Voices, Values and Visions

A Study of the Educate Together Epistemic Community and its Voice in a Pluralist Ireland

Volume 1 of 2

By

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This thesis is submitted to Dublin City University in fulfilment of the requirements for a Ph.D. Degree

July 2006

Declaration

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

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Date: 25th Sept. 2006.

Swords Educate Together National School

Reflection

As the sun shines kindly on the high and the low
Let us love one another as we work, play and grow.

May we be gentle and kind with helping hands
For those from all countries and different lands.

We respect what we have; we're honest and true
And we open our ears to all points of view.

We nurture one another while learning and living,
What we receive, we pass on in our giving.

Like a seed that changes to a great oak tree
We too can become strong, wise, full and free.

Written by Alice and Paul

Abstract

The purpose of this doctoral dissertation is to explore the Educate Together sector, the multidenominational primary school movement in the Republic of Ireland. This multilevel exploration looks at the role of Educate Together in a pluralist Ireland, the challenges presented by the accelerated growth of the sector, the values that underpin the schools in the sector and in particular the relevance of what is termed the Core Curriculum.

The background to the research is the prior work conducted with the sector in 1998. The work presented here is an account of the second phase of the research, which attempts to examine in greater detail some of the key issues that arose in the earlier work. Through a co-operative inquiry that involves a wide range of Voices within Educate Together, the research identifies a number of key issues that have arisen for the sector between 2000 and 2006.

The work examines the concept of mixed schooling that underpinned the Irish National School system in the 1830's, the gradual erosion of this system and its replacement by denominational schools and the emergence of the Educate Together sector in the 1970's. Using a form of co-operative inquiry the research identifies the importance of Educate Together in an intercultural Ireland, the impact of this form of inclusive education on the children who attend the schools and the design and development of "Learn Together: An Ethical Education Curriculum for Educate Together Schools". The final section of the research examines the impact of this curriculum at national and international level and in particular the strengthening of the relationship between the Colleges of Education and Educate Together. The study offers a unique insight into an important partner in Irish education.

Acknowledgements

Finally I want to thank Tony, Rory and Donal Mullins who have displayed infinite patience and given absolute support in particular over the last year. To those three I say: 'I'm back!'

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my late father, Michael Mulcahy who gave me a thirst for knowledge at a young age and who always believed in me, to my partner Tony who convinced me that I was capable of this work, who first introduced me to Educate Together and who is the centre of my life and to my late colleague and dear friend, Stephen Byrne whose memory has guided me from a distance to complete this work.

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Chapter 1　　　Voices, Values and Visions

1.1 Introduction

Change is not a new phenomenon in Irish society. Throughout our history we have undergone changes as a result of invasion, as a result of famine, as a result of emigration and also as a result of a movement away from our rural roots to a more urbanised way of living. The Famine of 1847 led to one of the biggest changes in Irish society and the fallout from the Famine can still be seen in the depopulation of sections of the Irish countryside but more clearly in the Irish Diaspora, which President Mary Robinson in her address to the Joint Houses of the Oireachtas in 1994 estimated at 70 million. This figure may be disputed (MacEnrai: Irish Times: May 23rd 2006) but it is generally used to represent those who self identify as Irish. The Department of Foreign Affairs in a snapshot of the Irish worldwide came up with a figure of 3 million Irish living abroad, of whom 1.2 million were born in Ireland.

The figures demonstrate that a large number of people with very tenuous link to Ireland are proud to claim an Irish identity, despite generations of absence from Ireland. We are a diverse and widely flung group of people linked through a shared sense of identity.

The new wave of change may have its roots in our entry into the EEC in the 1970's however the most dramatic impact of that change has occurred in the last ten years. We have moved from a country of mass emigration to one of mass immigration and while this may not appear at first glance to be as seismic a change as that which

occurred in the aftermath of the Famine, time may prove that the changes, though more subtle, will be equally dramatic. We have been forced to look again at the concept of Irish identity and our sense of Irish nationality, perhaps concepts that we took for granted when they were not challenged. Immigration has meant that we are looking at the reality of global engagement for the first time in our history.

Chapter 4 of this work looks at the facts and figures surrounding migration in greater detail. However the preliminary figures for the year 2005 indicate that 70,000 immigrants entered Ireland while a corresponding 16,600 emigrated. The estimates show that up to 38% of those immigrants came from the 10 new states that joined the EU in 2004. (Source: Irish Times: May 23rd, 2006) The number of Polish people in Ireland is estimated at 150, 000. (Source: Sunday Independent: April 1st, 2006) People are attracted into Ireland because of the job opportunities and the chance to become part of the 10th wealthiest state in the developed world. As we struggle to come to terms with the fact that we are in effect one of the wealthiest countries in the world with all the benefits and drawbacks that this position brings, we must also come to terms with the impact of immigration. Chapter 4 examines these issues in more detail and in particular looks at the concept of change and what it means to a society.

