Using Visible or Invisible Maps?

A Case Study of the Role of the Diocesan Advisor

in

Voluntary Catholic Secondary Schools

in the

Republic of Ireland

Catherine McCormack

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Supervisor: Dr PJ Sexton

Institute of Education

Dublin City University

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Declaration

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 that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, 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.

Signed: *Catherine McCormack*   (Catherine McCormack)

ID No.: 16212130

Date: 27 November 2020

Dedication

Dedicated to my parents Paddy and Nora Doherty.

To the memory of an exceptional human being - my beautiful sister Rose (1964 - 2006) "Requiescat In Pace".

And to the future with hope – our delightful granddaughter, Rosie.

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Last, but not least, thanks to John, for a lifetime of love and support.

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List of Abbreviations

AMCSS	Association of Management of Catholic Secondary Schools
ATCS	Association of Trustees of Catholic Schools
AI	Atheist Ireland
BOM	Board of Management
CCE	Congregation for Catholic Education
Cl.	Circular
CORI	Conference of Religious of Ireland
CPSMA	Catholic Primary School Management Association
CSII	Constitutive Elements of Catholic Identity for Catholic School
CSP	Catholic Schools Partnership
CT	*Catechesi tradendae*
DA	Diocesan Advisor
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DV	*Dei Verbum*
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECSIP	Enhancing Catholic School Identity Project
EN	*Evangelii nuntiandi*
ETB	Education and Training Board
FGP	Focus Group Participant
GCD	*General Catechetical Directory*
GDC	*General Directory for Catechesis*
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GE	*Gravissimus educationis*
ICRE:	Irish Centre for Religious Education
JCRE	Junior Cycle Religious Education

JMB   Joint Managerial Body

LAOS   Looking at Our Schools

LCRE   Leaving Certificate Religious Education

NAPDA   National Association of Primary Diocesan Advisors

NAPPDA   National Association of Post Primary Diocesan Advisors

NCCA   National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

NSBECS   National Standards & Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OFSTED   Office for Standards in Education

OSCE   Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe

PACT   Patronage, Access, Curriculum and Teaching

PISA   Programme for International Student Assessment

RE   Religious Education

RI   Religious Instruction

RDECS: Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School

REDCo: Religion in Education. A Contribution to Dialogue or a Factor of Conflict

SGN   Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland

SSE   School Self-Evaluation

TMG   Toward Mutual Ground

VEC   Vocational Educational Committee

WRERU   Warwick Religious and Education Research Unit

WSE   Whole School Evaluation

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Abstract

Using Visible or Invisible Maps? A Case Study of the Role of the Diocesan Advisor in Voluntary Catholic Secondary Schools in the Republic of Ireland.

Catherine McCormack

This research study set out to gain an insight into the role of Diocesan Advisors in relation to their work in voluntary Catholic second level schools in the Republic of Ireland at a time of great social, cultural and political change. The research question is sub-divided and addressed throughout the thesis in three parts: *What are the Diocesan Advisors' understandings of the purpose of the role? How do the Diocesan Advisors experience the role? How do the Diocesan Advisors perceive the future meaning and trajectory of the role?* These parts of the research question were chosen in order to maintain a focus on the perceptions of the participants in relation to their role, their experiences in the role and their hopes and concerns for the future of the role in an increasingly secular landscape. As the knowledge to be generated is subjective, involving the participants' own perceptions and experiences, the research was placed in the qualitative field. A case-study approach was taken, and data was gathered in researcher-driven solicited diaries; individual follow-on interviews and in a final focus group interview.

The literature review looked at five key areas for consideration in a study of this nature: 1. The identity of Catholic Schools; 2. Religious Education; 3. Inspection; 4. Diocesan Advisors; 5. Identity and Professionalism. The study includes the historical background of the role, and looks at the radical shifts that have occurred in the field of Catholic schooling and in Religious Education in recent years.

The diaries and interviews were coded and interrogated using the NVivo software application package. Themes were identified. The results, with supporting evidence, reveal the experiences of a total of nineteen post-primary Diocesan Advisors. Their daily records tell of the multi-dimensional nature of their roles. Their views on the role and on their remit reveal further complexities. Their concerns for the future of Religious Education, the future of Catholic schools and the future meaning and trajectory of the role, add a rich insight into the workings of Catholic schools and into Religious Education in particular, in a changing landscape. This study has shown that Diocesan Advisors' work in an increasingly contested space. The impact of recent State directives has posed new challenges for the Advisors and for many of the stakeholders in the field of Catholic Education.

Introduction

In this study, I present an account of my research which explored the role of the Diocesan Advisor in a changing landscape for Catholic schools and for Religious Education. The study is undertaken from the perspective of a cohort of 19 second-level Diocesan Advisors. While Diocesan Advisors visit all school types at both primary and second level where there are Catholic students, this research focussed in particular on the experiences and perspectives of Diocesan Advisors regarding voluntary Catholic second level schools.

The concept of 'visible' and 'invisible' maps is taken from Olsson (2007). It distinguishes between modes of monitoring practices in schools. State inspection in Ireland relies on visible mapping of inspection processes which are accessible to all stakeholders. The Diocesan Advisor, on behalf of the bishop, on the other hand, approaches the process in the school using invisible maps. They become the 'eyes and ears' (Coffey 2010) for the bishop in the school, absorbing how the school is living out its Catholic remit.

Context

Catholic clergy and religious orders dominated the education system from the founding of the Irish Free State (1922) up to the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), in a society that shared both an Irish and a Catholic identity. In this time, the predecessor to the Diocesan Advisor - the Diocesan Inspector - appointed by the Bishop, was charged with the oversight of religious knowledge in all school types in the diocese where there were Catholic students. The Diocesan Inspector, on behalf of the church, would make regular visits to schools to ensure and check that teachers were dedicating the appointed amount of time to the subject and were adhering to the teaching of the catechism prescribed by the Catholic Church, where doctrine was central to the subject. The Diocesan Inspector in this milieu was often seen as a stern and strict figure to be feared by teachers and pupils alike. Following the Second Vatican Council (1965), in the 1970s and 1980s, the role of the Diocesan Inspector was gradually refined and in 1988 the title was changed to Diocesan Advisor by the National Association of Primary Diocesan Advisors (Coffey 2010). The new title would reflect the image of a kind, gentle, supportive church 'envoy' to the school.

Up to 1998, religious education was the domain of the Catholic Church, and teachers of religious education in Catholic schools were expected to adhere to the directives of the church on the content to be taught. These directives were derived from Canon Law, which espoused faith development as essential to delivery of the subject. In this confessional approach, Religious Education, as a curriculum subject, was to be overseen by the Catholic Church, and the State had no involvement in any aspect of its provision.

In 1994 the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference called for a repeal of the Education Act of 1878, so that Religion, which had not been an examinable subject, could enjoy the same status as other academic subjects. It could be offered as a subject choice that would lead to an academic qualification. Four years later, the Education Act of 1998 provided a statutory framework for the development of the Irish education system and, as part of the vision of the Act, the prohibition on State involvement in Religious Education was lifted, heralding a shift in understandings of Religious Education and sparking debate on how it might be defined as a subject and incorporated into the curriculum. From 2000 onward, debates and consultations took place between and amongst a wide range of education stakeholders, including: the Department of Education and Skills; the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment; teacher and management bodies; and representatives of Church bodies. These debates and perspectives are explained in depth in Chapter 1.

Currently (2020) Religious Education as a State examinable subject is available on the curriculum for both the junior cycle and senior cycle at second level schools in Ireland. However, a degree of tension exists between the Catholic Church and the State's vision of the role and place of religious education in schools in an increasingly society that is the Ireland of today. The State's view of the subject could be described as preparing young people for life through debate and dialogue, which includes an understanding of all world religions and the beliefs and values of all. The Catholic Church, in keeping with *Share the Good News*: *National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland* (2010), sees the reach of the subject extending deeper, attending to the spiritual life of the students, their relationship with Jesus Christ and their connection to a faith community founded on Gospel values.

This is the context in which the Diocesan Advisors who took part in the research are conducting their role and the study aimed to explore qualitatively how they are negotiating the sometimes-contested terrain of religious education.

Researcher's Professional Background and Rationale for Undertaking the Study

I started my career as a teacher of Religious Education at a second level school in the Republic of Ireland. Visits by a very diligent Diocesan Advisor were part of the rich experience of those early years in a State school with a predominantly Catholic ethos. I held this position for twenty-three years until an opportunity arose to teach *Methodologies in Religious Education* in a college specialising in initial teacher education. I remained in this role for six years. As well as teaching on the programme, I had responsibility for placing students in schools for the school placement element of the programme. This aspect of my role allowed me to visit all types of second level schools, in the Republic of Ireland, to supervise placement students of second level Religious Education. During these visits I absorbed much about a school's spirit or ethos through the nature of relationships within, but without any intention or remit to measure what the school valued.

Subsequent to my college role, I took up a position as Faith and Governance Coordinator with a Trust body, where my work brought me into contact with the second level Catholic schools connected to this Trust. The role allowed me to experience the nature and quality of ethos in schools associated with it. A coordinator's role supports and promotes ethical governance in keeping with the Trust's charter values. School visits allowed for interaction with many of the partners of the school community: Boards of Management, principals and deputy principals, teaching staff, students, parent councils, student councils, and, occasionally, Diocesan Advisors. Meetings with Diocesan Advisors were, however, generally unplanned and coincidental. The role also allowed for formal meetings with the Department of Education and Skills (DES) inspectors, during Whole School Evaluation/Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE/MLL) inspections. The opportunity for engagement with the DES at the WSE/MLL inspections is one of the few occasions whereby the State and the Catholic patron of the school intersect.

The Trust I worked with did not formally 'inspect' their schools. Rather the Trust interacts with the school through many modes of communication. One such mode is in the form of an annual formal visit. As school coordinator, I conducted these formal visits and while part of the visit entailed a formal meeting with the principal, I also made observations during my walk around the school, noting iconography, the presence of sacred spaces, the availability of a prayer room/oratory, respectful interactions between students and staff, or staff and staff, and noted, on entry, the warmth of the greeting I received at reception. My visits blended observations of ethos in action, with more formal governance compliance.

My interest in Diocesan Advisors emerged initially out of concern for the quality of Religious Education in Catholic second level schools and later out of concern for the oversight of all ethos-related areas of Catholic schools. While State inspectors evaluate Religious Education when it is undertaken as an examination subject, they do not concern themselves with faith formation or school ethos. Representatives of Trusts do not have a remit in the day to day running of schools and can only support Boards of Management in policy development to guide the faith life of the school. The Diocesan Advisor, however, meets with teachers of religion in situ and should therefore be in a position to ascertain what is happening regarding the provision of Religious Education in schools. I wondered what instruments they used to evaluate or measure this on behalf of the bishop and what benchmarking system, if any, they employed. I wanted to know if they had a broader remit also for the faith life of the school community.

Study Aims and Research Question

This research set out to explore the role of the Diocesan Advisor in a changing social, cultural, political and educational environment, and this research question is addressed via three sub-questions which were framed as follows:

- What are the Diocesan Advisors' understandings of the purpose of the role?
- How do the Diocesan Advisors experience the role?
- How do the Diocesan Advisors perceive the future meaning and trajectory of the role?

These research sub-questions guided and informed the research approach and set about answering the main research question *'What is the role of the Diocesan Advisor in a*

changing landscape in voluntary Catholic second level schools in the Republic of Ireland?'

Research Sample

Purposive sampling comprises seeking out groups or categories for study based on their relevance to the research question. Framed by the three sub-questions of the research question, this study was interested in a particular cohort, Diocesan Advisors, as a case study. Nineteen Diocesan Advisors took part, and this case study is proposed as a single case with a "revelatory" rationale, given that the role of the Diocesan Advisor has not been researched at second level in Ireland before.

Data Gathering

The study sits within an interpretivist research paradigm whereby knowledge is understood to be socially constructed, and reality in this study is subjectively constructed by the Diocesan Advisors through their interpretation of reality as they engage in their work. Within this epistemological view, in order to get a real-life view of the work of the Diocesan Advisors and their experiences in the role, data was generated through their completion of a five-day solicited researcher-driven diary. Themes drawn from the diary informed the areas of questioning in follow-up one-to-one interviews, and a focus group was held to complete the gathering of data.

Ethical principles were adhered to at all stages of the process – participants were informed in detail about the purposes of the research. They were free to withdraw from the study at any stage, their identities were protected, and the data treated with the utmost confidentiality at all times.

Data Analysis

The data analysis methodology adopted by this research is based on the principles of thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Open-ended questioning allowed participants to frame their experiences and interpretations. Theoretical insights were developed from themes that illuminated the world of the interviewee. Data analysis was conducted using NVivo, a software package that assists researchers in managing and analysing their data. This software logs all coding and data sets, making the process of analysis transparent and the findings verifiable and trustworthy. The

findings from qualitative case studies are necessarily contextual and are therefore not generalisable to a wider population.

Overview

The study is presented in six chapters as follows:

C1 Historical Background and Context

Chapter 1 gives the historical background to the study. It focuses in particular on how the Church and State became enmeshed in education in the Republic of Ireland.

C2 Literature Review

The literature is reviewed under the following five pillars: Catholic Schools and their Identity; Religious Education; Inspection; the Diocesan Advisor; and, Identity and Professionalism.

C3 Methodology

The Chapter opens by presenting the perspective of the research in terms of ontology and epistemology. An interpretivist research paradigm is discussed as a justifiable approach for an investigation into the role of the Diocesan Advisor in voluntary Catholic secondary schools in the Republic of Ireland. The case study approach adopted for the study is described and explained. The sampling process is described. The data collection methods are explained. The process of data analysis is described and elucidated. The chapter closes with a consideration of ethical issues, followed by an outline of the research limitations.

C4 Findings

This chapter presents the findings arising from the process of data analysis. The concepts of identity, ambiguity, and professionalism were identified as three key overarching themes in the participants' discourses. The diary created an opportunity for the Diocesan Advisors to reflect on their role, and the interviews allowed them articulate their experiences and perceptions of the role in a rapidly changing social, political, educational and cultural context. The findings are presented in three sections under three key themes. Part 1 considers the theme of Identity; Part 2 discusses the theme of Ambiguity; and Part 3 focuses on the theme of Professionalism. Within the

sections on each theme, each of the three sub-elements of the research question is addressed.

C5 Discussion

This chapter considers the findings on Identity, Ambiguity, and Professionalism in relation to the theoretical perspectives discussed in the literature review and the research question.

C6: Conclusions and Recommendations

The research question: *What is the role of the Diocesan Advisor in a changing landscape in voluntary Catholic second level schools in the Republic of Ireland* is answered in this section and each part of the research question contributes to this. Recommendations arise from the study and are offered as possibilities for the future of the role.

Chapter 1: Historical and Contemporary Context

1.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the vista that contextualises the work of the Diocesan Advisor. Beginning with monasteries as centres of learning in Ireland it continues through to the complex educational set up at second level schools in Ireland today. The roots of this complexity are explained, and a background presented on the descriptors of denominational, non-denominational, and multi-denominational schools. The backdrop to Catholic schools is examined and the precursor to the Diocesan Advisor, the Diocesan Inspector, is explained. The role of the Diocesan Advisor in Britain both historically and currently, is examined. The chapter then visits the role of state inspection, and also the new Junior Cycle Specification for Religious Education, developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Development (NCCA). The chapter closes by signalling the implications of legislation regarding the implementation of this specification in Catholic schools in Ireland.

1.2 The Beginnings of Catholic Education

The Catholic Primary Schools' Management Association (CPSMA) Handbook (2016) details the background to schooling in the Republic of Ireland. From the earliest Christian times, monasteries were centres of learning in Ireland and monks provided education for many Irish scholars. However, with Ireland under British rule, and as the penal laws (1695-1829) banned schools for Catholics, hedge-school masters provided covert education for Catholics. Following the Relief Act at the end of the 18th century, inspirational lay individuals such as Edmond Ignatius Rice, Nano Nagle and Catherine McAuley, began setting up schools for Catholic children. Education was not widespread until Catholic emancipation was granted in 1829. In 1831, an important letter from the chief secretary for Ireland, E.G. Stanley announced a decision by parliament to provide funding for a network of primary schools in this country. The Stanley letter outlined a system of national schools with local patronage and management. It was hoped this system would be acceptable to all the churches in Ireland. Public funding would be available under certain conditions which included the involvement of the local clergy and religious orders, in the provision of the schools. These schools would have combined secular subjects and separate religious instruction. However, the churches were not satisfied with this arrangement. The reformed churches wished to maintain the

structures of schools already in place. The Catholic Church, emerging from the period of penal laws, was anxious that its newly won emancipation would extend to education for Catholic children. By degrees and rising out of negotiations by all the churches, modifications were introduced which made the system of schooling more acceptable to members of the different church communities. A network of national schools was established in Ireland (1831).

For over 140 years Catholic primary schools were managed by the local priest and were mostly parish schools. Convent and monastery schools were managed by religious orders. In 1969, following Vatican II, the Catholic bishops proposed that lay people should become involved in the management of schools. Since 1975, management is carried out by a Board of Management. The Constitution of Ireland outlines the rights and duties of citizens of the state on education are set out in articles 42 and 44.2.4.

1.3 Structure of the Post-Primary System in the Republic of Ireland

Irish post primary schools began to emerge about 200 years ago and saw the arrival from the late 18th century onwards of 'voluntary' denominational secondary schools. 'Voluntary' indicates that they are not founded by the state but were established by religious congregations and individuals who wished to respond to the needs of the Catholic community. These schools are *denominational* schools. The vast majority of Catholic Voluntary Secondary Schools joined the new free education system in the 1960s, as up to this they had to charge fees, (a minority continue to charge fees). The other main providers of post primary schools are the Education and Training Boards (ETB's) known from the 1930's up until 2013 as Vocational Education Committees (VECs); Community Schools and Comprehensive Schools. The VEC was established in the 1930's, and oversaw state schools under the non-denominational structure of the local VEC. As they provided religious education, and formation (according to parental choice) these schools were never, however, termed non-denominational.

In the 1960s the government promoted the establishment of Comprehensive Schools. These are denominational schools with a comprehensive curriculum in a co-educational environment. Further development occurred in the 1970s when Community Schools were established with joint patrons - the local Vocational Education Committee and various Catholic bodies - and are *multi-denominational* in nature, as they provided for the religious education and formation of all pupils. The Deed of Trust for such schools

ensured that religious worship attended by any pupil at the school and the religious instruction given to any pupil, shall be in accordance with the rights, practices and teaching of the religious denomination to which the pupil belongs.

From the 1980s onwards Vocational Education Committees opened Community Colleges. The local VEC entered into an arrangement with the Catholic bishops of the diocese and/or a religious congregation. In many respects these Colleges mirror the structures of Community Schools. Designated Community Colleges have a model agreement with the local bishop and/or a religious congregation. In 2013, a realignment took place which saw Education and Training Boards (ETBs) take over the role of the VECs. In the last few years ETBs have opened Community Colleges without the involvement of the local bishop. These colleges are referred to as non-designated Community Colleges. In recent years An Foras Pátrúnachta (Patron of Irish-medium schools since foundation in 1993) and Educate Together (state funded independent, non-governmental organisation offering multi-denominational education, founded in 1984) have established new Voluntary Secondary Schools.

At present in the Republic of Ireland there are 752 second level schools made up of 378 Voluntary Secondary Schools, 254 ETB schools including Community Colleges, and 96 Community or Comprehensive Schools. The Reformed Church communities (Church of Ireland, Presbyterian, Methodist) are served by a range of Voluntary Secondary and Comprehensive Schools. The overall structure of the Irish second level schooling (2014) is notably complex as shown in Fig 1:
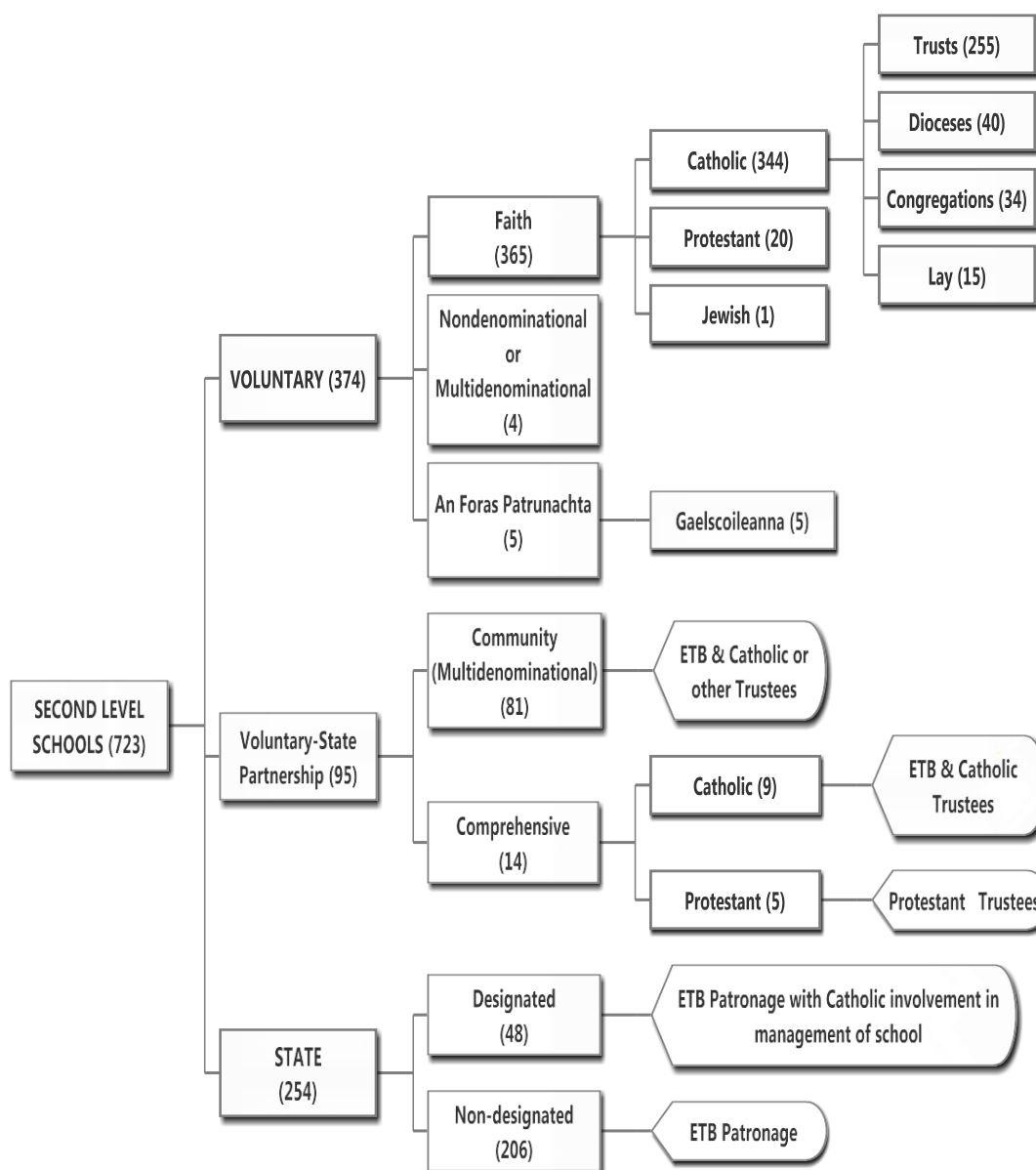
Figure 1 - Structure of Second Level Schooling (CSP 2014)

1.4 Catholic Schools

The Code of Canon Law, in canon 803 § 1, deals with the Catholic school in three cases: (a) when it is directed by "a competent ecclesiastical authority," the bishop or the pastor; (b) when it is directed by "a public ecclesiastical juridic person," a religious order; and (c) when it is directed by other persons, but has been recognised as Catholic by an "ecclesiastical authority…through a written document." Regarding this third case, the same canon, at § 3, establishes that, "even if it is in fact Catholic, no school is to

bear the name Catholic school without the consent of competent ecclesiastical authority."

Based on the teaching of Vatican II, the Catholic Church has the obligation to preach the gospel and to teach its doctrines and its disciplines to the faithful.

The 1983 Code of Canon Law

Canon 793§1 recognises the duty and the right of Catholic parents to choose schools which best promote the Catholic education of their children; Canon 793§2 acknowledges that these parents have the right to avail themselves of that assistance from civil society which they need to provide a Catholic education for their children. The Catholic school is understood to be the principal means of helping parents to fulfil their role in education (Canon 796§1). Among the fundamental rights and obligations of Catholic parents is the real freedom in their choice of schools. The responsibilities on bishops and trustees of Catholic schools, from a canonical point of view, are contained in Canon's 793-806. Of interest in this study are the following canons:

> 803 - to ensure that Catholic schools conform to the fundamental requirements of the code.
> 804 & 805 - to ensure that in Catholic schools, religious instruction is taught and that teachers of religion are appointed in accordance with the criteria of the code.
> 806§1 to exercise oversight of all the Catholic schools in the diocese and to carry out an inspection of these Catholic schools.
> 806§1 to issue directives concerning the general regulation of Catholic schools in the diocese.
> 806§2 to work in partnership with those in charge of Catholic schools to make sure that academic standards are as high in their schools as in other schools.

The task of ensuring that schools uphold this remit is the responsibility of the bishop as chief catechist of a diocese. The ways in which a bishop ensures that schools live up to their responsibilities in these matters is central to this research. The enactment of this requirement in Britain and Republic of Ireland today will be considered in Chapter 2.

1.5 History of Diocesan Inspection in Britain

Literature on the background to diocesan inspections in Ireland is scant and will be covered in section 1.6; however the history of diocesan inspection in Anglican schools in Britain recounted by E.L. Edmonds (1958) reveals an interesting trajectory that is helpful in understanding the development of the role in Britain today. It may also offer a possible model for a similar approach in Ireland.

The first linkages between Church and State are traced and the pattern of cooperation which currently exists in Britain is evident. Edmonds (1958) links diocesan visits with the "long visitational tradition of the Church" beginning with St Paul. Edmonds (1958) writes that both the Newcastle Commission and the Bryce Commission were occupied with "how local or how central" inspectorates of schools should be (p.13). The aim of all visits, he writes, was to ensure orthodoxy in religion by securing orthodoxy in all aspects of its teaching (p.13). Edmonds (1958) traces this inspectorial dimension in Britain across the middle ages and notes that complications set in during the early eighteenth century when attempts were initiated to educate the "deserving poor" (p.15) as this relied on philanthropy. Questions arose that resonate with issues emerging today. Who would assess the work of these schools? How qualified would assessors be for the role? Could they be impartial if they themselves had set up the school? These issues were resolved at the time by appointing and paying a professional agent. The 'ad hoc' nature of the arrangement is noted by Edmonds (1958), as the agent subsequently had oversight of the whole running of the school in many cases, and not just the instruction in religious knowledge. A formalised but local inspection followed from which reports were issued and performing schools were rewarded, combining inspection and examination (p.18). Issues surfaced surrounding the union of voluntary inspectorates with government inspections, as the Church resisted any attempt to be subservient to civil authority. By 1820, clerical visits were becoming more effective (p.20) and by 1833, the system of visitation included half yearly examinations. In 1860, the need for "a general and thorough diocesan visitation of church schools" (p.22) was identified. Standards continued to rise and these inspectors (usually male and ex-teachers) had the goodwill from neighbouring school board inspectors. They inspected a large number of schools and could identify differences in attainment.

1.6 Diocesan Inspection in Ireland

In Ireland, visitations tend to be carried out on an ad hoc basis by the bishop or his delegate and can be broad ranging or specific in focus. They can be carried out in response to concerns that come to the attention of the bishop or as part of the bishop's general duty of visitation. Schools are most likely to experience visitations as part of a broader visitation, for example, of a parish deanery or religious institute, but all Catholic schools can be the subject of a visitation by the diocesan bishop. The term inspection is not used for visitations. The term was used, however, for the visits to schools to examine the work in Religious Instruction (RI) classes historically.

Condon (2014) offers an insight into the conduct of the work of Diocesan Inspectors in the Diocese of Cloyne since circa the year 1900. He describes the annual report that was published by the Diocesan Inspector on the state of the subject of religion in the diocese. This report covered a range of areas including Doctrine, Bible History and Sacred Music. Marks were allocated in each area and tabulated for each school. Religion was held in high esteem on the curriculum and the transmission of knowledge of the Catholic faith and doctrine was central. Rote learning was common and long tracts were memorised. The Annual Report of Religious Examinations in the Diocese of Cloyne for 1961 - 1962 noted that "one of the gospels or the Acts of the Apostles" had to be memorised "with the greatest regard for verbal accuracy, with the gravity and accuracy suitable to Prayer, and at the same time with intelligence and devotion" (Condon 2014). The report could be scathing of a school describing, where necessary, its deficiency in the "positive knowledge required of the Religious programme" (p.525). Condon (2014) explains that the approach emerged from the first Vatican Council (1869-1870) which defined the faith as a series of propositions about God and the church and could be summed up in a catechism. A fearsome image of God was reinforced by both the method of transmission and subsequently by the Diocesan Inspector whose annual visit "must have seemed like the day of judgment" (p.525). This fear-ridden practice was discontinued after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) which emphasised a positive and relational God (*Dei Verbum, para. 2)*.

McConville (1966) details the 20 years of inspection from the mid-1940s to the mid-1960s referring to the system of inspection up to this time as one where the "fear of God" (p.719) was put into the teacher and pupils alike. He describes the entourage of

"the inspector flanked by the parish priest and perhaps the reverend mother with an assortment of curates and lesser religious occupying the wings and the helpless teacher hovering in the background" (p.719). A study by Diocesan Advisor Fr Pat Coffey, in 2010, reveals how the role evolved into a supportive one.

1.7 National Association of Primary Diocesan Advisors (NAPDA)

Coffey (2010) examined the contribution of the National Association of Primary Diocesan Advisors to religious education in Ireland. He studied the constitution and minutes of the National Association of Primary Diocesan Advisors meetings held between its foundation in 1987 up to and including, 2005. A constitution was drawn up in 1988 and minutes show that the discussion centred on a decision around the title of the role – "Inspector, Diocesan Advisor, or Co-ordinator of the work of Christian/Catholic Education of Children". The merits and demerits of each were considered. *Inspector* was considered negatively associated with *power and control* and was focused primarily on the knowledge of the pupils and, indirectly, on the work of the teachers, but a positive aspect was that it included *accountability* to the bishop. It was, nonetheless, deemed to be limited as a term, as it looked for assessment without any educational intent. The term *Diocesan Advisor* was (in the minutes) deemed to be more "school-focussed" and the "target group" was noted to be the teachers and priests. Support would be provided through courses, visits, and staff development sessions. Accountability would be to the bishop, teachers and priests. The weakness noted here is that it is "mostly school-based". The third option, *Co-ordinator of the work of Christian/Catholic Education of Children,* would represent a partnership, whose target groups would be the adults who are significant to the children and work in this model would involve helping adults to move through and analyse their own experience. While rejected at the time, this notion of adult catechesis is strongly reflected in *Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland* (2010). An interesting find in Coffey's (2010) study was a reference to a "copy book" dating from 1905 which contained the questions a Diocesan Inspector asked while on formal visits to schools over a ten-year period 1905-1915. The copy book serves as a record and reminder of the dogmatic approach that the Diocesan Examiners had at the time. Many of the questions listed focused on sin and on obeying laws. A photograph of the copy book (with kind permission) may be seen in Appendix H[1].

Coffey (2010) presents a contrasting approach to the diocesan examination (reflected in the 1905 copy book) with the current approach used in primary schools, by outlining his own approach to visits. He details that following a preliminary consultation with the teacher, he greets the pupils and he asks them what they like best about their religion class. He then asks if there is a favourite song from the programme that they would sing for him, followed by their favourite story from the Religious Education class. A viewing of their workbooks takes place and the children are encouraged to tell him about the work they are doing. If there is a sacred space, he will ask them about it. He then invites silence and shares some prayer-time, followed by a guided reflection. He answers any questions the children may have and then bids goodbye. There is warmth and a positive regard for the child. There is a sense that the child is at the centre of the approach. The approach is gentle and supportive, and the Diocesan Advisors would certainly be welcome back as they present no sense of judgment or inspection. It is difficult, however, to see where the possibility lies to assess learning or to evaluate the religion class and the school in the light of faith formation. It does demonstrate, however, that the remote and often hostile Diocesan Inspector has been reinvented as a supportive and non-challenging Diocesan Advisor.

The evolution of the National Association of Post Primary Diocesan Advisors will be outlined in Chapter Two: Literature Review.

1.8 Inspection of Catholic Schools in England and Wales

The system in England and Wales today offers an insight into a model that combines the requirements of Church and State in terms of inspection. This system exists since the enactment of the Education Act in 1992 but originated in the Council for Education in 1885 which resolved to oversee grants for school building improvements. As in Ireland, all schools at this point had religious foundations. State involvement initially led to tensions which were resolved by a "concordat" that saw only inspectors approved by and retaining the confidence of the Church of England appointed to inspect Church of England schools. Catholic schools agreed a similar concordat when grants were extended to them, with Religious Instruction excluded from inspection. While inspectors in Britain were established on denominational lines initially, becoming national and non-denominational under the 1870 Education Act, the Catholic poor school committee recommended that the bishops appoint denominational inspectors of

religious education. The Council of Trent (1545-1563) had required bishops to visit every parish regularly. Carter (2011) recounts that in Catholic France evidence shows these visits included inspecting schools, but in England the suppression of the Catholic Church meant that there were no parishes or schools to oversee until late in the 18th century, following the restoration of the hierarchy in 1852. In an official statement of the 6th of July 1852, the bishops agreed to undertake inspection of religious education. The first inspectors were clerics and took up the role in 1856. For the next hundred years, all inspectors were clergy. The work of inspectors was to expand from inspecting schools and examining potential apprentice teachers and, depending on the wishes of the individual diocesan bishop, school inspections usually resulted in a written report. This report contributed to an annual diocesan report that included a wide range of educational statistics.

What becomes evident in the evolution of the role is that responsibility shifted from just the oversight of classroom Religious Instruction to the oversight of the ethos of the whole school. The current status of the role in England and Wales will be covered in Chapter Two: Literature Review.

1.9 State Inspection of all Schools in Ireland

A view of how the State applies a model of accountability and assessment for improvement is useful to this study, opening up the question as to the benefits of formal inspection by Diocesan Advisors in the future.

The Department of Education and Skills (DES) in the Republic of Ireland has evolved over recent decades and has effectively reinvented its inspection approach. The traditional view of the school inspector was on a par with the traditional view of the Diocesan Inspector – both were anticipated with fear and foreboding in equal measure. The DES however, instead of softening in their approach to inspection, stepped up the rigour and demands they were making on schools while simultaneously managing to gain respect and a degree of acceptance that inspections are, in fact, good for the school. The achievement of this significant *volte face* could inspire a new model for diocesan evaluation. The format for inspection has developed in Ireland to a sophisticated degree. One factor that has undoubtedly focussed a spotlight on the quality of the Irish educational system, according to the Chief Inspector of the DES, Harold Hislop, is the

globalisation of the world economy and the increasing attention paid to comparative studies of educational achievement across many countries (Hislop 2012). In the race to attract global investment, the quality of an education system and the capabilities of young people are among the critical factors considered by investors when selecting where to locate businesses. Hislop (2012) explains how this led to international comparisons of educational achievement and the most influential is the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. In the school system the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Centre for Educational Research and Innovation of the OECD, in partnership with the EU Commission and EU bodies, conduct other surveys.

According to Hislop (2012) the question of quality in the school system emerged and from the late 1990s, a focus on outcomes and achievement was brought to bear (p.4). At this time also the professionalisation of teaching began to include professional standards, and educators began to consider their own professional development and to seek to improve the educational experience for learners. (p.5). Interest in measuring educational outcomes began to emerge against this backdrop.

Today, both internal and external assessment are part of the Irish education system and while responsibility for school effectiveness, quality, and improvement ultimately rests with the school's Board of Management, principal and staff - the State, through its Inspectorate, oversees the quality of schools maintained fully or partially through state funding.

The Inspectorate inspects the teaching of Religious Education in the same way as it inspects every other examinable subject. Where students do not opt for examinable Religious Education, or where examinable Religious Education is not offered by the school, Religious Education is not subject to inspection of any kind. Since 2000, the State has been directly involved in the provision and resourcing of a syllabus and examination in Religious Education at both Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate levels.

Prior to the Education Act of 1998 the status of Religious Education was determined by the Intermediate Education (Ireland) Act, 1878, which declared that "no examination shall be held in any subject of Religious Instruction, nor any payment made in respect

thereof". The State would have no direct involvement in religious education (Coolahan 1981). The State's position was that it could provide for Religious Instruction through its inclusion in the State's educational philosophy, its payment of teachers, and the inclusion of Religious Instruction in curriculum frameworks, but could not directly provide the curriculum, resources and examination of Religious Instruction such that it could be seen to promote a particular religious viewpoint. The provision of religious education was the sole responsibility of the Church. According to Cullen (2017) the dominant model for the teaching of religion within this system was transmissive, and involved teaching a particular religious worldview, its culture, beliefs and values, and a particular view of the identity of the Irish State and its citizens. In the Republic of Ireland, *Religious Instruction* is accepted as the constitutional and legal term to describe the provision made for teaching of a catechetical nature. The terminology surrounding the activity of teaching religion in schools will be discussed in Chapter 2.

The shift towards non-confessional religious education occurred after the Education Act of 1998 removed the prohibition on State involvement in religious education. The interpretation of the teaching of religious education in schools as an ecclesial task (religious instruction) moved to one which acknowledges it as a legitimate activity within the public domain (religious education). Meehan (2019) advises "while the state draws a definite distinction between religious education and faith development, or any type of learning into a faith community, the Christian view sees religious education and faith formation as intertwined" (p.87) A Religious Education Development Group was set up in 2017 to guide the development of the new specification for Religious Education. The group consisted of nominees from a wide range of education stakeholders including teacher and management bodies, Department of Education and Skills (DES), the State Examinations Commission and nominees from Church bodies.

1.10 National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is a statutory body of the Department of Education and Skills, serving to advise the Minister for Education and Skills on curriculum and assessment for schools, on assessment procedures used in schools, and examinations on subjects which are part of the curriculum. This advice, according to the NCCA website (April 2020), is developed through "research, deliberation, consultation, and networks". The NCCA stresses, however, that it is not

responsible for implementing curriculum change, but "supports educational change" by "developing a range of support materials such as examples of practice, online toolkits and planning resources and by working with those introducing new developments to practitioners and teachers".

The curriculum for Junior Cycle Religious Education (JCRE) is outlined on the NCCA's website. The course consists of three interconnecting strands: "exploring beliefs, exploring questions and living our values". The Specification for Religious Education as an "instrument of the State" is written to accommodate all worldviews – religious and non-religious but not serve any one in particular. In Catholic schools the bishops are clear in their guidelines of 1999 that religious education must always seek to support and inform their faith. *Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland* (2010) also clearly states that religious education should always support the faith life of the Catholic student. This recent dilemma is at the heart of the concern experienced by the Diocesan Advisors in their work in schools currently.

1.11 Junior Cycle Religious Education

Since 2000, JCRE has been inspected under the same subject inspection regulations as all other subjects set out by the NCCA for the Department of Education and Skills. Religious Education as a subject on the school curriculum for Junior Cycle has undergone significant review in 2019, and follows the requirements of the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015). It is designed according to a set of specifications: *Specifications for Junior Cycle Religious Education*, 2019. The NCCA has put in place a specification that is appropriate for all students, whether or not they have a particular religious commitment. Its aims are defined as: to develop knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes and values to enable young people to come to an understanding of religion and its relevance to life relationships, society and the wider world (NCCA 2019). It further aims to develop the students' ability to examine questions of meaning, purpose and relationships, and to help students understand, respect, and appreciate expression of beliefs and to facilitate dialogue and reflection on the diversity of beliefs and values that inform responsible decision making and ways of living (NCCA 2019).

The Department of Education and Skills distinguishes between *religious instruction* and *religious education* in a multi-denominational setting and issued a circular in February 2018 (c.0013/2018) entitled *Religious instruction and worship in certain second level*

schools in the context of Article 44.2.4 of the Constitution of Ireland and Section 30 of the Education Act 1998. The aim of the circular was to set out a new approach to the arrangements that are made for religious instruction and worship in Education and Training Board (ETB) and Community Post Primary schools. Essentially, students would be required to "opt in" to Religious Instruction. Section 5 of the circular states as the key change:

> *Those who do not want instruction in line with the requirements of any particular religion should be timetabled for alternative tuition throughout the school year rather than supervised study or other activities.* (C. 0013/2918 Section 5).

Under the Deed of Trust however, students had to "opt out" if they wished to excuse themselves from Religious Instruction classes. Legal advice to the Catholic sector confirmed that the circular does not supersede the Deed of Trust of Community Schools and the Department was subsequently challenged on the legality of the new arrangement. The Department of Education and Skills took the unprecedented step of issuing a clarification: *0062/2018 Clarification in respect of Section 5 of Circular 0013/2018 in relation to the NCCA Religious Education syllabus and religious instruction.*

> *Where a school decides to offer religious instruction in line with the requirements of any particular individual religious denomination, it must not be associated with or integrated to any degree with the NCCA-developed Religion Education syllabus being provided in timetabled class periods.*

> *Where the school is providing religious instruction having regard to the legal instruments created when the school was recognised, the school may provide the teaching resources from within the school's overall teacher allocation and the delivery must be in full class periods devoted exclusively to religious instruction.*

The implications of the exclusion for schools under Catholic co-patronage to teach and celebrate central aspects of their faith, conflict with the Bishops' guidelines (1999) that the religious education of Catholic students in any second level school should always seek to support and inform their faith. This aspiration cannot, however, be reflected within the NCCA religious education specification as a definite distinction is drawn

between religious education and faith development or any type of learning into a faith community. It should be noted that following negotiations, an agreement was reached between ETBI and the Episcopal Conference (May 2020) regarding religious education in Community Schools and Designated Colleges, thus bringing some clarity to the place of characteristic spirit in schools with Catholic co-patronage.

1.12 Consultation

The Council for Catechetics of the Irish Catholic Bishops Conference was represented on the development group by Dr Amalee Meehan. Meehan (2019) quotes the 1992 Government of Ireland document, *Charting Our Education Future; White Paper on Education*, when she writes that the Irish state is committed to ensuring that all children, in accordance with their abilities should have "formative experiences in moral, religious and spiritual education". The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment designed the new Framework for Junior Cycle based on a set of eight principles, 24 statements of learning, and eight key skills describing what all junior cycle children should learn. This structure allows a school to design its own Junior Cycle curriculum in a way that honours its characteristic spirit. In Catholic schools, Meehan (2019) writes, religious education has a significant role to play in the provision of a curriculum that supports the ethos of a school. The Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, in its document *Religious Education and the Framework for Junior Cycle* (2017) reiterate this position regarding religious education in schools under Catholic patronage:

- *Religious education retains its current status as a subject (200 hours provision)*
- *Religious education is taught for a minimum of 3 x 40-minute periods or 2 x one-hour periods per week for each of the three years of the junior cycle*
- *Religious education at junior cycle will continue to follow the syllabus, or subject specification for the new junior cycle as agreed by the Bishops' conference and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment*
- *Religious education will also continue to be taught in conjunction with the Bishops' conference guidelines for the faith formation and development of Catholic students*
- *Religious education should only be taught by teachers suitably qualified to teach religious education.*

The programme for religious education is to be designed by the school but must be "informed by the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015); the religious education subject

specification; the particular learning needs and interests of the students; and must reflect the characteristic spirit of the school in accordance with Circular Letter 0024/2016". The bishops clarify that characteristic spirit refers not only to the school's mission and vision statements, but to the living out of the school's founding intention (Meehan 2019 p.14). The State specification is designed to meet the needs of students of all faiths and none, across all school types at second-level. It does not specify how the "characteristic spirit" can be honoured where liturgy or religious instruction is to be excluded. This, in essence, is the challenge for Patrons, Trusts, Bishops, and for the Diocesan Advisors, who seek to maintain and nurture the founding intention of Catholic schools, reflected in Vatican and Church documents. In Britain, the resolution involves the State and the Church working together in the Inspection of Catholic schools.

The Chapter tracked the education system in Ireland from its beginnings in monastic centres of learning to the complex systems that exist today. Chapter Two reviews the literature pertaining to Catholic schools; Religious Education; the State inspectorate, the Role of the Diocesan Advisor and briefly reviews theory on Identity, Role Ambiguity and Professionalism.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

According to Silverman (2013, p.342) a literature review should "combine knowledge with critical thought" and Hart (1998) states it should be used to:

> *Show skills in library searching; show command of the subject area and understanding of the problem; to justify the research topic, design and methodology* (p.13).

Drawing on Hart (1998) the disciplines related to my research were first identified; they include the identity of Catholic schools; religious education; the State's remit in the inspection; the role of the Diocesan Advisor; theories on identity and professionalism. A literature review must be clear and logical and present evidence of adequate, appropriate and interesting dimensions of scholarly research (Hart 1998).

2.2 Pillar 1: Catholic Schools and their Identity

This section considers:

- Traits and characteristics of Catholic schools;
- Influence of Vatican II on Catholic schools; Catholic Church documents and recent publications related to the Irish context;
- Supports offered to Catholic Voluntary Secondary Schools;
- Studies on the identity of Catholic schools abroad;
- Challenges to a Catholic vision of education;
- Secularism is considered as the backdrop to the context in which the Diocesan Advisor works.

