, or maybe because, the Catholic Church controls 92% of national primary schools, there has been little by way of reflection on an explicit conception of Catholic education and distinguishing features of Catholic primary schools in contemporary Ireland. Many aspects of Irish society, point to the fact that a critical moment has been reached in the history of Catholic primary education.

This Chapter begins with an identification of areas in need of further research and support in Catholic education in Ireland today. It then outlines key issues to be placed on the agenda for dialogue if the Church is to faithfully read the signs of the times and lead Catholic education with authenticity and integrity in postmodern society.

6.2 Research, Engagement and Formation

6.2.1 Key Areas Requiring Research

Ireland now enjoys a more varied religious and ethnic demography than it has at any time in the past. Yet diversity and the changing nature of cultural, social and

religious mores remain relatively unresearched phenomena. In order fully to understand pluralist Irish society, there is a need for much more research data on Ireland's changing demographic patterns. More specifically, as a number of commentators have outlined (Randles, 1996; Report of the National Education Convention, 1994; Glendenning, 1999), research is needed on the challenges posed to the largely denominational primary school system by the shifting social and religious composition of Irish society.

In the first instance, Clear et al (2001) have highlighted the lack of research on children of minority beliefs in the Irish school context. Now more than ever there is an imperative to raise these "silenced voices" (Delpit, 1988) in order to elicit how minority-belief parents and their children experience denominational schools in postmodern Ireland. As noted in Chapter, 2, as a result of one research study in this area, Lodge (2004) concludes that Ireland's denominational and confessional primary school system "does not allow for equal recognition or respect for difference" (p.32). Lynch and Lodge (2002) conducted interviews with people of minority belief including members of the Baha'I and Buddhist communities, "people of personal belief", and a member of a minority Christian faith, about how they and their children experienced Irish primary education. Key issues emerging from the research included: children sometimes feeling alienated because of their different beliefs; sacramental preparation heightening this sense of exclusion and alienation; and bullying and teasing occurring based on the perception of the child as religiously different. The fact that both participation in, and withdrawal from, religious education class can be problematic was also highlighted. However, it must be pointed out

that this was a relatively small scale research project and whether or not such profound and provocative statements are true in the wider context of minority-belief parents and children in Catholic primary schools throughout Ireland is in need of further and more detailed research.

Secondly, there is a need for quantitative research into Catholic schools themselves. There is a dearth of basic statistical information on Catholic schools. For example, there is currently no full and complete information available on the number of non-Catholic pupils attending Catholic primary schools, nor on where admissions of pupils of other faiths in Catholic schools are occurring most. Research into the coherence or otherwise of Catholic school policies across Ireland – specifically in the area of school admission criteria and accommodations for non-Catholic children – would also be useful.

Thirdly, the term "Catholic school" is inclusive of a wide variety of school cultures not alone from one Diocese to another, but also from one parish to the next, and indeed from one classroom to the next. There is a great need, in the Irish context, to acknowledge this reality in an honest manner and to undertake qualitative research in order to investigate the actuality of school life in Catholic primary schools and to describe the practical consequences for Catholic schools as a result of the very different social and religious contexts in which they now operate.

Finally, research is also necessary on the extent to which Catholic schools know, understand and are faithful to the vision of Catholic education espoused

by the Congregation for Catholic Education; how, in local circumstances, they interpret their school's commitment to the common good; and how well, and how, they fulfil their primary purpose of evangelisation. Such research would elicit what expressions of Catholicity are actually being realised in the living cultures of Catholic primary schools in Ireland. It would also allow an analysis of the distinctiveness of Catholic primary schools, or, in Groome's (2001) words, would elicit what lies "at the deep heart's core" of Catholic education in Ireland.

6.2.2 The Need for Engagement, Reflection and Formation

Even outside empirical quantitative and qualitative research studies, there has been little serious debate and discussion among key players in Catholic primary education on their role in contemporary Ireland. While three Conferences of significance have been convened in the last twenty years[16], it is noteworthy that none were convened by the Irish Episcopal Conference or the Diocesan Patronal bodies.