2.2.1 Traits and Characteristics of Catholic Schools

Archbishop J. Michael Miller (2006) states, that while there is no universally accepted definition of a Catholic school, he can offer five "non-negotiable" traits of Catholic schools. A Catholic school, he suggests, should be inspired by a supernatural vision, founded on Christian anthropology, animated by communion and community, imbued with a Catholic worldview throughout its curriculum, and sustained by gospel witness (Miller 2006). The Congregation for Catholic Education (CCE) also outlines six characteristics for a school which proclaims itself as Catholic (CCE 1997, par. 4): as a place of integral education of the human person of which Christ is the foundation; its

ecclesial and cultural identity; its mission of education as a work of love; its service to society and possessing the traits which should characterise the educating community.

In Ireland, the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference and the Conference of Religious of Ireland established Catholic Schools Partnership (CSP) in 2010 as an umbrella group to provide direction to Catholic Schools and they set out their six principles in *'Catholic Education at Second Level in the Republic of Ireland – Looking to the Future'* (2014) where they speak about the mandate for Catholic schools arising from the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and identify the need for Catholic schools:

- *to continue the work of Jesus the teacher*
- *be part of a living tradition*
- *to respect both faith and reason*
- *to integrate religious education in the curriculum while providing opportunities for catechesis*
- *to give expression to the teachings of the Second Vatican Council*
- *to educate to intercultural dialogue.*

While there is no agreed definition of what a Catholic school is, it is clear that that Catholic schooling is unique and is rooted in a view of the person 'as a child of God, redeemed by Christ and destined to share in God's own life forever' (CSP 2014 p.35). Further, according to CSP, as faith is not a private matter, funding for such schools and protection in the law is widespread throughout democratic societies (CSP 2014). As Christian religious education is a subset of Christian education (Meehan 2017), then Christian identity is inseparable from the Christian faith, it is a reality that frames and interprets all of life.

How this mission is understood by schools in Ireland and how it is honoured will be central to this study as the role of the Diocesan Advisor is about supporting this vision but in a landscape where schools are undergoing significant legislative change, the role is somewhat challenged in schools that are increasingly answerable to State demands.

2.2.2 The Influence of Vatican II on Catholic Schools.

Vatican II conciliar documents inform Catholic education. Most notably, *Gravissimum educationis* (GE), which locates responsibility for the planning and direction of Catholic schools with local Bishops (*Gravissimum educationis,* Preface). *GE* states that the goal of Catholic education is to ensure that the whole of life is inspired by the spirit of Christ (*GE*, n 3) and continues that it is mainly fulfilled through catechetical instruction (*GE* n

4). A school is Catholic if it is in partnership with civil society in contributing to the development of a world worthy of humanity (*GE* n 3).

Gravissimum educationis (1965) describes the distinguishing characteristic of a Catholic school as one which attempts to generate a community climate in the school that is permeated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and love:

> *It tries to guide the adolescents in such a way that personality development goes hand in hand with the development of the "new creature" that each one has become through baptism. It tries to relate all of human culture to the good news of salvation so that the light of faith will illuminate everything that the students will gradually come to learn about the world, about life, and about the human person*
>
> (1965, 8).

The Vatican's *Congregation for Catholic Education* (CCE) in *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (1997) calls for a holistic and integrated approach to education and is critical of the tendency to reduce education to purely technical or practical aspects (p.10). It describes the fundamental characteristics of the Catholic school in terms of the integral education of the human person through a clear educational project of which Christ is the foundation, involving ecclesial and cultural identity, love and service to society (p.4). While recognising that we live in a knowledge-based society, the CCE in their 2013 publication *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love* encourages Catholic schools "to go beyond knowledge and educate people to think, evaluating facts in the light of values" (p.66). The CCE's 2014 document *Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion*, calls for a renewed mission in assisting young people to discover their personal freedom, which is a gift from God (p.10). The document stresses the need for Catholic schools not to succumb to the demands of the economy but instead put both individuals and their search for meaning at the centre of the curricula. In Ireland, through its various publications, the Catholic Church has widely disseminated this vision of education in Catholic schools.

2.2.3 The (1983) Code of Canon Law

Canon Law recognises that Catholic parents are entitled to educate their children in accordance with their beliefs and values. Church bodies, including schools, assist parents with this responsibility. The Catholic schooling that is reflected in Canon Law is

based on partnership between parents and Catholic bodies in service of holistic education (CSP 2014):

> *Since true education must strive for complete formation of the human person that looks to his or her final end as well as to the common good of societies, children and youth are to be nurtured in such a way that they are able to develop their physical, moral, and intellectual talents harmoniously, acquire a more perfect sense of responsibility and right use of freedom, and are formed to participate actively in social life.*

(The 1983 Code of Canon Law no.795)

The remit for the local bishop's involvement in Catholic schools is outlined in the Code of Canon Law. Canon 803 provides its definition of a Catholic school. Canon 803§1 provides that a school is Catholic if (a) it is controlled by a diocese or religious order or another public juridical person or (b) it is acknowledged in a written document as Catholic by the diocesan bishop. "Control" is normally established where the diocese or religious order owns the school and appoints the governing body or at least a majority of it. In addition, Canon 803§3 provides that no school, even if it is Catholic, may use the title Catholic school without the consent of the bishop.

When viewed side by side with what is happening in the State's involvement in Catholic schools in Ireland, the question of how Irish bishops currently resource and accredit the religious education provision within Catholic schools, must be considered. This study examines the evidence in this regard. The influence of the second Vatican Council is central to an understanding of the philosophy behind Catholic education and bishops interpret the central messages for the local Church.

2.2.4 Vision '08

The Vatican and subsequent Church documents speak to all Catholics in the global Catholic community. In Ireland, the Irish Bishop's Conference communicates the essence of these rich teachings to the faithful. In 2008, the Irish Catholic Bishops Conference published a pastoral letter entitled 'Vision '08 The Catholic School in Ireland'. The rationale for the pastoral letter was in response to discussion in the public domain on the justification of Catholic schools' existence in modern Ireland. The bishops through the pastoral letter wished to highlight the special nature of Catholic schools and to expand on their contribution to society and to the educational system. In

the pastoral, the bishops posit that Catholic schools distinctively seek to reflect a vision of life which is based on the gospel of Jesus Christ. The bishops also stress that the school must be an extension of the community of the family reflecting and supporting the values of Catholic family life and respecting the role of parents as the primary educators of their children. Along with the family, the school exists consciously within the community of the church and Catholic schools aspire to be warmly participative communities in which all stakeholders are valued. Catholic schools value tolerance and inclusiveness and in a multicultural society Catholic schools are open to children of all denominations. Following the publication of the pastoral, work commenced on a directory for catechesis in Ireland. The result was a landmark publication entitled *Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland* (2010).

2.2.5 Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland (SGN)

> *A Catholic education ethos understands itself as a humanising and caring activity, seeking to open the person to freedom and completion, and to spiritual and moral responsibility, lived respectfully with Christ in the world and with its peoples, celebrating all of life in a spirit of justice, generosity and gratitude.*

(Byrne 2013 pp. 147-148)

The Irish Episcopal Conference launched *Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland* in 2011. *SGN* stresses the broad canvas of catechesis, incorporating the whole of the Catholic community, who are called to evangelise, catechise and teach religious education (Byrne, preface ix) and includes a lifelong journey in faith. The directory was informed by many of the documents from Vatican II as well as subsequent Church documents: *Gravissimum educationis* (1965), the Council's Declaration on Christian Education; *The General Catechetical Directory* (1971); *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (1972); Pope Paul VI's *Evangelii nuntiandi* (1975); Pope John Paul II's *Catechesi tradendae* (1979) and *Redemptoris missio* (1990); the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992); and the new General Catechetical Directory for Catechesis (1997). The need for a local framework as well as guidance from the global Church inspired much of the work of *SGN*, and stresses that it claims nothing more than "searching out sure ways of making the treasures found in *the Catechism of the Catholic Church,* more readily available to the people of Ireland" (SGN p.2). These Church documents will be revisited in Pillar 2: Religious Education.

The cultural context of the Ireland of the 21st century is worlds apart from the Ireland of Vatican II and challenges to a Christian vision of how we are called to live as people made in God's image are centred on competing worldviews and economic concerns. It is this clash of cultures that sets the work of the Diocesan Advisor in contrast to the work of educators for market-states. Diocesan Advisors' work in Catholic education, highlights a spirit, a vocabulary and a vision that may be adrift in a secularist and markets-driven system. Diocesan Advisors, into the future will need to engage positively with, and complement the work of other professionals in the field, offering collaboration rather than conflict with those of a different vision.

2.2.6 Schools Founding Intention

The Catholic Church is the patron of the vast majority of primary schools in Ireland because historically it was the main provider of education for the general population and the State was happy to allow this situation of "peaceful coexistence" (Griffin 2019) to develop just over 50 years ago. When free second level education was introduced into Ireland (1967), large numbers of students availed of the opportunity as it was merely a matter of them continuing on to the secondary school building, usually located in close proximity to the Catholic primary school. Griffin (2019) outlines how sites for school buildings were provided by religious congregations who then taught in many schools free of charge or contributed their teaching salaries to support local school projects:

> *While the state has provided full funding for school buildings in the past 20 years, most Catholic schools are still built on church or congregational land in buildings that were at least partially funded by Catholic resources. Catholic schools in the voluntary sector are not state entities; the parents of students in Catholic schools are also taxpayers with rights to an education of their choice for their children* (p.56).

The Education Act of 1998 decrees that each school must have a patron in order to operate. As numbers entering religious life declined, many congregations discerned the need to change the direction of their ministry. The role of the laity had begun to be recognised after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and was further acknowledged by legislative developments such as the introduction of Boards of Management to schools (1975). Griffin (2019) traces the evolution of lay Trusts from the mid 2000's when congregations transferred their second level schools into

Education Trust bodies. Griffin notes that within a number of years "75% of Catholic second level schools had been handed over to the patronage of six such trust bodies in Ireland" (p.57). Upholding the characteristic spirit in these schools is the central work of these trust bodies. How individual trusts evaluate or measure the extent of the individual school's faithfulness to this spirit is undocumented.

The question of how Catholic schools are supported in their work of ethos in their schools is covered in the next two sections and offers an insight into the resources developed and delivered in Catholic schools at primary and post-primary levels.

2.2.7 Catholic Schools Partnership (CSP)

The Catholic Schools Partnership is an association established by the Irish Bishops' Conference and the Conference of Religious of Ireland. It was formally launched in 2010. Its aims are to:

- *Foster coherence in Catholic Education at a national level*
- *Provide a unified voice for Catholic Education in the public forum and with educational bodies and the Government*
- *Support Catholic Educators in the core activities of learning and teaching in order to foster high quality life-long learning and faith development for all learners*
- *Support the roles of Governance, Trusteeship and Management*.

Thus, CSP is an umbrella body providing strategic thinking on major issues facing Catholic Schools. (It should be noted that the CSP will cease to exist in late 2020. A group called Catholic Education Partnership (under the Catholic Education Services Trust) will be the sole member for the Secretariat for Secondary Schools on the management side and the association of Patrons and Trustees of Catholic Schools on the Patrons side and will have a more central role).

The CSP currently has a Council of twenty-one members representative of the various stakeholders in Catholic schools. This Council is charged with implementing a strategy that will achieve the aims of the CSP. The members of the Council are nominated by the Irish Bishops' Conference, the Conference of Religious of Ireland (CORI), the Association of Trustees of Catholic Schools (ATCS), the Catholic Primary School Management Association (CPSMA), and the Association of Management of Catholic

Secondary Schools (AMCSS). Thus, CSP is an umbrella body providing strategic thinking on major issues facing Catholic Schools.

A well-developed resource pack entitled *Understanding and Living the Ethos in a Catholic Voluntary Secondary School - A Process Centred on Conversations* was prepared and disseminated to every Catholic second level school in 2016. It consists of a Manual covering the steps to be taken by each stakeholder over a three year cycle offering guidance on:

> *Steps in the process; Aims of the process; Using the resources with different groups; using the resources with junior cycle students; using the resources with senior cycle students; using the resources with members of Boards of Management / staff / parents, and setting targets to support the school in understanding and living its ethos.*

The Introduction (p.5) states that it is a process based on conversations. It is not an exercise undertaken by outside experts but rather by the school community, all of whom who are invited to articulate the school's own identity through a series of conversations. This process includes trustees, staff, students, parents, members of the Board of Management and the broader school community:

> *The process is intended to be life-giving and supportive. It will be led and guided by the school community and it will be characterised by honesty and open dialogue. In this new cultural context every school needs to reclaim its identity so that it is not just reacting to the latest trend or fashion, it is truly articulating its self-understanding* (p.5).

The emphasis is on the school's founding story rather than the characteristics of a Catholic school:

> *Catholic voluntary schools were established by citizens who sought to improve and transform society through education. They were committed to human flourishing and the common good. This process encourages schools to reclaim their freedom in reimagining their founding intention and, in doing so, discover what is distinctive in their service of the community and the common good in the twenty-first century* (p.5).

The resource pack contains five resources comprising three videos, a booklet and a pamphlet including:

> *The Voluntary Sector in Ireland (Video 1)*
> *What is a Catholic Voluntary Secondary School? (Video 2)*

Continuing the Ministry of Christ in Our School (Video 3)

Catholic Education at Second-Level in the Republic of Ireland: Looking to the Future (Booklet)

Frequently Asked Questions about Catholic Voluntary Secondary Schools (Pamphlet)

This manual shows how these resources can be used with different groups within a school: (A) Junior Cycle students, (B) Senior Cycle students and (C) Members of Boards of Management/staff/parents.

The packs were distributed to voluntary Catholic secondary schools in 2016/2017 and all schools were encouraged to study the material and apply it over a three year period with the aim of focussing attention on school ethos. The task was delegated to the schools but without any training of specific personnel to oversee its delivery. The need to in-service specific people within the school and support them intensively for the duration of a project on ethos was recognised by the Alliance for Catholic Education.

2.2.8 Alliance for Catholic Education: *The School Culture Initiative*

The *School Culture Initiative* is an undertaking in Ireland by University of Notre Dame's *Alliance for Catholic Education*. It offers schools a rich and engaging two-year programme aimed at strengthening and sustaining their Catholic School Culture. Using a model developed and implemented with Catholic schools in the US, but tailored for an Irish context, individual School Culture Teams (the principal plus two other teachers) are supported over a two-year period to introduce, explore and implement the school culture framework. The process focuses on schools exploring the issue of Catholic school identity from their own perspective and being conscious of the rich tapestry of experiences different schools bring to the initiative.

A collaborative approach is employed, with the various School Culture Teams engaging as a single cohort for the delivery of induction, training seminars and ongoing support. Throughout the two years the Culture Teams from the Partnership Schools gather regularly, forming a supportive community, from which all can draw advice and encouragement as they journey through the process. The steps involve:

1. Induction for School Culture Team

2. Reflection on the School's context

3. Investigation and reflection on the Tenets of a Catholic School

4. Determining Root Beliefs

5. Deciding Core Values

6. Consideration of Actions and Behaviours

7. Communicating the Message (Consistently, Creatively, and Constantly)

Opportunities for the teachers and staff to grow in their own faith life and build community with others who share a commitment to revitalising the Catholic character are integrated throughout the process. Schools are not randomly selected; there must be a willingness and capacity to deliver the entire programme. There are four fundamental criteria for selecting the schools to participate in the ACE Ireland Schools Partnership initiative:

1. Principal is committed to Catholic Culture of their school

2. Principal believes faculty and staff are open to such a process.

3. Support and buy-in of the school's Board of Management.

4. The successful schools are clustered geographically to facilitate monthly meetings.

This model of intensive and ongoing support has ensured the success of this renewal of mission and vision in the schools that have completed the initiative. The buy-in of management is central to its success and the inclusion of an increasing number of staff during the delivery of the programme allows for an incremental spread of the commitment across the school adult population. In an Ireland where Christian values are challenged, investment in social and spiritual development for Catholics is essential. The provision of this opportunity for reflection by every Catholic school could greatly enhance self-evaluation of ethos and identity from a co-professional approach, the school community in partnership with the expertise of the Alliance for Catholic Schools. The Diocesan Advisor could be part of the journey with the schools and provide ongoing encouragement and support into the future.

Strengthening of the Catholic school's identity in a climate that is increasingly secular is essential if this identity is to be sustained in a market-driven economy.

2.2.9 Challenges to Christian Vision in Education

Many profound changes have impacted on Catholic schools, religious education and catechesis in recent decades and many of them can be attributed to a growth in secularism.

Charles Taylor (2007) argues in *A Secular Age* that secularism does not negate the existence of God - it just pushes God into the transcendent realm and considers that this coming of age narrative means that people no longer need to look beyond themselves to find their ultimate value. In this field of choices for the human, options emerge for 'spiritual life in new forms, and for new ways of existing both in and out of relation to God' (p.437) Taylor (2007) asks "why was it virtually impossible not to believe in God in, say 1500 in our Western society, while in 2000 many of us find this not only easy, but even inescapable?" (p.25). Taylor (2007) suggests that it is because secularism is the philosophical outcome of 500 years of the Enlightenment and in particular since the 1950's and 60's the effects of the broadening of education resulted in an intellectual leap of the public social sphere. Taylor (2007) describes three versions of secularism, characterising the first as the withdrawal of the religious world-view from the public sphere; the second as the decline in personal religious practice and commitment and reflecting an individual's move away from the community to more personal choices. The third version which he regards as more authentic than the superficial emphasis found in the first two, and is the radical shift in culture away from the assumption that a religious faith is the norm, and is now but one option among many. Taylor believes that authentic freedom is the highest freedom 'to be moved by one's mystique (one's experience of the Holy Spirit) as against being organized and mobilized and constrained by political authority to follow the rules' (p.749). He concludes that Christianity is a living tradition, which changes and adapts in each new age and, as such, Christians are called to be faithful to the tradition, and not to the past. Gallagher (2008) surmises that, for Taylor, the faith crisis of today's world calls for renewed forms and languages of faith but claims:

> *What has declined in his interpretation of cultural secularisation, is a set of ecclesial priorities and expressions that suited another moment in culture. What is needed is a creative discernment of the underlying hungers of the present situation that seems so secular, but may often be expressing a spiritual hunger for fullness* (p.444).

The need to examine how a Catholic school can address the hunger of the secular era and how ecclesial priorities can be maintained in an educational context will be taken up in the next section and addressed in Chapter 5 Discussion.

In a secular context, McKinney and Sullivan (2013) describe the contemporary mind-set as one that sits uneasily with Catholic principles because it puts individual fulfilment at the centre while denying absolute truths or values. These researchers claim that maintaining Catholic identity in Catholic schools "emerges as the challenge for Catholic education, in a 21st century cultural context that is increasingly ambivalent, if not hostile, to religion" (2013 p.29). Van Nieuwenhove (2009) asserts that a non-instrumentalist disposition must be at the heart of the Christian life because the ultimate concern or focus in life for Christians should be on God, and by being focused on God, this disposition allows people to recognise creative things as valuable and can foster a theocentric focus which is non-instrumentalist. Tuohy (2013) agrees that a Catholic education must go beyond training, skills and qualifications and instead help individuals to seek wholeness, truth and hope. He suggests that as the person is essentially social, the Catholic school must promote a sense of community based on solidarity while furthering the promotion of justice and making a difference (p.121). Pope Francis, in *Laudato Si* (2015), calls for Catholic education to resist the assault of the technocratic paradigm (111, 202). And, in an address at the Iona Institute in 2015, Prof Conway asked:

> *Do Catholic schools cultivate 'a spirit of liberty and charity based on the gospel' can we, upon this basis, claim we are making a distinctive contribution among a plurality of educational providers?* (Conway 2015).

The Catholic Archbishop of Armagh, Dr Eamonn Martin, speaks about "intentional Catholic schools" as "Hubs of God's Mercy" (2016). Dr Martin cites the four types of "poverty" that highlight the modern-day corporal and spiritual works of Mercy: physical-economic poverty; cultural poverty; poverty of relationships; and spiritual poverty (Martin 2016). In an intentionally Catholic school, Martin (2016) asserts, the works of mercy permeate experiences in the school community to confront the material, cultural, relationships and spiritual poverty that is prevalent in today's culture. According to the CSP (2014) the focus of Catholic schools must remain on their founding intention while continuing to take cognisance of cultural shifts. Disseminating an articulation of this vision upon which Catholic schools are built is essential (CSP 2014) and to be effective must be understood by all stakeholders (CSP 2014). The current focus from a State perspective in Ireland is described by the Department of Education and Skills in *CUMASÚ – Statement of Strategy* (2019-2021) as one where

young people are prepared to contribute to 'a strong and successful country' which underpins the economy and how well Ireland can compete in a global market (p.1). One of the challenges that lies ahead in Ireland and abroad currently for Catholic schools is the issue of the intersection of compliance with State circulars and authentic Catholic identity. Treston (2007) warns that as compliance is linked to funding and accountability, energies of school management can be absorbed in this task and ethos can be relegated to the margins of consciousness. Treston (2007) distinguishes between the school that is 'outer directed' rather than 'inner directed' - the outer directed school values efficiency, public image and management, whereas the inner directed school, while attending to the issues of management, insist the core gospel values drive the energies and policies of school life (p.2). Catholic schools must identify which perspective is central to their way of being in their school. If the identity of the Catholic school is based on the mission of Jesus as life giving and humanising of society, then the school according to Treston (2007), is focused on a theology of God. If the identity of the Catholic school is more explicitly associated with its ecclesial roots, a theology of mission gives the focus to education with sacraments, doctrine, spirituality, and knowledge of Catholic teachings to the fore (Treston 2007). The latter Catholic identity is difficult to promote in a pluralist culture and Treston (2007) suggests a middle ground whereby teaching and learning are conducted within an inclusive culture, where:

> *The good news of the gospel infuses the whole life of the school and a Catholic vision of life is fostered that would honour the pluralism of beliefs in the school and affirm the evangelising role of the faith community* (p.5).

It would be faithful both to the Catholic schools' ecclesial roots and mission and yet conduct an education that is inclusive of all who choose to share a Catholic vision of life through enrolment in a Catholic school.

Conway (2015) outlines the contemporary context in Ireland and highlights the challenges to Catholic education in such a context. One such challenge comes from Atheist Ireland (AI) whose equality PACT relates to Patronage, Access, Curriculum and Teaching. In terms of patronage, Atheist Ireland claims that state-funded schools should have an inclusive public ethos, that access should never be based on religion as a selection factor, even in faith-based schools. That the curriculum can teach about religions, beliefs and ethics in an objective and pluralist manner, and that faith formation must take place outside the school day. Regarding teaching, Atheist Ireland suggest that professional competence should be all that matters when applying for

teaching posts and not adherence to a belief system that matches a school's ethos. The identity of Catholic schools in the areas of Patronage, Admissions, and the Curriculum in religious education has gradually altered.

The Education Act of 1998 currently protects the status of voluntary patrons and trustees in the Republic of Ireland stating:

> *The patron of the school should carry out the functions and exercise the powers conferred on the patron by this Act and such other functions and powers as may be conferred on the patron by the Act of Oireachtas or instrument made thereunder, deed, charter, articles of management or other such instrument relating to the establishment or operation of the school.*

> (Education Act 1998 S.8 para. 6).

The State has in recent years, identified a need to re-balance the stronghold of ethos in schools. Minister for Education Jan O' Sullivan, announced the abolition of Rule 68 (of the Rules for Primary Schools) from Jan 2016. This rule had given religion priority on the primary school timetable. Minister O'Sullivan, speaking at the Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN) conference, on 28 Jan 2016, said rule 68 was "a symbol of our past and not our future" and "the language in the rule was archaic". Minister O'Sullivan further stated "it is anachronistic for us still to look at a set of rules drafted in 1965, many of which will have been superseded by curricular or legislative changes", and announced that a consultation process was underway on a new curriculum for primary schools which would provide education about religion, beliefs and ethics. In effect the abolition had very little impact in Catholic schools as characteristic spirit is protected in legislation. However, this protection has experienced erosion in 2018 by virtue of the Education (Admissions to Schools) Act 2018.

The Education (Admissions to Schools) Act 2018 was signed into law on 3 October 2018 by Minister Bruton, to remove the right to use religion as a criterion for school admissions and to provide the minister with the power to require schools to cooperate. In relation to admissions, the minister stated that the reforms:

> *While recognising the right of all schools to have their distinctive ethos, the removal of religion as a criterion for admission to school seeks to be fair to all parents including non-religious families. They will now find that in virtually all publicly funded primary schools they will be treated the same as all other families in school admissions.*

The provisions of this legislation allow for the discrimination of Catholic students in an oversubscribed school. If a Catholic school is oversubscribed, children of all faiths and none have an equal right to a place. The Catholic child will not have preferential treatment. Yet Article 42 states "the State shall not oblige parents in violation of their conscience and lawful preference to send their children to schools established by the state, or to any particular type of school designated by the state." Article 44 outlines that the state "cannot impose any disabilities or make any discrimination on the ground of religious profession, belief or status" "legislation providing State aid for schools shall not discriminate between schools under the management of different religious denominations". McDonagh (2019) asserts that this allows every religious denomination the right to manage its own affairs, to own, acquire and administer property and maintain institutions for religious or charitable purposes". One of the most significant steps of the Education Act, 1998, according to McDonagh (2019), was to provide that state funding would be dependent on that school being a formally recognised school, and as a recognised school, the patron was required, where practicable, to appoint a Board of Management. Section 15 of the Act provides that it is the duty of the Board to manage a school on behalf of the students and their parents. One function of the Board is to uphold and be accountable to the Patrons for so upholding the characteristic spirit of the school. There was nothing in the Education Act (1998) that precluded a Board of Management from developing an enrolment policy prioritising entry into the school for adherents of the particular denomination for which the school had been founded, up until this amendment (McDonagh 2019). The Education (Admissions to Schools) Act (2018) compels the Board of Management and the patron of the school to cooperate with this significant shift.

A further shift in respect of ethos has been the subject of debate in recent months by the Dáil, in the Oireachtas (The Oireachtas is the legislature of Ireland and the directly elected Dáil is the most powerful branch of the Oireachtas). The debate in question (26th September 2019) was in respect of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). Several Deputies contributed to the debate. The first is Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin, who outlined the work of the review committee on the current RSE programme. O'Loughlin concluded her opening remarks with a call for the removal of ethos as a barrier to the delivery of a fact based RSE programme:

It is also essential that it be delivered in an open, factual and consistent way across primary and post-primary schools. In addition, the necessary legislative amendments required to remove the role of ethos as a barrier to the objective and factual delivery of RSE and SPHE curriculums should be made without further delay. No element can be omitted on the grounds of school ethos or characteristic spirit.

Deputy Ruth Coppinger supported the call for the removal of ethos as a barrier as Boards of Management in Catholic schools and other faith schools may interfere. She asked:

Will the Minister amend the Education Act 1998 which places a legal obligation on the Minister to factor in the ethos that exists when setting the curriculum and which allow school Boards to state that something is out of character with the ethos of their school? I would be fearful. We cannot merely rely on this to happen. Any legislative power that some people can resort to, who are narrow-minded, conservative or whatever and who do not want young people getting this information, would be a real, serious mistake.

Deputies Catherine Martin; Funchion and Breathnach agreed. Only one speaker disagreed with the call for removal and/or amendment of the section of the Education Act (1998) on ethos, Deputy Peadar Tóibín, who spoke about pluralism as distinct from uniformity, warning that it would be a massive mistake to remove parental choice regarding school type and ethos. The reply from the Minister for Education and Skills Deputy Joe McHugh was non-committal but his reply was ominous:

We have a duty in this regard to ensure we put in place the proper curriculum that meets the needs of 21st-century Ireland. As for the questions about legislation, including legislating for ethos and so on, let us now focus on the consultation period, right up to 25 October. We will produce the guidelines before the end of the year and then address issues surrounding ethos, legislation and whatever else needs to be done after that.

In view of the amendment to the Education Act 1998 regarding school admissions, the aforementioned debate in the Dáil may signify further amendments to the Constitution effectively moving from a position of valuing ethos to one where ethos has become a burden on the State. An education system once dominated by the Catholic Church is all but legally free of its historical influence. In this context, Catholic school communities

will need advocates who can articulate the purpose and vision of a faith based religious education programme. Parents likewise, who may wish to choose a school with a denominational characteristic spirit and Catholic based religious education for their children, would benefit from the support of Diocesan Advisors with expertise in religious education, as well as Patrons, to speak on their behalf in debates of this nature in the public arena.

In the light of the developments in recent years, a growing realisation that Catholic schools are under serious threat from the State is acknowledged. Iona Institute member, Maria Steen (2019) argues that there is no respect for the rights of Catholic parents to religious freedom where a State continues to encroach on the values of Catholic schools. Steen (2019) calls for the Church to end the relationship with the State when it comes to the provision of education. Griffin (2019) points to an impending impasse between Church and State following the Admissions Act (2018) which allows the State to determine who can get entry to Catholic schools, effectively challenging the role of the Patron and the Board of Management. Griffin (2019) concludes that while no-one would wish Catholic schools to be the preserve of the socially and economically advantaged, it may well be the direction for Catholic schools in the future.

Research abroad has addressed concerns regarding the Catholicity of Catholic schools by investigating and evaluating the identity of Catholic schools.

2.2.10 Research in Catholic School Identity Abroad

The struggle to protect and strengthen the Catholic identity of schools is not unique to Ireland. Many researchers are attempting to gather empirical evidence of the current state of Catholic identity in schools and instruments for assessing the schools Catholicity are emerging as are benchmarking systems to continue the evaluation into the future. This section highlights some of those studies.

A study *Perceptions of Catholic Identity: Views of Catholic school administrators and teachers* conducted by Convey (2012) in the United States gathered responses from 3,300 teachers and principals on the issue of Catholic identity; and the findings suggested that the mere teaching of religious education and the presence of Catholic images or symbols is not enough to ensure this identity (Convey 2012). The permeation of Catholic identity through the school curriculum was identified by principals and senior teachers as important, but was seen as less important by newer members of staff in Catholic schools, leading Convey (2012) to recommend ongoing professional

development of all staff in relation to preserving and strengthening the Catholic identity of schools. The study *Perceptions of Catholic Identity: Views of Catholic school administrators and teachers* (2012) was replicated in Queensland by Gleeson, O'Gorman and O'Neill (2018).

The findings reveal differences with respect to the people, cultural and curriculum characteristics of Catholic schools. The US findings are more positive but the evidence shows that Catholic school authorities in Queensland have some challenges ahead in respect of faith formation and development. A factor not identified is the difference in time between the studies, Convey's research was initiated in 2010 and Gleeson et al. was undertaken in 2018. The years in between may have contributed to less positive perceptions of Catholic identity, given that another cohort of lay people have taken up roles in those years and Convey (2012) had identified that newer staff members do not have a sense of the importance of Catholic identity equal to longer serving staff members. In a study by Neidhart and Lamb (2016) the findings reveal that principals are worried that the next generation of school leaders might lack the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to engage faith leadership in a changing social and cultural context (pp. 55). Consequently, they recommended faith leadership formation for teachers as well as principals, their deputies, and assistants. The researchers conclude that there isn't a 'one size fits all' when it comes to Catholic school leadership. Another method of measuring Catholic identity was undertaken by Nuzzi and Holter (2009). Ten "Constitutive Elements of Catholic Identity for Catholic Schools (CSII)" focus on a school's (1) Christian (2) Incarnational (3) Trinitarian (4) Sacramental (5) Canonical (6) Ecclesiological (7) Paschal (8) Educational (9) Evangelical and (10) Catechetical elements (Nuzzi and Holter 2009 p.2). The CSII provides an empirical, data driven assessment of school based indicators of Catholic identity "founded on the rich tradition of church teaching and informed by decades of research on the distinctiveness of Catholic schools that values all aspects of school life as integral to Catholic identity" (p.2). The CSII is conducted in three primary phases: phase one: planning; phase two: team visit; and phase three: final report.

A case study by Walbank (2012) was undertaken with nineteen Catholic schools' head teachers in the North-West of England. Walbank (2012) used semi-structured themed interviews and applied Arthur's (1995) three models of Catholic education: holistic, dualistic and pluralistic to analyse the findings. According to Arthur (1995), the holistic

school is "deeply imbued by the Catholic faith" and has a "significant presence of Catholic teachers and pupils". Walbank (2012) however, found that participant schools could not identify with this description, because the increasing pressure of falling enrolments had required them to admit children of other faiths (p.175). Arthur's (1995) dualistic model separates the secular and religious aims of the school, and Walbank (2012) found that some elements of this model could be found in practices across all schools in the study (p.177). Arthur's (1995) pluralistic model reflects a school's admissions policy that is diverse and welcomes children of all faiths and none but suggests that this approach may weaken the Catholic nature of a school. However, Walbank's (2012) research does not uphold this view and concludes that it is *how* a school proclaims the nature of its Catholicity that makes it distinctive, not its admissions policy. Although Walbank's (2012) study involved head teachers in primary schools, the findings apply to second level schools' Catholic identity also.

In Australia, over the last 20 years research has been increasingly focussed on Catholic school identity. Groome (2002), McKinney (2008), and Sultmann & Brown (2011) have explored this faithfulness to Catholic identity, and parallel discussions on the Catholic identity of Catholic universities, was provided by Rossiter (1998), Boeve (2006), and Chia (2013).

Rossiter (2010) suggests that identity anxiety is pervading the Catholic landscape and proposes that institutional identity could foster individual identity development, in a pluralised, secular society. As part of this identity education, the wisdom of Catholic religious tradition can be accessed in the process (Crawford & Rossiter 2006 pp. 228-239). Gleeson (2020) suggests that Catholic education systems currently face challenges including: church state relations; the relationship between faith and culture; the meaning of Catholic identity; declining levels of religious observance; and the aging profile of religious teaching communities. Gleeson (2020) argues that neoliberal forces militate against the gospel values which underpin a school's Catholic identity. The identity crises highlighted by Gleeson (2020), is relevant to this study. The shift in Church/ State relations regarding education, the position of Catholic schools in a secularised culture, perceptions of the role and identity of the Catholic Church, of the Catholic school, and of the religious education and catechesis. All have implications for the identity of the Diocesan Advisor. The strength of the identity of the Catholic school can determine the

extent to which religious education is supported by management. The next section looks at the complexity of the field of religious education and catechesis.

2.3 Pillar 2: Religious Education

This section will consider the various interpretations of religious education. It outlines distinctions that have evolved over the decades since Vatican II and subsequently taken up by Church authorities in their publications. The evolution of religious education in Britain is presented as it may be helpful to provide a possible trajectory for the Irish State school context. Debates on the purpose of religious education in a changing society are explored. In the Irish context, the vision of *Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland* (2010) is included and the section ends with a consideration of the Junior Cycle specification for Religious Education.

2.3.1 Vatican and Church Documents

Cullen (2013) examined the origins of Catholic religious education and located its roots in the decrees and documents of Vatican II, in particular *Dei verbum* (DV), *Gaudium et spes* (GS), *Lumen gentium* (LG) and the 1965 Declaration on Christian Education, *Gravissimum educationis (GE)*. *Dei verbum* focused on revelation and on Christ as the ultimate revelation of God to his people and, ultimately, making this great gift known is the purpose of catechesis. *Gaudium et spes* (GS) and *Lumen gentium* (LG) further elaborate on the place of reason, which is, according to Cullen (2013), the reflective capacity of the person to 'understand, interpret, and analyse the human condition' (p.67). Relationship with God is the end point and is the impetus for the educational mission of the Church. *Gravissimum educationis* situates this educational vision within the overall mission of the Church. Cullen (2013) notes that *GE* sets out this vision of education in paragraph 8 using the term 'religious education' to outline the Church's responsibility for the moral and religious education of its members. The vision of the teacher as messenger and witness is conveyed in *GE* and Cullen (2013) identifies:

> *What is clear from GE is that all education is fundamentally understood to be for the formation of the human person within the context of a community that understands itself as having a socialising function that has a specific end or purpose, that is, communion of the person with God. Catechetical instruction is part of a socialising function* (p.67).

Terminology regarding religious education is complex and the nature, scope and purpose of education in religion is a contested area. Some of the titles for the activity in the teaching of religion include: 'catechesis', 'religious instruction' and 'religious education' and give a sense of the complexity for those both within the field of Catholic education and those charged with responsibility for educational enterprise in the State. Clarity in the meaning of terms is not always evident, even in Church documents. Cullen (2013) details the distinction Pope Paul VI makes in his 1975 Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii nuntiandi (EN)* between a more general catechesis and a systematic religious instruction noting that religious instruction addresses the intellectual requirements to learn the fundamental teachings of the faith in a way that is transmissive and ecclesial. Cullen (2013) observes that John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation of 1979 *Catechesi tradendae (CT)* follows the same theme in establishing the nature of the evangelising mission of the whole Church as a constitutive element of its identity. An interesting observation by Cullen (2013) is that *CT,* devotes only one paragraph to catechesis in schools:

> *This lack of emphasis on school as a natural location for catechesis suggests that, while schools can provide opportunities for catechesis, they are more properly to be considered as providing support for catechesis rather than substituting for catechesis.*

The second Vatican council's decree on the pastoral office of bishops *Christus dominus* (1965), called for a directory concerning the catechetical instruction of the Christian people to consider *the fundamental principles of such instruction* (Para. 44). The General Catechetical Directory (*GCD)* was published by the Congregation for the Clergy in 1971 and revised in 1997 and is known as the General Directory for Catechesis (*GDC).* A new directory entitled *Directory for Catechesis* (2020) has been published by the Pontifical Council For Promoting New Evangelization and addresses the opportunities and challenges in an increasingly global and secular society, drawing on the writings of recent popes, especially Pope Francis.

Paragraph 69 of the *GDC* (1997) is relevant to this study as it stresses that a school can and must play its specific role in the work of catechesis as it is the *school* rather than the *classroom* that assists in and promotes faith education (para. 69). This has implications for the work of a Diocesan Advisor as it suggests that the task of the school is

considered to be catechetical and evangelising, but the task of the classroom is the academic study of religion (Cullen 2013). Therefore catechesis belongs to the work of the wider Church community and religious education is the professional task of the teacher in the classroom.

The CCE continued to advance an understanding of the professional activity of religious education in an educational milieu in its 1977 document, *The Catholic School.* Emphasis is given to the need to speak a language comprehensible to each current generation where religious instruction is considered to be part of a wider religious education. In the 1982 document, *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* it is clear that religious instruction is an 'important instrument for attaining the adequate synthesis of faith and culture' (para. 31). For the CCE, the teaching of religion is an act of faith undertaken by witnesses who understand their role as participating in the mission of the Church. The CCE document, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School (RDECS)* (1998) acknowledges the tension between the school as a civic institution with responsibilities to the State and the school as a Christian community that has religious formation as a primary aim. The nature of religious instruction that has knowledge as its primary aim is distinct therefore from a catechesis that aims at maturity of faith. Cullen (2013) concludes that in its use of educational language such as aims, objectives, pupil experience, context, curriculum, and syllabus, the CCE begins to situate religious instruction within the sphere of education rather than in the sphere of pastoral theology.

Defining what is meant by religious education from either a Catholic perspective or an educational one is therefore challenging. McGrady (2013) acknowledges the need for a shared public understanding of the contribution of 'Teaching Religion' and clarity concerning the terms used. In the Irish context, the teaching of religion in second level has from the 1960's been catechetical, with the aim of deepening the faith of Catholic students, delivered by teachers committed to the faith and to the faith tradition and faith community (McGrady 2013 p. 80). The curriculum was Church approved and the State had no involvement for almost 40 years. The focus in the years between the 60s and 80s was on the Catholic faith in Catholic schools taught by people committed to Catholicism. In the Irish constitution this is referred to as *Religious Instruction* and as such the school continued the work of instruction that began in the home and was supported in the parish:

The education into religion structured as a timetabled subject in which pupils of a particular religious faith or tradition are brought together, separately from other pupils in the school…and are offered a programme based upon a curriculum defined by the relevant religious authority of their faith tradition and inspected by that authority.

(McGrady 2013 p. 81).

McGrady (2013) reminds us that while the term *Religious Instruction* is less referred to today, it still has legal and constitutional currency. From the mid 1980's onwards, the emphasis shifted towards the educational element and the subject became known as *Religious Education.* McGrady (2013) refers to the increasing secularisation that was occurring in Irish society in the 1980s and 90s and as other jurisdictions such as Britain began moving towards a phenomenological approach, similar expectations began to emerge in Ireland. Catholic schools in Ireland continued teaching from within the Catholic faith but with a consideration of other faith systems. In Britain, teaching about religion offered a more radical shift away from a confessional approach.

Later this section will examine the trajectory in Britain and the current perspective there.

Outside of the Catholic school sector in the Republic of Ireland, religious education did not necessarily involve teaching from a Catholic faith perspective and many moved towards a phenomenological stance or teaching about religion from a non-confessional perspective. So even within the Republic of Ireland the term, *Religious Education,* does not imply a common meaning. Further, McGrady (2013) points out, a statement in 2009 by the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education in Rome makes a distinction between faith formation and catechesis on the one hand and religious education on the other, noting that catechesis aims at fostering personal adherence to Christ and the development of the Christian life while religious education in schools delivers knowledge about Christ and the Christian life (pp. 83-84). Catechesis is understood as an activity broader than and not confined to schools, but part of the whole evangelising activity of the Catholic Church.

For Cullen (2013) the difference between the State's understanding of religious instruction and how religious instruction is understood by the Catholic Church is that the State equates religious instruction with faith formation while in the Catholic

tradition religious instruction is aligned with a religious studies approach and is situated alongside a faith formation approach. Cullen (2013) asserts that a Catholic understanding of religious instruction refers to the academic and inter-disciplinary study of Christian religion in schools in a way that can contribute to catechetical or faith formation and development, and therefore refers to a more specific educational activity than that understood by its use in the documents of the State.

The language of religious educational activity is not clearly defined however, and can refer to a phenomenological approach, "learning about religion", or it can include "learning from religion and belief" (Byrne 2013). Hull (2001) distinguishes between "learning religion", which he describes as a confessional approach; "learning about religion", which he claims is a more descriptive and objective approach; "learning from religion", he regards as one which encourages students to engage with the beliefs and practices being studied. Kieran (2013) further suggests that students need to learn about, and learn from, belief systems that are different to their own, while also cultivating their own belief system. Van Nieuwenhove (2013) agrees, stressing the need for students to be immersed in their own faith tradition before they can "engage in respectful and tolerant dialogue with people of different traditions" (p.196), in keeping with Sullivan's (2017) theoretical perspective on the relationship between formation and agency.

A radical shift in understanding of the purpose of religious education emerged following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001 and the view of religion to emerge was that education in religion or religious education, can no longer be relegated to a private activity if it can have such devastating effects on society. McGrady (2013) refers to the responses of governments and international bodies to the question of how the formal teaching of religion can contribute to tolerance and understanding of other faiths and cultures.

2.3.2 Evolution of Religious Education in Britain

Religious education as a concept is now a contested area, as is the space in which it belongs (Sullivan 2017). In Europe there is much research and discussion on the nature, purpose and place of religious education in an increasingly pluralised and secularised world (Jackson 1997, 2003, 2004, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2014). Shanahan (2017) points out that, at a time when the relevance of religious education, or any iteration of it, is being

questioned in Ireland, ironically its relevance is being highlighted as never before in mainland Europe.

The transformation in the presentation of religious education in schools in Britain, for example, has been traced by Gearon (2013) and while Ireland has not yet seen all of the shifts in focus that Britain has, nonetheless the trajectory is likely to be similar here given the secularisation process and the diversity of the population in recent years.

Gearon (2013) asserts that contemporary religious education has become separated from religious life and he puts forward a series of six 'paradigms' to outline this argument. The six paradigms help to frame the history of religious education in Britain and to understand the contested nature of the subject in schools there and, to a lesser extent, in the Republic of Ireland. The section to follow synopsises Gearon's (2013) six paradigms to outline what has been a gradual shift in the purpose of religious education in British schools and presents arguments from theorists Thompson (2010) and Wright (2008) who are opposed to the politicisation of religion. In Ireland, while much change is underway, debates on religious education are less concerned with politicisation currently and more concerned with the place and purpose of religious education in State schools and, ultimately, the place of ethos in denominational schools, as evidenced in the Dáil debate in section 2.2.9.

The Scriptural-Theological Paradigm

Gearon's (2013) first paradigm emanated from the 19th century when the State took responsibility for education in Britain. Christian scripture and theological perspective were embedded in the approach. Today, in Britain, this scriptural-theological approach is limited to schools of a religious character and there is evidence of a decline in scriptural-theological approaches even within religious education in all schools (Gearon 2013).

The Phenomenological Paradigm

The phenomenological paradigm originated when Smart (1969) presented the case for a 'phenomenological' approach to the study of religion. The phenomenological approach has had major implications for religious education in Britain, requiring in law that syllabuses for religious education in state schools should reflect, not only Christianity, but also other principal faiths, thereby legally enforcing a shift away from a scriptural-theological approach to the teaching of world religions. For Gearon (2013) the phenomenological model sees the purpose of religious education as creating a detached observer perpetually distanced from the religion itself. Gearon (2013) notes that a

quarter of a century after the 1988 Education Reform Act, the education inspectorate found a marked weakness in English schools, in the teaching of Christianity (Ofsted 2010). The new State specification for religious education in the Republic of Ireland could be said to have moved towards this paradigm.

The Psychological-Experiential Paradigm

According to Gearon (2014), Piaget's theories of child development informed developments in religious education as well as in education as a whole (Piaget 1928; 1952; 1953; 1957). Piagetian frameworks were soon applied to religious education, and in particular to moral development, and on Kohlberg's (1963) 'moral archaeology of childhood', followed by Fowler's (1981) 'faith development' theory.

The Philosophical - Conceptual Paradigm

Philosophy of education emerged as an approach to the teaching of religion in schools. Dewey (1916) published Democracy and Education, with the sub-title An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education. Gearon (2014) however, suggests that Dewey's intent was to integrate a political focus and that he had an implicit scepticism towards any religious tradition. Approaches using philosophy in religious education emerged in an educational environment where the subject had been philosophically devalued. Gearon (2014) concludes that:

> *With criticism of the phenomenology of religious education itself, much of the impetus for this model has grown from the very necessity of plurality of religious truth claims and especially the surfacing in contemporary geopolitical context of extremist religious claims.* (p.12).

Psychological models see the learner as a seeker after personal meaning and fulfilment, "spiritual with religion", the child as spiritual seeker, whereas philosophical models see the purpose of religious education as creating thinkers and proto philosophers (Gearon 2013).

The Socio-Cultural Paradigm

Socio-cultural approaches to religious education have their roots in Smart's (1969) phenomenology but place more emphasis on the socio-anthropological method deriving from socio-anthropology (Durkheim 2001) and the anthropological analyses of culture (Geertz 1995). Ethnographic studies in religious education focus on children in their own communities (Nesbitt & Arweck 2010). Socio-cultural models see the object lesson of religious education as creating ethnographic, cultural explorers (Gearon 2013). Jackson (2011) developed the interpretive approach linking ethnographic research with

the activity of the learner in the classroom, in an attempt to understand religions in the contemporary world. Jackson's (1997) approach has had wide international impact on religious education. Arguably this has been given most prominence in the Religious Education Dialogue or Conflict (2010) (REDCo) project, as the 'interpretive approach' was the method informing research and pedagogical thinking in the project. Jackson (2014) and the Wergeland Centre on behalf of the Council of Europe led the publication entitled *Signposts: Policy and Practice for Teaching about Religious and Non-religious Worldviews in Intercultural Education.*

The Historical-Political Paradigm

In this paradigm, religious education is serving democratic principles and practice, providing cohesion amongst diverse populations. Political principle underpins pedagogical principle (see Gearon 2008). This paradigm is the most influential across Europe and in the United Nations today. Political models, emphasising the public face of religion, "see teaching and learning in religious education as concerned with the creation of citizens" (Gearon 2013). The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), published *The Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions in Public Schools* (2007) pointing to the growing need for tolerance and understanding of faiths, beliefs and worldviews. The Toledo Guiding Principles offer a foregrounding of tolerance as a principle of religion or politics. Key findings from the REDCo (2007) study illustrate students' wish for peaceful coexistence across differences. One criticism of this approach, according to Gearon (2013), is its risk of limiting religion to its public and political face. Gearon (2013) claims that the resurgence of religion in public spaces of power "is not necessarily the mark of a prevalent counter secularization but rather a new form of secularization", for it is answering to political authority, but in terms of autonomy, this approach offers less (Gearon 2013).

Gearon (2017) is critical of what he perceives as the secularised political framing of religious education in Jackson's work, in particular work on the EU funded project REDCo (*Religion in Education A contribution to dialogue or a factor of conflict in transforming societies of European Countries*). Gearon (2017) believes this framing does not help in understanding the phenomenon of religion on its own terms. The political framing of religious education and its role in secularisation and the securitisation of the sacred is 'oriented towards civil religion and thus to political, secular, even secularising goals, whether such ends were intended or not' (Gearon, 2012 p 152). The 'pedagogical' imperative of multi-faith teaching is, for Gearon, also a

'political' imperative to 'address the needs of peaceful democratic coexistence amidst religious pluralism' (Gearon, 2012, p.156), the result is that 'within two generations Europe has transformed close to two millennia of Christian identity into a plural, multi-faith orientation in its religious education systems' (Gearon, 2012, p.156).

Thompson (2010) is also critical of Jackson's interpretive approach to religious education and of the activity of Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit (WRERU). He criticises 'the secular humanist foundation on which the UK Government's social and educational strategy is constructed' (Thompson, 2010 p.145) and refers to the approach in public religious education as 'the same narrow, secular humanist world-view, with its distorting, reductionist approach to understanding religion' (Thompson, 2010 p.151). Thompson refers to a presentation of a secularist view and points out 'this secular worldview is prevalent in the work of Robert Jackson and the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit (WRERU) (Thompson, 2010 p.151). Jackson rejects this criticism and claims that Thompson fails to distinguish between a 'secular position' and a 'secularist position' (Jackson, 2012 p.2) and Jackson stresses that he is not a secularist (Jackson, 2012 p.4) but considers his view as similar to that of Cooling, a Christian educator, in that religious education should 'encourage debate between people of very different, and often fundamentally opposed views, and to assist in the development of strategies which enable people to work together for the common good despite their deeply held differences' (Cooling, 2002; Jackson, 2012 p.3).

Thompson (2010) also comments on the 'disproportionately large establishment support' and the exercise of 'disproportionately wide establishment influence' of the WRERU's work and claims it is as a result of its appeal to 'establishment secularists who control education policy and funding' (Thompson, 2010 p. 152). Jackson rejects the claims as imprecise, as the exact identity of the 'establishment' is not made and the quality of WRERU's work and track record on research is not acknowledged as the reason for the funding (Jackson, 2012). Wright (2008), claims that Jackson proposes the deconstruction of religious traditions. However Jackson rejects this (Jackson, 2012) and points to his book *Religious Education: An Interpretive Approach*, in which he deals with the potential charge of reductionism, pointing out that the internal diversity of religious traditions does not challenge the existence or importance of religious 'wholes' (Jackson, 1997 p.126). A further criticism by Wright (2008) is the accusation of reducing religious traditions to 'the atomistic level of the individual spiritual lives of

adherents' (Wright, 2008 p. 3). Jackson claims that Wright ignores his advocacy of 'more personal accounts which link individual experience to social experience' (Jackson, 1997 p.69). Jackson states that it is clear from what he says in *Religious Education: An Interpretive Approach*, that groups are not simply 'individuals within their local contexts', as Wright claims, but that groups communicate; social and linguistic interaction occurs giving rise to rich tradition. Jackson's ethnographic data from Warwick research projects relate to religion as a social activity. Groups provide the context for the processes of 'transmission', 'nurture' and 'socialisation' that were investigated. Both Wright and Jackson, however, ultimately agree that pedagogies should not impose epistemological views on pupils studying religion in schools. In this regard, Jackson talks about 'epistemological openness' (Jackson, 1997 p.125-6) and Wright affirms that religious education should help students to clarify and formulate their own views (Jackson 2008). Jackson's contribution to the field of religious education has interesting and positive attributes; in particular, its emphasis on personal encounter, student voice and its reflexive nature. Gearon's concern for the absence of a commitment to a lived faith reflects the concern in Catholic schools in the Republic of Ireland whereby the State specification outlines a specification to cater for all faiths and none. Currently however, there is scope for Catholic schools to align the specification with the ethos of the schools but State schools here without Catholic co-patronage could be said to be moving towards a politically aligned or culturally aligned interpretive model.

While traditionally, religious education in the Republic of Ireland was understood to be a "socialising and educative activity of faith communities which has faith development as its aim" and "the school as a community of faith has a role to play in such socialising" (Cullen 2017), the view emerging in recent times, according to Cullen (2017), looks at the intersection of religion and education and considers the study of religion as the study of a cultural fact and religious education as merely a subset of inter-cultural or citizenship education. Cullen (2017) observes that these views do not share the same understandings "with the result that they often speak across each other rather than to each other" (p.37). The separate spheres of private and public do not serve religious education well and Cullen (2017) suggests that people continually negotiate between spheres and live within and between them (p.37). Cullen (2017) calls for religious education to be "an interpretive space between faith communities and the

public space" not just as some bridge between them, but as "an activity in this space 'between spheres' that religious education finds its proper identity" (p.38). Cullen (2017) cites Moran (1998) who describes religious education as having two distinct and equally important aims: the first relating to the religious context as it is concerned with teaching people to practise a religious way of life; the second aim being to teach people to understand religion, beginning from the understanding of one's own religion but also involving comparisons with other religions. For Cullen (2017), this dual purpose requires the ability to speak the languages of interrelated spheres. Religious education must speak the relevant languages as well as translate between languages. When one is open to interpreting between privacies, Cullen (2017) claims "understanding emerges" (p.47).

Religious education has, according to Byrne (2013), a significant part to play in the Catholic school and indeed, in all schools in a society which celebrates diversity (Byrne, 2013 p.152). This respect for diversity may however, cause confusion for school management in general and for religious education teachers, in particular. The Irish catechetical directory *Share the Good News* (2010) offers a perspective and direction for catechesis in every aspect of the Catholic Church community including the school.

2.3.3 Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland (2010)

Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland (2010) calls for the Catholic school to be a place where dialogue and respect are encouraged and where the school is open to pupils from all cultural and religious backgrounds (Byrne p.148). Byrne (2013) argues that in the Catholic secondary school, "the personal search for meaning and identity among Catholic young people, a growing facility for critical reflection on their part, and a deepening commitment to love of God and service of neighbour are instinctive" (p.153). Students from beyond the Catholic community, Byrne (2013) claims, have their faith and beliefs respected and parents' right to withdraw their children from denominational religious education and formation is upheld. Byrne stresses that young people should not in any way be subjected to proselytising or indoctrination (Byrne p.101) while reminding that equally, the indoctrination of young people with a secularist worldview, would also be unacceptable (Byrne p.153).

Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland (2010) differentiates between catechesis (bringing young people and adults to a mature Christian faith) and religious education:

> *Which, while contributing to the faith formation of Catholic pupils, can be defined in ways that allows for a broader mix of participants. The Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference advocates an approach to religious education, in whatever way it is defined in different circumstances, that always respects the religious life and tradition of the young person (and teacher) involved. It should support the Catholic young person in their faith, while helping them enter into dialogue with other young people on their journey too.*

(Byrne 2013 p.153).

This dialogue in the current secular, multi-denominational context is a complex task and has been the subject of much academic debate. In *Towards Mutual Ground* (2013) Byrne debates the difference between "secular" and "secularism". "Secular", Byrne (2013) suggests, can describe "what is of this world and must be engaged with" (p.150). "Secularism" on the other hand, he describes as "a radical attempt to exclude God and religion from culture and from public life" (p.150) and in *Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland* (2010) as 'a profound break not only with Christianity, but generally, with the religious and moral traditions of humanity' (Byrne 2010 p.21). Secularism, Byrne (2013) stresses, cannot be seen as a neutral stance, but as a "philosophy that strongly argues a position against other philosophical understandings, and in particular against any perceptible demonstration of religion or discussion of religious faith in the public domain" (Byrne 2013 p.150). Pluralism by contrast, is to be respected and valued as it "empathises with the variety of worldviews that are manifest in modern societies and upholds their right to contribute to debate" (Byrne 2013 p.150). Catholic schools are now all pluralist educational spaces and welcome all young people, regardless of their beliefs or faith background.

2.3.4 Religious Education and Catholic Students

Religious education in schools invites Catholic children and others to know and understand their own faith and the beliefs of others in a context today of diversity and plurality (Byrne 2013 p.154). Religious education prepares young people for life and "for conversations about life and faith, about meaning and identity and relationship, about justice, truth and love" (p.154). For Sullivan (2017), religious education offers "a

space like no other for encounter, explanation, and empathy; for expression, interpretation, and imagination; for interrogation, questioning, and reflection" (p.7). Sullivan (2017) clarifies that religious education also "protects a space that equips students to interrogate, negotiate, and dialogue with conflicting interpretations *within* a particular faith tradition" and that it further facilitates "encounter *between* faith traditions" (p.7). Sullivan (2017) refers to the interplay between the subjective and the objective, stating that in secular terms religious education should facilitate a place where students can encounter the big questions of life against a background of a faith tradition which has addressed these; and in religious terms, religious education provides a meeting place where God's word is mediated to his people by the tradition that has interpreted his revelation and has reflected on how this speaks to a person's own experience (p.13). Sullivan (2017) also differentiates the "space" at many levels: the space between self and the other; the space within the self; the space between the learner and the material being studied; the space between the learner and the teacher; the space between the learner and the religious tradition to which they are connected; the space between the person and the challenges posed by life; and finally there is the space between the person and God and in this space, the student is invited to hear God speak to them personally and can "respond by participating in the relationship God offers to them" (p.21). Sullivan (2017) speaks about "formation" and "agency" and in a study of this kind both concepts are central to the role of the Diocesan Advisor. Formation, for Sullivan (2017), entails "equipping someone to belong to, and to contribute to, a particular group: religious, social, or political" (p.22). As for agency, Sullivan (2017) states that learners have to be:

> *Prompted towards the degree of detachment from any formation they have undergone, and the capacity to reflect upon, to test and to question this, gradually developing the maturity and freedom to embrace, revise, or reject what they have received as they work towards a position for themselves that is internalised, authentically owned, and capable of being applied to the changing circumstances and perplexing dilemmas of life.*

(Sullivan 2017 p.22).

Agency, Sullivan (2017) suggests, is not possible without formation "one needs to be inducted into a pattern or tradition of thinking, behaving, and valuing in order to be able to exercise agency" (p.22). The question of formation is central to the work of the Diocesan Advisor, as the presence or absence of formation in the religious education

teacher can influence the quality of the faith development in the religious education classroom. The formation of the Diocesan Advisor can likewise influence the extent that the advisor has agency to carry out this role in an increasingly contested space.

2.3.4 Faith Development Objectives in Catholic Schools

Guidance for Catholic schools is very clearly laid out in *Share the Good News:National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland* (2010). *SGN* (2010) outlines seven faith development objectives for Catholic schools (pp.204-210). The objectives cover a wide range of areas and offer direction to schools in how Catholic mission can be guided and evaluated:

> *Objective 1: The members of the Catholic Church in Ireland will contribute energetically to developing a holistic understanding of education in school*
>
> *Objective 2: The Catholic school will operate according to a Mission Statement and Ethos Policy that openly reflects its Catholic spirit*
>
> *Objective 3: The Catholic school, primary or post-primary, will be characterised by respect, generosity, justice, hospitality and critical reflection*
>
> *Objective 4: The Board of Management in a Catholic school will take responsibility, on behalf of the Patron/Trustees, for supporting the Principal in the daily management of the school, according to that ethos*
>
> *Objective 5: The principal will ensure that the decisions of the Board of Management, and particularly the ethos statement set out by the Board, are lived out in the day-to-day running of the school*
>
> *Objective 6: Staff in a Catholic school will know, understand and sustain the Catholic ethos within which they are employed*
>
> *Objective 7: Religious education and faith formation will be evident strengths in the schooling provided by a Catholic school*

Share the Good News (2010) offers a range of indicators for achievement (p.204-210). The indicators for objective 7, for example, state that:

- *Trained Diocesan Advisors for Religious Education will support the Principal and those teaching Religious Education, encouraging and resourcing the school in supporting and informing the faith of Catholic students*

- *The Catholic school will establish and maintain strong contact with local Catholic parishes*

- *Teachers of Religious Education in post-primary schools will be fully trained specialist teachers. Religious educators working in a Catholic second level school, as well as having responsibility for the religious education of all students, will be acknowledged as having a faith formation responsibility to their Catholic students.*

The seven objectives for faith development and the subsequent indicators for measuring success (a sample of which is given above) offer the Catholic school a framework through which Boards of Management and Patrons can evaluate the Catholicity of the school.

2.3.5 Junior Cycle Religious Education in the Catholic School (2019)

The NCCA Background Paper on the Junior Cycle Religious Education specification presents ways in which, "religious education in publicly funded schools is informed by the particular religious ethos of the school and responds to the theological underpinnings of that ethos" (p.28) and:

> *In such cases, schools under the patronage of a faith community have to negotiate the aims of a State's Religious Education curricula in such a way as not to undermine their own educational aims and theological convictions*

(p.28).

The background paper states that 'teachers welcome the current syllabus as it is adaptable to a school context and ethos, a feature which they consider to be "very important" (Background Paper, p. 18). Students also expressed satisfaction that it gives them 'room to engage with their own thinking and beliefs in the contexts of their faith lives' in terms of their own agency around their faith and beliefs (Background Paper, p. 30).

The document drawn up by the Catholic Bishops, *Junior Cycle Religious Education in the Catholic School* (2019), offers trustees/patrons, Boards of Management, and senior management teams in Catholic schools an understanding of how religious education at Junior Cycle should be planned for and implemented. It is developed in line with the Department of Education circulars outlining teaching, learning and planning

requirements for the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015). Schools are encouraged to plan their programmes with attention to the learning needs of their students, and the characteristic spirit of their school (cf. Circular Letter 0024/2016 and subsequent circulars on the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle).

Junior Cycle Religious Education in the Catholic School (2019) is informed by four important documents:

- The Framework for Junior Cycle (Department of Education and Skills, 2015) and its accompanying circular letters.
- Junior Cycle Religious Education Specification (National Council of Curriculum and Assessment, 2019).
- *Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland* (Irish Episcopal Conference, 2010) which provides a rationale and vision for religious education in post-primary schools under Catholic patronage.
- Religious Education and the Framework for Junior Cycle (Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, 2017).

The fourth document outlines the implications of the Framework for Junior Cycle on Religious Education in Catholic schools. When taken together with Trustee policies, these four documents provide 'a solid educational, religious educational and Catholic understanding to underpin the teaching of Religious Education in a Catholic school' (*Junior Cycle Religious Education in the Catholic School* 2019 p. 3). The introduction also notes that Circulars 0013/18 and 0062/18 do not apply to Catholic or other voluntary secondary schools. *Religious Education and the Framework for Junior Cycle* (Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, 2017) reiterates that in a Catholic school:

- *There is always a provision of two hours for Religious Education at both Junior and Senior Cycle.*
- *Religious Education is always taught by qualified Religious Education teachers.*
- *Religious Education is understood as one expression, among many, of the school's ethos and faith life.*
- *In line with guidance provided by the Framework for Junior Cycle (p.9), existing subjects, including Religious Education, are not reduced to short courses.*

The document offers general principles which should underpin a Catholic school's approach to Junior Cycle Religious Education:

i) Religious Education has, in line with the vision set out in the Framework for Junior Cycle, a positive role to play in supporting young people as they ask significant questions, begin to express their responses, and seek to understand, formulate, and integrate for their own lives a caring and responsible way of living.

ii) The Framework for Junior Cycle has an additional expectation that, through education, the young person will be ready, willing and able to make a contribution to the community to which they belong – including their faith community – and to the world.

iii) In our contemporary world, there is an increasing expectation that Religious Education will equip students to engage constructively in a pluralist society by promoting religious literacy. This is reflected in the Framework for Junior Cycle and might helpfully be attended to in the approach taken by Religious Education teachers in their classrooms. In the wider life of the school, religious iconography, religious symbolism, the school's sacramental life and inputs from teachers other than Religious Education teachers (including of course, principals and members of the school's management team) will assist students in a variety of ways in developing this religious literacy.

iv) Religious Education in a Catholic school, in line with the Framework for Junior Cycle, speaks to the needs of all students, including students with special needs. Religious Education in a Catholic school attends to the variety of learning styles and abilities in a Catholic school, as a place where a diversity of learners are welcome and nurtured.

v) At the heart of Junior Cycle reform lies the need to provide students with quality learning opportunities that strike a balance between gaining knowledge and developing a wide range of skills, attitudes and thinking abilities (Framework for Junior Cycle). This kind of learning in the new Junior Cycle is informed by Eight Principles that will underpin the planning for – as well as the development and the implementation of – Junior Cycle programmes in all schools, by Twenty-Four Statements of Learning and by Eight Key Skills. Religious Education in a Catholic school clearly illustrates how these principles, statements of learning and key skills are attended to through the school's Religious Education programmes.

The *Junior Cycle Religious Education in the Catholic School* (2019) offers methodological focus in the principles for the teaching of religious education in a Catholic school in line with the Junior Cycle Religious Education Specification, noting

that the approach must be in compliance with the NCCA Specification for Junior Cycle Religious Education, 'addressing the specific learning outcomes indicated there, based around the three interconnected strands and incorporating, in an ongoing manner, the three crosscutting elements' (p.8).

2.3.6 Examinable Versus Non-Examinable Religious Education

The NCCA specification is designed for students of all faiths and none, who wish to study Religious Education for the Junior Cycle examination. Prior to 2000, there was no option for schools to offer Religious Education as a State Examinable subject. The Catholic Church sought this recognition (see Chapter 1) in order to raise the status of the subject in schools. Debates regarding the wisdom of presenting Religious Education as an examinable subject on the curriculum at second level, took place at that time and views were diametrically opposed even among Diocesan Advisors and clergy. Deenihan (2002) argued strongly that examinable Religious Education would replace faith formation and 'religious instruction', as he believed these could not co-exist. deBarra (2002), a Diocesan Advisor, on the other hand, gave a warm welcome to the introduction of Religious Education as an examinable subject and emphasised that schools will always have a choice. Diocesan Advisors at the time, he asserts, supported schools in looking at their current provision of religious education and determining if there was a need to change to the State syllabus. deBarra (2002) asserts that the debate, which is sometimes characterised as the 'formation versus information' debate, is a false dichotomy as schools are, and need to be, engaged in both (deBarra 2002 p.292). He argues that the schools' central function is to transmit knowledge about religion and religious matters in a context that supports the person's faith development and nurtures his or her relationship with Jesus Christ. In the religious education classroom at second level, the major task of the teacher is religious education and deBarra (2002) asserts that 'this is not to say that evangelization and catechesis do not take place' but 'it is rather that the aim and approach of the teacher is geared towards fostering thought about religion' (deBarra 2002 p.294). In deBarra's opinion the State syllabus is non-denominational in the sense that it is for those of all faiths and none, but not secular as claimed by Deenihan (deBarra 2002). In a response to deBarra, Deenihan (2002 p.300) clarifies his stance and warns that the replacement of Religious Instruction with a State syllabus designed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment was the beginning of an erosion of denominational religious instruction in schools and

surrenders the obligations present in Deeds and Agreements between various congregations to safeguard the denominational ethos of their schools. In reply to deBarra, Deenihan's (2002) suggested that as Religious Education has replaced Religious Instruction, the syllabus will evolve over time and may or may not be detrimental to the interest of the Christian churches. He suggests that while there has been consultation with the Catholic Church at the initial point in 2000, he wonders if dialogue with church will continue to be part of future changes (Deenihan 2002 p.300).

In 2019, Religious Education changed at Junior Cycle level, and a specification that can be adapted to suit the characteristic spirit of a Catholic school is now in place. Deenihan's fears proved unfounded in so far as a development group, including representatives of the bishops and other Catholic patrons, were invited over a two year period to participate in discussion on the new direction.

Carmody (2019) acknowledges that after fifteen years of provision, reaction to the examinable syllabuses in Religious Education has been largely positive (p.92). Uptake at Junior Cycle level was at approximately 50% in 2017, but Carmody (2019) argues that as Religious Education is a compulsory subject at this level, uptake could be expected to be higher. At Senior Cycle level, less than 3% take examinable Religious Education (p.92) and Carmody (2019) states that the status of the subject is low in the eyes of both students and parents, possibly attributable to the traditional presentation of Religious Education as catechetical. Senior Cycle Religious Education has an extremely low uptake, so is effectively outside the scope of the DES Inspectorate to maintain standards in the Religious Education classroom at even a pedagogical or methodological level, let alone at the level of information or formation. This is a challenge for the Catholic Church and the Diocesan Advisor. The State has a mandate to enter classrooms to inspect programmes they accredit. If the Catholic Church accredited programmes for the non-State examination of the subject, they too would be mandated to follow up at an evaluative level.

Carmody (2019) addresses the tension that exists between Religious Education for examination, which is largely based on what Grimmitt (2000) refers to as *'learning about'* religion, versus the Religious Education that has what Grimmitt (2000) refers to as a *'learning from'* or personal dimension. This latter dimension allows students to become critically conscious of their own journey in faith. Groome (2006) developed a shared praxis approach which Carmody (2019) sees as integrating the academic and the personal whereby the academic can enhance faith formation (p.96).

Students not wishing to opt for the examinable Religious Education specification and who perhaps want a purely catechetical programme, cannot have this need met currently, unless the school has an alternative Religious Education class available alongside the examinable one. Of course classes can complete the specification and not submit for the examination, but it is not a purely catechetical programme. Most schools at present have to choose between the examinable programme or a non-examinable one as it is unlikely that resources would permit both. Where such a programme does exist, it needs to be accredited by the bishops and examined to ensure standards are met. In that way, both student and teacher can be affirmed in their engagement with the programme. This point is taken up in Chapter 5: Discussion

2.4 Pillar 3: Inspection

In considering the research question: *What is the role of the Diocesan Advisor in a changing landscape*? State inspection is included as an aid to understanding the formal inspection and evaluation processes that operate within second level schools in the Republic of Ireland currently. The impact of the visit of a State inspector and a Diocesan inspector were similar up the 1960's in that both engendered fear and trepidation in teachers and students alike. In the case of the Diocesan Inspector, the post Vatican II era brought a reprieve, when the focus turned to one of support rather than inspection or evaluation. The Inspectorate chose a different route and while the aim was ultimately to be supportive, it focussed on measurement and accountability. This section will examine how the State advanced the formal processes of accountability, while the Church opted for a softening of approach to the oversight of Religious Instruction and ethos. The State is formally inspecting all schools to ensure quality and improvement. Regarding Catholic schools Miller (2006) states:

> *A Catholic school should be inspired by a supernatural vision, founded on Christian anthropology, animated by communion and community, imbued with a Catholic worldview throughout its curriculum, and sustained by gospel witness.*
>
> (p.17).

These benchmarks help to answer the critical question: Is this a Catholic school according to the mind of the Church? Miller (2006) poses:

> *How do you know that you are achieving what you say you are? What steps are you taking to improve your effectiveness? Should not Catholic schools, precisely*

insofar as they claim to be specified by their catholicity, do something along the same lines? (p.61).

Currently the Catholic Church in Ireland does not have a mechanism for inspection using visible maps but the State has refined its systems to a very high level. Miller (2006) reiterates:

They too could engage in quality assurance – that is, assurance of their Catholic identity. Such a "Catholic" accreditation process would involve an internal review of the five benchmark indicators – as well as others that could be developed. Teachers, administrators, bishops, parents, and Board of Management members would all take part in the review. This collaborative and systematic exercise of assessing a school's catholicity would serve to identify, clarify, and strengthen its effectiveness in its service of Christ and the Church (p.61).

The next section will look at the model for inspection by the State in the Republic of Ireland.

2.4.1 State Inspection in Republic of Ireland

State inspection functions as a link between the government on the macro level and the local and regional education providers they are mandated to inspect (Hall et al. 2019). Information-seeking is considered a vital step to making qualified judgments, and as part of the information gathering, inspectors use both 'visible' and 'invisible maps' (Olsson 2007 *in* Hall et al. 2019). Visible maps include the inspection rationale or policy and materials, usually in the form of text (minutes of Board of Management meetings, previous inspection reports, school timetables) made available prior to or during an inspection. Invisible maps rely on inspectors' own "professional knowledge, embodied expertise and experiences" to interpret the landscape (Hall et al p. 38). State inspectors for education in the Republic of Ireland rely on the visible and quantifiable evidence as they seek to implement policies on inspection, whether of a whole school or a subject basis.

Hall et al. (2019) state that information based, face-to-face interviews and on-site observations require proximity between inspectors and those to be inspected. As well as a degree of trustworthiness, inspectors have to be sure that there is no "window-dressing" or performance that would influence the findings of the inspection. Thus, Hall et al. (2019) claim that experienced and trained inspectors make qualitatively different

judgments about what is observed and heard, than those of a naïve, inexperienced or poorly trained inspector. Further, these researchers claim, experienced inspectors can explain how they absorb social and pedagogical dimensions based on informal chats with staff and students or just by walking around the school (p.47). Where inspectors have to judge the educational atmosphere at a school, they can draw on their own professional expertise – their own invisible maps – to make informed judgments based on intangible or fleeting information (p.51).

Hislop (2017) states that the Inspectorate in the Republic of Ireland believes that the most powerful factor in ensuring children's learning in schools 'is the quality of the individual and collective practice of teachers and practitioners; and second, that *a range of complementary features* are needed to provide an effective quality assurance process' (p.6). Inspection of itself, Hislop (2017) claims, cannot insert quality into any school. The high quality teaching and learning in schools is enhanced through a range of measures, including effective initial and continuing teacher education programmes; external inspection and effective internal self-evaluation (p.6).

Hislop (2017) identifies how the Irish Inspectorate has sought to develop both inspection and self-evaluation since the beginning of this decade and how improving standards and quality is a priority for the Department of Education and Skills in Ireland (DES 2003; 2007). Dillon (2012) explains that through its inspectors the Department operates a programme of inspection to evaluate the quality of education provision in schools and to contribute to school improvement. Whole School Evaluation (WSE) was introduced in post-primary schools in Ireland in 2004. It is designed to "monitor and assess the quality, economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the education system provided in the state by recognised schools and centres for education" (Department of Education 1998 Section 7.2 (b)). Dillon (2012) draws on Chelimsky's (1997) three conceptual frameworks of evaluation:

- Evaluation for accountability
- Evaluation for knowledge
- Evaluation for development or improvement

These elements of Chelimsky's (1997) framework help to set the Inspectorate's work in context. The first level is "evaluation for accountability". An inspection system holds schools accountable to the public purse and to the stakeholders as well as setting standards for the Irish education system in accordance with government policy. The

second level of evaluation in Dillon's (2012) study is concerned with "context specific knowledge" to inform judgments on the merit or quality of what is being evaluated, stating:

> *The literature on evaluation theory indicates that whole school evaluation can be used instrumentally, to provide information which supports decision-making and policy development at the system level and to identify challenges and strategies to tackle them at school level. It can also be used to influence the way stakeholders, within and outside the school, think about the work of the school and prioritise aspects of that work*

(p.21).

The third level of evaluation is "evaluation for improvement". Dillon (2012) discusses Chapman's (2001) three levels at which improvement might be achieved: at national level; at the level of the school; and at classroom level. At national level, inspectors of schools contribute to the development of policy, and Dillon (2012) confirms that this is part of their statutory function. "Whole school evaluation was conceived as a means of providing objective, dependable, high quality data which would allow existing education policies to be modified as appropriate" (Department of Education 1999, p.4). According to Dillon (2012), inspection is defined as "an official viewing or examination", while evaluation is defined as "a judgment or measurement of the quality, significance or value of something" (p.8). Dillon (2012) further states "both inspection and evaluation presuppose the application of specific criteria against which the effectiveness of the school, defined as the extent to which the objectives of a programme have been achieved is measured" (p.8).

The Inspectorate evolved from single visits by individual inspectors up to 2000, to complex multi-layered structures that allow for different levels of inspection in the present. This wide range of inspection models ensures engagement with post-primary schools on a reasonably regular basis and for a diversity of purposes. Some models, such as incidental inspections and follow-through inspections are proving to be particularly beneficial at both primary and post-primary levels in fostering detailed co-professional discussions between inspectors and school leaders regarding school improvement.

The Catholic Church has no such rigorous external systems by which to measure and ultimately improve what is happening in faith formation in the religious education classroom or regarding Catholic ethos in the school. The State has progressed from

external systems of accountability to internal systems for self-evaluation with the aim of moving a school from effective to highly effective practices. A model of supporting schools to evaluate their Catholic identity themselves could look towards the State's approach in their publication *Looking at Our Schools 2016: A Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools.*

2.4.2 Looking at Our Schools (LAOS)

Self-evaluation is part of the process by which schools reflect on their quality and in 2016 the inspectorate revised the 2003 guidelines on school self-evaluation in a document called *Looking at Our Schools 2016: A Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools*. It provides a set of standards for two dimensions of the work of schools: *Teaching and Learning* and *Leadership and Management*. The standards allow a school to identify their strengths and areas for improvement. The inspectorate can then ascertain on their visits, where the school is at and if, for instance, current practices are effective they can suggest ways of moving to a highly effective practice. The quality framework combines external evaluation with internal evaluation in a collaborative way. The Inspectorate has progressed from intensive but external inspection processes to a system whereby schools are enabled to conduct evaluation of their own work.

2.5 Pillar 4: The Diocesan Advisor

An outline of the history of Diocesan Inspection is included in Chapter One and this section brings the recent evolution of the role into view. It also looks at the emergence of the national organisations for Diocesan Advisors in Ireland and in England & Wales with the view to noting a divergence in remit, in the jurisdictions, in recent years. Detail from the approach in England & Wales is included as it may be a model which the Irish Bishops can evaluate and consider for the future. Focus on one diocese (Westminster) is included to highlight the multi-layered structure that operates there in order to ensure that the rigour applied by the State (Ofsted) to inspection is matched by the diocese in their co-inspection approach.

2.5.1 Emergence of the National Association of Post Primary Diocesan Advisors (NAPPDA)

McConville (1966) described the difficulty for Diocesan Inspectors to change the system away from a fear ridden diocesan inspection because of the isolation in which they lived - isolation from each other, isolation from the teaching body, isolation from

training colleges and from secular education (p.719). To address this, McConville (1966) suggests the inspectors needed to get organised. The first gathering of inspectors from Northern and Southern Ireland occurred in Belfast in October 1945. Two years later a national meeting was held in Dublin. These meetings revealed an uneven and chaotic state of religious instruction in Ireland. The lack of uniformity and absence of training in catechetics were identified as major concerns. As a result of these meetings, a national catechism emerged and was updated in the years that followed. In 1957 a group of Diocesan Inspectors in Northern Ireland began to meet regularly and they produced a common syllabus for schools. To remedy the deficiency in catechetical training, a summer course for teachers was held on an inter-diocesan basis and periodical circulars on catechetics were issued. The development of the Diocesan Inspectors through the 1960s revealed the emergence of a softer and more supportive approach. By the mid-60s, McConville (1966) recognised the need for proper training as a priority for Diocesan Inspectors warning that "degrees in theology or in education are not sufficient" (p.721) and he also identified a lack of stability in the post of the Diocesan Inspector as they were frequently being changed thus destroying any hope of continuity in policy. McConville (1966) also recommended that attention should be paid to "the distribution of catechists in the country" (p.721) noting that due to diocesan boundaries some inspectors were "grossly overworked" (p.721) and others were finding themselves in only part time employment. The suggestion of regional inspectors McConville (1966) claims would give "each one an opportunity to specialise in one department of religious education, so that he might be better able to help the teachers of religious education" (p.721). McConville (1966) concludes that "diocesan isolationism can have no place in the future catechetical scene" (p.721) calling for "a stronger national organisation of Diocesan Inspectors (with perhaps official recognition)" (p.722) and "closer links with seminary and training colleges" as well as international links to be established with catechetical centres and institutes in order to benefit from shared knowledge (McConville 1966). The organisation formally adopted the name of National Association of Post Primary Diocesan Advisors (NAPPDA) in the late 80's.

Currently in Ireland, Diocesan Advisors are members of NAPPDA and in-service for Advisors is organised centrally through this body. The study will explore to what extent, if any, the recommendations of McConville (1966) were acted upon.

2.5.2 The National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisors (NBRIA)

Peter Ward (NBRIA Executive) traced the evolution of the present system of the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisors in England and Wales, stating that the position of Catholic schools was strengthened by the 1944 Education Act. As a result of the Act, post-war, Catholic Religious Instruction in England and Wales continued with renewed optimism, as new teachers were recruited for the new schools built for the increasing number of Catholic pupils. A move away from religious instruction towards catechetics was happening in Ireland and in England & Wales simultaneously. An interesting parallel between the account of diocesan inspection in Ireland by McConville (1966) and the beginnings of the national body for the Religious Inspectors and Advisors (NBRIA) emerges. The status of the NBRIA members shifted considerably, however, when they became involved in national discussions. Ward (2019) elaborates:

> It was decided to co-opt Directors of Catechetics to NBRIA, giving them a corporate status, and providing an official channel of communication to the Hierarchy. Henceforth the role of inspector gradually morphed into that of advisor and the appointment in 1974 of Fr Kevin Nichols as National Advisor for Catechesis, and subsequently Religious Education, led to members of NBRIA being increasingly drawn into national discussions.

The discussions provided a platform for Church and State to dialogue and Ward (2019) explains that this led to the current arrangement with Ofsted:

> Ahead of the 1992 Education (Schools) Act and the creation of Ofsted, the reality of the dual system created a challenge. In short, the Church would not allow the state to inspect denominational education in Catholic schools. Government accepted this, recognising diocesan bishops' duty to inspect under Canon 806 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law. The solution was the requirement under section 13 of the Act that the Catholic Church, in common with all groups with voluntary schools, inspect denominational education and publish the inspection report for each school inspected.

Once enacted, NBRIA devised a national inspection framework, which was adopted by each diocese, amended as necessary to suit local needs in line with the principle of subsidiarity. The framework covered the statutory duty to inspect Religious Education and Collective Worship along with inspecting the Catholic life of the school as a whole. It was revised in the light of the 1996 School Inspection Act which addressed

denominational inspection under section 23 of the Act, and subsequently, in order to ensure that the framework was broadly similar to that of Ofsted and to minimise any discontinuity that might otherwise be experienced by schools. Ward (2019) notes:

> *The most recent legislative change - the Education Act 2005 - placed denominational inspection in England in section 48 of the Act and for Wales in section 50. The statutory duty remains to inspect each school every five years, a duty that Ofsted monitors along with the recommendations of the most recent section 48 report.*

Preparation for a new system of Catholic denominational inspection in 2021 across England and Wales is underway, with all dioceses agreeing to use the same framework. Ward (2019) observes that the current review of Catholic School Inspection in this instance is not motivated by a desire to maintain broad alignment with the new 2019 Ofsted framework but rather to seek to harmonise different diocesan frameworks.

The route that NBRIA took towards accrediting and inspecting Religious Education in partnership with the State inspection body Ofsted, offers a blueprint for Diocesan Advisors and bishops in Ireland.

2.5.3 Role in England and Wales Today

The model in England and Wales today has evolved from a Church / State concordat and has become a sophisticated system combining the best practice of State and Diocesan requirements. The structure of the diocesan support mechanisms for this oversight is multi-layered and not dependent on isolated Diocesan Advisors working alone in merely a supportive capacity, which is the current provision in the Republic of Ireland. Much consideration is given to the development of the role of oversight by the bishops in England and Wales and currently a review is underway to ensure a standardised practice across all dioceses.

The Diocesan Framework for Inspection (2015) from the Diocese of Westminster, for example, outlines how the service is provided by occupants of various roles within the Westminster Education Service and is supported by a framework and a set of benchmarks. Diocesan Inspectors are selected, trained and appointed by the Westminster Education Service on behalf of, and in the name of, the Archbishop" (p.5) whereas *Diocesan Advisers*, are members of the Westminster Education Service. They are delegated by the Archbishop with the specific remit to assist him to carry out his

role to oversee Catholic education in his Diocese. They assist schools in developing religious education programmes in accordance with the "Religious Education Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools", promulgated by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (2012). They also assist the Archbishop in the appointment of head teachers, deputy heads, subject leaders and teachers of religious education, and chaplains. In Ireland the advisors have a remit in the appointment of teachers of religious education and chaplains only and have no input into the choice of person appointed as the faith leader of the Catholic schools in a diocese.

In England and Wales, the *Advisers* visit schools to review and monitor classroom religious education and support the Catholic life of the school. An important function of the Westminster Education Service is to support schools in their preparation for diocesan inspection, and subsequently advise and assist with issues arising from the inspection. Foundation Governors appointed by the Archbishop, or the relevant religious superior in schools owned by a religious order, are in the majority on the governing bodies of Catholic schools and colleges. They have a duty to uphold the identity of the school as a Catholic Community and to ensure that classroom Religious Education is taught in accordance with the teachings, doctrines, discipline and general and particular norms of the Catholic Church. They have the legal duty to run the school in accordance with the terms of its Trust Deed. A *Chief Inspector* is appointed by the Diocesan Education Commission to ensure that the diocesan inspection process is suitable to the needs of diocesan schools and colleges, and provides the Archbishop with a clear and rigorous annual report on the state and quality of Catholic schools in the Diocese. The Chief Inspector is responsible to the Director of Education for the inspection process, the appointment and training of inspectors and the annual report to the Diocesan Education Commission (Diocesan Framework for Inspection 2015).

The advisor in the Republic of Ireland is a stand-alone operative, without a structured back-up for delivery of the role. In the Republic, Diocesan Advisors make no claim to an inspectorial dimension or remit. Their role, as a support role, has no line management accountability to a Chief Inspector or any equivalent person who ensures that the oversight function is carried out on behalf of the bishop.

2.5.4 Benchmarking Frameworks Abroad

Benchmarking of Catholic schools and institutions has emerged in recent years and may provide a useful lens from which to view the identity of Catholic schools in the

Republic of Ireland. A significant responsibility for the evaluation of standards in both the Catholic school and the religious education class would be required of the Diocesan Advisor if benchmarking became a feature here.

An empirical methodology to frame, assess and enhance the identity structure of Catholic educational organisations has been developed in the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium led by Boeve (2006). Boeve (2006) proposes four options for Catholic third level institutions, they are: 1) abandon all claims to a Catholic identity; 2) reassert a confessional identity; 3) promote the institute as a place where values are Christian and humanitarian or 4) dialogue towards a renewed vision of Catholic identity in a multi-faith society. Boeve (2006) favours the fourth option which is centred on dialogue, to be the most fruitful in a post-Christian Europe. In Australia, similar work was undertaken by Pollefeyt and Bouwens (2010) in association with the Catholic University of Leuven called the Enhancing Catholic School Identity Project (ECISP). It was conducted under the auspices of the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, Australia. The ECSIP was initiated in 2006 consisting of two stages: 1. Assessing the identity of Catholic educational institutions by means of quantitative and qualitative survey instruments. 2. Enhancing the identity of Catholic educational institutions by means of practical-theological instruments, promoting post-critical belief and a recontextualisation of Catholic identity in dialogue with the cultural context. The outcome of their empirical research was the devising of two scales by which schools in Australia can assess their Catholic identity: the Melbourne Scale for Dummies and the Victoria Scale for Dummies. The empirical questionnaires are based on the typology of Prof. Lieven Boeve regarding the theological identity options of Catholic institutions in a pluralising cultural context.

In America, a framework entitled National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools (NSBECS) (2012) advocated by the Catholic bishops offers the opportunity for the Catholic community to clarify the identity of the Catholic school; it provides a framework to define characteristics, review standards, and set benchmarks. The National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools (2002) is intended to describe how the most mission-driven, effective, well-managed and responsibly governed Catholic schools should operate (Appendix H[4]).

In the Republic of Ireland currently, there is no empirical evidence of the quality of ethos in Catholic second-level schools. Many of the schools could benefit from

assessing which of Boeve's categories best describes where they are at currently and where they might focus their energies for the future. Some schools may have abandoned all claims to a Catholic identity; some may already have reasserted a confessional identity; some may just promote the school as a place where values are Christian and humanitarian or some may be already dialoguing towards a renewed vision of Catholic identity in a multi-faith society. The Patron's responsibility in this regard is central. Taking the documents of Vatican II and *Laudato Si* into account, theologian Dermot Lane suggests that a renewed anthropology must be sought as the foundation of relevant Catholic education. This anthropology must be rooted in relationality, dialogue and embodiment. Lane (2015) proposes that the perspective of this relationality must be connected to all of creation and not just humanity. He sees the call to ecological awareness and conversion as intrinsic to Catholic education (p.78).

2.6 Pillar 5: Identity and Professionalism

O'Connell (2012) looks at the nature of the cultural shift in Ireland in recent years, asserting that the landscape for Diocesan Advisors is changing in Ireland due to the variety of worldviews present in any Catholic school. There are students whose worldview is "shaped by secular atheism, for whom there is no transcendent dimension to life", students who are "not sure if they believe in God or not" and others again "who believe in God as revealed in the person of Jesus Christ" (O'Connell 2012 p.1). Added to this, O'Connell (2012) states, there are different religious traditions present and a wide spectrum of belief and belonging but laments that "shared understandings have disappeared and we no longer all speak the same language" (p.1). The Diocesan Advisors in this context must be able to "enter into dialogue with those outside and within their own faith tradition" (p.2) and they need to make sense of the viewpoints in a new and changing landscape within the Catholic school and "find clues to faith that can resonate with the experience of whosoever they speak to today" (p.2). This is a shift in identity for the Diocesan Advisor from a context where the dominant culture was Catholic to one where Catholics and students of many faiths and none reside side by side in the Religious Education classroom. What are the implications for the identity of the Diocesan Advisor where such a radical cultural shift is now part of the landscape in every Catholic school they visit? The next section considers the psychological effects of such an identity shift.