In February 2009, the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference announced that the Catholic Church in Ireland – North and South – would hold a "Catholic Schools Week", with the theme "Catholic School - A Vision for Life". The central focus and stated purpose of the week was "to promote the contribution that Catholic schools make to our society". Resources were made available for schools "to encourage all members of the school community to reflect on two key questions

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[16]The Conference of Major Religious Superiors convened a Conference entitled *The Catholic School in Contemporary Society* in 1991. In 2002, the Marino Institute of Education held a very well attended Conference entitled *Re-Imagining the Catholic School;* and, in 2008, the Iona Institute convened a small, poorly attended Conference entitled *In Defence of Denominational Schooling.*

– what makes a school Catholic? and what does it mean to be a Catholic school?" While this is a new and welcome initiative on the part of the Catholic Church, clearly questions regarding how, and if, the proposed activities were carried out in schools, and with what results, remain areas in need of investigation, if this initiative is not just to remain at the level of a public relations exercise rather than an attempt to engage actively and receive feedback from those at the coal-face on the reality of Catholic primary education in Irish society today.

Outside this general initiative, there is a clear and urgent need for the Church to begin a process of targeted discussion and engagement with the key players involved in Catholic education. The Church, as Patron of 92% of primary schools, should engage Boards of Management and Principal teachers of Catholic primary schools in honest, open debate about the difficulties and opportunities which social and cultural change has brought to Catholic schools and, in this way, to begin to garner consensus on what the priorities and emphases of the Church's policy on education ought to be[17].

Furthermore, nothing is to be gained by pretending that the distinctive features of authentic Catholic education or its defining principles are universally known, understood, accepted or applied in Irish Catholic primary schools. Indeed, *The Catholic School* (1977) acknowledges that "often what is perhaps fundamentally lacking amongst those who work in a [Catholic] school is a clear realisation of

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[17] While the focus in this work is on Catholic primary schools, it is noteworthy that in June 2008, the Minister for Education and Science convened a conference entitled "The Governance Challenge for Future Primary School Needs", the aim of which was to provide a forum to consider the implications of new social diversity for the future of primary schools in general.

the identity of the school and the courage to follow all the consequences of its uniqueness". Yet in order to authentically engage with the reality of pluralism, one must have a sense of one's own identity. Hence, ongoing inservice training and formation for school Principals and teaching staff in a sound understanding of the relevant theology that illuminates the practice of Catholic education would surely benefit them in their task as Catholic educators. In the first instance, such an understanding would help to support, motivate and empower school leaders and staff, liberating them to "see the vision beyond the reality". It would also enable key personnel in primary schools to review and re-engage with an authentic vision of Catholic education which would help collectively to revitalize and re-energise Catholic primary schools in Ireland.

6.3 Towards an Agenda for Dialogue

In this thesis, I have endeavoured to articulate a vision and to forge a rationale, both philosophical and practical, for the future of Catholic primary education in Ireland, based on a constellation of interlocking factors and three key foundation stones, viz.:

i)   an analysis of the historical development of Catholic primary schools in Ireland from the foundation of the national primary school system to the present day, and an exploration of how the particular identity of today's Catholic primary school has emerged and developed as a result of historical circumstances, social and political context and the Church, at different times, advancing models of Catholic school in "retreat" or in "mission" mode;

ii)   an exploration of an authentic conception of Catholic education, from before the First Vatican Council and the emergence of the personalist school of thought, to the understanding of Catholic education and the distinctive features of Catholic schools as

espoused during and after the Second Vatican Council, particularly in the decrees from the Congregation for Catholic Education and, in the Irish context, from the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference;

iii)   an understanding of the concept of authentic action in postmodern society based on the writings of Bernard Lonergan and Charles Taylor.