2.6.1 Identity

Stryker (1980) developed many of the central ideas of Structural Symbolic Interaction (SSI) and the framework of identity theory. His core idea (taken from Mead 1934) was that "society shapes self - shapes social behaviour" based on the fact that individuals are enmeshed in networks in society from birth and cannot survive outside of pre-existing organised social relationships. Two levels of social structure (Stets and Burke 2014) are noted: the first level is one in which people and their identities are embedded, for instance their families, classrooms and work groups. Second is the larger bounding social structure of organisations and institutions. According to Stets and Burke (2014), Stryker (1980) viewed people as having multiple identities, and the positions, meanings and expectations attached to them come from a common culture that is shared with others. Stets and Burke (2014) claim that having a particular role identity means fulfilling the expectations of that role, coordinating with role partners, and manipulating the environment to control resources for which the role has responsibility. In role-based identity, some form of interaction and negotiation is usually involved. Likewise, for group-based identities, similar actions and perceptions created bonds and group norms.

Identity change occurs when the meaning in one's identity shifts over time. Stets and Burke (2014) outline how, since 1998, more theorising and empirical work emerged on the concept of identity change. In identity change, individuals may not find their identity different in the short-term; it is only when considering a longer period of time, months or years, that a difference is observed. If situational changes persist and people's meanings of themselves in those situations are able to adjust to match their identity, meanings may change slowly (Stets 1998). In general, identities can and do change both in the meanings that define the identity and in the level of salience of the identity (Stets 1998). If a person has difficulty in verifying an identity over time, the identity is likely to change slowly in due course (Stets 1998). If the reflected appraisals affirm the identity, then, Stets (1998) claims, it is likely to remain stable over time.

Stets (2005) refers to Burke's earlier work (1991) which looks at how emotions emerge within the self, stating that essentially when individuals get support for their identity or when others in a situation see them in the same way that they see themselves, they will feel positive emotions and, in turn, the identity may increase in salience and commitment. However, a lack of support or shared view as to who one is in the situation generates negative emotions and the identity may decrease in salience and commitment. The more individuals receive feedback that others see them differently

than how they see themselves, the more they will be unable to initiate or sustain whatever they are doing and the more distressful their emotional reaction will be (Stets 2003, 2005). According to Stets and Burke (2014) the three dimensions of self-esteem are worth-based, efficacy-based, and authenticity-based esteem. Each one emerges through verification of a social group/role, or personal identity. In identity theory, the verification of different bases of identities is linked to different self-esteem outcomes (Burke and Stets 2009). The verification provides a general sense of being valuable; it provides a sense of competency and generates the feeling that one is being one's true self. Positive self-evaluations indicate our social worth and connect with a desire for communion and interpersonal connectedness with others (Stets and Burke 2014). This strengthens acceptance and belongingness. The desire for human agency is connected to the ability to have an effect on the environment. Efficacy-based esteem is about what "one can do" in a situation compared with worth-based esteem that emphasises "who one is." (Stets and Burke 2014 p.411). A sense of authenticity reflects individual strivings for meaning, coherence, and understandings about the self (Stets and Burke 2014).

The Diocesan Advisors in this study have experienced shifts in identity since the period following the Second Vatican Council in the 1960's but the cultural shift of recent decades is unprecedented for the advisor. The next section looks at the nature of professionalism in roles and organisations. This section is included with a view to considering the extent of the professional supports available to the Diocesan Advisors, for the enactment of their roles.

2.6.2 Professionalism

Professionalism can be understood as an "occupational value" (Evetts 2011) but according to Sachs (2003 p.6), it is difficult to seek a fixed position on professionalism as it has always been "a changing concept rather than a generic one". Sachs (2001) focuses on professions in terms of being either managerial or democratic in perspective. Hilferty (2005) sees professionalism as a socially constructed term, influenced by policies and ideologies. An extensive analysis on the attributes of the classical professions was conducted in 2007 by Sexton. This analysis included the writing of a broad range of contributors including Flexner (1915), Hoyle and John (1995), Furlong

et al. (2000), and Breathnach (2000). The common findings amongst these researchers included:

- The presence of a recognised knowledge base
- An extensive degree of autonomy
- Personal responsibility and a code of ethics
- A spirit of altruism
- Intellectually based with extended training

Three other attributes less commonly identified were:

- Commitment to ongoing professional development
- High status or prestige
- High level of remuneration

Locke (2004) established the "classical triangle" based on a summary of three attributes which Hoyle and John (1995) identify as: knowledge attributes; autonomy attributes; and service attributes. In short, the "knowledge attributes" refer to the body of knowledge (or knowledge base) required in the role. The "autonomy attribute" can be defined as the right or state of self-government and the freedom to determine one's own actions and behaviours. And the "service attribute" is referred to by Locke (2004) as altruism. The service attribute raises the notion of the vocation or call associated with the role. Arthur (2003) stresses the integral part that values and beliefs play in interactions, referring to forming character and providing an opportunity to promote moral and social development. Much of this research pertains to the teaching profession but is adapted in the discussion chapter for consideration of the role of the Diocesan Advisor.

A report conducted in the UK on teacher effectiveness, the Hay McBer (2000) Report, identifies professional characteristics as underlying dispositions and patterns of behaviour and although referring to teachers, can be applied to the Diocesan Advisor role:

> *Professionalism*: which includes confidence, respect for others, creating trust, challenging and supporting pupils
>
> *Thinking*: both analytical and conceptual
>
> *Planning and setting expectations*: which includes the drive for improvement, information seeking and initiative

Leading: comprising flexibility, holding people accountable, managing pupils and passion for learning

Relating to others: which includes impact and influence, team working and understanding others.

For Hoyle (1980) professionalism refers to the practice and behaviours of the individual and professionalisation relates more to the occupation itself rather than an individual. While individual Diocesan Advisors are professionals in their own right (for instance as qualified teachers) the nature of the professionalism as a group of Diocesan Advisors remains vague.

2.6.3 Role Ambiguity

The radical shift in the cultural context in which the Diocesan Advisor operates can possibly have implications for the perception of the role and for the Advisors' understanding of the place and purpose of the role in a changing context.

According to Carter and Harper (2016) a role may be defined as "a set of expectations that govern the behaviour of an occupant of a specific position within a social structure" (p.1). Role ambiguity occurs, they suggest, when behavioural expectations associated with the role are "vague, imprecise, or unclear to a role occupant" (p.1) leading to a potential source of stress and negative consequences that affect both the role occupant and others around them. The degree of stress experienced from role ambiguity is a function of the "role identity salience" which Carter and Harper (2016) describe as "how central a role is to their self-concept", and the "degree of uncertainty" they have in accomplishing a goal aligned with the role (p.2). Role ambiguity is reduced where effective leaders maintain clear communication between superiors and subordinates, whereas in less structured organisations poor communication may give rise to greater role ambiguity among employees (p.3). Without formal job descriptions and clear boundaries between different positions within an organisation, employees may have a difficult time asserting their specific role, especially in relation to the role of co-workers (p.3) and may potentially cause strain between employees as a result of the inability to identify individual responsibilities. Carter and Harper (2016) conclude that proper feedback and formal orientation procedures may help to reduce role ambiguity by creating a more structured socialisation process for incoming employees.

2.6.4 Close

This review considered the literature related to the five pillars of concern to this study: Catholic Schools, Religious Education, Inspection, the Diocesan Advisor, and Identity and Professionalism.

Having explored these topics and themes in the literature, the chapter to follow sets out the methodological framework adopted by this study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The research question *'What is the role of the Diocesan Advisor in a rapidly changing social, cultural, political and educational environment*? is examined under three research sub-questions which were framed as follows:

- What are the Diocesan Advisors' understandings of the purpose of the role?
- How do the Diocesan Advisors experience the role?
- What are the Diocesan Advisors' perceptions of the future meaning and trajectory of the role?

And this chapter explains the methodology adopted in this research endeavour.

The chapter opens by presenting the perspective of the research in terms of ontology and epistemology. An interpretivist research paradigm is discussed as a justifiable approach for an investigation into the role of Diocesan Advisor in voluntary Catholic secondary schools in the Republic of Ireland. The case study approach adopted for the study is described and explained. The sampling process is described. The data collection methods are explained. The process of data analysis is described and elucidated. The chapter closes with a consideration of ethical issues, followed by an outline of the research limitations.

3.1 Ontology

According to Wand and Weber (1993) ontology is a branch of philosophy concerned with articulating the nature and structure of the world. It is about the nature of being and the kinds of things that have existence. In other words, ontology is associated with a central question of whether social entities should be perceived as objective or subjective. Accordingly, objectivism (or positivism) and subjectivism can be specified as two important aspects of ontology. Objectivism, according to Bryman (2012) is an ontological position that asserts that social phenomena and their meanings have an existence that is independent of social actors.

Subjectivism (also known as constructionism or interpretivism) on the other hand, perceives that social phenomena are created from the perceptions and consequent actions of those social actors concerned with their existence. Formally, constructionism can be defined as an ontological position which asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors (Bryman 2012).

My ontological assumptions are my beliefs about the nature of the world and what exists out there in the social world, in other words, the nature of reality and what can be discovered about it. I believe reality is subjectively acted upon by social players and that social phenomena are created from the perceptions and actions of the said players. So in choosing to view the role of a cohort of people and attempting to unearth their own meanings attributable to their role, I apply a constructivist post-positivist understanding of the nature of reality and what can be known. The opposite view to this - objectivism or positivism, holds that social entities exist in reality external to social actors and that there is a meaning independent of people..

This research, while accepting that there can be objective truths, aligns itself to this post-positivist, subjectivist perspective, An objective study would limit the findings to scientifically quantifiable facts, but conducted subjectively, this study can generate rich data in consultation with those who visit Catholic schools and those who contribute to the catechetical nature of the school. This ontological perspective guides the researcher's epistemological assumptions. Diocesan Advisors operate in a world that has a long history which impacts on their reality, a history continually evolving and shaping the nature of their interactions in school communities. The approach in this study is a constructionist/constructivist one, as the everyday lived experience of the Diocesan Advisors is examined in order to identify the nature of their relationships in Catholic schools, in a milieu where state inspections of religious education classes provide objective and quantifiable data only.

3.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is a term referring to the nature of human knowledge and understanding that can be acquired through different types of inquiry and alternative methods of investigation (Hirschheim et al., 1995). Epistemological assumptions about the nature of human knowing emerge from one's ontological assumptions. Both ontology and epistemology comprise one's worldview and forms a conception of the world from a specific standpoint. These standpoints fall into two main categories: objectivist and constructivist/interpretivist.

The aim of the positivist is to observe and explain while the constructivist holds that the only reality that can be known is that which is represented by human thought. Constructivism claims that knowledge can only be known through the active construction of the knower and holds that social actors develop subjective meanings of

their contextualised experience. The task of the researcher is to try to understand the many and various ways that meaning and knowledge are constructed and communicated in particular contexts. This research is based in the constructivist/interpretivist domain.

Research paradigms according to Maxwell (2005) 'include specific methodological strategies linked to these assumptions and identify particular studies that are seen as exemplifying these assumptions and beliefs' (Maxwell 2005, p. 36). Qualitative research examines the patterns of meaning which emerge from the gathered data and are presented in the participants' own words. The task of the qualitative researcher is to find the patterns of meaning within those words and present them for others to inspect, while ensuring they stay as close to the construction of the world as the participants experienced it.

In this study the choice of approach is qualitative and seeks to make sense of the world of the Diocesan Advisor and interpret it by finding meaning in the patterns of narrative which are shared. The Diocesan Advisors in this study have experienced change in their role following the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), and currently another shift in practice is emerging in an evolving secular landscape for religious education at second level schools which impacts the role of the advisor. The research is time-bound and context-bound and is merely a snapshot of the lives of the Diocesan Advisors who agreed to take part in the data collection in the Winter of 2018 and Spring of 2019. The setting is naturalistic and allows for the participants to gain personal insights by reflecting on their experiences and offering rich descriptions of the kind that are presented in case studies. Data gathered within this interpretivist research paradigm is primarily descriptive and while it can include quantifiable elements, the emphasis is on the lived experiences of the participants. In order to access the participants' lived experiences and perceptions of the role, data was generated through participants' diaries, in-depth interviews, and a focus group (explained in depth in the section on data collection later in this chapter).

The self-reflective nature of the diaries and interviews offered the Diocesan Advisors an opportunity to view themselves and their work in a considered fashion and to evaluate their own view of their effectiveness in supporting the quality of provision of religious education in the schools in their dioceses. Participants can report on multiple realities that are both subjective and complex and the researcher uses the words of participants from written transcripts and interviews to provide evidence of their different perspectives. In this study, the researcher is a co-participant and has built up a positive

relationship with the participants by attending their professional development in-service days and listening to concerns about their role in a changing context. It is also acknowledged that the researcher and the participating Diocesan Advisors influence, and are influenced by, the shared values in relation to our common work in Catholic education.

3.3 Research Design

The choice of research design in this study is influenced by considerations of a study that is on subjective sense-making, inviting participants to reflect on their roles in context. The limitation of self-reporting in research of this nature is outweighed by the rich descriptions of time spent in a regular working week and reflections on daily experiences.

Overt ethnography or participant observation were considered initially as a potential method of data collection as the possibility of immersing myself in the work of the Diocesan Advisor over a period of time, observing and listening to what is said in conversation, was appealing at first; however, the logistics of travelling distances to each Diocesan Advisor's place of work and then shadowing them as they travelled to schools rendered the approach unworkable. Creswell (2007) describes ethnography as a range of experiences combining to provide a focus on an entire cultural group. The potential to focus on individuals' understandings as group members was attractive as was the direct participant involvement in a context-specific enquiry (Creswell 2007, p. 53). The possibility of exploring how the Diocesan Advisors experience themselves as a cultural group, was inviting. However, where sensitive and confidential issues were likely to emerge, there would be ethical considerations. Phenomenology as a sense-making approach may also have worked with its focus on individuals' experiences and direct participant involvement. The emergence of detailed biographical and rich life-history descriptions could have been interesting but would not have addressed the research question directly and is somewhat theoretical in nature (Creswell 2007). Ultimately, a case study approach was identified as the methodology that would best align with the purpose of the study.

3.3.1 The Case Study Approach

Case study, Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2013) state, can be used in educational research to enhance an "understanding of contexts, communities and individuals" (p.3). Stenhouse (1978) saw case study in educational research as a means of capturing

complexity but stressed that it needs to be verifiable. Merriam (1988) considers the most important aspect of case study is determining that the case is a bounded unit. The focus in this study is on the individual's experiences and understandings in their context-specific environment. Case study has evolved as an approach to research which can capture rich data, giving an in-depth picture of a bounded unit or an aspect of that unit. Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2013) list the elements of case study as follows:

- Case study as research genre
- Bounded unit - a person, a group, an institution or an organization
- Located within personal, professional, local and national communities
- Involves interactions, communications, relationships and practices between the case and the wider world and vice versa
- Focus on collecting rich data - capturing the complexity of case
- Data may be collected over extended periods with repeated collections or may be collected during an intensive but short period of time
- Requires spending time within the world of those being researched
- Uses a variety of data collection tools (interviews, observations, reflective journals and others) and different perspectives to provide depth
- Employs two or more forms of data collection tool and/or two or more perspectives. This helps to triangulate the data and reinforces the legitimacy of the conclusions drawn.

This study incorporates the key elements listed above: it looks at a bounded unit – the Diocesan Advisors. It is located in a professional setting at national level. It involves interactions and communications between the case and the wider world of schools and dioceses. It collected rich data, capturing the complexity of the world of the Diocesan Advisor. It collected data over a specified day diary filling exercise and an extended period of interviews and focus group activity, thus using a variety of data collection tools. Finally, it employed two or more perspectives – that of the individual diocesan advisor and that of the group or collective in the focus group. However, there is no expectation of generalisability.

Table 1 is based on Creswell (2007) the case study design:

Model	Purpose	Focus	Key Terms	Characteristics
Case Study	To portray, analyse and interpret the uniqueness of individuals and their work through accessible accounts	Individuals and local situations	Individuality In-depth analysis and portrayal Interpretive analysis	In-depth, detailed data from a range of data sources
	To catch the complexity of experience	Unique stances	Subjective Descriptive Analytical	Participant self-observation
	To contribute to action and intervention	A single case	Understanding specific situations	Non-interventionist
	To present and represent reality, to give a sense of 'being there'	Bounded phenomena and systems Individuals; groups; roles.	Sincerity Complexity Particularity	Empathic Holistic treatment of phenomena

Table 1: The purpose, focus, key terms and characteristics of case study design (Creswell 2007).

Case study research offers a perspective where truth is not necessarily grounded in statistical confidence or in mathematical logic (Cryer 2006 p.79). The truth in case study research is more related to the mind of the reader based on the researcher's argument. Case study research involves the use of multiple sources of evidence in an investigation of a phenomenon. In this case, Diocesan Advisors carry out diocesan duties and provide catechetical support in schools, but what exactly those duties are can only be understood by becoming familiar with the world of the Advisors.

This case aimed to explore the daily experiences of Diocesan Advisors in Irish Catholic secondary schools over a five-day period. It offered an opportunity for the participants to become co-researchers in the case and to build data based on their own observations of themselves and of others in the performance of their duties. In an adaptation of Yin's

model, the subject, the unit of analysis, the context, the illustrative types of theories and the case study design are made explicit as shown in Table 2: Designing the case:

Designing the case	
The subject or "phenomenon" under study	(a) Diocesan Advisors (b) Religious Education (c) Inspection of Religious Education
The unit of analysis	A group of 10-15 individual Diocesan Advisors
The context	Voluntary Catholic Secondary Schools in the Republic of Ireland
Single case study design	To capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday commonplace situation. Yin (2009, p.48).
The analysis of data	Data analysis will be linked to the elements of the research question to highlight the key findings.

Table 2: Designing the Case

The preferred design is the single-case design with embedded multiple units of analysis as shown in Figure 2: Single case design with embedded units.
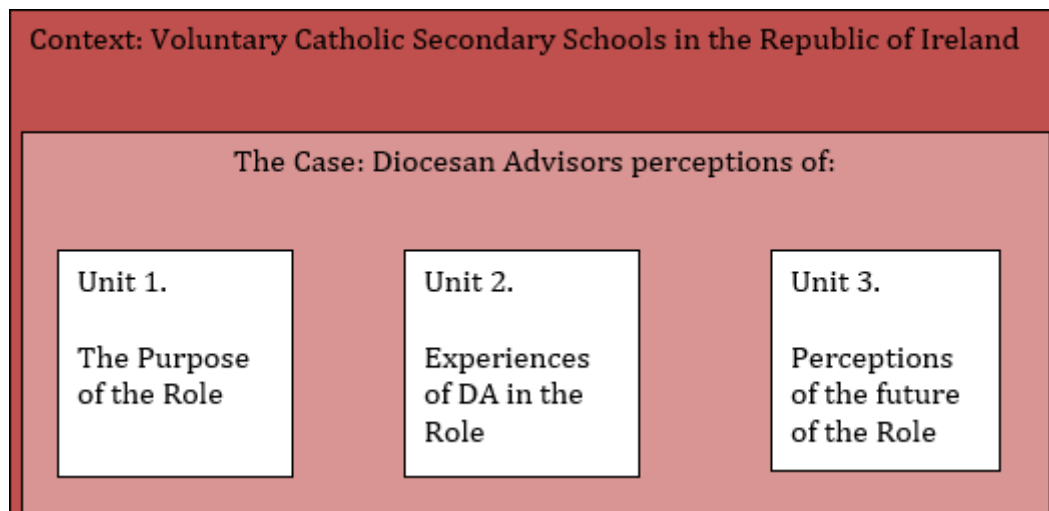
Figure 2: The single-case design with embedded multiple units of analysis based on Yin 2009.

The plan of the research included multiple sources of evidence. Data gathering tools and processes are outlined in Table 3 using Yin's planning template:

Kinds of Data		
Background Data	**Individual Data**	**Total System Data**
• Historical literature • Academic literature • Church literature	• Participant's gender • Educational qualifications • Experience in the role • Experience in education prior to role of Diocesan Advisor • Contact Details (Held confidentially)	**Researcher-Driven Diaries** • Records of regular duties, responsibilities, and activities • Reflections on daily work • Reflections on working week • Reflection on evaluation of RE • Reflections on Catholicity of school **Semi-Structured Interviews**

Table 3: Kinds of Data (Adapted from Yin 2009)

3.4 The Sampling Process

Purposive or theoretical sampling involves selecting groups or categories for study on the basis of their relevance to one's research question and, as Taylor and Bogdan (1984) explain: "in theoretical sampling the actual number of 'cases' studied is relatively unimportant; what is important is the potential of each 'case' to aid the researcher in developing theoretical insights into the area of social life being studied" (p83). This case study is proposed as a single case with a "revelatory" rationale, given that the work of Diocesan Advisors has not been researched in Ireland before.

3.4.1 Seeking Access

The first step in preparing to collect case study evidence involved finding a sufficiently large group of Diocesan Advisors willing to act as the primary information resource. Cohen et al. (2007) note that the "quality of a piece of research stands or falls not only on the appropriateness of methodology and instrumentation but also by the suitability of the sampling strategy that has been adapted" (2007, p.100). Individuals, such as Diocesan Advisors, may not wish to expose their work or by extension the work of the bishop to whom they are answerable. They may feel confined by confidentiality. Four key factors in sampling are the sample size, representativeness, access to the sample, and the sampling strategy to be used (Cohen et al. 2007). My starting point was to make contact with the Chairperson of the National Association of Post Primary Diocesan

Advisors (NAPPDA) and request permission to attend the in-service meetings of Diocesan Advisors.

3.4.2 Gaining Access

I met with the Diocesan Advisors on two occasions prior to the launch of the diary. I was invited to observe their in-service day in early 2018. As no ethical permissions had yet been submitted, I merely introduced myself and stated my interest in the group. On the second occasion, I was asked by the Chairman in advance of the in-service in September 2018, to prepare a presentation on the church documents relevant to the teaching of religious education at second level in the Republic of Ireland. Ethical permission had not been granted at this point, so I did not engage in any conversation relating to the study. But a rapport was growing, as was the confidence I was gaining in understanding the context in which the Diocesan Advisors worked. In November 2018, I was again invited to attend the in-service day for the national group of Diocesan Advisors and, as ethical permission had been granted (October 2018), I outlined the research, sought permission, and distributed the diaries (Appendix C) to those interested in participating. The Diocesan Advisors willing to take the diary were guided through the sections and given a stamped addressed envelope in which to return the completed diary. The deadline for receipt of completed diaries was set for December 7th which allowed three weeks in which to complete the entries and write up the reflections. The back cover of the diary included a letter of thanks and participants were invited to be interviewed further, following the submission of the diary. For ease of memory and commitment the telephone interviews would be conducted in the weeks following completion of analysis of the diaries.

3.4.3 Profile of the Research Sample

Of the 26 dioceses in the Republic of Ireland, a total of 19 Diocesan Advisors had some involvement in the data collection process: 10 completed the diaries and were interviewed; and a further 9 participated in either the one-to-one interviews or engaged in the focus group discussion.

Background information can only be given for the ten diarists, four male and six females, who completed the section in the diary on biographical details. Of this group, six participants came from a religious or clerical background; the remainder were lay Diocesan Advisors. The academic qualifications of the diarists revealed that two completed studies at doctoral level; seven held qualifications at the level of master, and

one has a primary degree. In terms of participants' experience in teaching, experience in the role of Diocesan Advisor, and experience in the teaching of Religious Education, Figure 3 shows that the majority had been in the role of Diocesan Advisor for a relatively short time:
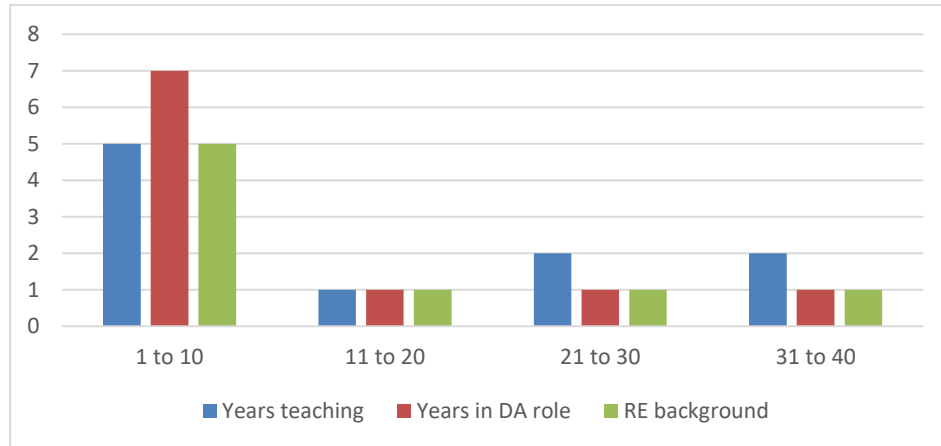
Figure 3: Experience in teaching, in the role of Diocesan Advisor, and in Religious Education.

Five of the diarists had between 1-10 years teaching service, one had between 11-20, two had between 21-30, and two had between 31-40. Seven of the ten diarists were in the role of Diocesan Advisor between 1-10 years, which would suggest a high turnover of incumbents. Of the remaining three diarists, one was between 11-20, one was between 21-30 and one had been in the role between 31-40 years. Interestingly eight of the ten had experience teaching Religious Education and eight out of ten were qualified to do so.

3.5 Data Collection

As already mentioned, in order to access the participants' lived experiences and perceptions of the role, data was generated through participants' diaries, in-depth interviews, and a focus group discussion.

3.5.1 The Solicited Diary

According to Alaszewski (2006), the solicited diary has four defining characteristics: regularity, privacy, contemporaneousness, and is a time-structured record. As a result, diaries can provide chronological and detailed information about behaviour, events and other aspects of individuals' daily lives in a time-bound context. For Bartlett and Milligan (2015) the diary can be a precursor and aide-memoire to stimulate discussion in subsequent interviews or, as in this study, the interview can follow up on areas of interest for expansion and check the plausibility of a diary entry.

The diary in this study was confined to a five-day range. It required participants to record during the day or in the evening activities they were involved in during three phases of each day, for the five days. This "interval-based sampling" was combined with "event-based sampling" (school visits) and "signal-based sampling" a surprise text message in keeping with Bartlett & Milligan's (2015, p. 16) model. The diarists were empowered in what they chose to write and how they chose to write it and the "distance" between researcher and participant freed the participant from judgement (Bartlett & Milligan 2015).

Bartlett and Milligan (2015) developed a set of core questions for the researcher to consider when choosing diary as the instrument in their research:

> *Is the tool appropriate for your research questions and aims?*
>
> *Will the diary be used on its own or as part of a mixed methodology design?*
>
> *Is its purpose to inform or confirm other data?*
>
> *Are you using diary method to collect structured, semi-structured or unstructured data, or a mix of these forms of data?*
>
> *How will you analyse your data?*
>
> *Are participants aware of the time commitment and effort involved in completing the diary?*
>
> *Have you decided on content and structure and have you included this in your instructions?*
>
> *Are the instructions and terminology clear?*
>
> *Have you considered any specific requirements of the participant group you are targeting?*
>
> *Have you allowed time for developing and piloting your diary?*
>
> *How will you reinforce data recording and support participants throughout the data collection period?*
>
> *How will you address potential respondent fatigue?*
>
> *How will you deal with attrition and partial completion of diaries?*
>
> *Have you considered alternative formats to the written word?*

Having considered all of the above, the solicited written diary was chosen as the most suitable format given the nature of the work of the Diocesan Advisor. The electronic diary would have offered many conveniences such as accessibility for analysis; however, due to data protection considerations, the professionally produced twenty-page format was chosen.

A pilot researcher-driven diary was initially trialled and a one-day log of the activities of two of the Diocesan Advisors was gathered. Feedback from both participants indicated that the A5 size was too small and while they appreciated that it could be carried around more easily in the smaller size, they would prefer space to write their observations. Modification to the increased size of A4 was made. As no other modifications were suggested, the two participants who had piloted the diary were offered the opportunity to complete the full version in due course. Both accepted as they had found the recording of their reflections beneficial.

3.5.2 The Structure of the Researcher-Driven Diary

The opening pages offered a brief explanation of how entries may be recorded (Appendix C[1]). The cover page offered evidence of affiliation to Dublin City University and the confidential nature of the content was stressed. The researcher and the University authorities have access to the identities and all content is traceable to its source. Confidentiality was the key safeguard offered to participants, and while data can be authenticated always by Dublin City University, no names or personally identifying features are disclosed in any other manner. The diary consisted of 20 pages in an A4 size booklet format.

The cover page offered a checklist of activities selected from the Diocesan Advisors' Handbook (2013) and with which Diocesan Advisors would be familiar. Page two was in a letter format, written in plain language, giving the background and rationale for the research. Page three provides the evidence of ethical approval for the work from the Research Ethics Committee of DCU (Appendix C[3]). Page four sought professional background information as a means of drawing up a profile of the diarists. Such information included: gender, academic qualifications, length of service in the role, prior teaching experience, and prior involvement in religious education.

Page five offered a space for the diarists to expand on their role if they so wished. Information about the number of schools they liaise with and the level of the school – primary and secondary was included because while the focus was solely on second level Catholic schools, some of the Diocesan Advisors may have a wider remit which may impact on their enactment of the role. The type of patron or management was categorised, and the approximate number of religious education teachers involved in the schools was sought, as well as whether such teachers were qualified for the post or not.

The following ten pages were dedicated to the log of the activities for the five days. Keeping in mind the need for clarity, the log offered three divisions of morning, afternoon and evening with space for the diarists to record their activities and thoughts. The log included a space for recording what they were doing when a surprise text came through to them. Diarists were also asked to note if any part of the day was uplifting, and any aspect that they found particularly challenging.

Page sixteen asked the diarist to report on one school visit and requested simple data on size of the school, religious education programmes available, duration of the visit, and strengths and weaknesses noted.

Page seventeen asked the diarists to comment on a "Statement on Inspection from the Diocese of Westminster" and asked two further questions concerning their opinion on evaluating religious education classes and evaluating the Catholic life of the school.

Finally, on page eighteen diarists were asked to reflect on their role and tick boxes relating to specific activities outlined in their Handbook (2013). The last question asked them what might help them improve how they carry out their role. The back-cover thanked the participants and invited them to consider further engagement with the research by way of a telephone interview.

Clear and simple headings were adapted from the Diocesan Advisors' Handbook (2013) and placed on the cover of the diary, the number of entries was confined to five days, corresponding to one working school-week in situations where participants would commence the diary on a Monday and follow through on each subsequent day. Some participants explained that they could not complete the diary on consecutive days due to the nature of their contracts, as many were not employed on a full-time basis.

3.5.3 Follow-up Interviews

Bryman (2001) observes that the collection of data in researcher-driven diaries can be supplemented by a personal interview in which the diarist is asked questions about such things as what he or she meant by certain remarks. Further areas to be probed can also emerge following analysis. The interviews took place by telephone as suggested on the back page of the diary, in as open a manner as possible. Bryman (2001) recommends telephone interviewing, as the remote location of the interviewer might aid sensitive revelations about the role and also because body language cues are absent. Interviews can be time consuming to arrange, carry out, and analyse, yet, according to Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2013), they can provide some of the richest data in a research

project. The purpose for choosing interviews in this study included the possibility of follow up on themes identified in analysis of the diaries, and further probing of issues or observations after the diarist has had a period of time for reflection. Recording of the interviews further allowed the researcher to identify key issues of concerns to the participants, and bring these themes to the final focus group interview for acknowledgement and clarification. As part of my role in a Trust body involved interviewing for senior management positions, I felt comfortable that my interview skills of listening, encouraging, managing transitions, and prompting, were fine-tuned for the purpose (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier 2013).

Recording and interpreting the views and experiences of the Diocesan Advisors through a phenomenological lens, as active participants and collaborators in the research, places the study in the constructivist domain. The Diocesan Advisors in this study were part of the meaning-making whose voices held importance both narratively and contextually (Gubrium and Holstein 2002 p.83).

The interviews were conducted by phone over the period 4th to 11th March 2019. (Appendix C[10]) and the final focus group interview was conducted on 2nd May 2019. All participants gave permission for the conversations to be recorded and transcribed for data analysis. Phone calls were made from the researcher's home study and the interviews were held on speakerphone. No other person was present during the recording or during the subsequent transcription process. The researcher produced the transcripts using REV, a voice-to-text computer programme. A final typed transcript, representing the entire interview content, was prepared without "tidying up" and with a clear emphasis on "what was said" rather than "how it was said" (Poland 2002 p.634).

3.5.4 Validity of Data Collection Methods

Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2013) suggest that validity can be maximised by taking steps to ensure triangulation of data collection instrument and/or perspective: two or more forms of instrument or view. In this study the interviews took place after a period of time when the contents of the hand-written diaries had been analysed. Triangulation was addressed by collecting data at different times and from different sources, using multiple methods of data collection and applying different theories to interpret the data set. Bryman points out, "validity is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated in a piece of research" (2001, p.30). Generalising or attempting to claim a

high degree of external validity in the quantitative sense is problematic, given the very nature of case study research.

3.6 Data Analysis and Development of an Audit Trail

According to Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data. Thematic analysis is the search for themes or patterns in the words of the participants to elicit the deeper meaning in what is being said. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) suggest that "the task of the researcher is to find patterns within those words and to present those patterns for others to inspect" (p18). Qualitative research seeks to access the inner world of participants in order to understand, describe, and explain experiences occurring in their world.

3.6.1 Thematic Analysis: Overview of the Process

Open-ended questioning allows participants to frame their experiences and interpretations in their own words. The researcher searches for meanings and patterns in the words and thereby describes and explains the perceptions of the participants. This method involves breaking down the data into "units of meaning" (Maykut and Morehouse 1994) and coding them to categories. The researcher develops theoretical insights from themes that illuminate the participants' world. Using this method, the researcher simultaneously codes and analyses data in order to develop concepts, refines these concepts, identifies their properties, explores their relationships to one another, and integrates them into a coherent explanatory model (Taylor and Bogdan 1984). The presentation of an audit trail is essential to demonstrating the trustworthiness of a study. The qualitative analysis software used in this study is called NVivo, and through its logging mechanism, this software allows coding patterns to be made explicit, and all stages of the analytical process made transparent. This logging mechanism allows the researcher to generate an audit trail in the form of a 'codebook' that shows all steps taken during analysis of the data (Appendix B).

The analytical process was conducted in eight cycles over six phases in keeping with the methodology of Braun and Clarke (2006) as outlined below:

Phase 1: Familiarisation with the Data.

Cycle 1: Importing and Familiarising involved importing the interview transcripts into NVivo (QSR International Pty Ltd. Version 12), the data management software adopted

in this study; then reading the interview data and noting down initial ideas. Each diary was read many times and uploaded to the NVivo system as a PDF. The content was then word processed in order to work on patterns on paper without marking the diaries. The interviews were uploaded as audio files which could be listened to directly from the NVivo system. The focus group interviews were also uploaded as an audio file. The transcripts of the interviews were saved to NVivo. Transcripts were generated by an automated on-line system (*REV.com - an automated speech to text transcription service*). This artificial intelligence software was chosen to preserve anonymity. Each file was uploaded to the REV system and returned within four minutes as a transcript. As it is an automated system, it picked up every "um" and "ah" and gave the researcher a sense of the hesitancy and nuances of the dialogue. Anonymity was preserved as no human listened to the audio files throughout the process.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

Cycle 2: Open Coding involved broad participant-driven initial coding of the interviews into initial non-hierarchical general codes. There was no attempt made at this stage to develop patterns or hierarchies, however interesting features were coded in a systematic manner across the corpus of data, relevant to each code. (Appendix B[1]).

Phase 3: Searching for Themes

Cycle 3: Developing Categories involved re-ordering codes identified and coded in phase 2 into categories by grouping related codes. This phase involved close reading of the content of the open codes to search for patterns in the data. (Appendix B[2]).

Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

Cycle 4: *Drilling Down* involved breaking down the restructured categories into sub-categories to offer more in-depth understanding and clearer insight into the meanings embedded in the categories. The generation of a thematic map of the analysis took place at this stage. (Appendix B[3]).

Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes

Cycle 5: Data Reduction involved consolidating codes from the preceding cycles into more literature-based themes to create a final framework of themes. This phase revealed the rich over-arching themes and made sense of the data in addressing the research

question under its three aspects: participants' understandings of the purpose of the role; participants' experiences in the role; and participants' perceptions of the future meaning and trajectory of the role (Appendix B[4 & 5]).

Phase 6: Producing the Report – Cycles 6, 7, & 8.

Cycle 6: Involved *writing analytical memos* against the themes to summarise the content of each category and its codes and propose empirical findings against such categories. An example of an analytical memo is contained in Appendix B[6].

Cycle 7: Validation involved interrogation of the data, forcing the researcher to consider elements beyond the theme itself, drawing on relationships across and between themes. This phase resulted in evidence-based findings.

Cycle 8: Involved *synthesising analytical memos* into a coherent narrative that would form the basis of the findings chapter (Appendix B[7]). As the process of data analysis progressed, three overarching themes were identified as central to the lived experiences of the Diocesan Advisors who took part in the study. These themes were 'Identity', 'Ambiguity' and 'Professionalism'.

This configuration of codes and categories grouped under the three themes of 'Identity', 'Ambiguity', and 'Professionalism' served as an organising framework for presenting the study findings in the chapter to follow.

Table 4 charts the NVivo tasks conducted in this study in alignment with Braun and Clarke's (2006) methodological framework:

Analytical Process (Braun & Clarke, 2006).	Braun and Clarke Practical Application in NVivo	Strategic Objective	Iterative process throughout analysis
1. <u>Familiarizing yourself with the data</u>	**Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas. Import data into the data management tool**	**Data Management** *(Open and hierarchal coding through NVIVO)*	Assigning data to refined concepts to portray meaning
2. <u>Generating initial codes:</u>	**Phase 2 – Open Coding- Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collecting data relevant to each code**		Refining and distilling more abstract concepts
3. <u>Searching for themes:</u>	**Phase 3 - Categorisation of Codes – Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme**	**Descriptive Accounts** *(Reordering, 'coding on' and annotating through NVIVO)*	
4. <u>Reviewing themes:</u>	**Phase 4 – Coding on - Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (level 1) and the entire data set (level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis**		Assigning data to themes/concepts to portray meaning
5. <u>Defining and naming themes:</u>	**Phase 5 - Data Reduction - On-going analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story [storylines] the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme**	**Explanatory Accounts** *(Extrapolating deeper meaning, drafting summary statements and analytical memos through NVIVO)*	Assigning meaning
6. <u>Producing the report</u>	**Phase 6 –Generating Analytical Memos - Phase 7 – Testing and Validating, and Phase 8 - Synthesising Analytical Memos. The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly account of the analysis.**		Generating themes and concepts

Table 4: Analytical Hierarchy to Data Analysis (Adapted from Braun and Clarke 2006)

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval to undertake this study was sought from the Dublin City University and approval was granted on the understanding that the researcher would abide by the terms of a written submission that would guarantee informed consent, a respect for privacy, and assurances against deception and any real or potential harm to participants (Bryman, 2001).

The "cost/benefit ratio" described by Cohen et al (2007), whereby the benefits to the research community are balanced against potential harm to participants, was weighted entirely in favour of the participants in this undertaking (p.51). In researching the activities and experiences of the Diocesan Advisors therefore, the communal codes of educational research studies determine that at no time can there be any consideration of an "affront to dignity, embarrassment, loss of trust and social relations, loss of autonomy and self-determination and lowered self-esteem" (p.52).

The researcher maintains the participants' identities in the strictest confidence. Participants were given the opportunity at all times to withdraw their participation and/or their data, should they so wish. Significantly, the process did not involve children or communities at risk and was undertaken as a low-risk study. No intimate or potentially discrediting information was sought. There was no risk of harm or exposure to physical or mental stress. Contributions were voluntary, every effort was made to minimise intrusion and there was no prospect of coercion or manipulation. The purposes and boundaries of the research were clearly explained and maintained throughout (Lankshear & Knobel 2004). It was made clear to participants that, while the study findings would be available as doctorate research through the university and in other appropriate settings, their anonymity would be protected at all times.

3.8 Limitations of the Research

The working contracts of the participants determined their ability to participate fully in the diary filling activity. Participants who held a one or two per week position as a Diocesan Advisor found the diary-filling more challenging than participants who were engaged in the role every day, as it was an infrequent activity and was sometimes forgotten. Some participants preferred not to complete the diary but were willing to participate in the interviews and focus group.

A surprise text was initially included as a possible recall aid for when the participant was recording the day's events. However, in the diaries whereby the participant was not

filling five consecutive days, the surprise text proved problematic, as the researcher could not continue with surprise texting for a continuous three-week period. It would be annoying for those who had completed the diary in five days and may be unwelcome also to a Diocesan Advisor who held other responsibilities unrelated to the Diocesan Advisor role. For these reasons the surprise text had little or no benefit and was discounted.

The study is a snapshot of a group of Diocesan Advisors at a particular time in their careers. Many of them took up the role after retirement from teaching or from principalship, therefore they can only serve a short number of years in the role. This leads to significant turnover of personnel in dioceses. Some of the participants have retired from the role since the data was gathered and therefore any replacement Diocesan Advisor may already be approaching the role differently.

Having described and explained the research design, the methods of data collection, and the process of data analysis, the chapter to follow sets out the findings arising from these processes.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings arising from the process of data analysis. The concepts of identity, ambiguity, and professionalism were identified as three key overarching themes in the participants' discourses. Identity emerged as a major theme early in the analysis of the data. The awareness of the increasingly secular place that many schools have become was identified as a cause of much concern for the Diocesan Advisors in terms of their identity. Overall, the findings suggest that a Catholic identity in an increasingly secular context is the difficult reality for Diocesan Advisors in the Republic of Ireland today.

The solicited researcher - driven diary

The diary created an opportunity for the participants to reflect on their identity in the role and the interviews allowed them discuss their experiences and perceptions of the identity of the role in the changing social, political, educational and cultural context. The findings from the diary are integrated into the themes and presented as a unit rather that separately.

The findings are presented in three sections under the three key themes. Part 1 considers the theme of Identity; Part 2 discusses the theme of Ambiguity; and Part 3 focuses on the theme of Professionalism. Within the sections on each theme, each of the three elements of the research question is addressed:

- *What are the Diocesan Advisors' understandings of the purpose of their role?*
- *How do the Diocesan Advisors experience the role?*
- *How do the Diocesan Advisors perceive the future meaning and trajectory of the role?*

4.1 Part 1: The Theme of Identity

This section discusses the theme of identity in relation to the three elements of the research question.

4.1.1 Theme of Identity and Diocesan Advisors' Understandings of the Purpose of their Role:

The responsibilities of Diocesan Advisors are outlined in their Handbook entitled *The Role of the Diocesan Advisor for Post Primary Religious Education* (2013) which was drawn up by the Irish Catholic Bishop's Conference. The Handbook (2013) outlines

eleven duties and responsibilities that are central to the role (Appendix G). The Diocesan Advisors live out their role in their respective dioceses according to the time allocated and resources provided to them by their Bishop to fulfil the role.

The first observation in the composition of the study sample is that six of the Diocesan Advisors came from a religious or clerical background, while the remaining thirteen Advisors were drawn from the laity, and data analysis showed profound differences in the way these two groups talked about the purpose of their role, as exemplified in the following extracts from their narratives:

> *I see a huge need for pre-evangelisation and re-evangelisation. I would be concerned that in encouraging dialogue in religious education, we could end up with syncretism – that an adolescent would end up with a mixture of different beliefs. The role of the Diocesan Advisor is to help a Catholic student to develop and deepen their own commitment to their own faith. The role is about the formation of intentional disciples of Jesus and the group apostolate is vital.*
>
> (DA1).
>
> *We need to challenge but we need to challenge with great love.*
>
> (DA9).
>
> *The quality of our religion teachers is paramount, that they would be people of faith and that they know the ground they are standing on is Catholic, there's a big role for the formation of religion teachers*
>
> (DA15).
>
> *I watch how prayer is led and I'm absolutely taken aback when people just race through a prayer with no quiet time for reflection – how can we be witnesses like that? How can we go out and teach how to pray if we don't do it ourselves?*
>
> (DA2).

As the above excerpts illustrate, the Diocesan Advisors coming from a religious background tended to frame their comments on the purpose of their role in a catechetical language. By contrast, lay Diocesan Advisors did not tend to use terms such as witness or formation, rather depicting the purpose of their role as that of educational support to the religious education teacher:

> *I recommend things that the religious education teachers might do in class or items that they might have or whatever in the school.*
>
> (DA13).

My main work as an advisor is to spend time visiting the schools and organising in-service ... and I liaise with the teachers around resources and advise them.

(DA5).

Supporting teachers, I think that's the big thing – that you're there, that they can ask you questions, they can phone me outside of school and meet me on a one-to-one or in a group and talk to me. They see that as a great support.

(DA8).

Analysis of the Diocesan Advisors' discourses suggested that across this cohort, two differing forms of identity may be discerned. What may be termed a 'vocational identity' was found in those Diocesan Advisors who perceived the purpose of the role to be, first and foremost, as a facilitator of faith formation in the religious education classroom. What might be described as a more 'educationally oriented identity' was discerned in Diocesan Advisors who defined the purpose of their role primarily as a source of support to the religious education teacher and other stakeholders, not to the exclusion of faith formation as a dimension of the role, but rather to foreground a sense of adaptability and flexibility in a rapidly changing educational and social landscape.

4.1.2 Theme of Identity and How the Diocesan Advisors Experience the Role

Diocesan Advisors have a remit granted in Canon Law to oversee the quality of religious education in all schools:

A primary role of the Diocesan Advisor is to ensure that the provisions for teaching religious instruction are upheld, particularly in terms of content and in terms of timetabling allocation within the Catholic school; there is an obligation on the catechist to impart knowledge that respects the teaching of Christ and the Church.

(Handbook 2013 p.13).

The language of Canon Law in relation to the teaching of religious education reflects an assumption concerning the identity of the religious education teacher, depicting this figure as a 'catechist' who therefore is 'witnessing' as well as teaching, and who has been 'formed' for this 'mission'.

In analysing how the Diocesan Advisors experience the role in term of identity, a number of identities, sometimes competing or conflicting identities, were observed as being at play in the religious education classroom and in the school *per se*.

At the focus group session which aimed to follow up on issues and concerns identified during the process of analysis of the participants' diaries and interview transcripts, the researcher raised the issue of identity and asked for a show of hands as to how many of the participants would identify themselves as having a 'vocational identity' and all but three of the Diocesan Advisors raised a hand, with one speaker commenting:

> *I'd say for most of us, our heart is in catechetics rather than religious education*
>
> (Focus Group Participant - FGP).

Thus, it can be concluded that the majority of the study participants, whether from a religious or lay background, had a perception of self as a supportive presence in the school dedicated to the promotion and protection of the Catholic faith and values and aligned with their own background and formation. It may be noted that the remaining three Diocesan Advisors, while not negating the vocational aspect of the role, described themselves as taking a more 'professional' approach in their enactment of the role. In this way, the researcher's concept of the 'educational identity' amongst this cohort was redefined by the study participants themselves as a 'professional' identity, and fits with their experiences within the education system as a professional enterprise.

The theme of professionalism is considered in the third section of this chapter.

Thus, operating from a strong sense of 'vocational identity', many of the Diocesan Advisors in the study, tended to focus on the identity of the religious education teacher and the principal of the school, often expressing grave concern at the increasing emergence of a secular identity and pointing to the negative implications of this for the mission of faith formation and upholding of a Catholic ethos in the classroom and the school:

> *Society has become more secularised; schools, even voluntary schools are following that route, religious education is becoming more secularised as well. If the pupil has no participation in the faith, then the school is working in a vacuum and it loses meaning very quickly. The same applies to teachers; you can tell straight away if a teacher is personally interested in the Church and in being part of a Christian community from one who isn't.*
>
> (DA4).

> *It depends on what the principal is like and the principal's approach because principals can manipulate Boards of Management, so if the principal isn't coming from a faith background the school can struggle. If the principal is*

strong in the whole area of faith, then the whole area of ethos in our schools will have a chance.

(DA5).

Based on analysis of the data, it can be concluded that most of the study participants considered the religious education classroom as a space often contested between church and state:

There is a lot of dictatorship happening at the minute from the secular state and it has to have very strong leaders and it's finding those strong leaders who support and inspire the Catholic ethos that might be problematic going forward. Also there is a cohort of professionals who give full allegiance to their faith and to the ethos of the school but at interviews some teachers can say wonderful things about ethos and when it comes to practice they are not really supportive, there is a certain amount of anxiety about interference from the state.

(DA7).

I think just again, just be very careful about the books out there, who's writing them, and try to know what's in them, there is a chance for Catholic schools to look at sections that would actually promote the faith formation, but what's the ethos of the school? That's a huge area.

(DA15).

I can't emphasise enough the importance of having committed teachers, they get involved in all of the liturgical celebrations: the mass for opening the school year, November, Christmas and so on. They also organise fundraising events. The exam in religious education has raised the bar for religion in the school; a person of faith can choose sections from the specification that would actually sit well with the whole faith formation.

(DA15).

In the latter two comments, DA15 seeks out ways the teacher with a strong Catholic identity might identify ways to incorporate opportunities within the state specification for religious education in which to carry out the work of faith formation, thereby reconciling a 'vocational identity' with the state sponsored increasingly secular identity of the religious education teacher.

The Diocesan Advisors agreed that the school principal is a key figure in the task of promoting and preserving the Catholic ethos of the school in the face of increasing secularism, as exemplified in the narrative of DA9:

We need to have good Christian Catholic leaders as principals who will walk the walk when it comes to difficult decisions – about religion on the timetable, about prioritising in-service for religion teachers, about the status of religion. There is an excellent principal, but I know this person was wondering why there was a church bell ringing on a particular holy day during the summer holidays, on 15th of August to be specific, so you know, that's what you're talking about, and he'd be running an excellent school.

(DA9).

In the state's drive to separate its programme for religious education from the faith-based programme of the Catholic Church, Diocesan Advisors are not permitted to attend in-service for religious education teachers that is provided by the state, and the state makes no provision for these teachers to attend diocesan sponsored continuous professional development in-service. It is hardly surprising, then, that many of the Diocesan Advisors perceived the classroom as a contested space with DA2 making this tension palpable:

I've been to a lot of the government meetings around various things and there is a massive, massive drive to get rid of the basics of Catholic education, and that is very difficult to deal with.

(DA2).

While DA6 anticipated a need for Diocesan Advisors to take an alternative approach:

In a landscape in which no element of worship or instruction can take place in the classroom where the exam programme is being taught, the current role is going to be very different.

(DA6).

Arguably, these combined circumstances necessitate that the Catholic Church strengthens its support for the training and possible formation of religious educators and for the conducting of Catholic worship, rites and ceremonies:

I think we will be giving a lot more formation to the teachers and more in-service will have to take place. They are not updating to the way I would like it to be. We have to offer very good courses to enable principals and religious education teachers to grow their own spiritual life. And that's not what really is on our remit at all. You know, we just presume that they're going to do it and they don't have the formation to do it. And I think we're responsible for that as Advisors.

If the element of instructional worship or formation cannot be part of what is taught then the faith formation, the catechesis has to take place at a deeper level and in a different way with liturgical worship following the liturgical year, all of these things must continue, must become far more part of the fabric of the school and the way in which the school is run than they possibly are now.

(DA6).

DA6 feared the disappearance of a Catholic identity altogether should the catechesis element of the role not be pursued vigorously:

It's just that if you don't have teachers who are aware of where the Catholic school is coming from, the vision that underpins the Catholic school, the faith dimension of the school, the Gospel values that underpin 'the way we do things around here', to use that expression, if we're not actually supporting teachers in that, I don't see how Catholic schools can continue to call themselves Catholic schools.

(DA6).

Further, during the focus group discussions, some of the participants indicated that they were already experiencing a sense of loss that the traditional identity of the Diocesan Advisor was no longer holding true, leaving them with a view of self as purposeless:

The other thing that came up in the discussion is our role, the term used was we're peripheral to everyone – that we're peripheral to the diocese, we're peripheral to the Boards, peripheral to the schools, but we're also peripheral to the teachers – and that's quite a difficult space to be working in.

(FGP).

And this sense of lost identity was shared by DA4:

Down through the years, the role has been gradually eroded in a number of dioceses and then when it's gone it's very hard to restore it.

(DA4).

4.1.3 Theme of Identity and How the Diocesan Advisors Perceive the Future Meaning and Trajectory of the Role:

As the preceding sections illustrate, many of the participants expressed profound concern at the threat to Catholic identity that is posed in an increasingly secular social,

political, cultural and educational landscape. But perhaps their collective perception of the gravity of this threat is best summarised and encapsulated in the words of DA4:

> *Well I suppose as a whole, the landscape has changed, and it has changed pretty quickly ... there is a sense of a general crisis in the Church and we're just keeping going at the moment, so there's that atmosphere, that just things keep changing, because you don't make changes or do anything in the moment of a crisis, you just keep surviving and I think we are in that mode at the moment, rather than doing anything that would be more constructive maybe or new, you know?*

<div align="right">(DA4).</div>

In this statement, the sense of crisis that DA4 is experiencing is understandable from the perspective of a Diocesan Advisor, and indeed, other Catholic stakeholders in the field of religious education in today's Ireland. For, as Griffin (2019) explains, there had been a long-standing historical arrangement between church and state whereby the two had lived in "peaceful coexistence" with clear boundaries in terms of the provision of Catholic religious education – church had been responsible for the religious education classroom, prescribing the methodologies and resources to be used by the teacher, and the state did not interfere. It is fair to say, therefore, that within this framework Catholic education stakeholders had a clearly defined identity that they could take for granted and did not need to question it or its relevance. As DA8 reminded:

> *A lot of the work we do is based on historical relationships as opposed to legislation or any other grounded framework as to why we visit.*

<div align="right">(DA8).</div>

And so the crisis to which DA4 referred arises from the disruption of this 'peaceful' church-state relationship over a relatively short period of time, a decade, from 2010 to the time of writing (2020), with the outcome that the religious education classroom is perceived by some stakeholders as a contested space and this tension is situated within a legislative framework that leaves little room for manoeuvre on the part of Catholic stakeholders in the field of religious education.

Having considered the theme of identity in relation to the Diocesan Advisors' approaches to the role, theoretical perspectives on the concept of identity are considered in C5: Discussion.

4.2 Part 2: The Theme of Ambiguity

This section discusses the theme of ambiguity in relation to the three elements of the research question.

4.2.1 Theme of Ambiguity and Diocesan Advisors' Understandings of the Purpose of the Role:

A twofold responsibility of the Diocesan Advisor outlined in the Handbook entitled *The Role of the Diocesan Advisor for Post Primary Religious Education* (2013) relates to the provision of support to religious education teachers and other stakeholders, and evaluation of their work:

> *The Advisor will help the religious education team to evaluate their work and provide support* (p.5).

The Diocesan Advisors who participated in this study adopted varied approaches in the application of these duties to their practice, with some prioritising the provision of support over evaluation while others prioritised the evaluative element of the role, and yet others completely refrained from conducting evaluations of the classroom and the school. The extracts to follow offer some examples of the participants putting their various understandings of the purpose of the role into practice. As articulated by DA15, some of the Diocesan Advisors found the specification of these duties to be vague or ambiguous:

> *The role is a little ambiguous despite the well drafted Handbook. It mentions evaluation but I have held back from visiting classrooms. I do see a value in this but I am not sure if it is part of my role.*
>
> (DA15).

DA12 and DA13 spoke about offering support to teachers but keeping a distance from the minutiae of their teaching material and course content:

> *As a support role for the religious education teachers ... meeting with the teachers, going through what they're doing in a broad sense, but not looking at lesson plans or any detail like that.*
>
> (DA13).

> *I've never sat in religious education classes and observed teachers teaching, but some teachers would share their plans and their work and you get to give them a bit of feedback or a bit of direction about how to tackle a difficult area.*
>
> (DA12).

DA8 and DA9 explained that they never conduct evaluations of the Catholic life of the school, an approach that stood in stark contrast to that of DA5 who viewed evaluation of both religious education and the Catholic life of the school as the *raison d'être* of a Diocesan Advisor:

> *We don't evaluate religious education classes and we don't evaluate the Catholic life of the school.*
>
> (DA9).
>
> *We don't evaluate the Catholic life of the school.*
>
> (DA8).
>
> *Evaluating the religious education classes is the primary focus of my work and evaluating the Catholic life of the school is the secondary focus.*
>
> (DA5).

DA6 and DA1 spoke of gaining 'second-hand' insight into classroom practices, an approach that is, however, dependent on the authenticity of the mediator:

> *I'm not officially an inspector so I can't demand class plans – I do ask if I can see what they're doing, to give me some idea in terms of things they have done, but being invited into a classroom is very rare. You can have wonderful feedback from religion teachers about their teaching and the great programmes they are teaching, but then in another context you might meet parents and they might say something about what is going on in their child's classroom and you think to yourself – is that the same school I was just in?*
>
> (DA6).
>
> *I usually invite the religious education coordinator to do that and ask how it might be improved*
>
> (DA1).

DA4 and DA7 depicted a methodological approach that strives to get as close as possible to the essence of the interactions occurring in the religious education classroom:

> *It involves very much being in the classroom, being with the teachers in their classroom and getting to experience what the pupils know and how they perceive religion in their lives. So you know, I think the question I would often ask if I'm in a classroom is 'what have you been doing and how has it been going'? So, it's hard to put marks on it, you're just going to get a general impression.*

Assessment in religious education is valid because it actually keeps people on their toes, whereas if you have no assessment, they tend to, very quickly run into a dilemma, where they'd be correcting homework instead of teaching religious education.

(DA7).

Given this variety of approaches to conducting the supportive and evaluative dimensions of the Diocesan Advisor's role, it is, perhaps, the methodology adopted in the diocese of DA3 that could be described as the ideal in that it provides a structured support to the school that is born out of an inclusive consultation process with all relevant stakeholders:

It is fundamentally a support role, but in order for the support to be real, it has to involve a level of engagement with teachers, students, and management that is equally real. And prior to the development of the diocesan policy – which was the fruit of much consultation – prior to the ratification of the policy and working out a research methodology that underpins the reports, we were at sea because varying expectations meant we never had shared clarity about either the enterprise that religious education is or to one's place in the world as a young person today.

(DA3).

Based on the participants' narratives, it may be concluded that a lack of clarity on the nature of evaluation to be conducted by the Diocesan Advisor means that individual Advisors are deciding whether to evaluate at all, and if so, whether to base their judgements on first-hand experience and observations of the interactions in the religious education classrooms or rely on the account of the religious education teacher and/or the religious education coordinator.

4.2.2 Theme of Ambiguity and How the Diocesan Advisors Experience the Role

The Handbook entitled *The Role of the Diocesan Advisor for Post Primary Religious Education* (2013) states:

It is good practice for the Diocesan Advisor to write up a personal evaluation of the school following each visit. This record can be the basis for the report held for the bishop's attention.

(Handbook 2013).

Having considered the study participants' understandings and applications of the supportive and evaluative purpose of the role, this section considers their lived experiences in the role in terms of accountability as may be evidenced through their systems of reporting. And, again, analysis of the data highlighted the ambiguous nature of the Handbook (2013) as the participating Diocesan Advisors interpreted the reporting aspect of the role differently.

Most of the Diocesan Advisors talked about having an informal approach to reporting as exemplified in the following extracts from their narratives:

> All I am required to do is produce a report at the end of the year, and to present my report.
>
> (DA12).
>
> My direct line of reporting was annually to the Bishop with a report which gave him an overall picture of what was going on in the schools in the diocese and to flag up anything, but generally I was left to my own devices.
>
> (DA11).
>
> I will report informally to the principal if I find something that needs to be discussed. I prepare a report at the end of the year for the Bishop, including for instance, if the school is doing religious education as an exam, the number of religious education periods in each school, and if they are complying with the requirements of three classes a week. Just general, if there was a specific concern, I would flag up that as well.
>
> (DA6).

While DA8 and DA5 described a much more formal approach to reporting situating the task within a wider set of systemic relationships:

> Every year in May, I am expected to write up an annual report for the Bishop, it would be fairly comprehensive. It's a detailed report in terms of all the schools I visited and general information about the school. I am accountable for my time and for the roles I undertake in my job, the biggest part of my role is school visits.
>
> (DA8).
>
> I benchmark the schools according to the policy position. The reporting procedure is to the patron, the bishop of the diocese, the trustees of the school, the Board of Management, the principal, and the deputy principal if they had

been involved in the process, and to each member of the religious education
team. If the school has a chaplain, a copy will go to the chaplain also.

(DA3).

In stark contrast, DA1 talked of operating autonomously and having no line of
reporting:

Traditionally in my diocese, there hasn't been any ongoing reporting, the job
was given to you and you just got on with it.

(DA1).

A pattern was identified during the process of data analysis whereby the approach and
measures adopted by DA3 stood out as contrasting sharply with the approaches of most
of other Diocesan Advisors insofar as the stakeholders in this diocese have worked out a
policy framework to guide and inform the work of the Diocesan Advisor:

Again, from experience it's impossible to do that unless you have a policy to
benchmark your written report against. You're actually chartering very
dangerous waters. I know in our own case it came as a surprise to some
principals and teachers that the bishop has oversight of provision in diocesan
schools. We have a diocesan policy. It took us three and a half years in terms of
consultative processes that led to that, and that was fruitful in itself. My work as
Diocesan Advisor is defined by that policy.

(DA3).

Another pattern was identified in analysis of the data concerning the reporting aspect of
the Diocesan Advisor's role: differences were identified between the reporting structure
in which those with a 'vocational' and those with a 'professional' approach operated. In
summary, the 'vocational' approach was characterised by reporting that tended to be
verbal in form and given to the bishop and/or the school principal. By contrast, the
'professional' approach was characterised by written reports that, depending on the
level of professionalism, tended to go beyond reporting to the bishop and principal to
include other stakeholders, for example, trustees, Boards of Management, and teachers,
and were usually written to a template. One focus group participant who self-identified
as a 'vocational' turned 'professional' pointed to the pros and cons of taking a
professional approach:

I thought I'd make one comment that the professional route is exhausting. If
you're doing this it demands a huge energy just in the manner in which you
communicate writing to such a diverse group of people. Now it can lend itself to

some very incredibly fruitful conversations, but you have to be very nuanced. You have to be very careful because it's out there. It's just a completely different way of being in the role. And I say that as somebody who has transitioned from the vocational and who would carry many aspects of it into the professional.

(FGP).

The guideline on reporting in the Diocesan Advisors' Handbook (2013) speaks of "good practice" rather than offering a clearly stated explanation of what the bishop needs to know. As discussed, the study participants adopted a range of approaches along a spectrum that ranged from absence of reporting to extensive reporting conducted within a clearly defined and inclusive structure – and these reporting approaches were identified as being aligned to either the 'vocational' or 'professional' approaches to the role – with the 'vocational' approach being characterised by informal measures as opposed to the 'professional' approach. As reporting is linked to accountability, the findings suggest that the 'vocational' approach operates on an implicit sense of trust underpinning the relationship between the Diocesan Advisor and his/her bishop whereas the 'professional' approach strives towards a more explicit system of checks and balances that is inclusive of other stakeholders in the field of religious education.

Clarity of Remit in the Different School Types

Under the theme of ambiguity, the Diocesan Advisors also called for clarity in their remit in schools other than voluntary Catholic schools in a changing landscape:

I would have big concerns in terms of our access to schools and how that's changing. The ETB schools that we currently have as part of our remit, and the non-designated community colleges, you know, because it has never really been verified as to why we still go out there. So some schools are fine, but two schools in the last year, both of them would have been non-designated community colleges, didn't really see what our role was and why we were coming out. So I do see that as an area of concern and this hasn't really been addressed.

(DA8).

I think our schools are going through a big transition ... schools are becoming more and more secularised, and more and more ETB schools that don't have a particular interest in religion or any kind of a model of it that involves participation in a faith.

(DA4).

Overall, the study participants were calling for clarity that would help them to make sense of the lived reality and help them to align the original intention of voluntary Catholic school with the state's agenda. Their discourses highlighted a great need to do away with ambiguity and define or re-define their role in today's world:

> *I think the NCCA are going to bring a dialogue to us concerning the religious education provision in Catholic schools at senior cycle level in the near future. I think this will come under the guise of the review of senior cycle religious education. I would like to see us engage very proactively and positively with that – are we promoting a confessional model of religious education? Are we taking our lead from secular developments? To what extent have we given consideration to the Vatican's letter to the episcopal conferences in 2009 on the distinctiveness of religious education from catechesis? And where do we stand on all of that? They are the challenges, they are not insurmountable and they generate some wonderful opportunities. But if we can establish clarity I think it would be helpful.*

> (DA3).

4.2.3 Theme of Ambiguity and How the Diocesan Advisors Perceive the Future Meaning and Trajectory of the Role:

In speculating on the future of the role, the study participants pointed to the need to be brought in from the wilderness, to develop wider sets of relationships within a wider relational structure. During the focus group discussion, some Diocesan Advisors wondered if in the future the role would solely focus on Catholic schools, which would be a narrower but deeper remit:

> *What is our role in ETB schools and what is it exactly in Catholic schools? Do we have, into the future, a role just in Catholic schools? That was a question that came up in our discussion.*

> (FGP).

> *We are very much lone rangers – we're not working together and there's a limit to what only one person can do. Going into the future, if nothing else, there has to be more people involved.*

> (DA1).

> *I think there needs to be closer links with other support bodies and closer links among the Diocesan Advisors ourselves maybe on a regional basis.*

I think the role in the future will be working more closely with Boards of Management in the schools.

(FGP).

We wonder will we have a bigger role with the congregations and the trusts and we wonder where the funding will come from to support the role into the future?

(FGP).

In considering the future, one focus group participant suggested a return to the document *Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland* (2010) to re-examine and contemplate the future in terms of the message articulated in that document:

Share the Good News is the national catechetical directory and maybe we need to look at our mission in the context of that document, which puts us in a position of something much bigger than our current role.

(FGP).

Having considered the theme of ambiguity in the reality in which the Diocesan Advisors find themselves, theoretical perspectives on the concept of role ambiguity and its implications are considered in C5: Discussion.

4.3 Part 3: The Theme of Professionalism

This section discusses the theme of professionalism in relation to the three elements of the research question.

4.3.1 Theme of Professionalism and Diocesan Advisors' Understandings of the Purpose of their Role:

All of the participants originated in the teaching profession, so in their respective practices, it is likely that they adhered to the norms of that profession. However, the extent to which professionalism may be identified in their respective practices as Diocesan Advisors is not as clear cut. Analysis of the data suggests that this is not due to any failing on the part of individual Advisors, but rather to the wider established tradition into which the Diocesan Advisors had been recruited.

In similar fashion to the themes of identity and ambiguity, two approaches: 'vocational' and 'professional', were identifiable in the data relating to the theme of professionalism, starting from the recruitment and selection process through to the everyday processes of the individual Diocesan Advisors operating in their various dioceses.

In talking about the recruitment and selection processes that had brought them to their role, some of the Diocesan Advisors described an informal, almost 'word of mouth', process:

> *I had been Head of Religious Education and had taken early retirement from teaching. The post of Diocesan Advisor was filled by a priest until then. The Bishop approached me and asked would I be prepared to do this work for the diocese, and I agreed.*
>
> (DA13).

> *My recruitment was via a phone call …. I was asked to come in and meet our bishop… he told me the previous Diocesan Advisor was retiring and asked me if I would be interested in taking up the position.*
>
> (DA7).

> *In a sense we came through by invitation of the bishop, a retiring Diocesan Advisor or some other member of the Diocesan Education Secretariat.*
>
> (FGP).

By contrast, other Diocesan Advisors recounted undergoing a vigorous process in pursuit of the position:

> *I was interviewed thoroughly by panel of five.*
>
> (DA8).

> *The recruitment and selection process followed an extensive consultation process.*
>
> (DA3).

> *The job was advertised on two websites. I applied by sending in my CV. I was subsequently interviewed by two people for the role.*
>
> (DA5).

The majority of the Diocesan Advisors outlined their appointment procedure as an informal process, with only three Advisors outlining a more formal process. Overall, analysis of their narratives suggest that differing routes to the role translated into differing approaches to the enactment of the role, and differing interpretations and understandings of the purpose and meaning of the role. For example, the Handbook (2013) stipulates that "the person appointed as Diocesan Advisor must be a person of faith" (p.4), and the 'vocational' informal but *targeted* approach, it could be said, reflects this goal – the potential post-holder had already been identified as 'a person of faith' eliminating the need for a formal recruitment and interviewing process that might

render it difficult to identify the candidate's background in faith formation. This challenge in the recruitment of religious education teachers was articulated by DA7 who had come to the role through the informal or 'vocational' route:

> *But at interviews some teachers can say wonderful things about ethos and when it comes to practice they are not really supportive, there is a certain amount of anxiety about interference from the state.*
>
> (DA7).

By contrast, DA3 for example, had been recruited through a formal and structured mechanism and being supported by a range of on-going formation opportunities and whilst not losing sight of the faith formation dimension of the role, displayed a professionalism in the enactment of the role that translated into a wider more inclusive vision of the role, and its purpose and meaning in a landscape now characterised by a multiplicity of players with differing viewpoints. While DA1 was aware of the disappearance of the homogeneous culture that once constituted Irish society, DA3 was aware of the need for flexibility in retaining one's identity whilst accommodating differing identities. This contrast may be seen in the juxtaposition of comments made by DA1 and DA3:

> *Of course I'm concerned about it and I feel for example, the homogeneous culture that was there when I started off in my role is no longer there.*
>
> (DA1).

> *I find the model I'm working within very fruitful. When I started in this role, say 8 years ago, in a consultative capacity, only 40% of teachers of religious education in the diocese were qualified to teach religious education. That number is up now as far as 85% or 90%, I hasten to add it's not just because we have a Diocesan Advisor, it's because we have a Diocesan Advisor and a policy and a review process and ongoing dialogue not only with religion teachers but with management.*
>
> (DA3).

The section to follow considers how the study participants currently experience the role in terms of professionalism.

4.3.2 Theme of Professionalism and How the Diocesan Advisors Experience the Role:

This section considers the Diocesan Advisors' lived experiences in the role in terms of professionalism in their everyday processes and practices and seeks to determine if there is a need for the development of a professional model of practice that might guide and inform, not just Diocesan Advisors, but other relevant stakeholders in the field of Catholic religious education in today's Ireland.

Contracts:

Diocesan Advisors who had been recruited to the role by the 'informal route' were employed by a contract that defined their work as part-time, and these part-time Advisors worked on either a one-day, two-day, two-and-a-half-day, or three-day week. All three of the Advisors who had come to the role through a formal recruitment and selection process had full-time contracts. Those Diocesan Advisors who belonged to either a religious order or the clergy had complex arrangements because aside from this role they were involved in a range of processes aimed at supporting faith life in the wider community, as explained by DA1 and DA2:

> *I have a lot of other responsibilities in the parish. It is difficult to assess how I divide my time. I try to get all the school visits done between September and December, even at that I'm under pressure. I have parish meetings, I celebrate the sacraments, I visit my parishioners and many other duties. I never have enough time.*
>
> (DA1).

> *I have responsibility for 22 second level schools but I also visit and support 99 primary schools. As well as my work as Diocesan Advisor, I am involved in facilitation, in the diocesan pastoral council, and in the diocesan pastoral plan as well as other sacramental preparation inputs.*
>
> (DA2).

Two of the three full-time Diocesan Advisors combined their role with other roles in the diocese but identified the work of advisor as their main concern. The third full-time Diocesan Advisor outlined an extensive brief:

> *I am contracted to devote c17 hours per week to education, this includes supporting a catechetical initiative involving 113 primary schools. I am a member of the diocesan education secretariat and also have co-responsibility*

for organising and facilitating on-going formation in Catholic ethos
opportunities for Catholic school principals, deputy principals, and Board of
Management members

(DA3).

Arguably, while the Handbook (2013) outlines 11 duties of the Diocesan Advisor, this is an impossible brief for somebody who is paid for one day per week to live up to. It is hardly surprising then that the duties of Diocesan Advisors who worked a one-day per week were limited to school visits and organising one in-service day per year for religious education teachers.

In short, the commitment of all the Diocesan Advisors to the role was beyond reproach; the workload of the religious and clergy extended far beyond any legal contract; and the work of part-time Advisors was severely narrowed to only those duties that could realistically be fulfilled.

Some participants called for uniformity in the resourcing of the role of Diocesan Advisor, which would likely translate into better relationships with schools:

The role needs to be equally resourced in all dioceses as, if it was done
properly, schools would have more confidence in it but they just don't know if
they're going to get a consistent delivery of service. It has to be taken more
seriously by the church.

(FGP).

Some participants called for uniformity of contracts, as exemplified in the following extract:

Our contracts per se vary greatly. So it would be nice if there was some sort of
uniformity among Diocesan Advisors and even among dioceses for what the role
actually involves, and then some clarity of it, if it is moving beyond the school
role, because you know, there's still an element of some schools think that you're
there in an inspectorate kind of role and I was always thought it was more
supportive or whatever.

(DA11).

Although focussing on contracts, the appeal for clarity of the role expressed by DA11 echoes and amplifies the sentiments expressed by Diocesan Advisors confused by ambiguities in the Handbook (2013), indicating, it could be said, a lack of professionalism in many of the diocesan organisational systems.

Training

A measure of professionalism lies perhaps in any organisation or association's approach to training, for training leads to shared understandings, shared values, and shared approaches within a given community. None of the Diocesan Advisors who participated in the study had been formally trained or inducted into the role. The sole source of training for Diocesan Advisors is the National Association of Post-Primary Diocesan Advisors (NAPPDA) which offers informal workshops, in-service days and a forum for discussion. Many of the participants sought opportunities for continuous professional development (CPD) elsewhere but there were no guidelines on requisite time or hours from their bishops on the nature, regularity or quality of the CPD. Many of the Diocesan Advisors had self-funded additional courses and programmes of interest to the role or their religious orders had done so, where applicable.

The Handbook (2013) identifies characteristics but not essential qualifications for the post of Diocesan Advisor. One of the duties of the role requires that Diocesan Advisors be involved in the recruitment and selection of religious education teachers and chaplains, a duty that involves making professional judgements, yet they are given no training to equip them for this onerous task. The need for role-specific training was emphasised by many of the Diocesan Advisors:

> *Particularly if the Diocesan Advisor does not have a background in religious education or any complementary skills set, which puts them in a position to actually genuinely contribute to the quality of religious education in that diocese.*

(DA3).

> *The Diocesan Advisors need support and they need training.*

(DA4).

> *If all the Diocesan Advisors have training in theology, they will have had formation as well. So, I think it's very important that all Diocesan Advisors would have the same qualifications and more than that of a teacher.*

(DA5).

The need for training was stressed by the study participants, not just in the area of training for the Diocesan Advisor's role but also the need for training of Boards of Management to equip them to fulfil their duty to uphold the school's founding intention. DA9 referred to first-hand experience and observation of the interactions between a Trust and a Board of Management where financial and practical issues concerning the

Board's role were prioritised by the Trust over the Board's role in protecting and promoting the Catholic ethos of the school:

As well as being a Diocesan Advisor, I am on the Board of Management of a Catholic school within a Trust and if religion or ethos is ever mentioned, then I would be the only one to mention it. The only representative who has come to speak to the Board of Management from a Trust body spoke about issues of finance and practical things, but religion was never mentioned.

(DA9).

The future of the Diocesan Advisors' visits in Catholic schools will depend on the understanding of the Boards of Management as to their remit regarding the protection of a school's founding intention. The Trust bodies are responsible for the training of Board members regarding ethos and are supported by the Joint Managerial Body (JMB) in this work annually. If Board members are not equipped to address ethos then the quality of the training regarding ethos may be in need of review. The Diocesan Advisors were unsure of the remit in this regard; their Handbook (2013) outlines a role for them with Boards of Management but only two participants mentioned any work in this regard, both of whom were members of a Board of Management rather than an external support as a Diocesan Advisor – in other words, it was their experiences on Boards, independent of their role as Diocesan Advisor – that had given them this insight.

In short, all the Diocesan Advisors who participated in the study were highly qualified across a variety of disciplines ranging from theology to sociology but, due to lack of role-specific training, had no shared body of knowledge, no shared skills set, and no shared body of research being built up – a circumstance that hardly allows for the enactment of the role in a professional manner.

4.3.3 Theme of Professionalism and How the Diocesan Advisors Perceive the Future Meaning and Trajectory of the Role
Stakeholders

All the Diocesan Advisors were aware that the landscape in which they had once worked with confidence and a strong identity and purpose has changed dramatically in a short period of time. Their speculations on the future of the role, it could be said, reflected this awareness as they focussed on the need for training and guidance in enacting their role within a new configuration of stakeholders and players in the field of

religious education whereby they might balance the traditional 'vocation' identity with other identities at play in this arena:

> *And I think that going forward our role would be really working with the Board and the trustees of the voluntary secondary schools to make sure that we at least safeguard our Catholic schools and that integrity and that it is never watered down.*
>
> <div align="right">(DA4).</div>

> *If we are going to call schools out that are not up to the mark, the Diocesan Advisor's role might be to flag something with the trust. I'm not sure how positive it would be for the Diocesan Advisor to take on the role of calling schools out. But maybe they would be the link between the bishop and the school, or the trust and the schools, but I don't think it would be our role to move on that – it would certainly be the role of trustees.*
>
> <div align="right">(DA6).</div>

In order to enact the role in a professional manner, the Diocesan Advisor would need to be the person who has comprehensive information and clarity on policies, procedures and developments in the areas of Catholic ethos and of religious education programmes. The advisor would need to be able to bring accurate and current information to the Trusts, Boards of Management, Principals, Chaplains, and teachers of RE on a regular and timely basis. The advisor could then guide the various stakeholders in addressing their obligations and oversee the implementation by the respective stakeholders of their duties and responsibilities.

Finances

Some of the Diocesan Advisors expressed concern about the dioceses' ability to fund the role and thereby bring it to a higher standard in the future as illustrated by DA15:

> *My concern is will dioceses have sufficient financial resources to finance Diocesan Advisors in their diocese in the future?*
>
> <div align="right">(DA15).</div>

The importance of the bishop to the success of the whole Diocesan Advisors' endeavour was raised by a number of the Diocesan Advisors and, in the overall scheme of things, the fragile and sometimes ephemeral nature of this dependency on the bishop was best articulated by DA13:

I've been very lucky up to now in that the bishop would be very tuned into the Catholic education. And our bishop has since retired, so what the future's going to hold, if our next bishop doesn't have as big a say in educational circles? I could see a little trouble down the road. And I think there's nothing, it's all too individualistic, but you know, it depends too much on who's there – and that can change so quickly.

(DA13).

Summary

This chapter examined the findings and grouped them according to the three themes of identity, ambiguity and professionalism. Each theme was looked at through the three parts of the research question.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the implications of the study findings that were identified as central issues and concerns of the Diocesan Advisors who participated in the study. The researcher responds to the key issues in light of the literature review. The research reported on here suggests that the Catholic education sector in Ireland is likely to be better served through further clarification of the role and mission of the Diocesan Advisor, taking due care to illuminate how their work complements the contributions of other stakeholders, especially religious education teachers and Boards of Management.

The research indicates that Diocesan Advisors currently hold to a broad and diverse range of perceptions as to what their primary foci are and should be. As anticipated, resource issues are a consideration, but not necessarily the most significant. The research suggests that many positive outcomes could emerge from furthering a dialogue among the Diocesan Advisors, their bishops and other stakeholders. This dialogue must be mindful of the insights and implications of contemporary critiques of the rapidly changing landscape of religious education and catechesis presented in Chapter 2, the literature review. This research suggests there is an openness to such a dialogue among the Advisors, as each is cognisant of the need for the role to evolve.

The rapidly changing landscape of religious education and catechesis, and the diversity of approaches provided in dioceses for the role of Diocesan Advisor, means that there is presently a lack of clarity regarding the remit. In this context it is hard for the Advisors themselves, let alone all those they work with, to understand what emphasis to bring to the role, what support they can be to others, and how significant any evaluation they make about what they see in schools can be.

5.2 Discussion on the Theme of Identity

The responsibilities of Diocesan Advisors are outlined in their Handbook entitled *The Role of the Diocesan Advisor for Post Primary Religious Education* (2013) which was drawn up by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference. The Handbook (2013) outlines eleven duties and responsibilities that are central to the role (Appendix G). The Diocesan Advisors live out their role in their respective dioceses according to the time allocated and resources provided them by their Bishop to fulfil the role. The Handbook (2013) has defined the identity of the role, however many of the Advisors report that the expectations in the Handbook (2013) are already outdated and the range is unreasonable

given the limited resource of time allocated in many dioceses for the delivery of the many functions therein. These and other challenges have presented themselves for the Advisors in the space that is dominated by civic demands and will be looked at in the sections below.

5.2.1 Vocational or Educational Approach

An agreed understanding of the exact nature and purpose of religious education in Ireland is not currently evident. It is clear that complexity exists in the terminology of catechesis, religious instruction and religious education, to name but a few of the iterations of the activity involved in delivering classroom based education in 'religion' (McGrady 2013). Differences in understanding exist even within a term; for instance, in Ireland, the Catholic Church and the State interpret the term *Religious Instruction* differently. The State's understanding of religious instruction is that it equates religious instruction with faith formation, while in the Catholic tradition religious instruction is aligned with a religious studies approach and is situated alongside a faith formation approach. Cullen (2013) asserts that a Catholic understanding of religious instruction refers to the academic and inter-disciplinary study of Christian religion in schools in a way that can contribute to catechetical or faith formation and development, and therefore refers to a more specific educational activity than that understood by its use in the documents of the State. The Diocesan Advisor is navigating this complexity in Catholic schools as well as multi-denominational schools. Their own backgrounds further complicate the task.

The Diocesan Advisors who participated in the study, have identity variance within their own cohort, leading to different interpretations of what the Advisor should be doing in a school. Some of the Diocesan Advisors come from a religious or clerical background and formation had been part of their preparation for lives of service so it is through this vocational lens that this cohort viewed and operated their remit. These participants also had a clear catechetical perspective which is most likely attributable to their theological studies and knowledge of Church documents. The influence of Church documents is readily discernible in the approach of this cohort (*GE; CT;* the publications of the CCE, in particular the GCD (1971) and GDC (1997) and *Share the Good News* (2010).

The remaining participants are lay people and data analysis showed a difference in the way some of this group spoke about the purpose of their role. Their lens is educational

and stems from their backgrounds in schools, either in management or in the teaching of religious education. They support the classroom activity with resources and suggest texts and offer methodological advice, but do not focus on the element of witness or evangelisation in either the classroom or the wider school community.

Clarification is needed on the distinction elicited from the two approaches within the group and a decision needs to be made on where the emphasis should lie. If equal emphasis is required then the educationally oriented advisor needs to be 'formed' and needs to apply a catechetical lens as well as an educational one, as currently the outcome is that the participants do not share a common approach, or language, in the role.

The Handbook (2013) is oriented towards the vocational/theological/catechetical approach and the distinction made the *GDC* (1997) that it is the *school* rather than the *classroom* that assists in and promotes faith education (para. 69) which suggests that it is therefore the task of the school that is considered to be catechetical and evangelising, and the task of the classroom to be a place for the academic study of religion. This distinction is not made in the Handbook (2013) however, which by its title *Role of the Diocesan Advisor for Post-Primary Religious Education* points towards Religious Education in the classroom and does not reflect a support system for the principal and other stakeholders. The Advisors themselves held various interpretations of who the service is aimed at.

Share the Good News (2010) refers to: *Trained Diocesan Advisors for Religious Education who will support the Principal and those teaching Religious Education, encouraging and resourcing the school in supporting and informing the faith of Catholic students* (p.209). *SGN* (2010) offers a broader remit both of catechesis and religious education including the RE teachers and the Principal and speaks of *'resourcing the school'* and not just classroom Religious Education. The role needs to reflect the balance evident in *SGN* (2010). It is interesting to note that *SGN* (2010) places support of the principal before support of the religious education teacher and an exploration of what that support might look like needs to happen.

Currently, induction training is offered to newly appointed principals and Boards of Management by the Joint Managerial Body (JMB) on behalf of, and in collaboration with Patrons and Trustees to support their governance of voluntary schools and this training currently involves a one-hour ethos session.

Supporting the Principal as Faith Leader in the Catholic School

The need for Diocesan Advisors to support principals in matters of Catholic ethos is timely. Neidhart and Lamb (2016) found that principals are worried that the next generation of school leaders might lack the knowledge, skills and attitudes to engage faith leadership in a changing context. Convey (2012) further identified a need for ongoing professional development for all staff as newer members do not share a sense of the importance of Catholic identity to the same extent as longer serving staff members. There is no need to design new resources for this work as several excellent resources are already developed, in particular by the Catholic Schools Partnership (resource pack for schools) and the Alliance for Catholic Education (School Culture Initiative). Upskilling of the Diocesan Advisors is required to facilitate this work in Catholic Schools. Partnerships with Trustee Bodies could also enhance the resourcing. The need for Diocesan Advisors to be fully knowledgeable of the rich background to Catholic education outlined in *SGN* (2010) is essential. *SGN* (2010) offers an overall perspective on catechesis and details the focus of stakeholders in several domains. Diocesan Advisors would bring an understanding to principals of how they can support the work of catechesis in the Catholic school and the work of religious education in all schools where there are Catholic students.

Educational Support for the Delivery of Classroom Religious Education

Educational support for the delivery of classroom Religious Education needs to be equally resourced and supported. Detailed knowledge of the religious education programmes; the methodologies best suited and the opportunities to present religious education in keeping within the ethos of a Catholic school all reside in this approach. The work of catechesis supports both a broad remit and a classroom focused remit. They are not mutually exclusive and the marriage of the two current orientations in the role is possible with a focus on formation and training, if the approach outlined in *Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland* (2010) is to be honoured.

The diocese of Westminster is currently using a multi-layered structure which allows for differentiation, *Advisers* and *Inspectors* hold different roles and are under the direction of *a Chief Adviser*. The multi-layered nature of this approach requires major investment and increased specialist personnel. The support element is provided by a diocesan advisor and the evaluation element is conducted by highly trained Diocesan

Inspectors who are in turn answerable to a Chief Inspector. These inspectors work with the Ofsted in inspections of schools in a professional engagement which delivers visible maps of the state of play in each of their schools (see section 5.4.1).

A clearer job description is needed to reflect where the emphasis in the role is to be and much is to be gained by pursuing this through dialogue with other stakeholders. If the emphasis in the role is educational, then the advisor must have expertise in education at both classroom level and, more importantly, managerial level. It is not enough to be a practitioner oneself, the role must offer more than this. It must offer oversight of the educational remit, understanding the needs of both Church and State. If it is intended to be chiefly a vocational role - to support the catechetical concept of witnesses who can imbue the classroom and school with a rich experience of faith - then a programme of spiritual enrichment needs to be developed and delivered by Diocesan Advisors who are themselves enriched by a depth of spiritual awareness and gifts. A resource for this task was developed in 2012 by Dr Amalee Meehan on behalf of Catholic Education an Irish Schools Trust (CEIST), entitled *Joining the Dots: A Programme of Spiritual Reflection and Renewal for Educators.* Joining the Dots (Meehan 2012) provides an excellent opportunity for educators to bring their own spirituality into conversation with the richness and wisdom of the Christian tradition and could be delivered by Diocesan Advisors if they themselves had experienced the programme. The material and approach in this book are timeless and offer a ready-made resource for the spiritual development of Diocesan Advisors and for the Catholic school principals and educators they encounter.

If the role of Diocesan Advisor is, on the other hand, to be an evaluative role with oversight of the quality of the Catholic experience - gathering information and relaying it to the stakeholders with the understanding that a school is or is not meeting certain benchmarking criteria that allow it to proclaim itself as Catholic – then a model of inspection needs to be developed. Are these approaches currently compatible and can every Diocesan Advisor deliver all elements currently? Hall et al. (2019) claim that experienced or trained inspectors make qualitatively different judgements about what is observed and heard than those of a naïve, inexperienced or poorly trained inspector (p.47). The findings reveal that while many Diocesan Advisors are only contracted for a one or two day per week role, the likelihood is that many elements of the role will not and cannot be fulfilled.

The generation of a revised role must not happen in a vacuum however, and best practice would see it within a process that allows bishops and others to reflect on their remit and their possible contribution and engagement going forward.

Seeking out 'witness' in an educational setting

Another question to emerge in today's context is if the Diocesan Advisor has in fact the right to seek out and /or support 'witness' in a teacher of religious education, who is not formed as a catechist and may have undertaken the study of religious education from a purely academic perspective? The Handbook (2013) states that within the Catholic school, there is an obligation on 'catechists' to 'impart knowledge' that respects the teaching of Christ and the Church. Does today's cultural milieu dictate a shift in emphasis or is the traditional formational aspect needed now more than ever? The need for a detailed job/role description outlining the exact remit in the religious education classroom, as distinct from the wider school community, is needed. Clarity in the remit of school stakeholders - Religious Educators / Chaplains / Principals / Boards of Management and Patrons - is also required.

The role of the Diocesan Advisor vis-à-vis Non-Examinable Religious Education

Currently the State is the accrediting body for the examinable programme and inspects it as such; but Religious Education outside of the examinable specification is not accredited and is not inspected for summative or formative assessment, or its value in teaching and learning. The emphasis in this study has been on the new Junior Cycle specification, due largely to the timing of the study which coincided with the introduction of the draft specification. This researcher, however, suggests that the accreditation of the non-examinable Religious Education and the mode of ensuring that the work of faith formation is faithful to the vision of catechesis in *SGN* (2010) needs to be prioritised. Deenihan (2002) identified the potential weakening of the instructional elements of Catholic Religious Education in the light of the State's involvement and where there is little or no oversight of what is happening in the non-examinable religious education classroom. This may be a concern. This accreditation cannot and should not be conducted by the State. It is for the bishops to ensure that it is happening in keeping with Canon Law. Concern for the standards of Religious Education at senior cycle level in particular, emerged in the study. Currently, Diocesan Advisors do not have a mandate to enter classrooms and where this has occurred it is generally down to

goodwill. The legality of these classroom visits could be challenged at any stage and in order to regularise the practice, bishops must take ownership of the non-examinable space for Religious Education and set standards and benchmarks that can be assessed formally by a Diocesan Advisor with permission to be in the non-examinational Religious Education classroom. This accreditation of non-examinable Religious Education is urgently required at senior cycle level as the subject is being eroded while it has no status or oversight (DA7 & DA15). The religious education teacher in this context has no measurement or acknowledgement of the work they are doing and no indicators of where the work can be improved in the same way that the religious education teacher in the examinable specification has.