While today in Ireland, at a surface level, the future for Catholic primary schools may still appear bright, given that the Catholic Church is Patron of over 92% of schools and that they have State support guaranteed in both the Constitution and in the Education Act (1998), analysis at a deep structural level shows that the future holds many challenges. Undoubtedly, the most critical issue facing Catholic primary education is the multi-faith, multi-cultural and increasingly secular context of Irish society and its implications – both practical and moral – for the Catholic Church's control of the primary school sector. As Tuohy (2007) succinctly summarises, "the changing secular culture raises questions about the State's dependence on Church patronage of its schools" (p.269).

Such an analysis prevents complacency about Catholic schooling and provokes thoughtful reflection about the role of Catholic primary schools in the changing Irish culture. For, if the Catholic Church is not doggedly to ignore the challenges or to become a passive victim in the new societal era, it must now seize the opportunity of helping to shape that new era. As Lonergan observes, one of the drawbacks of a predominant approach is that it can become dulled, presumptuous, and complacent. There is now a new opportunity for the Catholic tradition to outline what it offers to education – by reconnecting with

fundamental purposes and by reimagining new responses for new times. In this way, the Catholic Church can respond to the challenges of postmodern society from a deep conviction of the identity and mission of the Catholic school, in ways which both serve the Catholic school community and the wider Irish society.

While it is true, as Groome (1996) points out, that Catholicism

> ...has often preached and taught a negative anthropology, tried to control and limit the sacramentality of life, practised its communality as a system of domination and exclusion, failed to institutionally represent the richness and depth of its own tradition, discouraged critical rationality especially in matters of "faith", often neglected its priority for persons and concern for justice, and failed in its own "catholicty" (p.123),

it must be remembered that the Second Vatican Council reshaped Catholic identity and Catholic education. Catholic schools today must be explicit in their statement of philosophy and ethos. It needs to be understood that, in today's society, Catholic education is not about control but about offering a vision of life inspired by the Gospel; it is not about indoctrination but about igniting a search for authentic truth; it is not something exclusive to Catholics but is inclusive and welcoming towards all; it is not inward looking but is radically ecumenical; and that a Catholic conception of education offers a holistic education and develops in its students a hunger for social justice, a concern for the common good and a thirst for God. This conception of education must now be brought to life in the lived reality of Catholic primary schools and, in Lane's (1991) words, Catholic schools must demonstrate that they are "marked by a sense of caring, sustained by an experience of belonging and missioned by a spirit of justice" (p.116).

While the Catholic Church has traditionally spoken of absolutes, it must now speak of authenticity and act in the interest of the common good rather than out of a concern for control or self-preservation. The Catholic Church does not need to provide some defensive apologia for the continuance of the Catholic education system, but, rather, to engage with the issues and challenges facing Catholic schools with "a constant readiness to begin anew and to adapt" (LCWF, 1982).

In this regard, I consider there to be three key areas which must be placed on any agenda for dialogue and which must be faced with courage and with authenticity by the Catholic Church and by Catholic schools.

In the first instance, the Church must take on the daunting task of exploring again an authentic vision of Catholic education and enabling this vision to become more visible and to be more accessible. There are compelling reasons to avoid the task, chief among them being the deepening disenchantment with the Catholic Church at this time in Ireland. However, if Catholic education is defensible, as it is, then a first task is to be able to answer comprehensively and compellingly the question why – because the why question elicits the fundamental purpose of the Catholic school. In order to make a viable contribution to society, the Catholic school must be clear regarding its philosophy and ethos and how its policies, practices and programmes are influenced by that ethos. Catholic educational leaders and policy makers, and Catholic teachers themselves, must be engaged in reflective dialogue on the philosophy and distinctive characteristics of Catholic education in order that

they have a vision and a clear sense of what it is that they are striving to achieve.

As Taylor (1989) observes, articulating our qualitative distinctiveness is crucial to being truly authentic and setting out the point of our moral actions.