5.2.2 Religious Education Specification

The NCCA Religious Education Specification (2019) is clear, and the right of a denominational school to impart it, in keeping with the ethos of the school, is transparent. Diocesan Advisors need to help Catholic schools and religious education teachers to clarify where faith formation and worship can be provided for in the school and find a supportive system of ensuring that this happens. The documents that emerged from the Catholic bishops to guide the Catholic school in applying the NCCA specification offer a clear and encouraging approach to ensuring that the ethos of a Catholic school is safeguarded in the design and delivery of the new specification. The three documents drawn up by the Council for Catechetics of the Irish Episcopal Conference i) *Religious Education and the Framework for Junior Cycle* (2017); ii) *Choosing Your Textbook for Religious Education in the Junior Cycle* (2019) and iii) *Junior Cycle Religious Education in the Catholic School* (2019) provide some guidance for the religious education teacher and other stakeholders.

Diocesan Advisors can draw on the documents to support the work of examinable Religious Education at Junior Cycle level, (or access them to guide classroom Religious Education which is not for examination at Junior Cycle level) to support the rich delivery of the programme and foster faith formation. Regarding worship and ritual, the documents give many suggestions for the school towards maintaining and strengthening its Catholic identity in the secular landscape. Boards of Management will need to be supported in this responsibility also. Highly specialised Diocesan Advisors could deliver this support to Boards of Management going forward.

It should be noted that at the time of the research (late 2018 and early 2019) the specification for Religious Education was in draft form only and the Diocesan Advisors did not have the final document. This particular time was also a time of great uncertainty due to the publication of the circulars (cl.0013/18; cl 60062/18) which refer to ETB schools and Community schools but not voluntary Catholic schools. The lack of clarity was a cause of great concern for the Diocesan Advisors and this anxiety emerges in many of the narratives about the future of the role, in particular in relation to a sense of crisis in the Church.

5.2.3 'Ongoing crisis'

A number of the participants recounted experiencing a sense of isolation and disconnection, talking of how the role had "gradually been eroded" rendering the Diocesan Advisor "peripheral" to the workings of the diocese, and concluding "that's quite a difficult space to be working in". In particular the narratives of DA1; DA2; DA4 DA7 and DA9 are more fearful of the impact of cultural and legislative change than others. These Diocesan Advisors are from the catechetically formed, vocational cohort and perhaps feel under more threat as a result. The lack of clarity available to them at that time explains the unease about the focus in this context. The subsequent documents published by the Council for Catechetics of the Irish Episcopal Conference - *Religious Education and the Framework for Junior Cycle* (2017); *Choosing Your Textbook for Religious Education in the Junior Cycle* (2019) *Junior Cycle Religious Education in the Catholic School* (2019) offer increased assurance for the Diocesan Advisors and the religious education teachers about the ways in which the Catholic ethos could be honoured. The call to be people of hope must be reiterated and support offered to school staff, the students and to all stakeholders at a time of challenge and change. The sense of hope evident in *SGN* (2010) must be harnessed and utilised to scaffold the Catholic school and the Diocesan Advisor during a time of change. The Advisors were also awaiting in-service on *Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland* (2010) at the time the study concluded, as many of them had taken up the role in recent years and had not received in-service on the directory. Bishops too must support their appointees in a changing landscape. This can be done by reviewing the Handbook of 2013 as a matter of urgency and offering intensive preparation to those tasked with supporting Catholic Religious Education in a secular culture.

Identity alignment

The findings suggested that whilst the formation and agency (Sullivan 2017) of the Diocesan Advisor traditionally had been aligned to that of school management and the religious education teacher, in many instances this alignment no longer exists and this gap is leading to some Diocesan Advisors experiencing identity confusion. Building on the work of Burke (1991), Stets (2003; 2005) considers the relationship between emotion and identity in social interactions. Stets (2003; 2005) theorises that where the identity of a social actor is affirmed by others in a given situation, the actor experiences positive emotions which strengthen self-perception and identity – and this sense of positive identity may be witnessed in the narrative of DA3 who has established a broad network of working relationships with all stakeholders in religious education in the diocese. According to Stets (2003; 2005) the opposite holds true: receiving social feedback that does not correspond with one's identity may induce a negative emotional state wherein the social actor's self-view deteriorates and that identity is difficult to sustain; some of the Diocesan Advisors who participated in the study were not receiving affirmation of their role and identity, leading to a diminished self-view as 'peripheral' to all the players in field of religious education in the diocese.

The literature review shows that while there may be a range of characteristics, traits and principles used to define the essential nature of a Catholic school (Miller 2006; Congregation for Catholic education 1997; Catholic Schools Partnership 2010), no universally accepted definition of a Catholic school has been established (Miller 2006). In today's Ireland, the findings suggest, there is a profound need for school personnel to negotiate and agree meanings so that the school's identity is clear, and all stakeholders can relate to that identity. In this endeavour, Treston's (2007) framework may prove useful in highlighting some truths about the direction a school is going in. Treston (2007) distinguishes between schools that may be defined as 'outer directed' or 'inner directed' – the outer directed school values efficiency, public image and management, whereas the inner directed school, while attending to the issues of management, insist the core gospel values drive the energies and policies of school life (p.4). Given the multiplicity of demands and directives that schools are subject to, especially where a school is answerable to *both* church and state, it may be that the once 'inner directed' aspiration of a school has, over time and under pressure to serve two masters, been drifting towards a more 'outer directed' outlook in its daily processes and practices.

This work of not losing sight of the inner vision and founding intention could be supported by the Diocesan Advisor and could be directed by drawing on *Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland* (2010) as a tool for exploring and arriving at new understandings of the school's purpose as a Catholic school. Lane's (2015) renewed anthropology based on Vatican II documents and *Laudate Si* could prove helpful in this context.

For Treston (2007) while the ecclesial mission will ensure a focus on sacraments and knowledge of doctrine, a theology of God orientation is focused on the mission of Jesus as life-giving and humanizing of society. It may be feared by some of the theologically formed vocational Diocesan Advisors that the ecclesial roots will perish in a school where the State continues to encroach, however Taylor (2007) calls for Catholics to let go of the past but not the *tradition* and to find this identity in an approach that strongly features *agape*. It is this balance that needs to be developed in the preparation of this role into the future.

5.3 Discussion on the Theme of Ambiguity

This section will address the ambiguity surrounding evaluation of religious education. It will contrast the approach of the State Inspectorate with that of the Diocesan Advisor and introduce the idea of a co-professional approach. The section will also view shortcomings in the reporting mechanisms currently and contrast this reporting style with the State Inspectorate's reporting practices. Finally, the section considers the ambiguity of the advisor's role in schools other than Catholic schools.

5.3.1 Inspection or Evaluation

The Handbook (2013) addresses accountability to the bishop and other stakeholders. It refers to the inspection provided by the State in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland and states that Canon Law assigns the role of the oversight of religious education to the local bishop (Code of Canon Law #801–806). The Diocesan Advisor is appointed by the bishop in the exercise of this pastoral responsibility. In aligning the role with State inspection under Canon Law and signifying that it is duly assigned to the Diocesan Advisor, there is an inherent implication that something is being inspected or evaluated. According to Hislop (2017) State inspection has sought to bring about evaluation for knowledge, accountability and improvement (Chemlinsky 1997) and has devised a professional and thorough system for the implementation of this and the transparency of the findings using 'visible maps' (Olsson 2007). There is clarity in the

approach by the State. Hislop (2017) identifies key themes that will inform the development of inspection and evaluation in the Inspectorate in the coming years. Among these are the following:

> *Embedding standards for educational provision in schools and settings; increasing the impact of inspection; improving the ways in which parents and students engage in inspections; promoting and fostering excellence; working with and supporting the quality of school (or other setting) leaders; improving how data is used to support both inspections and self-evaluations and providing the loop of learning between schools and the development of educational policy*

> (pp. 19-21).

These pointers offer an insight into the rigour and information that inspections can provide. Hislop (2017) also offers suggestions regarding how academic institutions, such as the Centre for Evaluation, Quality and Inspection within Dublin City University's Institute of Education, can support inspection and evaluation wherever it is needed by school settings, individual learners, parents, practitioners and teachers with whom they work.

Identifying a school's strengths in ethos has much to recommend it and if the five traits identified by Miller (2006) are present then the advisor works on maintaining and supporting this lived culture. Knowing where the school is at with its identity is essential as a starting point as Miller (2006) asks *'how do you know if you are achieving what you say you are?'* (p.61). In referring to quality assurance Miller (2006) proposes that a 'Catholic' accreditation is required, almost a re-commitment to what the school values and suggests benchmarks are applied to establish the basis for the standards needed. This process, if collaborative with all partners would *'serve to identify, clarify and strengthen its effectiveness in its service of Christ and the Church'* (p.61).

The Handbook needs to be revisited and must clarify the purpose of the role of the Diocesan Advisor in the context of the educational space that religious educators reside in today. If evaluation is to be part of the role then, there must be clarity on what is being evaluated; what measures or instruments are being used; and what is the outcome of the findings of the evaluation.

Co-Professional Evaluation

Hislop (2017) claims the Inspectorate is getting inspection and evaluation "right" particularly regarding the commitment to co-professional evaluation of schools. The Catholic Church might consider seeking a co-professional arrangement with the State Inspectorate in evaluating Catholic religious education and perhaps the Catholic identity of a school. Hislop (2017) refers to two examples of collaboration: Teagasc, the agricultural development authority, sought detailed briefings on quality measures for agricultural colleges and requested that the Inspectorate "construct and carry out whole-college evaluations (WCEs) using the co-professional and collaborative approaches" developed for the schools sector (p.17). On a much larger scale, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs asked in 2015, for the Inspectorate to develop an education-focussed inspection of early years' provision within the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme that would complement the regulatory inspections carried out by TUSLA. For this task, they:

> *Set out from the beginning to work closely with a sector that was wary of additional inspection. We recruited early years' specialists from the sector as inspectors. We developed a research-informed quality framework. We talked with and listened to around 2,000 practitioners at different fora across the country. Our co-professional working has been praised as a model of inspection that was firmly focused* (p.17).

The Inspectorate has developed strong collaborative links with inspectorates in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and within the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates. They were commissioned in 2016 to provide external quality assurance for the evaluation of an intervention project undertaken by the Education and Training Inspectorate in Northern Ireland. If Ofsted and the Catholic Church can collaborate in the UK, and the Inspectorate in the Irish Republic have already collaborated with groups to develop co-professional models of inspection, the opportunity for the Catholic Church to seek the advice and direction of the Inspectorate and collaborate with them is timely. This idea is presented in Chapter 6 as an option for the future.

5.3.2 Reporting Mechanisms

In the Inspectorate, reports are central to the inspection process and provide visible maps:

> *School inspection reports have to fulfil both improvement and accountability functions: they have to provide guidance for improvement and affirmation of good practice, they have to speak to a professional audience, and they also have to report accurately to parents and others* (Hislop 2017 p.13)**.**

The Handbook for the Diocesan Advisors (2013) however place emphasis on the rigour of the reporting stating:

> *An element of evaluation and consequent reporting is also part of the work of the Diocesan Advisor in the area of faith formation. An Annual Report should be made for the local bishop. Diocesan Advisors have traditionally involved themselves with the resourcing and support of the mainstream syllabi for Religious Education – including those for State examinations. This is alongside the professional development services of the DES.*

The Handbook (2013) suggests that reporting could be made to several stakeholders including the school principal. Feedback to the school principal is both a courtesy and a requisite. If the work of the schools' Religious Education department deserves affirmation then the principal is given the knowledge; similarly, if the work of the Religious Education department is failing in its duty to incorporate the school's characteristic spirit, then the principal needs to be aware of this also. If the meeting between the Diocesan Advisor and the principal remains at the level of a greeting only, then the principal will in time perhaps, not prioritise the meeting - the school of 2020 is a busy place and the likelihood is that a principal will be too busy to 'greet' the advisor. If the purpose of the meeting was clearly stated and involved a measure of support at a professional level for the principal's faith leadership role, then the meeting may warrant priority.

The Handbook (2013) also suggests that there may be merit in submitting a report to the school's Board of Management. This researcher suggests that perhaps this could be a two-way process - the Board reporting to the Diocesan Advisor on the faith life of the school from a governance perspective and the Diocesan Advisor reporting to the Board on what is happening on the ground.

The local bishop is identified as a destination for a report from the Diocesan Advisor. The Handbook suggests that *The Diocesan Advisor's report should include information on syllabus, qualification, resources, time-allocation and methodology, and evidence of the living ethos of a Catholic school*. The majority of the participants in the study

submit a report to the bishop annually. However, there is no evidence of follow-up actions taken. Further, the implications of data privacy need to be understood in terms of the sharing of any personal data outside of the employer. The need for compliance with all legal directives regarding employment must be respected. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (2018) is a regulation in EU law on data protection and privacy in the European Union and the European Economic Area. The Diocesan Advisor must ensure that compliance is not breached on any issue regarding identifiable individuals.

Currently the reporting mechanisms are haphazard and somewhat informal in many instances. They do not offer detailed standardised outcomes which are benchmarked against agreed criteria set by all stakeholders. The reports are not available to parents and other stakeholders and there is no evidence that the reports provide a springboard for addressing deficits in current practices where they exist. There is an urgent need to identify what needs to be known and who needs to know it.

5.3.3 Schools Other Than Voluntary Catholic Schools

The Diocesan Advisor's role in Catholic schools, following the introduction of the new Junior Cycle specification, has been supported by the Irish Catholic Bishops by resourcing the three guiding documents. These documents go a long way towards offering direction for all those involved in Catholic schools and in the delivery of religious education. The Diocesan Advisor will have this clarity in their Catholic schools remit, however they also serve Catholic students in schools other than Catholic schools and there is no such clarity.

The Handbook (2013) mentions reporting (either by a written report or in a meeting) to the local Education and Training Board (ETB) in the Republic of Ireland. Since the ETB has responsibility to provide 'Religious Instruction' in vocational schools and community colleges, under the provisions of Circular 7/79 and the Model Agreements of Designated Community Colleges and the Deeds of Trust of Community schools, the Diocesan Advisor should foster links with the local ETB, ideally through the CEO or Education Officer. Implications of the circulars 0013/18 and 0062/18 may impact on this, however. Dialogue at the level of the Episcopal Conference is needed as to their role in ETB schools in the light of their requirement to nurture the faith life of Catholic students therein while cognisant of legislation regarding Religious Education (Cl's

0013/18 and 0062/18). Diocesan Advisors are currently unclear on their role in ETB schools. In short:

> *It is very difficult for the Diocesan Advisor to exercise the role in the contemporary climate outside of a policy framework and outside of clarification for ourselves and others as to what our contribution is in the overall scheme of things.*

(DA3).

This comment by DA3 draws together the three themes central to this study: the Diocesan Advisors grappling with identity issues, their need for clarity on the meaning and purpose of the role, and on where it fits within a wider set of relationships; and the need for the development of professionalism, not least in the area of policy-making so that an agreed framework could provide direction and guidance, not just to Diocesan Advisors but to all interested parties in the field of religious education in the Republic of Ireland.

It should be noted that some progress has been made since May 2020 between the Education and Training Board Ireland (ETBI) and the Episcopal Conference regarding finalising a Patron's Framework for ETB schools. This agreement, when finalised should offer increased clarity for the participants and all future appointees.

One of the key root causes of the Diocesan Advisors' dilemma lies in the vague and ambiguous nature of their Handbook (2013), which the findings suggest is no longer fit for purpose:

> *I re-read the handbook recently. I mean things date so quickly; the handbook was assuming that wherever there were Catholic pupils that we had a right to supervise and support the type of Religious Education. I think the new specification is more of a separate vision of religious education really. I think we do need to be aware the handbook was a document just for raising awareness of the role.*

(DA4).

Given that the Handbook (2013) to which all the study participants referred multiple times was only produced as a means of "raising awareness of the role" and was never developed, or updated to alert Diocesan Advisors to the implications of the State's competing vision for religious education, it is not surprising that the Diocesan Advisors had vastly differing interpretations of the meaning and purpose of the role. It is also not

surprising that the theme of ambiguity should be identified as central to their lived experiences in their enactment of the role.

For the Diocesan Advisors who participated in the study, clarity is needed not just in practical terms on the 'doing' of the role, but also on definitions and meanings of the various roles, highlighting a need for inter-stakeholder debate:

> *We should be comfortable around the dialogue on our role, but we have no definitive positions and we find it hard to articulate in this changing context.*
>
> (FGP).

Carter and Harper (2016) offer a 'common sense' approach to the avoidance of role ambiguity in an organisation. Defining a role as "a set of expectations that govern the behaviour of an occupant of a specific position within a social structure", role ambiguity occurs when the expectations associated with the role are "vague, imprecise, or unclear to the role occupant" (p.1) as in the case of Diocesan Advisors trying to discern the 'expectations' attached to the role from an outdated handbook, resulting in stress and negative consequences that affect, not just the advisor but others with whom he/she interacts in delivering the role. Consequently, the advisor is likely to experience a negative sense of self, the intensity of which depends on "how central the role is to their self-concept" (p.2). The narratives of the participants place strong emphasis on the question of identity in this study, suggesting that, for them, there is a very strong correlation between the role and their self-concept. Carter and Harper (2016) offer a common sense solution: role ambiguity is minimised when employees are given a clear definition of the role and its associated expectations, and a clear explanation of where the role fits in relation to colleagues; and when regular and effective communication is maintained between role occupants and their superiors to appraise the role holder's performance. The Irish Catholic Bishops need to address this.

5.4 Discussion on the Theme of Professionalism

Shortcomings were identified in the possibilities for professionalism offered to the Diocesan Advisors by the parameters of contracts, appointments processes, limitations of training offered, and time available. This section looks at some of the shortcomings in the role as it is currently enacted.

5.4.1 Professional Structure

According to Evetts (2011) there are two different forms of professionalism in knowledge-based, service sector work. These are defined as 'organisational' and

'occupational' professionalism (p.7). *Organisational* professionalism uses hierarchical structures of authority. Accountability is by means of externalised forms of regulation, target setting and performance review – thus sitting well within the State's model of inspection using visible maps. *Occupational* professionalism is discourse constructed with collegial based authority; discretion is applied and trust is part of the clients' and employers' understanding of the role. This sits well with the Diocesan Advisors approach currently and is based on invisible mapping of outcomes. The occupational professionalism that currently exists is from 'within' Church. Church negotiates the role with the advisor and is not answerable to external agencies. However, in the role of advisor in a school context, the boundaries extend further than Church, due to the educational enterprise of the field within which the advisor works. This field requires both occupational and organisational professionalism from those who are involved. The Church, as employer of the Diocesan Advisor, must be seen to apply organisational systems to the role on a par with standards applicable to other areas in the field of education. This must be addressed if the role of Diocesan Advisor is to continue in the professional sphere of education.

Recruitment processes

Regarding recruitment, for instance, the mode of recruitment was held up to scrutiny in this cohort of participants and the findings show that it is currently undertaken in a variety of ways. Advisors coming from a religious or clerical background are generally expected to undertake whatever roles their bishop proffers as part of their vocation to religious /clerical life. The majority of the remaining participants experienced an informal approach by the bishop or his secretary, when they retired from other roles within education, and a small number followed a more formal route through an application and interview process. The method of informal appointments does not hold up to standards expected in professional roles within education and must be addressed by the Catholic Church. All other professional school personnel undergo rigorous selection procedures. The appointment of a principal for example, is a process that requires about six to eight weeks engagement between the Patron/Trustees and the Board of Management of the school where the vacancy exists. It is conducted in stages and Trustees and Patrons are guided in voluntary schools for this task by the Joint Managerial Body. The preliminary stage of the process involves conducting a needs analysis of what is required in the post in a given school. All stakeholders, including

students, have a say. This information influences the questions on the application form (which is currently 18 pages long) and allows the selection panel to see how an applicant meets their needs. A shortlisting process follows based on the criteria set by the panel arising out of the needs analysis, and only candidates meeting a certain bar will be called for interview. The interview panel of (usually) five professionals will interrogate the candidate to find the best fit for the school at that time. The process is thorough and professional. This researcher suggests that the filling of the role of Diocesan Advisor should be taken in a similarly rigorous fashion, in order to appoint people who can go on to support principals, Boards of Management, and teachers in the role, according to the ideals set out in *SGN* (2010). Unless the role is pitched at this level, stakeholders may not have confidence in the relevance of the role to the school community, in terms of both catechesis and faith development in the religious education classroom.

Sexton (2007) identified professional traits including the presence of a recognisable knowledge base. For the study participants, there was no uniform knowledge base and this gave rise to different approaches in enacting the role. There is no set training schedule on appointment and many merely mirrored what the predecessor had done. The need for training considering the complexity of the landscape is evident. An extensive degree of autonomy is also identified by Sexton (2007) as a trait of professionalism. The participants could all be said to have this degree of autonomy but sometimes the autonomy slipped into isolationism and participants felt 'peripheral' in a changing landscape. Another trait sees professionalism as intellectually based with extended training (Sexton 2007) and while the participants were not complaining about the level of intellectually based training and continuous professional development, the shortfall in expertise in a changing landscape left some feeling adrift. The participants all embody what Locke (2004) refers to as the service attribute, with a keen sense that a vocation or call is at the heart of their work.

Examination of the everyday practices of the Diocesan Advisors suggested a need for the development of an inclusive professional model of practice to guide and inform, not just the Diocesan Advisors but other stakeholders in the field of religious education. Structures in Britain currently offer multi-layered support for the work of ethos in Catholic schools and the religious education provided therein. The NBRIA network is the body that oversees this work and monitors standards across all dioceses. The

diocesan bishop has both canonical and statutory rights to inspect all aspects of education in a Catholic school. The diocese of Westminster is an example of best practice in this regard.

Exemplar of Westminster Diocese

In Westminster Diocese for example, the system is finely tuned and professionally organised. The Archbishop has appointed an *Education Commission* to carry out his responsibility to set policy in educational matters and to be responsible for the Westminster Education Service which serves all Catholic schools and colleges in his diocese. A *Director of Education* is accountable to the Commission. *Foundation governors* are appointed by the Chair of the Education Commission to sit on the governing body of a maintained Catholic school and they have the responsibility of representing the bishop in his role as teacher and leader in the diocese. *Diocesan Inspectors* are selected, trained and appointed by the Westminster Education Service in the name of the Archbishop. *Diocesan Advisers* are members of the Education Service; they are delegated to assist schools to develop religious education programmes in accordance with the Religious Education Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools. They also assist the Archbishop in the appointment of head teachers, deputy heads, subject teachers and religious education teachers as well as Chaplains. On behalf of the Archbishop they visit the schools to review and monitor classroom religious education and they support the Catholic life of the school. A further function is that they support schools in their preparation for Diocesan Inspection and follow through with supporting the school with issues arising from the inspection. Governing bodies of Catholic schools have a duty to uphold the identity of the school as a Catholic Community and to ensure that classroom Religious Education is taught in accordance with the teachings, doctrines, discipline and general and particular norms of the Catholic Church. They have a legal duty to run the school in accordance with the terms of its Trust.

The Diocesan Chief Inspector is appointed by the Diocesan Education Commission to ensure that the diocesan inspection process is suitable to the needs of diocesan schools and colleges, and provides the archbishop with a clear and rigorous annual report on the state and quality of Catholic schools in the diocese. The Chief Inspector is responsible to the Director of Education for the inspection process, the appointment and training of inspectors and the annual report to the Diocesan Education Commission. It is clear that religious education is taken seriously in a system that has such rigorous support and

accountability structures. The visible and invisible maps are valued and both organisational and occupational professionalism (Evetts 2011) are present. Much can be learned by dioceses in the Republic of Ireland about the value placed on classroom religious education and the Catholic identity of the school in this example. The status of religious education is confirmed by such rigour, investment and interest from the bishop.

Links could be forged between NAPPDA and NBRIA for collaboration and networking as suggested by McConville (1966).

5.4.2 Contracts

Part-time arrangements versus employment in full-time positions undermines of a common approach across dioceses. Advisors across the cohort have different working conditions. Most have part-time arrangements with one and two day per week roles. This impacts on the range and quality of what can be offered to schools. It also reflects a very limited sense of the involvement of the diocese in the work of religious education and in the wider remit of catechesis in the whole school. There are only two participants (DA4 and DA8) who are fully allocated to the role of Diocesan Advisor at second-level (at the time of the study). Other participants combine the role with primary schools and other commitments of a pastoral nature.

One participant expressed concern about implications of the short-lived nature of the role:

> *Diocesan Advisors tend to be in the role for a relatively short term, and then the whole thing has to be started from scratch again, almost. It can be hard to, you know, you have to build up a reservoir of goodwill.*

(DA4).

This drawback could be redressed if more Diocesan Advisors were to be recruited from the workforce rather than favouring recruits from the retired community. It follows from this that recruitment procedures would have to be made more transparent and fair as opposed to the current dominant model of informal and closed methods of recruitment.

Contracts currently are not standardised and many participants took up the role almost as a gesture of goodwill to the bishop after serving a lifetime of teaching in a Catholic school. Others serve in their capacity as religious and clergy and often fit the role into a

very demanding and busy parish schedule. McConville (1966) noted the many shortcomings of how the role was resourced and managed by individual dioceses.

5.4.3 Information Compilation

A decision must be made regarding how much responsibility the Diocesan Advisor has for oversight of ethos across the school as distinct from their remit with teachers of religious education. If the Diocesan Advisor is to be charged with this responsibility fully then perhaps cooperation could be sought from Patrons and Trust bodies on the nature of the information needed and the resourcing and dissemination of this. Otherwise, there is the risk of overlap of provision by the various groups resulting in information overload on some topics and insufficient information on others. The Diocesan Advisors could lead the way and include opportunities for dialogue with the aforementioned groups, if they are adequately trained in all specialised areas of ethos in a Catholic school and if they are employed in a professional full-time capacity.

In recent years, material and resources of exceptional quality reached school offices but did not have the much needed support on implementation. A skilled advisor could prepare teams within clusters of schools, along the same lines as the Alliance for Catholic Education currently does, to engage religious educators, chaplains and Boards of Management in an understanding of religious education and catechesis in Catholic schools. The Catholic Education Partnership, due to come into being in October 2020, might take the lead on investigating possibilities of collaboration on this and other work with and for Catholic schools.

5.4.4 Finance

The fear of many of the participants regarding the future of the role revolves around finance and the ability of a diocese to continue to support a role such as this into the future. Already some dioceses have reduced the provision of the service to one or two days per week. The Diocesan Advisors expressed vulnerability around the future of the role where a bishop was due to be replaced and where the replacement may not be as aware of the needs of the schools for support of this kind. The bishop is central to the question of financial decision-making in this regard. Bishops in smaller dioceses could combine to resource an advisor between two or three small rural dioceses. Investment in the structures to support Catholic schools and religious education is needed and investment in the oversight work of the Diocesan Advisor is also required, if evaluation is to be part of the role in a professionalised way.

The literature suggests that the concept of professionalism is context-bound; and the term 'professionalism' has socially constructed meanings that are influenced by policies and ideologies at play in a given social context (Sachs 2001; Hilferty 2005). The findings show that the Diocesan Advisor is operating in the professional context of a school, with a vocational mission sometimes not fully aligned with the professional skills required to support other professionals. Professionalising the aspects of the role that require specialist knowledge is urgently required.

On a more optimistic note, many of the elements of professional characteristics identified in the Hay McBer Report (2000), albeit in relation to the teaching profession, may be discerned in the model of practice applied in the diocese of DA3, not least regarding the elements of meticulous planning and setting of expectations, close involvement of the bishop and solid inter-stakeholder relationships. It is clear that DA3 enjoys the vision and support of the bishop for this role. Structures have been developed and refined to allow for a blend of the catechetical and the educational in a dialogical framework. There is no sense of threat or fear in an 'us and them' style approach of some of the other participants. The Diocesan Advisor in this instance has a confidence in their ability to negotiate, deliver and do so in partnership with the other stakeholders. The role is resourced both financially and collegially by the bishop.

Professionalisation

While professionalism refers to the practice and behaviours of the individual, professionalisation relates to the occupation *per se* (Hoyle 1980). While the individual Diocesan Advisors in this study were professionals in their own right, for instance as qualified teachers, the findings identified a lack of professionalism in the workings of most of the dioceses in relation to the provision and oversight of the role. In terms of professionalism, the three key failings identified in the findings were lack of clarity, low levels of accountability and lack of training – all leading to role confusion and identity confusion.

Role-specific training for all stakeholders would be a first step in developing professionalism in the field of religious education, followed by provision of continuous professional development. The findings showed that the National Association of Post-Primary Diocesan Advisors (NAPPDA) while beneficial for Diocesan Advisors in its provision of collegial support, networking opportunities, and workshops, does not offer role-specific comprehensive training, or academic modules leading to accreditation.

Arguably, provision of academic modules on specific aspects of the Diocesan Advisor's role would enhance the perception of the value of the role and would lend prestige to the role from the perspective of other stakeholders who interact with the Diocesan Advisor.

This section considers the training needs, not just of the Diocesan Advisor but also of other stakeholders and, in so doing, sheds light on the various perspectives at play in the field of Catholic religious education.

Training for Diocesan Advisors

While the Diocesan Advisors with a religious background had been 'formed' in their training for religious life, the lay participants had not. A programme of preparation for all Diocesan Advisors might provide a standardised level of 'formation' for the role. The *Joining the Dots* programme devised by Meehan (2012) on behalf of CEIST could offer a rich spiritual preparation for all Diocesan Advisors as a starting point.

There is an expectation outlined in the Handbook (2013) that Diocesan Advisors participate on interview panels for the selection and appointment of religious education teachers and chaplains; therefore training in this aspect of the role could be beneficial to the Diocesan Advisor. There is, however, a problem in this regard for the Diocesan Advisor – if the ideal religious education teacher is one who is dedicated to the Catholic faith, the Diocesan Advisor is limited in the extent to which interview questions may be framed in pursuit of the ideal candidate; and if, in the past, it could be taken for granted that a graduate teacher had received 'formation' for the role, that is not the case today. State rulings forbidding discrimination on grounds of religious affiliation in the appointment of religious education teachers, as well as rulings forbidding discrimination on admission to teacher training colleges has created a chasm in the traditional relationship whereby those conducting the recruitment of teachers and principals could take for granted that candidates had received formation over the course of their training. Cullen (2013) states that, prior to the 1990s, students who wished to train to be teachers of religion had to undergo an interview to assess their suitability for the profession, as well as meeting entry requirements. A significant shift occurred in the 1990s, when entry onto all programmes for Initial Teacher Education came under the remit of the Central Admissions Office. The policy of interviewing candidates was discontinued. Since then the personal commitment and religious affiliation of the student can no longer be part of the admissions process.

As discussed in the findings, the Diocesan Advisors' Handbook *The Role of the Diocesan Advisor for Post-Primary Religious Education* (2013) refers to evaluation and support as part of the duties and responsibilities of the role. However, it would be impossible for any training body to provide training on this aspect of the role in the absence of a benchmark against which the evaluation could be conducted. Currently all the participating Diocesan Advisors, with the exception of DA3 and to a lesser extent DA4, operate out of an "eyes and ears" (Coffey 2010) approach, in other words, they are using mainly invisible maps (Olsson 2007) to gauge the workings of the school and the religious education teacher on behalf of the bishop. The mechanism for evaluating the work of religious education and catechesis in schools needs to be prioritised if weaknesses are to be identified and addressed.

Continuous professional development must address specific contextual needs (Sachs 2004), and so ongoing training for Diocesan Advisors would have to include updates on developments in educational policy and legislation that impact on the role, updates in curriculum change and classroom methodologies, and appraisal of relationships with all stakeholders. Once the role of the Diocesan Advisor is clearly defined, even re-defined, further role-specific training needs can be identified.

The section closes with a symbolic representation of the two approaches currently at play in the oversight of the religious education in a school, showing their contrasting understandings of the purpose of religious education, and their contrasting methodologies:

Figure 4: Church support of Religious Education:
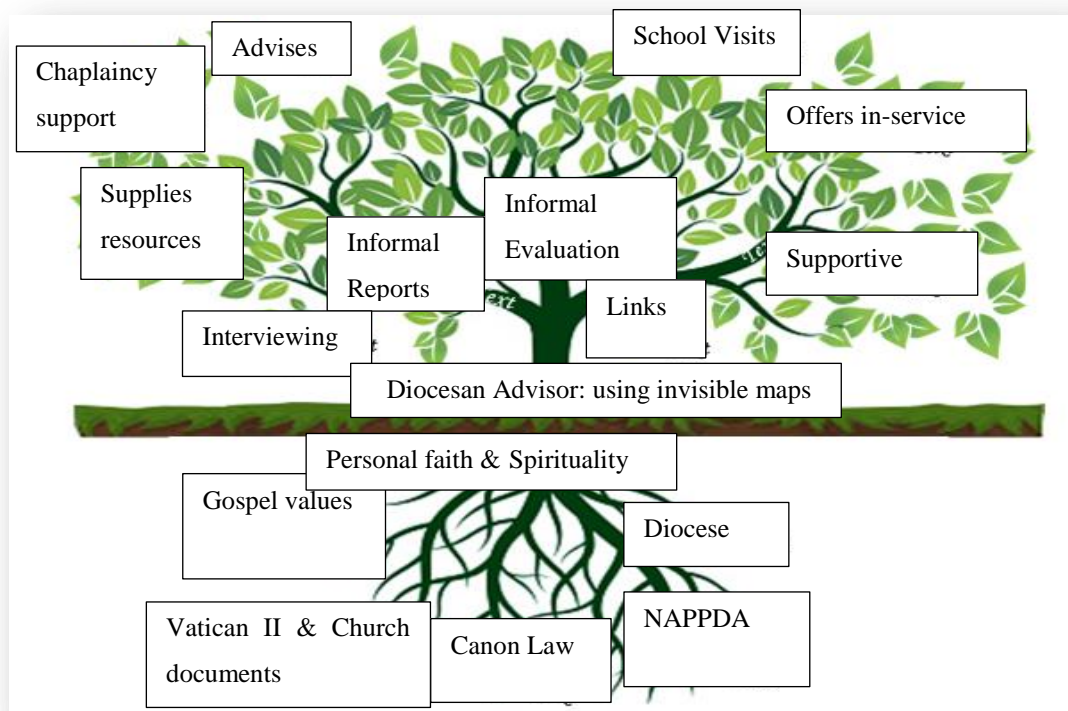
Figure 4: Current Church model of supporting Religious Education

Church Model: Using Invisible Maps

Diocesan Advisors currently operate out of a supportive model, serving the school and the religious education teacher in particular. There is no statutory basis for the role; the remit is based on Canon Law and Gospel values. Key aspects of the role include visiting schools, organising annual in-service, and acting as the 'eyes and ears' of their bishop (Coffey 2010). The Diocesan Advisor is a person of faith with a vocational orientation at the heart of the role. The advisor supports faith-based religious education in all school types and supports the ethos of Catholic schools. Inspection is not regarded as part of the role but evaluation of religious education is expected.

Figure 5: The State Model of Inspection: Using Visible Maps
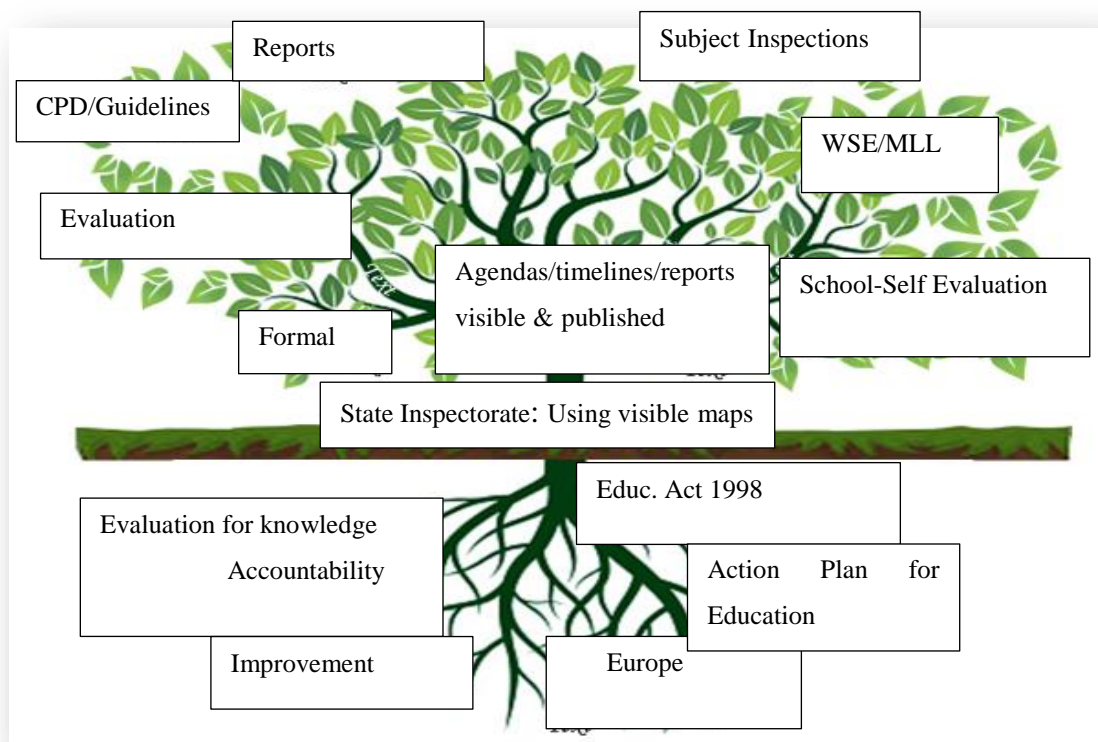
Figure 5: State inspection model

In the Republic of Ireland, the State ensures that Religious Education, as a examinable subject at second level is inspected by the same standards as every other state curriculum subject and is not responsible for ensuring that Catholic schools are living the Gospel message and remaining true to their founding intention. State inspection is rigorous, following from which a formal report is published. The report presents a factual account of the strengths and weaknesses found during the visit of the inspector(s). The aim of inspection is to identify areas of potential improvement, and, ultimately, each school should be able to 'self-inspect' following a process supported by the Department of Education and Skills, known as School Self-Evaluation (SSE).

5.5 Options for the Future

Where does the new direction in religious education leave the role of the Diocesan Advisor? Might a model of practice be negotiated between church and state that can accommodate both identities?

Chapter 6 outlines possible options - some options are derived from the narratives of the study participants, while others are offered by the researcher, based on the findings from this study and from reviewing the literature.

This research identified the systems and structures operative in the diocese of DA3 as an exemplar of good practice, and proposes it as a model upon which other dioceses might fashion their practices. The significance of dialogue to the discernment of current practice in that diocese cannot be overestimated and reflects Boeve's (2006) fourth option, the dialogue school, for Catholic schools into the future.

The research also suggests that it may be worthwhile for church and state to explore the possibility of entering into negotiations that may lead to the development of a new cooperative model of practice, as has happened in the UK and these options are discussed in the chapter to follow.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

In light of the fact that the CCE's document *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (1998) acknowledges the tension between the school as a civic institution with responsibilities to the State and the school as a Christian community that has religious formation as a primary aim, the advisor needs to be trained to find the appropriate approach in this dualistic space. A synthesis needs to be sought so that the advisor has expertise in Catholic Church documents and in State legislation. The advisor needs to be skilled in traversing this dual terrain with a deep awareness and commitment to Boeve's (2006) notion of a dialogue school; Lane's (2015) idea of an anthropology centered on a positive relationality with all of creation and Taylor's (2007) idea of agape at the heart of Catholic education.

The literature outlines many characteristics, traits and principles of Catholic schools. In Ireland, schools also honour and celebrate their founder(s). This may involve following values outlined in a Charter - if the congregation has passed over responsibility to a lay Trust. As a result, for many schools, the messages are complex and poorly understood in relation to each other. The model that works best is a model where expertise is available to guide a school towards defining its own Catholic identity. The Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) is currently offering a successful model for this work. Perhaps the Diocesan Advisors could themselves be upskilled by the Alliance for Catholic Education in order to further this work across dioceses? The CSP programme is very useful for linking the founding story with the school's Catholic identity but needs to be supported in a school by a Diocesan Advisor or coordinator from the school's Trustees. *Joining the Dots* (Meehan 2012) is an excellent programme for deepening the spirituality of those working to nurture themselves and others for the work in religious education and catechesis.

6.1.1 Fuller Engagement with Junior Cycle Religious Education Specification:

At the time of the case study, the support for the implementation of the Junior Cycle specification was at draft stage. Documents from the Catholic bishops are now finalised and offer advice and support to Catholic school stakeholders. A revision of the role based on dialogue is necessary to embrace the delivery of an understanding of the commitment to characteristic spirit under the specification. The advisor could start with

the religious education teacher and move outwards to the principal and the Board of Management. Expertly prepared presentations could be shared across the Diocesan Advisors Network for this purpose.

6.1.2 Fuller Engagement with Share the Good News (2010)

SGN (2010) is a rich resource that has the potential to make explicit, in accessible language, the call to Catholic schools and faith communities to evangelise and make the Good News of Jesus Christ more fully known and available to all. Diocesan Advisors must bring this rich directory to the stakeholders, continually reminding them of the ways that they can play a part in this work. The document's introduction makes an appeal that it would not become an abandoned text but that it would inspire in a meaningful way the way forward. This researcher suggests that collaboration between the Alliance for Catholic Education, the Catholic Schools Partnership and the Diocesan Advisors could offer renewal to schools in a manner similar to the School Culture Initiative. *SGN* (2010) could be incorporated seamlessly as one of the key documents that is studied during the programme.

6.1.3 Faith Development in Whole School Community

Setting out ways in which the faith formation for Catholic pupils can be supported by the school community, as well as parameters around prayer and worship is an essential part of the role. Advisors in a remodelling of the role, could perhaps form school clusters in a diocese and address this, where necessary, via an online forum. The sharing of ideas and resources could be facilitated by a portal on diocesan websites.

6.1.4 Exemplar of Diocese of DA3

Professionalise the approach of the Diocesan Advisor. Perhaps the best example in current practice is happening in the diocese of DA3. The components that need to be strengthened in every diocese to make the role as professional as that of DA3 include:

Quality educational support: Ensure that the Advisor is expertly trained and knowledgeable in all aspects of Church and State documentation in order to honour both the catechetical and the educational dimensions of the role. The supports that will be required by principals to carry out their roles as faith leaders in Catholic schools and by the Boards of Management regarding ethos in the school they are appointed to manage, will increase in a climate where the presence of a link with the founding

congregation is in memory only. Supporting the classroom religious education teacher to strike a balance between the requirements of a civic programme and a faith mission is essential if the teacher is to be confident in both. The future remit should ultimately extend to all teachers – perhaps through linking with school middle management teams such as AP1 and AP2 post-holders who play an important part in the leadership of the school.

Clear reporting structures: Ensure that a thorough reporting mechanism, using visible mapping where possible, is agreed by and implemented in every diocese. The visible maps could include elements of self-evaluation similar to the approach taken in schools that have completed the Whole School Evaluation inspection. Ideally the patron/trustees in partnership with the Council for Catechetics and the Irish Episcopal Conference would assume responsibility for this work and would be supported by the Diocesan Advisor in drawing up a structure for improvement where necessary. Payment structures for the role of Diocesan Advisor need to be aligned to other roles with similar responsibility and expertise in order to attract practitioners of a high calibre. Senior management positions in schools or at the level of inspector in the DES might offer a comparison.

Clear job description: Draw up a job description that is unequivocal and implementable and where the advisor is aware of essential elements of the role and time structures that would guide the implementation. A new Handbook is essential which is cognisant of both ecclesial and State demands.

Clear recruitment processes: If the role is to be viewed as a professional role with a strong commitment to professional practice in the field of education, then a clear recruitment process must allow for a range of candidates to present themselves for the role across a diverse range of backgrounds. Qualifications to honour the aspects of the role that require specialist skills must be presented. A move away from the informal practices of approaching retired religious or retired RE teachers is favoured.

Full-time commitment: The role as it stands has eleven aspects and while these may need to be re-visited, it can be assumed there will be a range of aspects which necessitate a full-time commitment to the role. The role may be combined with other

support duties at a pastoral level in smaller dioceses if this honours all employment legislative requirements. In many instances, smaller diocese could create a partnership whereby the resourcing and provision of the role is shared.

Clarification of payment structures: Legislation regarding employment specific structures that must be honoured in contracts (Terms of Employment (Information) Acts 1994-2012; Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015; Workplace Relations Act 2015). The Workplace Relations Commission – offer a Guide to Employment, Labour and Equality Law (2018).

Adequate initial and ongoing training and mentoring: An approach to what constitutes adequate training in relation to a role that has many dimensions has to be worked out. A view of how the Inspectorate developed its training for the State inspectorate could provide a starting point. The role shares some dimensions of the work of the Inspectorate but has other responsibilities also in terms of Canon Law and in terms of implementing best practice evident in subsequent Church directories such as *Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland* (2010).

Clarity on evaluation role: It is imperative that a decision is reached regarding evaluation as part of the role. The participants in this study were divided as to whether it is part of their remit or not. This researcher believes it is essential that fully trained Diocesan Advisors are resourced to evaluate the work of faith-formation and the provision of Catholic worship and prayer in Catholic schools.