In the second instance, as a result of a firm belief in the transforming contribution that Catholic education can make through its comment on values, its commitment to the dignity of the person, and the centrality of justice and compassion - there can be no shirking from difficult issues such as admissions and curriculum in the Catholic school. Catholic schools must *actively* promote the fact that they are *inclusive and welcoming of diversity*. Otherwise, they are ever in danger of being considered sectarian, exclusive, and unwelcoming. This is an example of where social context and Catholic school identity actually meet – the lack of alternative school places along with the Catholic school's commitment to the common good and to welcome and respect for all, make it imperative that the qualifier "Catholic" ensures that pupils will truly "experience their dignity as persons before they know its definition" in the school (CS, 1977) and that non-Catholic pupils can secure places in Catholic schools on an equal footing with their Catholic neighbours. Furthermore, non-Catholic pupils must be facilitated in their own religious adherence and instruction. This does not mean abandoning core Catholic principles – rather it means witnessing to them.

In the third instance, the Catholic Church must honestly acknowledge the difficulties resulting from its majority control of the primary school system. While the Church has made statements that it will divest some Catholic primary schools, this issue has not been pursued or elaborated with sufficient rigour. Thus, the Church must now move beyond a rhetoric of plurality of patronage and show a willingness actively to address the urgent issue of diversity of school types which will serve the needs of a religiously and culturally diverse Irish society. This will be facilitated by the gathering of key statistical information on Catholic schools and the undertaking of wide-ranging and indepth research on all aspects of Catholic education in Ireland.

In sum, it is timely for those associated with Catholic primary education in Ireland to take a clear and courageous stand, certain in the validity and usefulness of the Catholic vision of education both for young people and for postmodern society as a whole. In so doing, the process of authenticity is key.

In this thesis I have attempted to recover Catholic education's proper heritage, to explore what authentic Catholic education entails in the context of postmodern Irish society, to uncover what is authentic and inauthentic in current Catholic primary school structures, policies and practices and based on this, to determine future directions for Catholic primary schools.

We have in our history and in our genealogy names like Nagle, Rice, Delaney, Aikenhead, McCauley, Aylward, Ball. The clay beneath our feet is sacred – the challenge is to honour that which is authentic in our heritage, to acknowledge

and respond to the difficulties and challenges posed by postmodern culture, to identify our core ethos and determining principles, and, in so doing, to bring to life the *truly* Catholic school – in the expectation of reaching a place where, in the words of Seamus Heaney, "hope and history rhyme".

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INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

SCHEDULE FOR INTERVIEWS WITH:
i) Bishop Leo O'Reilly, Chair of the Episcopal Conference on Education,
Tuesday, September 16, 2008
10.00am

ii) Dr. Diarmuid Martin, Archbishop of Dublin
Thursday, December 18, 2008
11.00am

1. BACKGROUND
At the present time, over 92% of primary schools in Ireland are under the patronage of the Catholic Church. However, a confluence of pressures can be seen to be building, from a variety of sources, regarding the future patronage and management of primary schools.

In general, this series of questions seeks to ascertain what is the appropriate response of the Catholic Church to a more pluralist and secular society -
- in relation to Catholic philosophy of education in general, and
- in relation to enrolment policy of Catholic schools, in particular.

Firstly, what do you see as the greatest challenges / issues facing Catholic primary schools in postmodern Ireland?

2. PHILOSOPHY of CATHOLIC EDUCATION
The lack of a clearly articulated Catholic philosophy of education for primary schools in contemporary Ireland is a fact alluded to by many writers on Catholic education (e.g. Dermot Lane; Joseph Dunne ; Gerald Grace; Louise Fuller).

In the first instance, would you agree that there has been a relative under-development of Catholic philosophy of education for Irish primary schools?

What do you see as the unique tenets of Catholic educational philosophy appropriate to contemporary Irish society?

How do these translate into concrete manifestations i.e. what are the appropriate, distinctive features of Catholic primary schools?