Capacity to support, directly or indirectly, the accreditation of Religious Education, especially at Senior Cycle: The lack of accreditation of faith based religious education is contributing to a two tier system of religious education in Catholic schools. The status enjoyed by the teacher who has his/her work evaluated and affirmed by the Inspectorate and is given guidance on improvement is very different to the experience of the religious education teacher of the faith based programme in a Catholic school, as they have no such bar to aspire to or no such body to be answerable and accountable to. Thus a potential to slide into poor practices, as identified by DA7 and DA9, may occur. The student undertaking the non-examinable faith based programme is also left without any incentive to invest time and energy into a subject that is not validated by the Church or

the State. The Diocesan Advisor in any new iteration of the role must support the drive for accreditation and advocate for the rigour enjoyed by the examinable programme.

Two suggested options, recommended by the researcher, are akin to Boeve's (2006) favoured option, which is centred on the notion of dialogue and negotiation in a pluralist society: build on the model of practice operative in the diocese of DA3 and/or negotiate with the State for the development of a model that could accommodate the two identities, as has been achieved with Ofsted in the UK. And these two options are symbolically represented in Figure 6 and Figure 7.

Option One: Figure 6 – Model based on approach of DA3

Figure 6: Model based on DA3
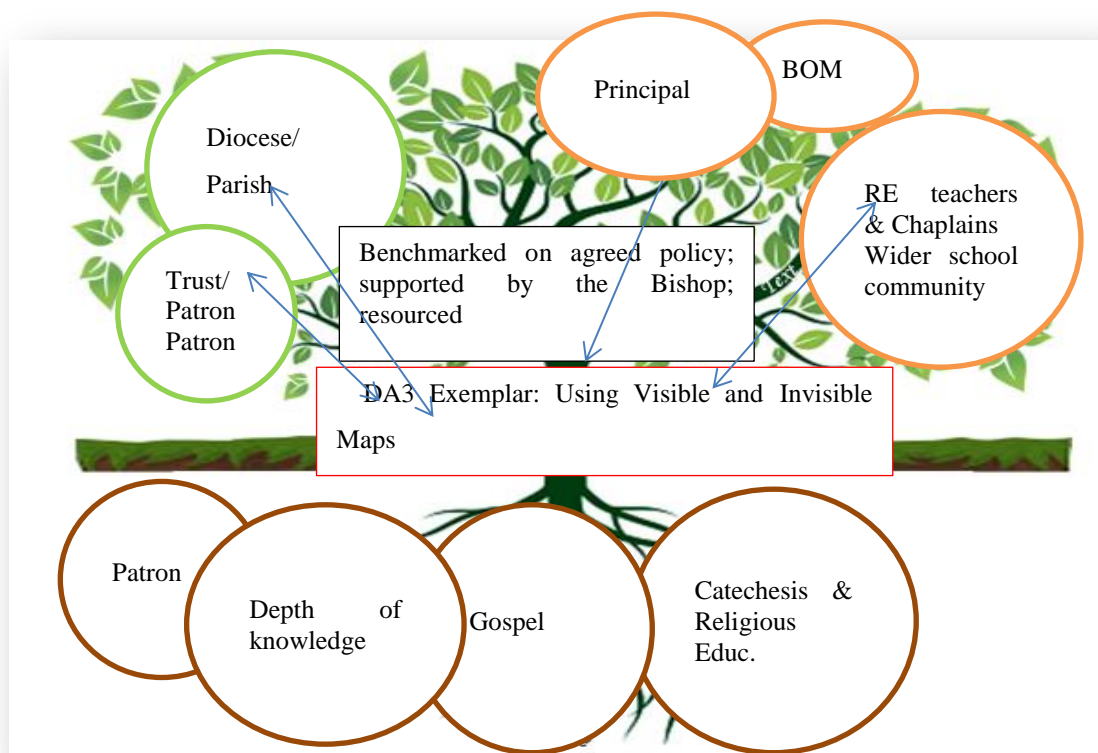
In this model the advisor's modus operandi is professional. He/she has been both trained and formed. Training is rigorous and gives a broad and deep understanding of the context of the Catholic schools and the ethos and religious education within them. Formation for the Advisor is part of initial training and is ongoing. The model is rooted in Gospel values. Both catechesis and religious education is promoted, and the patron exercises oversight regarding the work. The advisor has professional and vocational links with the wider community, including the local parish, the diocese (and the Trust

body where one exists). All the work is grounded in a framework that has been agreed by the adult stakeholders. The work is benchmarked against agreed criteria and the advisor systematically reports back to all stakeholders on the religious education within. The Advisor furthers a report to the Board of Management and the principal to support best practice. The strength of this model is its strong relational nature with the local community and the school stakeholders. Accountability is to this cohort only. The weakness in this model may be its lack of rigorous visible mapping and pathway towards improvement and further accountability toward students.

Option 2: Figure 7 - New model combining Church and State inspections
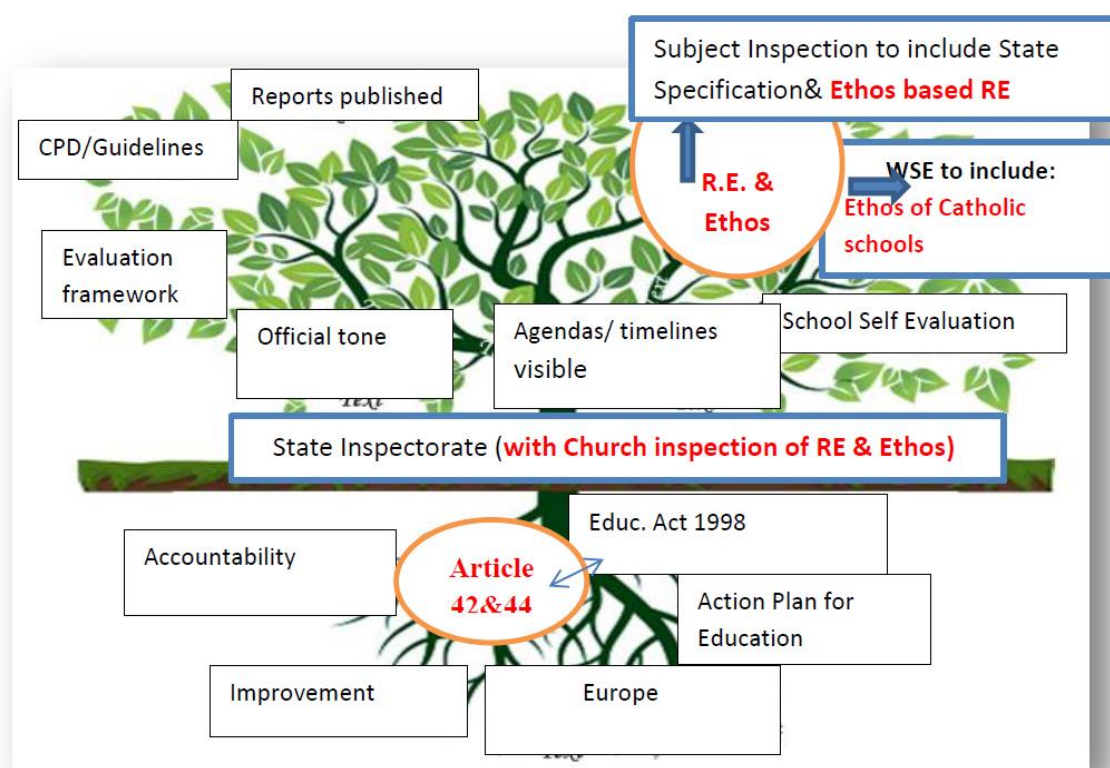
Figure 7: Combining Church and State inspections

The model suggests a cooperative dynamic between Church and State. It involves a professionalisation and training of Diocesan Advisors / Inspectors to the same degree as that of the State inspectors. It suggests the need for an organisational model in the Church support for religious education similar to that of the Westminster diocese. It suggests the inspection of Catholic schools and their ethos to be undertaken every 5 years (similar to a whole school inspection) and the inspection of the faith-based religious education with the subject based inspections conducted on a more regular

basis. It is based on the England and Wales /Ofsted model: *The inspection of schools with a religious character in England (those schools subject to inspection under both sections 48 and 5 of the Education Act 2005:*

> *If a school has a religious character, as determined by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills under section 69(3) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, denominational religious education and the content of collective worship are inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.*
>
> *Where religious education is required to be provided using the locally agreed syllabus relevant to the school, religious education is inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. (Protocol on the inspection of schools with a religious character in England 2010).* (Appendix F).

The strength of this model lies in the combination of both visible and invisible mapping (Olsson 2007). The weakness is that it moves to a very overt measurement model and may lead to a competitive atmosphere in the Catholic schools sector.

A structure could also be modelled from combining the CSP's 'founding story' training with the ACE (School Culture Initiative) and resourcing specialist Diocesan Advisors with expertise in working with schools on their Catholic identity and catechesis as well as the delivery of quality religious education programmes. It would be guided by the *SGN* (2010) directory and delivered in clusters of dioceses, as dioceses vary in such demographics as population, school types and numbers, and whether they are located in rural or urban settings.

Finally, it is worth remembering that McConville (1966) identified a number of key weaknesses in this role at that time. The list included a lack of uniformity in the role from diocese to diocese, the absence of training in catechetics, the need for proper training for the role and the necessity for stability in the post, and noted that due to diocesan boundaries some inspectors were grossly overworked while others were finding themselves in only part-time employment. He called for linkages with training colleges as well as international links with catechetical centres in order that the Diocesan Advisors could benefit from shared knowledge. This study concludes that the

issues that were highlighted by McConville in 1966 remain much the same fifty years later.

Further Recommendations

The study findings suggest areas in the Diocesan Advisors' current practices that could be improved upon as a means of imbuing the role with a professionalism and clarity as it grapples with its meaning, purpose, and place in a context that is characterised by flux.

If the National Association of Post-Primary Diocesan Advisors (NAPPDA) and/or the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference were to develop alliances with Catholic third level institutions in Ireland to work towards the development of academic courses leading to accreditation, such a measure would bestow status and prestige on the role and elevate the overall value in the religious education landscape. Currently excellent programmes are offered in third level colleges around the country in preparation for those aspiring to Christian Leadership: Mary Immaculate College (MIC), Limerick offers a Certificate/Graduate Diploma/Masters in Christian Leadership; in Cork, the Christian Leadership in Education Office offers a Diploma in Catholic Education; and in St. Patrick's College, Maynooth a Diploma in Catholic Education is available. Dublin City University houses the Mater Dei Centre for Catholic Education which is involved in research and developments of religious education. Dublin City University also houses the Centre for Evaluation, Quality & Inspection (EQI) and could offer much by way of findings from research on evaluation of benefit to Church authorities in their quest for ensuring standards in religious education.

Suggestions for Further Study

As relatively little qualitative, in-depth research has been conducted at the level of individual players, this study suggests further research at the micro level, focussing on stakeholders in Catholic schools. For instance, the following titles could offer a starting point for further study:

> An exploration of a model designed to support Boards of Management regarding their responsibility for ethos in Catholic schools.
>
> An exploration of the experiences of the religious education teacher in Catholic schools tasked with delivering the State specification for Religious Education.

The Significance of the Study

This is the first study of Diocesan Advisors at second level to be undertaken in Ireland, and is significant on three levels. The study charts the development of the role of the Diocesan Advisor in Ireland both historically and contemporaneously and offers insight into the complexities and challenges of the current context. First-hand accounts of the difficulties faced by the Diocesan Advisors are presented and the study offers possible options for the future of Catholic schools and for the role of the Diocesan Advisor. The originality of the study lies in its identification of a range of cultural and legislative challenges that impact on the role of the Diocesan Advisor in second level schools.

Final Reflection

Given the recent changes with regard to the provision of religious education in second level schools, combined with changes in religious practices nationally and internationally, this research interrogates the role of the Diocesan Advisor at second level in Catholic schools. The research question asked about the role of the Diocesan Advisor in this changing context and sub-divided this question into three parts, to include the understanding of the role; experience in the role and the future of the role. The research question has been answered under the themes of identity, ambiguity and professionalism. The central issue is indicated in the title: *Using Visible or Invisible Maps* - the DES Inspectorate in Ireland use unambiguous *visible maps* in their inspections. In England and Wales the Church/State collaborate in a model using *visible maps*. The Irish bishops however, in exercising their oversight of religious education, use mainly *invisible maps* in a range of practices by Diocesan Advisors that display varying levels of professionalism due to recruitment procedures, contracts and a lack of specific training or expertise in the area.

A concern for many of the advisors in this study is the lack of accreditation for the non-examinable subject of Religious Education. No subject should be 'non-examinable' in a sophisticated education system whereby knowledge, accountability and evaluation lead to improvement in practice. Teachers need to be affirmed also for best practice and need to know that their subject is held in high regard by all. Inspection can offer this morale boost and can identify areas for improvement. Inspection raises the bar for the teacher, the student, school management and the Catholic Church. Currently non-examinable

Religious Education is out of this loop - at Senior Cycle level 97% of RE is unexamined and at Junior Cycle the figure is approximately 50% (Carmody 2019).

This study was located in the broad field of Catholic second-level schools. The researcher has resided in this domain all her working life and is hopeful that the insights gained may contribute to the development of more professionalised approaches by bishops representatives in schools, in a landscape that has been transformed in the last twenty years.

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APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A: CIRCULARS

- ## APPENDIX A1: CIRCULAR 0013/2018

Circular Letter 0013/2018

AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS

> **To: THE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITIES OF**
>
> **COMMUNITY AND ETB POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

Religious instruction and worship in certain second level schools in the context of Article 44.2.4 of the Constitution of Ireland and Section 30 of the Education Act 1998

1. Introduction

The purpose of this circular is to set out a new approach to the arrangements that are made for religious instruction and worship in the schools covered by this circular in order to ensure that the rights of children to attend the school without having to attend religious instruction will be conducted in a manner that takes account of the likelihood, given changing demographics, of an increasing number of families wanting to exercise their constitutional right to withdraw.

2. Schools covered by the circular

The circular applies to

i. Community Post Primary Schools where in addition to an Education and Training Board (ETB) the patronage is exercised by one or more catholic religious orders and/or a catholic diocese.

ii. All Education and Training Board (ETB) post primary schools (other than those where there is an agreement between the Education and Training Board and Educate Together whereby the school operates as a non-denominational school that is not required to provide for religious instruction).

1

3. Background

3.1 The existing Multi-denominational Basis for Religious Instruction or Worship

In establishing Community and VEC schools (now ETB schools) the State set a multi-denominational basis for religious worship and instruction that expresses requirements that are common in the relevant governance documents of Community Schools and the ETB schools concerned as follows:

> *The religious worship attended by any pupil at the school and the religious instruction given to any pupil shall be in accordance with the rites, practice and teaching of the religious denomination to which the pupil belongs.*
>
> *If any question arises whether the religious worship conducted or the religious instruction given at the school is not in accordance with the rites, practice and teaching of a religious denomination that question shall be determined by the competent religious authority.*

(Extract from Deed of Trust)

This circular does not alter that multi-denominational basis by which religious instruction is provided or amend any of the deeds, or legal instruments concerned.

3.2 Changing Practices

It may have been reasonable when the schools were established for a school to assume that its pupil population was predominately Catholic and to make arrangements for religious instruction and worship exclusively on that basis. Historically some ETB schools in addition to meeting Catholic needs also made provision for religious instruction that met the needs of pupils from local Protestant communities. Depending on their future pupil composition as multi-denominational schools, Community and ETB schools may have to make provision for religious instruction for those from other minority religions should it be required.

2

Past practice of assuming that the pupil body is predominately Catholic and arranging religious instruction accordingly is no longer an appropriate approach. In a changing context the constitutional right not to attend religious instruction must be given effect through changed practices.

The key change is that those who do not want instruction in line with the requirements of any particular religion should be timetabled for alternative tuition throughout the school year rather than supervised study or other activities.

4.   Requirement to Consult Parents/pupils

In future instead of waiting for a parent to request a withdrawal and then having to make alternative arrangements for the pupil for the class periods concerned a school must establish the wishes of parents in relation to opting out of religious worship or instruction and where the pupil is over 18 establish the pupil's wishes.

Ascertaining parental/pupil choice in relation to religious instruction should be integrated with the school's processes for establishing subject choices generally.

In future the school must offer an alternative subject(s) for those who do not want religious instruction. Parents must be made aware that such alternative tuition is available and be asked to choose between religious instruction and the alternative subject(s) offered by the school. Once an opt-out has been expressed it should endure in subsequent years unless otherwise advised by the parents.

While in respect of those who want instruction in line with the requirements of a particular religion the school may appropriately engage with the parents in relation to their religious beliefs, there is no basis for a school to intrude in that regard on the privacy of those who are opting for the alternative subject(s). The only information required is that the parent wants to opt for the alternative subject(s).

5. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) Developed Curriculum for Religious Education

The NCCA developed curriculum for Religious Education currently also serves to meet the religious instruction requirements of the Catholic Church and schools can continue this arrangement for pupils whose parents elect for Catholic religious instruction or other parents who wish to follow the NCCA curriculum, and where that is the case it is important in the information provided to parents that they are made fully aware that the curriculum is not necessarily confined to learning about religions.

6. Arrangements for Religious Worship

Best practice in relation to making appropriate arrangements for withdrawal from religious worship or events is to provide parents with information about religious worship in the school; its frequency, timing, duration and the nature of the services or events. Ideally this should be done at the start of every school year. Parents should be given the opportunity to advise the school of whether or not they want their child to participate in or be present during religious worship.

It should be clarified with parents who do not want their children to attend if they want the child to be excluded in all circumstances or whether they might view particular situations differently (e.g. where the religious activity is related to bereavement within the school community or where a religious service or event in the school is a multi-faith gathering or service). Decisions made by parents should endure in subsequent years unless a parent states otherwise.

7. Implementation

This circular supersedes all guidance or requirements in previous circulars (or parts thereof) that concern the participation of pupils in religious instruction and worship or arrangements for those who may not wish to participate.

While this circular has immediate effect it is acknowledged that the necessary adjustment of curricular timetabling may not be feasible until revised timetables are in place for the 2018/19 school year and time will be required to establish parent and pupil wishes. In implementing this circular, regard must also be had for current arrangements in place for curricular timetabling at Junior or Senior Cycle, and the curricular choices made by existing pupils in respect of those arrangements.

8.   Dissemination of Circular

A copy of this circular should be provided to members of the board of management and the teaching staff of each school.   This circular may be accessed on the Department of Education and Skills website at www.education.ie. An Irish version of this circular is also available on the Department's website.

9.   Queries

Queries in relation to this circular should be e-mailed to the Department at:

schoolgovernance@education.gov.ie

Paraic Joyce

Principal Officer

School Governance Section

- APPENDIX A2: CIRCULAR 0062/2018

An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

Circular Letter 0062/2018

COMMUNITY AND ETB POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Clarification in respect of Section 5 of Circular 0013/2018 in relation to the NCCA Religious Education syllabus and religious instruction

1. Introduction

The purpose of this circular is to make clear the different requirements for those students who are studying the NCCA Religious Education syllabus* and those who elect to join Religious Instruction classes where the school they attend offers to provide Religious Instruction in accordance with the rites and practices of a particular religious denomination. This circular should be read in conjunction with Circular 0013/2018.

2. Clarification of Section 5 of Circular 0013/2018

Circular Letter 0013/2018 sets out a new approach to the arrangements for religious instruction and worship in certain post-primary schools. The key change identified in that circular was that those who did not want religious instruction in line with the requirements of any particular religion should be timetabled for tuition rather than

address their withdrawal by providing supervised study or other activities.

*This refers to the NCCA Religious Education syllabuses for both Junior and Senior cycle. A new NCCA Junior Cycle Religious Education Specification will be introduced from September 2019 and will replace the current NCCA Religious Education Junior Certificate Syllabus.

In section 5 of that circular it was stated that the NCCA Religious Education curriculum at either Junior or Senior cycle level also serves the religious instruction requirements of the Catholic Church and that where that is the case it is important that parents are made fully aware that the curriculum is not necessarily confined to learning about religions.

The NCCA-developed Religious Education Junior and Senior Cycle syllabuses, and the Religious Education specification for Junior Cycle, to be introduced in 2019, are intended for students of all faith backgrounds and none. The content prescribed in the syllabuses is intended to ensure that students are exposed to a broad range of religious traditions and to the non-religious interpretation of life. They do not provide religious instruction in any particular religious or faith tradition.

The Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference published guidelines for the faith formation and development of Catholic students which built on the content of the Junior Certificate Religious Education Syllabus 1999* and the Leaving Certificate Religious Education Syllabus 2006**. In addition, parental experience conveyed to the Department suggests that in some schools there has been a practice of delivering Catholic religious instruction within class periods where the NCCA Religious Education syllabus is time- tabled.

The purpose of this circular is to eliminate any ambiguity about how Religious Education is delivered in schools and accordingly adjust the arrangements in the original circular where necessary.

3.   Schools discretion in relation to Religious Education

The Department does not require schools to include the NCCA-developed Religious Education syllabuses at Junior or Senior Cycle as mandatory subjects on their curriculum. Accordingly schools have discretion to determine if they provide the subject at all or if it is to be mandatory or optional in any particular class group or year.

*Guidelines for the faith formation and Development of Catholic Students: Junior Certificate Religious Education Syllabus (1999)

**Catholic Bishop's Conference Framework document: Guidelines for the faith formation and Development of Catholic Students:
Leaving Certificate Religious Education Syllabus R.E. & A Curriculum Framework for Senior Cycle (2006)

Religious Education, where it is offered by a school, must be delivered in the timetabled class periods without any religious instruction or worship of any religion forming any part of class activity. This means that any practice or material that would introduce religious instruction or worship cannot be used in the future. Religious Education will be subject to inspection including its delivery according to this circular.

This clear separation of religious instruction from the NCCA Religious Education syllabus has the effect of ensuring that withdrawal does not arise for students studying the NCCA Religious Education syllabus where the school provides the subject as part of its normal range of subjects.

4.   Providing for Religious Instruction

Where a school decides to offer religious instruction in line with the requirements of any particular individual religious denomination, it must not be associated with or integrated to any degree with the NCCA-developed Religion Education syllabus being provided in timetabled class periods. Such religious instruction must be provided as a discrete separate subject which will be external to the Department-approved NCCA Religious Education

syllabus. Where the school is providing religious instruction having regard to the legal instruments created when the school was recognised, the school may provide the teaching resources from within the school's overall teacher allocation and the delivery must be in full class periods devoted exclusively to religious instruction.

Students should be provided with a place in any religious instruction class only where there has been a parental request for admission to the class. In accordance with Section 4 of Circular 0013/2018, parental/student choice must be established in relation to religious instruction at the outset of the school year and that choice replaces mandatory placement by the school in religious instruction classes and therefore eliminates any necessity for subsequent withdrawal from that class. On establishing parental choice at the outset of the school year, schools should also recognise the views of students on reaching the age of 18.

APPENDIX B: CODEBOOK

- APPENDIX B[1]- CODEBOOK\\PHASE 2 - GENERATING INITIAL CODES (OPEN CODING)

Phase 2 - Generating Initial Codes (31 initial codes developed at this cycle of coding)	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning coded
Bishop	7	9
Challenges in the role	4	6
Chaplain	3	5
Concern for ethos	4	7
Concern for the Faith	5	5
DA Handbook	5	6
Exam Religious Education	1	1
Faith commitment of teacher	3	3
Faith-based Religious Education	7	9
Format	4	8
Formation in the role	4	5
John Paul II Awards	1	3
Lack of expertise for the role	2	2
Leadership of catholic schools	4	6
Negative	9	18
Overseeing that Religious Education is taught diligently	4	4
Own background in Re or theology	2	3
Positive	1	1
Principal	5	12
Principals understanding of the role	2	5
providing in-service	1	1
Religious Education classes	1	5
Religious Education teachers	3	5
Remit	3	5
Response to issues raised in reports	4	4

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[1] Codebook -Phase 2 – Generating Initial Coding involved deconstructing the data from its original chronology into an initial set of non-hierarchical codes

Phase 2 - Generating Initial Codes (31 initial codes developed at this cycle of coding)	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning coded
Role of the Trusts	1	1
School types	3	6
Supporting Chaplains	1	2
Sustainable	5	12
Vocational or professional	1	2
Welcome into Religious Education classes	1	1

- APPENDIX B[2] - CODEBOOK\\PHASE 3 - SEARCHING FOR THEMES (DEVELOPING CATEGORIES)

Phase 3 - Searching for Themes (31 initial codes mapped to 19 initial categories of codes at this cycle of coding)	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning coded
Assessment	11	19
Concern for Catholic schools	11	26
Concern for Religious Education	13	36
Concern for Role of DA	7	14
CPD	9	10
Evaluation	10	12
Function of the role	9	21
Future of the role	13	45
Inspection	14	22
Recruitment	14	20
Reporting	15	54
Role Related	0	0
Share the Good News	4	8
Support in the role	7	14
terms of role	6	15
Training	12	17
Uncategorised Codes	11	24
Visits	7	27
Welcome in schools	6	17

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[2] Codebook – Phase 3 – Searching for Themes – involved merging, renaming, distilling and clustering related coded into broader categories of codes to reconstruct the data into a framework that makes sense to further the analysis.

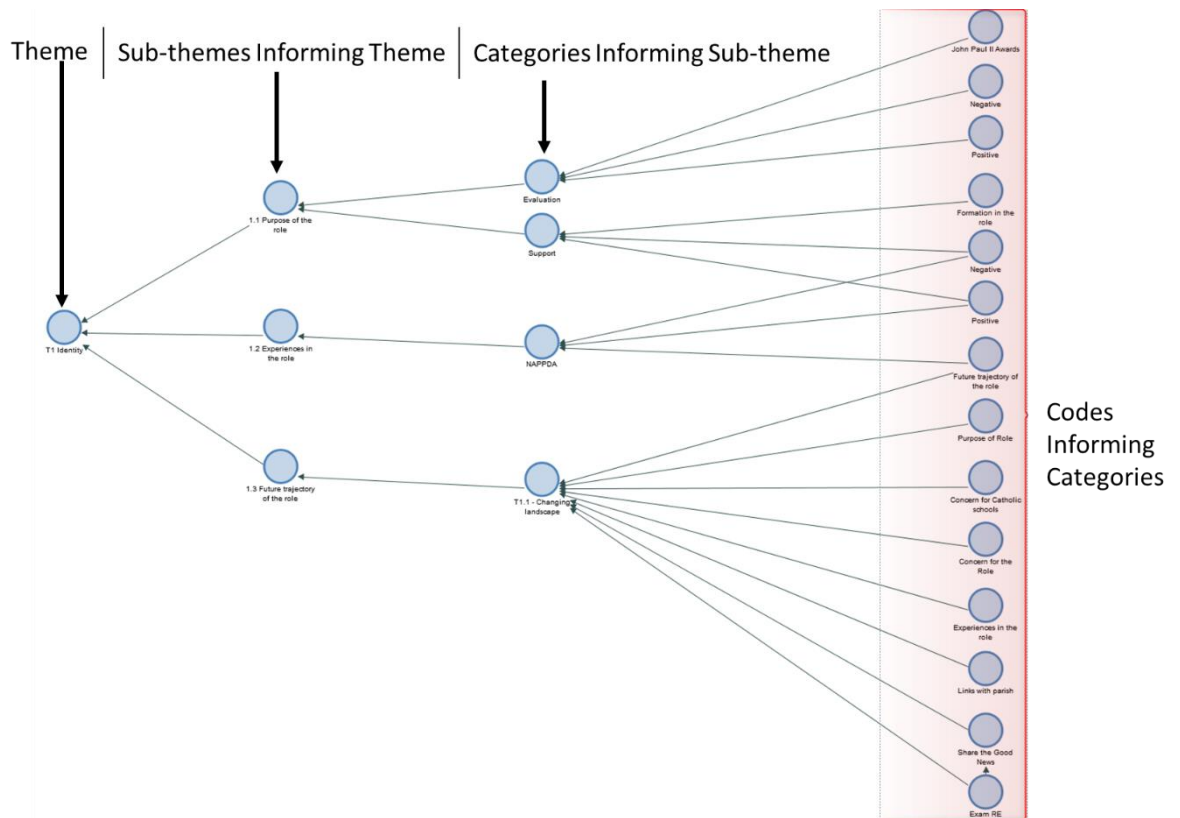| Phase 4 - Reviewing Themes - 19 categories of codes mapped to 4 thematic areas at this cycle of coding)	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning coded
Ambiguity Related	15	159
Concern for Catholic schools	11	26
Concern for Religious Education	13	36
Future of the role	13	45
Share the Good News	4	8
Visits	7	27
Welcome in schools	6	17
Identity Related	25	171
Assessment	11	19
Concern for Role of DA	7	14
Evaluation	10	12
Function of the role	9	21
Inspection	14	22
Reporting	15	54
Support in the role	7	14
Terms of role	6	15
Professionalism Related	15	47
CPD	9	10
Recruitment	14	20
Training	12	17
Uncategorised Codes	11	24

- APPENDIX B[4]- CODEBOOK\\PHASE 5 - DEFINING & NAMING THEMES (DATA REDUCTION)

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[3] Codebook – Phase 4 – Reviewing Themes involved breaking down the now reorganised categories in to sub-categories to better understand the meanings embedded therein.

Phase 5 - Defining and Naming Themes - 4 thematic areas consolidated into 3 themes with 12 sub-themes	Interviews Coded	Units of Meaning coded
T1 - Professionalism	15	221
T1.1 - Changing landscape	14	142
T1.2 - Function of Role Peripheral to All	14	79
T2 - Identity Professional Vs Vocational	15	133
T2.1 - Recruitment	15	70
T2.2 - Training	12	44
T2.3 - CPD	12	32
T2.4 - Reporting	14	27
T2.5 - Support	7	14
T2.6 - Language & Way of Being	4	5
T3 - Ambiguity	23	59
T3.1 - Assessment	11	19
T3.2 - Evaluation	10	12
T3.3 - Inspection	14	22
T3.4 - Handbook	5	6

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[4] Codebook – Phase 5 – Defining and Naming Themes involved conceptually mapping reviewed thematic areas (4 themes) into a broader thematic framework comprising 3 consolidated themes

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- APPENDIX B[6] - EXAMPLE OF THE ROLE ANALYTICAL MEMO

- APPENDIX B[7] - EXAMPLE OF THE ROLE OF INTEGRATED ANNOTATIONS

	Interview with Justin	Identity of DA	Group Query	Focus group

attended an interview with, um, the Bishop Secretary of the head of, um, the Bishop Secretary and a former Da. And that person was offered the job as a result of the interview process. So that's really the recruitment. And then training wise, again it was just really learning as you went on. Um, what's really the, the, how the training happened, learning as you actually practice the work. There was no official training as such. No. Thank you. Group one, group two.

Group 2: 02:05 In our group, two people had been nominated, by the outgoing DA and had a chat with the bishop and appointment was as informal as that. one person, the role was advertised and they applied. Uh, they were interviewed, substantial interview by five people on the interview board and there was quite a bit of competition and shortlisting. So it was a a serious process. One person is succonded and is full time and two retired and both part time, no training and while one person signed a contract, the terms and conditions, weren't stipulated very clearly and the other two actually have never signed the contract.

Group 3: 03:05 Thank you. And Group Three, can you put

Group 3: 03:07 Group representing six diocese in the context of induction, one of the DA's in the group, um, shadowed other retiring, do you for a week, but also had the ongoing support of that year for a

Annotations

Item	Content
1	recruitment: varied and consists of formal and informal preocesses

Annotations were used to integrate contextual factors such as coding assumptions, field notes and observations and researcher's thoughts and ideas during the encoding process

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APPENDIX C: DIARY

- APPENDIX C1: COVER OF DIARY

RESEARCH DIARY

5 DAYS IN THE LIFE OF A DIOCESAN ADVISOR

Ethics approval granted by REC of DCU

- School Visits
- Reporting
- Appointments
- Chaplaincy
- National Association
- Organising and Leading In-services for Religious Education
- Engaging with Schools and the Partners in Education
- Developing Links between Home, School and Parish
- Evaluation of Religious Education in the School
- Gathering and Sharing Resource Materials
- Overview

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Diocesan Advisor,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the collection of data for this Doctorate in Education.

The instrument to be used is a research driven diary in the format of a booklet to allow you to reflect and record your busy schedule and about the joys and challenges in your role over a five-day period. Explanations and background information for the research are included.

In this research project I am asking you to carry out a set of five daily reflections and to comment upon them. A number of Diocesan Advisors have volunteered to keep the researcher-driven diary for five days and to participate in short interviews about it afterwards. Your contribution will be extremely valuable in shaping this process.

You are asked to give approximately ten minutes each day or evening to filling the diary. Hopefully, you will enjoy the reflective process and gain an insight into your role and how it is structure.

Your own comments and other information in the diary will be made entirely anonymously. The personal information about you and about your diocese will not be shared or made public at any point. This project has been approved by the DCU ethics committee.

I hope this study will cast some light on the nature of the role of the Diocesan Advisor currently and into the future.

Catherine McCormack

- APPENDIX C3: PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE THE STUDY

Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

DCU

Ms Catherine Mc Cormack
School of Human Development

25th September 2018

REC Reference:	**DCUREC/2018/163**
Proposal Title	**The Role of the Diocesan Advisor in Catholic Voluntary Second Level Schools in the Republic of Ireland**
Applicant(s):	**Ms Catherine Mc Cormack**

Dear Catherine,

Further to expedited review, the DCU Research Ethics Committee approves this research proposal.

Materials used to recruit participants should note that ethical approval for this project has been obtained from the Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee.

Should substantial modifications to the research protocol be required at a later stage, a further amendment submission should be made to the REC.

Yours sincerely,

Dónal O'Gorman

Dr Dónal O'Gorman
Chairperson
DCU Research Ethics Committee

DCU
Research & Innovation

Taighde & Nuálaíocht Tacaíocht
Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath,
Baile Átha Cliath, Éire

Research & Innovation Support
Dublin City University,
Dublin 9, Ireland

T +353 1 700 8000
F +353 1 700 8002
E research@dcu.ie
www.dcu.ie

- APPENDIX C4: CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION ON PARTICIPANTS

④ *Research Diary*

Confidential Information on Research Participation

DCU

The following person has agreed to keep a semi-structured diary and to participate in semi-structured interviews to assist in data gathering for a Doctoral research project on the working lives of Diocesan Advisors. The School of Human Development at Dublin City University approves the study. The researcher is Catherine Mc Cormack (catherine.mccormack34@mail.dcu.ie) and the supervisor is Dr. PJ Sexton (pj.sexton@dcu.ie). Information is held in the strictest confidence by the researcher and no individuals or schools or diocese will be identified in the research. Details included below are for verification purposes only and will remain confidential to the participant, to the researcher and to the supervisor (including any other internal/external examiners appointed for validation and awarding purposes).

Diocesan Advisor's Name	

Male ☐   Female ☐

Primary Degree ☐   Masters Degree ☐   Doctoral Award ☐

Experience in the role of DA:

1-10 yrs ☐   11-20 yrs ☐   21-30 years ☐   31-40yrs ☐

Experience in Education (Principal/Teaching) prior to taking Role of DA:

None ☐   1-10 yrs ☐   11-20 yrs ☐   21-30 years ☐   31-40yrs ☐

Experience as RE teacher:

Yes ☐   No ☐   If yes, Duration ☐   Qualified in RE ☐

- APPENDIX C5: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Other information about your role as DA that may be relevant at this particular time:

Number of schools you visit

Primary   Second-level

In second level please state how many are:

Voluntary Catholic

ETB

Community/Comprehensive:

Other

Approximate number of qualified RE teachers in the Vol. Catholic schools

Approximate number of unqualified RE teachers in the Vol. Catholic schools

- APPENDIX C6: SAMPLE LAYOUT OF DAILY RECORD (PART ONE)

The record of Day One

Date: / /

Morning:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

TIME ON PHONE TODAY:

Hours [ ]
Minutes [ ]

TRAVEL TIME:

Hours [ ]
Minutes [ ]

Afternoon:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

MEETINGS:

Hours [ ]
Minutes [ ]

PLANNING:

Hours [ ]
Minutes [ ]

Evening:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

ORGANISING RESOURCES:

Hours [ ]
Minutes [ ]

OTHER:

Hours [ ]
Minutes [ ]

- APPENDIX C7: SAMPLE LAYOUT OF DAILY RECORD (PART 2)

Reflecting on how I spent my day

Surprise Text time: What activity I was doing when I got the surprise text?

_____
_____
_____

What were the 5 Activities/Tasks that took up most of your time today?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Was there any activity you would like to have had time to do today? Explain:

_____
_____

What was good and uplifting about your role today?

_____
_____

What was challenging in your role today? Why?

_____
_____

- APPENDIX C8: QUOTATION ON INSPECTION

Reflections on my week

Please comment on the following Statement from the Diocese of Westminster
Diocesan Framework for Inspection

"Inspection provides an opportunity to support, challenge, evaluate and promote the work of Catholic schools and colleges. It also...enables the Diocese to celebrate with schools their sense of identity and their strengths as Catholic schools'

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

In your role as Diocesan Advisor how important is:

1. Evaluation of Religious Education classes?

_____
_____
_____

2. Evaluation of the Catholic life of the school?

_____
_____
_____

- APPENDIX C9: PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW (BACK COVER)

Dear Diocesan Advisor,

Thank you for agreeing to be part of this research. Please return it in the enclosed stamped-addressed envelope as soon as it is completed.

If you could find the time for a short telephone interview about this research topic I would be very grateful. I would like to record and transcribe the conversation, with your permission. Any details and opinions would be held confidentially as part of the research feedback. Please tick below and include a contact number if you agree to this.

Thank you.

☐ Yes. You can phone me on the following number:

_____

☐ No, thank you. I do not wish to be contacted or interviewed.

I wish to thank the NAPPDA who have welcomed me to their in-service days. The final results will be available to NAPPDA members following its completion in 2020.

I understand the demands of your busy schedule and I am most grateful for the time and effort that you have invested in this data gathering exercise.

Catherine
McCormack

- APPENDIX C10: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Diocesan Advisor	Diary returned	Interview	Date of interview	Duration of interview mins: secs	Transcribed & Coded
1	Yes	Yes	4 March 2019	20.00s	Yes
2	Yes	Yes	6 March 2019	14.01	Yes
3	Yes	Yes	5 March 2019	20.31s	Yes
4	Yes	Yes	11 March 2019	20.27s	Yes
5	Yes	Yes	7 March 2019	27.42s	Yes
6	Yes	Yes	6 March 2019	25.29s	Yes
7	Yes	Yes	8 March 2019	13.11s	Yes
8	Yes	Yes	5 March 2019	19.35s	Yes
9	Yes	Yes	7 March 2019	23.18s	Yes
10	Yes	No			N/A
11	No	Yes	11 March 2019	13.37s	Yes
12	No	Yes	8 March 2019	28.59s	Yes
13	No	Yes	11 March 2019	17.10s	Yes
14	No	Yes	8 March 2019	17.09s	Yes
15	No	Yes	11 March 2019	37.37s	Yes
Focus Group (n.13)		Yes	2 May 2019	19.44	Yes

APPENDIX D: DIOCESAN POLICY

(*Please note – in order to preserve anonymity the policy has been converted to word and anonymized*)

Diocese of X

Post-Primary

Religious Education Policy for Catholic Schools and Catholic Students in Other Schools serving the Parish Communities of the X Diocese

1. Aim

The key aim of Post-Primary Religious Education for the Diocese of X is to awaken Catholic students to faith as a lived relationship with Jesus Christ and to help them to deepen and strengthen that faith through reflective engagement with:

(i) the knowledge

(ii) the understanding, the skills and the attitudes which form the foundation of the various Religious Education Curricula approved by the Department of Education and Skills and Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference along with various Religious Education Programmes approved by the Diocese for special programmes and classes.

2. Religious Education in Catholic Schools

The Diocese of X believes that the provision of a quality religious education is integral to an education of the whole person and, therefore, to Catholic Education and to the upholding of the characteristic spirit of every Catholic school. Consequently it calls on all Catholic schools to adopt the following key principles:

Designation of religious education as a core subject for all years.

All students to follow the Junior Certificate Religious Education Syllabus attentive to the Guidelines for the Faith Formation and Development of Catholic Students: Junior Certificate Religious Education Syllabus (1999) and to sit the state examination in religious education.

All Senior Cycle students to be offered the opportunity to sit the Leaving Certificate Religious Education State examination.

All Senior Cycle students, not studying for the Religious Education Leaving Certificate examination, to follow the entire Department of Education and Skills Curriculum Framework for Senior Cycle, with attentiveness to the whole range of Learning Outcomes

and the Catholic Bishop's Conference framework document: Guidelines for the Faith Formation and

Development of Catholic Students: Leaving Certificate Religious Education Syllabus. Religious Education. & A Curriculum Framework for Senior Cycle (2006)

All students in special programmes and classes to follow religious education programmes approved by the Diocese for such programmes Of classes.

The Diocese recognises and encourages attentiveness and support on the part of Boards of Management, Principals, Deputy Principals and Religious Education Departments / Teams to the many possibilities offered by both the Junior and Leaving Certificate Religious Education syllabi and approved programmes to contribute to the nurturing of every Catholic student's personal relationship with God in Jesus Christ through prayer, Sacred Scripture and the Sacraments.

Timetabling of three forty-minute periods Of two one-hour periods of religious education per week at junior and senior cycle for all class groups.

Teachers of Religious Education to possess a qualification in religious education that satisfies the requirements of the Teaching Council and the Catholic Bishop of X.

The wish of parents of other faith traditions and those of no faith tradition that their children be exempt from religious education is to be respected and reasonable accommodation made. The Diocese respectfully suggests that school communities, in keeping with the Education Act 1998 and in dialogue with Parents/ Guardians, provide such students with other means of advancing their spiritual and moral development during class periods dedicated to religious education.

Schools to consistently provide forms of assessment capable of providing evidence of junior and senior student learning and development using the Learning Outcomes of the syllabus as key assessment criteria.

Assessment outcomes to be reflected in reports to parents on a par with other subjects.

Inter-religious dialogue and dialogue with those of no faith tradition to be among the key skills developed based on knowledge and understanding of one's own faith tradition.

Uptake of Department of Education & Skills Religious Education in-service training and Diocesan in-service provision by all teachers who teach religious education.

An openness by the Religious Education Department/ Team in each school to support and assistance from the Diocese of X's Education Secretariat.

An openness by religious education teachers to the visiting of religious education classes by the Diocesan Advisor.

3. Religious Education of Catholic Students in other School Communities

At the request of Roman Catholic parents the Diocese of X also appeals to other school communities serving Roman Catholic students to facilitate Catholic Students in having a quality religious education provision, respectful of their Catholic faith.

We ask schools who seek the affirmation and support of the diocese with regard to their provision for Catholic students to:

Time-table three forty-minute periods or two one-hour periods of

Religious Education per week at junior and senior cycle levels [1].

Invite, facilitate and support all Catholic Students in following the Junior Certificate Religious Education Syllabus and to sit the State examination in religious education.

Facilitate and support all Catholic Senior Cycle students in following the entire Department of Education and Skills Curriculum Framework for

i.e. in keeping with the spirit and provisions of Department of Education Circular 7/79, the Model Agreements of Designated Community Colleges, the Deeds of Trust of Community Schools, and the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference's Guidelines for the Faith Formation and Development of Catholic Students.

Senior Cycle, with attentiveness to the whole range of Learning

Outcomes and to facilitate interested Catholic students in sitting the Leaving Certificate State examination in Religious Education

Facilitate all Catholic students in special programmes and classes to follow Religious Education Programmes approved by the Diocese for such programmes or classes.

Regularly review, through meetings of the Religious Education Team with the Principal and Deputy Principal, and through Board of Management meetings, how the many possibilities offered by both the Junior and Leaving Certificate Religious Education syllabi and approved programmes are contributing to the nurturing of every Catholic student's personal relationship with God in Jesus Christ through prayer, Sacred Scripture and the Sacraments.

Ensure that Teachers of Religious Education possess a qualification in

Religious Education that satisfies the requirements of The Teaching Council and that they are adequately knowledgeable of the Roman Catholic Faith tradition.

Ensure that Teachers of Religious Education are knowledgeable of the content of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference Guidelines for the Faith Formation and Development of Catholic students (Junior Certificate), 1999 and (Leaving Certificate) 2006.

Provide forms of assessment capable of providing evidence of junior and senior Catholic student learning and development using the Learning Outcomes of the syllabus as key assessment criteria.

Reflect assessment outcomes in reports to Catholic parents on a par with other subjects.

Facilitate inter-religious dialogue and dialogue with students of no faith tradition, i.e. With a view to developing the related skills based on knowledge and understanding of Catholic Student's own faith tradition.

11) Facilitate uptake of Department of Education & Skills Religious Education in-service training and Diocesan in-service provision by all teachers who teach Religious Education to Catholic students

Encourage an openness by the Religious Education Department / Team in each school to support and assistance vis-Ä-vis the religious education of Catholic students from the Diocese of X's Education Secretariat.

Encourage an openness by religious education teachers of Catholic students to the visiting of religious education classes by the Diocesan Advisor.