3. PLURALITY OF PATRONAGE
The policy document *"Catholic Primary Schools: A Policy for Provision into the Future"* points out that Catholic education has a dual purpose and a dual character – its service in the mission of the Church and its service to society, and as both a civic and a Christian institution.

What do you say to those who argue that holding onto a separate system of Catholic schools maintains a stance of theological, social and educational exclusivity when what society currently requires is greater inclusivity?

4. ENROLMENT POLICY

"Catholic Primary Schools: A Policy for Provision into the Future" states that "the Catholic school welcomes diversity and strives for inclusivity" (p. 5) and that Catholic schools' enrolment policies "will incorporate the Catholic school's commitment to diversity and inclusivity while at the same time protecting the integrity of the school" (p.5)

How will this be achieved and how will it translate into specific admissions criteria?

The innovative enrolment policy of reserving two-thirds of school places for Catholic pupils and one-third for children of other faiths and none, is being tried out in the current academic year in two Catholic primary schools, in Porterstown and Clonsilla.

Is this policy being pursued because of the lack of an adequate number of school places in the area or because this is a good policy idea in and of itself?

Do you believe that the new multi-ethnic, multi-faith diversity of the Irish population should be reflected in all schools regardless of their patronage?

5. ENROLMENT STATISTICS

Are there composite statistics available for the number of non-Catholic pupils currently attending Catholic primary schools in the Republic?

6. NEW PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The opening of two new public primary schools, in September 2008, in the Phoenix Park and Phibbelstown, has been largely welcomed. However, there is a fear that the establishment of a State system of primary schools could lead to the development of a two-tier system - with the middle-classes gravitating to traditional Catholic schools and new-comer children attending State schools.

How can the Church ensure that the emerging system of State patronage and Church patronage is fair and equitable to all students?

It is reported that the Catholic Church sought a number of protocols regarding the teaching of RE in the new State schools.

How would the Church ideally like to be involved in the governance and religious education of the new multi-faith schools? And how do you counteract the accusation that the Church is seeking a privileged position in the new model?

Do you consider the current political landscape in Ireland to be hostile or receptive to the continuing funding and development of denominational primary schools?

The great advantage of Catholic primary schools in Ireland has been that children from vastly different backgrounds have been educated together, with a lack of social division; and an editorial in the Irish Times suggested that the challenge for Irish primary education is to "retain the good aspects of the current system while being flexible enough to accommodate and reflect much more diversity"

How can this be achieved in Catholic primary schools?

7. DIVESTING CURRENT CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
The policy document also states that in some areas where circumstances may have changed, "an existing Catholic school may no longer be viable as a Catholic school" and in such situation "an evaluation will have to be made, in consultation with parents and teachers, about the future of such a school" (p. 6)

Upon what specific criteria (financial, numerical or other) is it envisaged that such a decision will be reached?

8. RETREAT AND MISSION
The challenges and developments now facing Catholic primary education in Ireland herald an end to the Church's dominance in an area previously under their direct power and influence. It must be acknowledged that the unequivocal welcome by the Church for a plurality of patronage represents a defining moment in the history of Irish education and reflects a dramatic new policy approach by the Church.

What does this welcome for a plurality of patronage reflect about the Church's approach to its role in primary education in post-modern Ireland, viz: does it signify:

> *- a retreatist position i.e. a smaller number of Catholic schools restricted to Catholic pupils only (with the expectation that non-Catholics will attend State schools) ;*
> *or does it reflect, as the cynics may say,*
> *- a purely pragmatic and surface acceptance of a reality that will not necessarily change the status quo, given that 87% of the population remain Catholic*
> *or finally does it reflect*
> *- a culturally realist Church, ready and willing to take critical decisions in light of the demands and challenges of twenty-first century Ireland which will play out in Catholic schools adopting enrolment and admissions policy which reflect the multi-ethnic community they serve?*