4. Complementing the Religious Education of Catholic Students in All Schools

The Diocese of X also appeals to all school communities serving Catholic students to complement their religious education provision by:

(1) providing additional means and opportunities of assisting students move towards a deeper sense of God in their lives and greater maturity of faith,

e.g. experiences of pilgrimage, school liturgical celebrations, school retreats, engagement with relevant outside agencies, testimonies of guest speakers etc..

(2) encouraging religious education teachers and school chaplains to liaise with each other With a view to helping chaplains consolidate the school community's religious education provision and Catholic students' maturation in faith.

(3) encouraging teachers of other subjects, as appropriate, to explore the Catholic understanding of the dignity of every human person and of community.

(4) integrating opportunities to explore the Catholic understanding of the dignity of every human person and of community through the school's Pastoral Care provision.

(5) providing students with opportunities for participation in local and global justice projects as a means of engaging with the Christian vision of social justice.

⁽⁶⁾ fostering in students a realisation of the significance of religious dialogue with those of other religious traditions and none, based on knowledge and understanding of one's own faith tradition and a mutual respect for other beliefs and worldviews.

providing students with vocational discernment opportunities relating to ministries in the service of the Catholic Church, e.g. the ordained ministry,

various lay ministries, e.g. Catechists, and the Religious (apostolic and contemplative) Life.

providing, with the support of local parishes and the X diocese, opportunities for parents and guardians to become familiar with the school's Religious Education provision.

⁽⁹⁾ facilitating Junior and Senior cycle students in witnessing to their personal faith through experiences of ministry in social justice and peer leadership,

e.g. participation of Catholic students in faith related Transition Year programmes and other programmes that provide Catholic students with opportunities to witness to one another.

5. Staffing and Resourcing of Religious Education of Catholic Students in All Schools

In order to maintain a high standard of religious education teaching the Diocese appeals to all Boards of Management and Principals to ensure that every

Religious Education class is taught by a dedicated religious education teacher and that every teacher teaching religious education, at both junior and senior levels, has at a minimum a degree in religious education, catechetics and/or Catholic theology along with appropriate educational qualifications.

The Diocese also appeals to Principals to ensure that every teacher teaching

Religious Education attends in-services organised by the Diocese, the Department of Education and Science, the Religion Teachers' Association of Ireland and any other appropriate In-service.

Furthermore the Diocese requests that each Religious Education Department/ Team select a Department/Team Co-ordinator at the beginning of each academic year. The role of the Department/Team Co-ordinator is to oversee and promote the full implementation of the school's religious education policy.

The Diocese recommends that the Department/Team Co-ordinator work closely with and be accountable to the school's Senior Management. S/he is to facilitate and document team meetings, lead religious education subject planning, co-ordinate assessment and assist the team in undertaking regular evaluation. The role also involves liaising with the principal, chaplain and other staff members, student and parents' council and outside agencies,

including the X Diocesan Post-Primary Religious Education Advisor appointed by the Roman Catholic Bishop of X to the school.

The Diocese also encourages school communities to provide adequate resources in terms of time and funding to provide for the teaching of Religious Education along with appropriate resources/prayer spaces/ activities that complement the school's religious education programme.

5. Role of Diocesan Religious Education Advisor

In the Roman Catholic Church, the role of oversight of the Religious Education of all Roman Catholic Post-Primary students is the responsibility of the local bishop, who in turn appoints a Diocesan Advisor in the exercise of this pastoral responsibility.

In light of this the Diocesan Advisor is to:

involve him/ herself with the on-going resourcing and support of the mainstream syllabi for Religious Education, i.e. from a Roman Catholic perspective.

visit each school at least annually (following the norms set out in the Irish

Catholic Bishops' Conference 2013 publication The Role of the Diocesan Advisor for Post Primary Religious Education

organise an annual in service for the religious education teachers as recommended in The Role of the Diocesan Advisor for Post Primary Religious Education

participate in meetings, seminars, conferences etc. relating to Post-Primary Religious Education, e.g. such as the meetings of the National Association of Post-Primary Religious Education Advisors

participate in selection / interview boards f0f teachers of religion, i.e. as directed by the Bishop [3]

exercise an element of evaluation, i.e. in keeping with this policy statement, and

report annually to the following:

The Bishop b. The Episcopal Vicar for Education

hold a briefing meeting, at least annually with

The CEO of each school's Trust body, including those of ETB schools

The Board of Management and Principal of each school

The Religious Education Teachers and Chaplains of each school

The Clergy and Parish Pastoral Councils of the Parishes served by the School community Parents (on request)

The Diocese also endorses the role of Diocesan Advisor as proposed in the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference 2013 publication The Role of the Diocesan Advisor for

Post Primary Religious Education and considers it to be an integral part of the Church's support for and guidance of Post-Primary Religious Education for Roman Catholic pupils.

The Diocese also strongly encourages school communities, through Boards of Management, Principals, Chaplains and Religious Education Department / Team Leaders to recognise the Diocesan Advisor and X Diocesan Education Secretariat as a Religious Education resource that can be drawn upon as need arises.

Signed: Bishop of X   Date:

Seal _____

Copies can be downloaded from Post-Primary Education section of the X diocesan website: www.Xdiocese.ie/education/postprimary.

While undertaking this task, the Diocesan Advisor will conform to regulations governing such boards by, for example, the local ETB or the Community Schools concerned. Furthermore, the Diocesan Advisor will be mindful that he she is the representative of the Catholic bishop on such boards.

APPENDIX E: FORMS

- APPENDIX E1: RESEARCH ETHICS PERMISSION GRANTED

Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

Ms Catherine Mc Cormack
School of Human Development

25th September 2018

REC Reference: **DCUREC/2018/163**

Proposal Title   **The Role of the Diocesan Advisor in Catholic Voluntary Second Level Schools in the Republic of Ireland**

Applicant(s):   **Ms Catherine Mc Cormack**

Dear Catherine,

Further to expedited review, the DCU Research Ethics Committee approves this research proposal.

Materials used to recruit participants should note that ethical approval for this project has been obtained from the Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee.

Should substantial modifications to the research protocol be required at a later stage, a further amendment submission should be made to the REC.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Dónal O'Gorman
Chairperson
DCU Research Ethics Committee

- APPENDIX E2: CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

The Role of the Diocesan Advisor

Catherine McCormack, B.Rel.Sc, MA (EdD Student in DCU)

Research Supervisor: Dr P.J. Sexton

The purpose of this research is to explore the role of the Diocesan Advisor in Catholic Voluntary Secondary Schools in the Republic of Ireland. A research diary was designed, piloted and refined for the purpose of exploring the various aspects of the role as carried out by Diocesan Advisors currently working at second level schools in the Republic of Ireland.

Follow through in-depth interviews will be conducted with all willing participants at a later date.

Please Complete the Following (circle Yes or No for each question):

I have read the Plain Language Statement (or had it read to me)   Yes / No
I understand the information provided   Yes / No

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study   Yes / No

I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions   Yes / No

I understand that I will be completing a five-day diary and may
subsequently agree to be interviewed about my experiences
and views.

    Yes/ No

I am aware that my diary will be coded, and my interview will
be audiotaped for analysis   Yes /No

I understand that I will be offered a copy of the transcripts to review.

    Yes/No

I am aware that I may request to view the final study upon completion.

    Yes/ No

I understand that all information provided in this interview will be confidential and anonymous. Pseudonyms will be used when writing up the research findings.

    Yes / No

I understand that no information will be given in the writing of the research that could potentially identify the diocese, school or individuals involved.

    Yes / No

I understand that all information supplied as part of participation is subject to the established legal limitation and confidentiality.   Yes / No

I understand that participation in this research is voluntary and that I may withdraw from it at any point by emailing catherine.mccormack34@mail.dcu.ie
                                                                        Yes / No

Signature:

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researcher, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project.

Participants Signature:

Name in Block Capitals:

Witness:

Date:

- APPENDIX E3: Plain Language Statement

You are being invited to participate in this research about the role of the Diocesan Advisor in Catholic Voluntary secondary schools in the Republic of Ireland. The research for this study will form the basis of a doctoral thesis in Education which will be submitted to DCU. Very little research has been conducted on Diocesan Advisors in second level schools in Ireland to date. The study will hopefully provide insights into the type of work and the supports that Diocesan Advisors offer to religious educators to support them in carrying out their role.

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you consent to participate in keeping the diary, you will be asked to spend approximately 10-15 minutes each day for five days noting the key elements of your day in the diary. If you further consent to an interview, you will be invited to speak with the researcher on the telephone for no more than thirty minutes for a one-to-one interview during a day and at a time, convenient to you. The interviews will be audio recorded using a mp3 recorder and later transcribed by a research assistant or myself. A copy of the transcribed interview will be sent to you for review afterwards.

All data collected will be treated confidentially, within the usual legal limitations for such. Pseudonyms for each participant and each school or diocese mentioned will be applied. Information supplied or views expressed during the research will only be communicated to the researcher and research assistant (i.e. the person transcribing the interviews) and will not be attributed to individuals.

No information will be given in writing up the research to potentially identify the participants or any individuals involved. This research will not attempt to evaluate in any way the work of any individual or school.

Audio recordings of the interviews will be stored on computer and will be password protected. It will be saved for five years, after which time the data will be destroyed.

A box with the completed diaries and interview transcripts will be kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office for five years, after which time the data will be destroyed.

Participants may request to view the results and findings of the study by requesting this directly from the researcher. Upon completion, the researcher will also share the findings with the Diocesan Advisors at an annual in-service training day (with permission).

The benefit of taking part in this research is that it provides an opportunity to examine your role; to compare the carrying out of the role with how colleagues carry out theirs; to compare the role with the brief in the D.A.'s handbook; and to compare the role with how it is carried out in jurisdictions outside of Ireland. In a climate where religious education at

second level in Ireland is undergoing review, the role of the D.A. is vitally important in supporting and evaluating the quality of provision of Religious Education in schools.

No risks are foreseen due to participation in this study. The sensitivities of participants with regard to their opinions will be respected.

Participation in this study is voluntary and participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any point. This can be done by emailing the researcher: catherine.mccormack34@mail.dcu.ie

If participants have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

Dr P.J. Sexton, School of Policy and Practice, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000

- APPENDIX E4: FOCUS GROUP CONSENT

Dublin City University

Consent Form for Participants: Focus Group

Catherine Mc Cormack (Researcher)

Research Supervisor: Dr P.J. Sexton

Date: 2 May 2019

Dear Diocesan Advisor,

As part of my ongoing research on the role of the Diocesan Advisor, you are invited to take part in a follow-up 'Focus Group' activity.

The purpose of the focus group is to further explore the group dynamic on a number of questions relating to the role. The areas for questioning are:

1. Induction/Recruitment/Training/Contracts
2. Reporting to whom, what format and with what expected outcome?
3. Implications for D.A.'s following changes to the R.E. curriculum
4. Future of the role.

The purpose is to triangulate the data already received and unpack some of the anomalies therein.

The duration will be about 30 – 45 minutes and will recorded by audio.

The audio will be analysed anonymously and destroyed afterwards.

Please indicate that you are willing to take part in the focus group.

I am willing to take part in a focus group activity for the purpose of discussing as a group, the role of the Diocesan Advisor.

- APPENDIX E5: TRANSCRIPT OPTION

Dublin City University

Consent Form for Participants: Focus Group

Catherine Mc Cormack (Researcher)

Research Supervisor: Dr P.J. Sexton

Date: 2 May 2019

Dear Diocesan Advisor,

As part of my research on the role of the Diocesan Advisor, you were invited to take part in a recorded interview.

As part of the agreement, a copy of the recording will be made available to you should you wish to have it. The options are outlined below, please indicate which option suits you best and tick the box beside that. Please sign the form.

Option One: I require a verbatim transcribed account of the interview

Option Two: I am happy to receive a memory key with my recording on it

Option Three: I do not require a copy of the recording.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX F: OFSTED DESCRIPTOR

Ofsted
raising standards
improving lives

Protocol on the inspection of schools with a religious character in England

From 15 September 2010

The inspection of schools with a religious character in England (those schools subject to inspection under both sections 5 and 48 of the Education Act 2005).

Protocol for inspectors

Purpose

1. The intention of this protocol is to ensure that, where a school is to be inspected under both sections 5 and 48 of the Education Act 2005, appropriate arrangements are in place for the inspections to be carried out simultaneously, or for the section 48 inspection to take place after the section 5 inspection. This is in order to minimise the volume of inspection in the school. This version of the protocol is between Ofsted and the [insert name of the relevant faith group]. This protocol also covers the inspection of academies sponsored by faith groups.

Background

2. If a school has a religious character, as determined by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills under section 69(3) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, denominational religious education and the content of collective worship are inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005. Where religious education is required to be provided using the locally agreed syllabus relevant to the school, religious education is inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

3. The governing body of a school (or foundation governors in the case of a voluntary controlled school) is responsible (after consultation with the appropriate authority) for setting up the section 48 inspection and for appointing that inspector.

4. Ofsted and its inspection service provider (ISP) partners have no statutory remit in respect of section 48 inspections. This protocol is designed to assist in the manner in which section 5 and section 48 inspectors cooperate while remaining within the statutory requirements of each inspection, including the provision of separate reports.

5. Section 5 inspections are generally carried out by a team, one member of which is designated the lead inspector. The inspections may be led by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or an additional inspector from an ISP. Where a section 5 inspection is carried out by a single inspector, the term 'lead inspector' is used to describe this inspector in this protocol. Section 48 inspections are generally carried out by one inspector, and the term 'section 48 inspector' in this protocol refers to this person or the lead inspector where there is more than one inspector on the section 48 team.

6. In circumstances where a section 5 inspection is scheduled

    - alongside an inspection of boarding provision; or

- with an inspection of the Early Years Foundation Stage taking place as part of that section 5 inspection; or

- with an inspection of the Early Years Foundation Stage taking place as a parallel inspection event alongside that section 5 inspection

then a section 48 inspection may also take place concurrently. However, if a school's leadership considers that such concurrency would place an inappropriate burden on the affected school, then the section 5 inspection of a school which has boarding provision will take precedence over the section 48 inspection, in that the section 48 inspection shall be postponed. In the case of a section 5 inspection taking place, where it includes the inspection of the Early Years Foundation Stage, then the section 5 inspection shall take precedence over the section 48 inspection, in that the section 48 inspection shall be postponed. Where a school directly provides registered childcare for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, there may be a further inspection. This may take the form of a first inspection of newly registered provision, or inspection of any non-compliance with the requirements of registration as a result of a previous inspection or complaint. In such circumstances, there would not be a further section 48 inspection at the same time as or after that event.

Scheduling the inspection

7. Ofsted will make available to signatory organisations to this protocol the names of all relevant faith schools to be inspected in each ISP's geographic area, and the dates of those inspections, in the term prior to the term of inspection. Each ISP will nominate an inspection liaison officer as the contact point for faith groups, and shall also nominate a senior manager to act as a liaison point on wider section 5 and section 48 matters. Ofsted will take appropriate steps to ensure that such notifications are made on a confidential and secure basis, in line with Ofsted's policy on information assurance. The information to be shared is the names of faith schools and the proposed dates of inspection, and carries the UK Government's Protective Marking of 'PROTECT - INSPECTION'. The information is issued by Ofsted and is to be used by [name of faith group] solely for scheduling inspections as described in relevant sections of the protocol. The faith group contacts shall sign the confidentiality clause (contained in the annex), undertaking to maintain confidentiality concerning the provision of the information.

8. If the date of a section 5 inspection of a faith group school is changed, then the relevant ISP shall advise the affected faith group as soon as practicable after the decision to change the date of the section 5 inspection has been made.

9. The information in paragraph 7 will only be used by the lead nominated officer and other nominated employees and members of the faith groups for the purpose of scheduling section 48 inspections. Nominees will be proposed to Ofsted by the signatories to this protocol. The names of schools to be inspected and the proposed dates of inspection will be kept confidential. A school's name

will not be revealed to any section 48 inspector until after the school is notified, nor will it be revealed to any member of any school, or any officer of the relevant local education authority, or any member of that school's governing body, either by nominees, members or employees of the faith group, or by any inspectors appointed to inspect that school under section 5 or section 48, until the school and the relevant diocesan officer have received notification from the ISP of the date of the section 5 inspection. The relevant diocesan officer may be notified by email. By signing the protocol, the signatory binds her or his organisation to maintain the levels of confidentiality outlined in this protocol.

10. Information supplied to [name of faith group] will not be used for any purpose other than within the terms of this protocol. This protocol, or the supply of information, does not create any licence, title or interest in respect of any Intellectual Property Rights of the disclosing party. Where possible, information must be processed directly from the system. Where local storage, such as saving information from the system to a local computer, is required, all reasonable steps must be taken to ensure only authorised individuals have access, including limiting and removing access when it is not required; careful handling and disposal of any print-outs; avoiding use of removable storage where possible; and encryption of storage devices. In the event that [name of faith group] discovers that materials provided under this protocol have been incorrectly released, then [name of faith group] shall inform Ofsted immediately about that breach.

11. A proportionate approach to inspection is a principle of the new school inspection framework, and will be achieved partly by adjusting the frequency of inspections. In consequence, from September 2009, Ofsted has varied the frequency of schools' inspections depending upon the results of their previous inspections and an annual assessment of their subsequent performance. Hence, in general terms, schools currently judged 'good' or 'outstanding' at their previous inspection are usually inspected once within a five-year interval unless there is cause for concern. Schools which were judged 'satisfactory' at their previous inspection are inspected within three school years from the end of the school year in which that inspection took place. The section 48 inspection will be scheduled to take place either concurrently with the school's section 5 inspection or as soon as possible after it, and within the period specified by the legislation. If the faith group with linkages to the school is able to conduct a section 48 inspection at the time of the section 5 inspection, the faith group inspectorate will, first of all, confirm with the ISP that the section 5 inspection will be going ahead, and that the school has been, or will be, notified of the section 5 inspection's date by the ISP. After the school has been notified of the section 5 inspection, the faith group inspectorate will contact the school to apprise the school of the concurrent section 48 inspection, and its form and nature. The faith group must check with the ISP that the school has been notified, and that a section 5 inspection will go ahead; the ISP shall advise the faith group inspectorate of the lead inspector's name.

12. Where a school is subject to a further inspection within the inspection interval under section 5 (for example, a second inspection of a school with a notice to improve), a further section 48 inspection would not normally take place at the same time. Should a faith group decide to conduct a section 48 inspection at the same time as the further section 5 inspection, the faith group should consult with Ofsted and the Department for Education.

13. Breaches of confidentiality over the scheduling of inspection will result in withdrawal of access to Ofsted's information about scheduled dates of inspection for a period at the discretion of Ofsted. The determination of a breach of confidentiality will be made after the views of the relevant faith group have been taken into account: that process, and the decision on a withdrawal of access to that source of information, will be the responsibility of the National Director, Inspection Delivery, Ofsted. The decision letter will be issued to the relevant faith group inspectorate and copied to the Department for Education.

Relationship between inspectors

14. Ofsted's framework for inspection, its inspection guidance and instruments used under section 5, are available to section 48 inspectors through access to Ofsted's website.

15. Where a section 48 inspection takes place concurrently with a section 5 inspection, the section 48 inspector will, if it is requested, make available to the section 5 lead inspector the evaluation schedule to be used for the section 48 inspection and any supporting guidance.

16. The school may make its self-evaluation form (SEF) available to the section 48 inspector without prior reference to the section 5 inspector. The school may provide a paper or electronic copy of the SEF.

17. Where either the section 48 or the section 5 inspector, having read the SEF and/or having been in contact with the school, believes that a section 48 inspection has been wrongly scheduled, or a section 48 inspection has not been scheduled when one is needed, she or he should immediately seek advice from the relevant ISP to establish what action if any is needed.

18. Although the section 48 inspector will inspect acts of collective worship or those lessons designated as providing denominational religious education, section 5 inspectors and section 8 inspectors who monitor groups of schools, such as those causing concern, may attend acts of collective worship, and may observe lessons in which denominational RE is provided. In such cases, the section 5 inspector will not inspect or report on matters which are the responsibility of the section 48 inspector. Finally, section 5 and section 48 inspectors should jointly take steps to avoid over-inspection of particular teachers.

19. In the case of concurrent inspections, to support their understanding of the school and its standards and provision, section 5 and section 48 inspectors may

discuss, within the terms of the Ofsted Code of Conduct for inspectors, inspection evidence and emerging judgements, providing that no inspector from either inspection shall seek to take part in decisions or influence judgements made by inspectors from the other.

20. In the case when the inspections take place within the same term, but with the section 48 inspection taking place after the section 5 inspection, the lead inspector on the later inspection will consider the report of the earlier inspection.

Feedback and reporting

21. Where section 5 and section 48 inspections are undertaken concurrently, feedback on both inspections may take place at the same meeting, with the agreement of those receiving feedback, and provided that the feedback and subsequent discussion are conducted under the terms of the Ofsted Code of Conduct for inspectors. The timing of the feedback should be agreed beforehand by the inspection teams and the school's leadership.

22. The existence of a section 48 inspection report on a school shall be acknowledged in the 'Information about the school' section of a section 5 inspection report.

Quality assurance and performance management

23. Section 48 inspection reports shall not be subject to scrutiny by Ofsted or the ISP for the purposes of quality assurance, and section 5 inspection reports shall not be subject to scrutiny by section 48 inspectors or their faith groups for the purposes of quality assurance.

24. The work under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 of any section 48 inspector who also inspects under section 5 shall not be admissible in support of her or his performance management by Ofsted or by her or his ISP.

APPENDIX G: ROLE OF THE DIOCESAN ADVISOR (HANDBOOK)

The Role of the Diocesan Advisor for Post-Primary Religious Education (2013)

The Role of the
Diocesan Advisor
for Post-Primary
Religious Education

IRISH CATHOLIC
BISHOPS' CONFERENCE
COMHDHÁIL EASPAG CAITLICEACH ÉIREANN

- APPENDIX G1: INTRODUCTION TO HANDBOOK
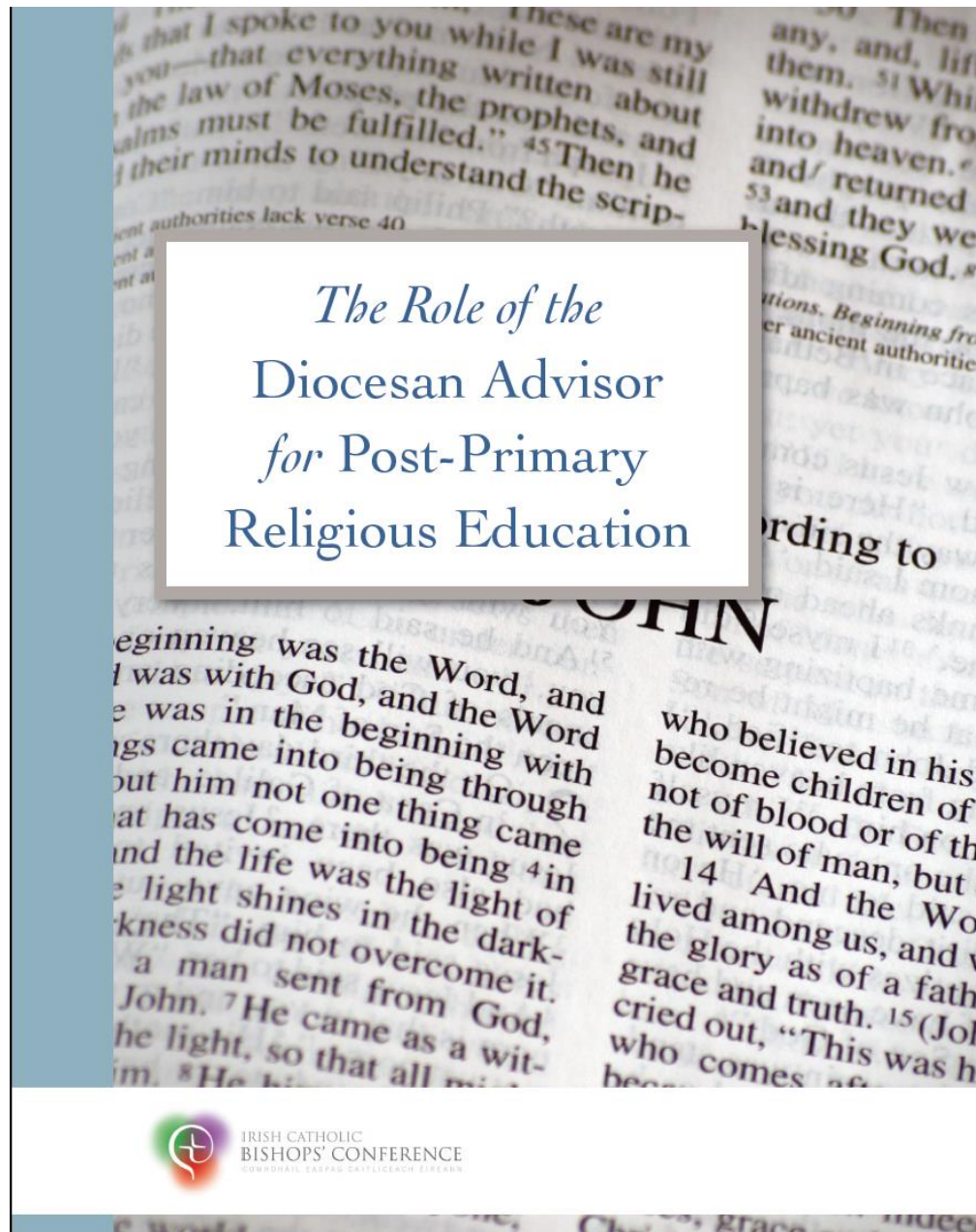
Introduction

The family, the school and the Church are overlapping communities, with shared responsibilities in the moral and spiritual formation of young people. The expectation that adequate religious education be provided in schools follows from the wishes of parents. The local bishop assists the school in this responsibility by appointing Diocesan Advisors that support and guide the religious education programme of a school. This document sets out the role of Diocesan Advisors in greater detail by describing their activities.

The Diocesan Advisor is a person appointed by the local bishop(s) to act in the name of the local Church in relation to schools within the diocese. This appointment brings with it certain responsibilities and requires certain qualities in the Diocesan Advisor.

While the bishop's authority is to watch over the orthodoxy of religious instruction and the observance of Christian morals in Catholic schools, it is the task of the whole school community to ensure that a distinctive Christian educational environment is maintained in practice.

This provision, in relation to the role of the diocesan bishop as regards education, is included in the Code of Canon Law. The Code is clear that bishops have a responsibility in relation to religious education which is not just confined to Catholic schools.

The formation and education in the Catholic religion provided in any school is subject to the authority of the Church. It is for the Episcopal Conference to issue general norms concerning this field of activity and for the diocesan bishop to regulate and watch over it. The local Ordinary is to ensure that those who are to be appointed as teachers of religion in all schools are outstanding in true doctrine, in the witness of their Christian life and in their teaching ability (Code of Canon Law #804).

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- APPENDIX G2: QUALIFICATIONS

Qualification for the Post

The person nominated as Diocesan Advisor must be a person of faith. Furthermore, as the Diocesan Advisor will be working in collaboration with teachers, schools and school management, it is important that he/she has experience of working within a school and holds professional qualifications in education/religious education. In addition, the person should have taught religious education within a post-primary framework. The Diocesan Advisor must be freely available to visit schools during the school year.

The Role of the Diocesan Advisor

Since the Diocesan Advisor is appointed by the local bishop, he decides the role of the Diocesan Advisor within that particular diocese. However, the functions can be described under the following broad headings. These should not be regarded as exhaustive and may be added to or varied, depending on local circumstance:

1. School Visits

It is by making regular personal visits that the advisor builds up familiarity and trust with the principal, chaplain and religious education team of each school.

The Diocesan Advisor is obliged to make at least one substantial visit to each school in the diocese in a given year. The visit should be arranged in advance for a mutually acceptable time and a notice of the visit sent to each school for the attention of the religious education teachers. The visit should be arranged for a day when the religious education team is available to meet the advisor.

Ideally, a timetable for the advisor's visit is drawn up by the school prior to the visit. On arrival, the advisor should meet with the principal and then with the head of the religious education

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- APPENDIX G3: EVALUATION

department. The Diocesan Advisor should then meet with the religious education teachers, individually and/or as a subject department. These meetings will involve the bringing of new resources and ideas to the teachers' attention, as well as listening to and discussing issues that arise in the school's religious education programme. The advisor will help the religious education team to evaluate their work and provide support. All these meetings should take place in a suitable room.

The advisor may visit classes timetabled for religious education that day, to encourage and review the students' participation in religious education. The Diocesan Advisor should visit the oratory, where one exists, and any designated sacred space within the school, as well as appraising the other resources which the school provides for religious education. Ideally, the visit should conclude with a second meeting with the school principal – this is to appreciate the work being done and also to state concerns, when such are warranted.

The formal visit to the school is, if possible, made in the first term, when there is less pressure from examinations. In the second and third term follow-up visits are made, for example, during morning break, to make teachers aware of new resources, events or to welcome a newly appointed religious education teacher or chaplain. Towards the end of the academic year, it is useful to visit schools to assist with forward planning and facilitate decision making around the choice of textbooks, teaching methodologies, the provision of retreats, etc.

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- APPENDIX G4: REPORTING

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2. Reporting

In every subject in the curriculum, the Department of Education and Skills (DES) in the Republic of Ireland and the Department of Education in Northern Ireland have a group of qualified inspectors who report to the Ministers of Education and ensure standards are maintained. Canon Law assigns the role of the oversight of religious education to the local bishop (Code of Canon Law #801–806). The Diocesan Advisor is appointed by the bishop in the exercise of this pastoral responsibility. The Diocesan Advisor reports to the bishop at regular intervals on issues that call for his attention.

As religious education is now a multi-denominational examination subject offered at both Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate level in the Republic of Ireland and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and General Certificate of Education (GCE) A Level and AS Level in Northern Ireland, the Department of Education in both jurisdictions has appointed an inspector for religious education. An element of evaluation and consequent reporting is also part of the work of the Diocesan Advisor in the area of faith formation. An Annual Report should be made for the local bishop. Diocesan Advisors have traditionally involved themselves with the resourcing and support of the mainstream syllabi for RE – including those for State examinations. This is alongside the professional development services of the DES.

In general terms, the Diocesan Advisor should report to the following:

i.   The school principal, with whom the Diocesan Advisor should meet during school visits. Furthermore, there may be merit in submitting a report to the school's Board of Management/ Board of Governors;

ii. The local bishop, who has a role in relation to the religious education of Catholic students and the religious education curriculum. The Diocesan Advisor's report should include information on syllabus, qualification, resources, time-allocation and methodology, and evidence of the living ethos of a Catholic school;

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- APPENDIX G5: APPOINTMENTS

iii. The local Education and Training Board (ETB) in the Republic of Ireland. Since the ETB has responsibility to provide 'religious instruction' in vocational schools and community colleges, under the provisions of Circular 7/79 and the Model Agreements of Designated Community Colleges and the Deeds of Trust of Community schools, the Diocesan Advisor should foster links with the local ETB, ideally through the CEO or Education Officer. This could be done through an annual report or meeting.

3. Appointments

Since, 'in his own diocese, the local Ordinary has the right to appoint or to approve teachers of religion and, if religious or moral considerations require it, the right to remove them or demand that they be removed' (Code of Canon Law #805), the Diocesan Advisor may be required to participate in selection/interview boards for teachers of religion. While undertaking this task, the Diocesan Advisor will conform to regulations governing such boards by, for example, the local ETB or the community schools concerned. Furthermore, the Diocesan Advisor will be mindful that he/she is the representative of the Catholic bishop on such boards.

4. Chaplaincy

The Diocesan Advisor will also be responsible for duties in relation to the appointment, support and probation of chaplains as required by the local bishop. For schools under the authority of the Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) these duties are contained in the 'Contracts for Chaplains' as agreed by the ETBI and the Irish Bishops' Conference. In the case of comprehensive and community schools, the duties for chaplains are outlined by contracts drawn up by the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools. The local bishop may require the Diocesan Advisor to undertake further responsibilities in this regard.

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- APPENDIX G6: NAPPDA

5. National Association

Diocesan Advisors should belong to the National Association of such advisors. This organisation should work in close collaboration with the Council for Education of the Irish Bishops' Conference and with the Council for Catechetics of the Irish Bishops' Conference, in relation to the syllabi for religious education, in relation to identifying resources and encouraging appropriate methodologies. Membership of this association is also important for the support, formation and development of the Diocesan Advisor. In this regard, the programme for meetings of the National Association should seek to address issues/topics of relevance to the Diocesan Advisor and the general aim of these meetings should be to provide faith and professional development opportunities for its members.

6. Organising and Leading In-services for Religious Education Teachers

The Diocesan Advisor should organise an annual in-service for the religious education teachers of a diocese. This gathering introduces teachers to leading speakers in the catechetics or faith development field. It renews a sense of enthusiasm for their work, as well as providing information updates and skills. All Catholic schools, schools under Catholic co-trusteeship and teachers of the Catholic faith in VEC schools are expected to be represented at this meeting.

Other less formal in-services are arranged on a local (school cluster), shorter (afternoon or evening), and particular interest (chaplain, head of religious education, year group) basis. Diocesan Advisors may also organise retreats and days of prayer for religious education personnel.

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- APPENDIX G7: FURTHER ASPECTS OF THE ROLE

7. Engaging with Schools and the Partners in Education

The Diocesan Advisor's primary function is to support the school's religious education team in its responsibility as a provider of religious education. A school profile form, a template for which is included here, is sent to each school at the beginning of the academic year. The completed form is returned to the advisor to assist with planning and to provide an overview of the school's religious education activities and personnel. The advisor engages with the religious education team, the principal, the board of management and the trustees of a given school as necessary.

8. Developing Links between Home, School and Parish

In partnership with other diocesan services, the Diocesan Advisor promotes links between school, parish and home, creating possibilities for interaction between these partners in education in a particular area.

- The advisor can discharge this role to parishes by meeting with local pastoral teams to provide information on post-primary catechetics and suggest possibilities for parish–school links.

- For schools, the Diocesan Advisor might facilitate a diocesan-based certification/awards scheme to acknowledge the role schools play in the pastoral life of local Catholic communities. Such links might encourage the setting up of a youth group in the parish or a new choir, or a liturgy group for Sunday Masses. The advisor might also promote programmes which facilitate teenage 'faith friends' for those preparing for First Communion and Confirmation.

- The Diocesan Advisor can support and encourage parent gatherings in schools or parishes where the topic of religious education and the Catholic educational ethos is being addressed.

- APPENDIX G8: EVALUATION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

9. Evaluation of Religious Education in the School

The Diocesan Advisor is an employee of the local diocese whose concern is the catechetical programme in post-primary schools. The Diocesan Advisor should, therefore, remind all the partners in education of the central position of religious education in the curriculum. The advisor recommends the adequate timetabling and resourcing of religious education classes as well as the other features of faith formation such as retreats.

It is good practice for the Diocesan Advisor to write up a personal evaluation of the school following each visit. A template for this is included. This record can be the basis for a report held for the bishop's attention. It can also be used if a letter is written to the principal or the school's board, subsequent to a visit.

In all cases, the evaluation should recognise the strengths of a school's religious education programme and view any shortcomings in the context of a willingness to assist the school's authorities.

10. Gathering and Sharing Resource Materials

The Diocesan Advisor informs schools about the best available resources for the religious education syllabi, faith formation and the celebration of the liturgical year. The advisor can help schools choose the textbooks and other materials best suited to their particular needs. This is done when making personal visits to schools as well as by regular mailings of a newsletter. The Diocesan Advisor's newsletter also promotes religious education in-services and other catechetical and diocesan events.

Each advisor should compile a teacher and Chaplain email database to regularly distribute prayer services and resources relevant to the syllabi. The advisor may, as required, update on a regular basis the section of their diocese's website devoted to post-primary catechesis with resource material and information.

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11. Overview

A primary role of the Diocesan Advisor is to ensure that the provisions for teaching religious instruction are upheld, particularly in terms of content and in terms of timetabling allocation. Within the Catholic school, there is an obligation on catechists to impart knowledge that respects the teaching of Christ and the Church. This obligation was restated by John Paul II in his jubilee address to catechists:

> Your work, dear catechists and religion teachers, is more necessary than ever and requires on your part constant fidelity to Christ and to the Church. For all the faithful have a right to receive from those who, by office or mandate, are responsible for catechesis and preaching answers that are not subjective, but correspond with the Church's constant Magisterium, with the faith that has always been taught authoritatively by those appointed teachers and lived exemplarily by the saints.
>
> *Pope John Paul II, Address to Catechists at St Peter's Rome,*
> *10 December 2000.*

This 'work' must be supported, evaluated and reported on by the Diocesan Advisor. The Diocesan Advisor is a person appointed by the local bishop to act in the name of the local Church in relation to schools within the diocese. This is a shared responsibility for the moral and spiritual formation of young people.

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APPENDIX H: TEXTS (COPYBOOK & NAPDA/ NAPPDA CONSTITUTIONS)

- APPENDIX H1: COPYBOOK (1905)

1905 AD copy

Diocesan Inspector
Original Copy book
in Crinkle N.S, Birr
Co. Offaly

Questions were passed
around from school to
School in the Area each
Year.
Teachers in adjoining
Rooms listened + took
down the Questions —

Mention a mortal sin. Mention a mortal
sin against 7th Commandment? Against 2th?
If you burned a man's hay what commandment
would you break?
If I stole a £5 note what commandment would
I break? Commanded by 4th Commandment
Who are our Superiors?
What is Grace? What is a sacrifice?
How many sacrifices in Jew Law? How many
in the Old? What is the Mass? And so?
Is it a mortal sin to conceal a mortal sin
in Confession? How was St Paul put
to death? What is the mystery of the Incarna-
What sacs do you receive only once + why?
What does resurrection of the body mean?
Could a bishop allow a priest to give Confirm-
What com. would you break by cursing?
When did Christ ascend into Heaven?
If you met 2 magpies on the road + turned back
what kind of devotion would that be?

- APPENDIX H2: NAPDA & NAPPDA CONSTITUTIONS

1988 NAPDA Constitution.

1 Title: The group shall be known as the National Association of Primary School Diocesan Advisors in Religious Education.

2 Membership:

2.1 Membership of the association shall be open to full and part-time primary Diocesan Advisors.

2.2 Associate membership shall be open to others who work in relation to R.E. in primary schools.

2.3 There will be a nominal annual subscription fee payable at A.G.M.

3 Vision:

1 To fulfil within the Irish context the command of the Risen Lord to 'go teach all nations.'

2 Us, fully alive, nurturing the seed in ourselves and in others.

4 Aims:

The Aims of the Association are as follows.

4.1 To provide support for individual members in their work.

4.2 To provide a forum for discussion.

4.3 To provide further formation and education for the members.

4.4 To review nationally the work of religious education in the primary school and to encourage

 continual evaluation of curricula and programmes.

4.5 To liaise with other agencies involved in the field of Religious Education – the Catechetical, Liturgy and Pastoral Commissions, Department of Education, Post-Primary Diocesan Advisors, Adult Advisors, R.E. Programme Writers and Publishers, National Director for Catechetics.

4.6 To foster co-operation between those involved in Religious Education.

4.7 To articulate the needs nationally of Religious Education at primary level.

5 Meetings:

The association shall hold an A.G.M. and a minimum of two other meetings during the year.

5.1 A Committee of four shall be elected by simple majority at A.G.M. and shall hold office for three years. Individual members may be re-elected for another term.

5.2 All 'paid up' members and associate members of the association shall be entitled to vote.

5.3. Only full members of the association shall be eligible for election.

5.4 Nominations for the committee shall be proposed at the A.G.M. Candidates shall indicate willingness to go forward for election and each candidate shall be both proposed and seconded.

5.5 Election shall be by secret ballot.

5.6 The officers shall include a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer. All officers may be appointed/elected by the committee.

5.7 If the Chairperson resigns the Vice Chairperson will act as Chairperson until the next election. Another member may be co-opted onto the committee, from the full time members of the association, to fill the vacancy until the next election.

5.8 If a person holding office on the committee ceases to be a full time member of the association he/she must resign from the committee.

6 The committee shall arrange for meetings of the association and shall set the agenda from the points raised by the membership. The secretary will notify members of the time and place of the meetings and in consultation with the chairperson, compile the agenda. The secretary will keep accurate minutes of decisions made at meetings of the association. A copy of these will be circulated to each member of the association prior to the meeting.

- APPENDIX H3: NAPPDA CONSTITUTION
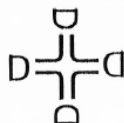
The National Association of Post Primary Diocesan Advisers

1. The Association shall be called the National Association of Post Primary Diocesan Advisers (N.A.P.P.D.A.)

2. Membership is open to all Post Primary Diocesan Advisers for Religious Education.

3. Aims of the N.A.P.P.D.A.:

   (a) Keep members informed of issues and developments in religious education and faith formation.

   (b) Provide mutual support for members.

   (c) Represent views and concerns of members.

   (d) Liaise with other groups and bodies involved in religious education and faith formation.

4. Executive Committee:
   An Executive Committee of four members shall be elected to hold office for three years. One member should be a diocesan adviser from Northern Ireland.

5. Nominations for the positions of Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer on the Executive Committee shall be proposed and seconded at the Annual General Meeting (at three year intervals).

6. Election shall be by secret ballot and simple majority.

7. Members of the Executive Committee shall not serve for more than two consecutive terms.

8. The N.A.P.P.D.A. shall hold an Annual General Meeting (usually during the season of Spring) and at least two other meetings each year.

9. Provincial meetings for a catchment of dioceses shall be held at the discretion of local diocesan advisers.

10. An Episcopal member of the Commission for Catechetics shall be invited to attend the Annual General Meeting and other meetings as the need arises.

11. The Executive Committee shall make all arrangements for meetings of the N.A.P.P.D.A., circulate members with minutes of meetings and all necessary documentation, and ensure that the agenda and format of meetings reflect the wishes, needs and concerns of members.

12. The Executive Committee shall be empowered to speak and act on behalf of the N.A.P.P.D.A.

13. The Executive Committee shall extend invitations to relevant external bodies/persons as the need arises.

14. An annual diocesan subscription is levied on members to help defray administrative expenses. The amount of the subscription is to be decided at the Annual General Meeting.

- APPENDIX H4: NSBECS Framework

NATIONAL STANDARDS AND BENCHMARKS FOR EFFECTIVE CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Defining Characteristics of Catholic Schools

- Centered in the Person of Jesus Christ
- Contributing to the Evangelizing Mission of the Church
- Distinguished by Excellence
- Committed to Educate the Whole Child
- Steeped in a Catholic Worldview
- Sustained by Gospel Witness
- Shaped by Communion and Community
- Accessible to All Students
- Established by the Expressed Authority of the Bishop

The National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools may be used for purposes consistent with the support and improvement of Catholic education. It may not be sold for profit by any person or institution. The content contained herein may not be altered, edited or amended. Any reproduction or use must include acknowledgement of the Center for Catholic School Effectiveness, School of Education, Loyola University Chicago, in partnership with the Barbara and Patrick Roche Center for Catholic Education, Lynch School of Education, Boston College.

Copies available for download at the Catholic School Standards Project. Please visit www.catholicschoolstandards.org.

STANDARDS

MISSION AND CATHOLIC IDENTITY

1 An excellent Catholic school is guided and driven by a clearly communicated mission that embraces a Catholic Identity rooted in Gospel values, centered on the Eucharist, and committed to faith formation, academic excellence and service.

2 An excellent Catholic school adhering to mission provides a rigorous academic program for religious studies and catechesis in the Catholic faith, set within a total academic curriculum that integrates faith, culture, and life.

3 An excellent Catholic school adhering to mission provides opportunities outside the classroom for student faith formation, participation in liturgical and communal prayer, and action in service of social justice.

4 An excellent Catholic school adhering to mission provides opportunities for adult faith formation and action in service of social justice.

GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

5 An excellent Catholic school has a governing body (person or persons) which recognizes and respects the role(s) of the appropriate and legitimate authorities, and exercises responsible decision making (authoritative, consultative, advisory) in collaboration with the leadership team for development and oversight of the school's fidelity to mission, academic excellence, and operational vitality.

6 An excellent Catholic school has a qualified leader/leadership team empowered by the governing body to realize and implement the school's mission and vision.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

7 An excellent Catholic school has a clearly articulated, rigorous curriculum aligned with relevant standards, 21st century skills, and Gospel values, implemented through effective instruction.

8 An excellent Catholic school uses school-wide assessment methods and practices to document student learning and program effectiveness, to make student performances transparent, and to inform the continuous review of curriculum and the improvement of instructional practices.

9 An excellent Catholic school provides programs and services aligned with the mission to enrich the academic program and support the development of student and family life.

OPERATIONAL VITALITY

10 An excellent Catholic school provides a feasible three to five year financial plan that includes both current and projected budgets and is the result of a collaborative process, emphasizing faithful stewardship.

11 An excellent Catholic school operates in accord with published human resource/personnel policies developed in compliance with (arch)diocesan policies and/or religious congregation sponsorship policies, which affect all staff (clergy, religious women and men, laity and volunteers) and provide clarity for responsibilities, expectations and accountability.

12 An excellent Catholic school develops and maintains a facilities, equipment, and technology management plan designed to continuously support the implementation of the educational mission of the school.

13 An excellent Catholic school enacts a comprehensive plan, based on a compelling mission, for institutional advancement through communications, marketing, enrollment management, and development.

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