As a society we are at odds with the 'interplay between the globalisation of the local and the re-localisation of the global.' (Keohane: 6) Baumann's term 'liquid modernity' captures the essence of the current situation. Like any society in a time of change we take from the past and bring this into the future with us. We look at our institutions and try to discover what can be salvaged from the past and present to create something worthy and fitting for the future. This research began almost 6 years ago when it would have been difficult, if not impossible to envisage the rate of

change and the increasing relevance of the research topic. Today, it appears more important than ever to look at the position of Educate Together, the umbrella group for multidenominational primary schools, in an ever increasingly pluralist Ireland.

1.2 Challenges for Education

Education was responsible for one of the biggest waves of change in Irish social life and many would believe that it set in train the new economic boom that has fuelled the current dramatic change in our society. In the late 60's when the then Minister for Education Donagh O'Malley, introduced free secondary education for all he unleashed a wave of change that would send ripples into every corner of every village in Ireland. The increased interest in education led to the setting up of more universities and Institutes of Technology located throughout the country. Sociologists very often focus on access to education in urban areas and in particular postal regions for example in the greater Dublin area. If the spotlight were turned on rural Ireland it might identify whole communities where in the 60's it was rare to attend secondary school and where today 3rd Level education is the norm. I speak with the experience of being part of a family that broke the barriers for attendance at 2nd level, completion of Leaving Certificate and in my own case being the first in the village to proceed to degree status. Today, a sociologist visiting that same village would find that it is expected that school leavers will progress to Third Level in the University of Limerick, Mary Immaculate College of Education, Limerick Institute and Limerick College of Art. Students also travel to colleges outside of Limerick and outside of the State. I raise this issue to demonstrate the power of education and its ability to make

and lead change. Today, Irish education is faced with the challenges presented by immigration and by a more global society. This thesis is in some part an examination of that challenge.

While it is impossible to predict with any certainty that immigration figures will continue to grow there is some evidence from the Central Statistics Office that net immigration trends will not be reversed to any considerable extent in the next two decades. Regardless of the nature of growth into the future, Irish education still has a responsibility to engage with the concept of inclusive citizenship as defined in the declaration of the European Ministers for Education on intercultural education in the new European context. The Council of Europe states that the development of the ability to interact productively in a multicultural context is not intuitive but must be acquired and learned. They urge governments that it is imperative to include the management of religious diversity within the larger context of intercultural education. This unity of the intercultural and multidenominational elements of inclusive, democratic citizenship, will, they believe, serve to foster dialogue around issues of identity, co-operation and peaceful conflict resolution. (Athens: November 2003) This is an interesting challenge from an Irish perspective given the predominantly denominational nature of our education system and in particular the denominational ethos that prevails in the majority of Irish Primary schools.

Chapters 2 and 3 of this research will examine the historical background to our current system of Primary Education and the slow but sustained growth of the multidenominational system. The current figures available for membership of different religious groupings in Ireland relate to the 2002 census. The indications are that these numbers have increased significantly based on the immigration patterns and

the numbers of churches belonging to different faith groups opening up throughout Ireland. The census figures revealed that:

> *The number of Muslim and Orthodox adherents increased significantly between the censuses of 1991 and 2002- the former more than quadrupling to 19.000 and the latter increasing from less than 400 adherents in 1991 to over 10,000 in 2002. Non Irish Nationals made up 70% of the Muslims and over 85% of the Orthodox faith who were usually resident and present in the State on Census night. (Press Statement: Central Statistics Office: April 8th 2004)*

The headings 'No Religion' and 'Not Stated' were added to the Census in 1961 for the first time. The respective figures for that year were 1,107 and 5,625. By 2002 these figures had increased to 138,264 and 79,094. This marked a dramatic increase from 1961 and also from the 1991 figures, where the percentage increase in those who stated they had no religion was a sizeable 72%. There was a slight drop in the percentage of those who in the category 'Not Stated' of –4.3%. Dr. Patricia Kieran, (2005) believes that this may in part be due to the influence of postmodernism and the rejection of absolute, universally valid, truth. This may indeed be part of the reason, but the dramatic nature of the figures indicate that the second largest grouping after Catholicism, fall into the category of having no religion. This presents a major challenge for the predominantly Catholic Primary schools in Ireland. The Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) discussed some of these challenges at a Conference in Limerick in 2003. The findings from this conference show that there is a decline in religious practice among families attending denominational schools. Schools may not get the same level of support from families when it comes to religious education. Teachers also endorse the pluralist aspirations of the 1998 White Paper on Education yet there is little formal guidance on how to include children of other faiths in the denominational school. Padraig Hogan (2003: 65-74) highlights the changing balance of responsibility in denominational schools in relation to religious education and religious formation. Teachers are taking more responsibility for

religious formation at a time when they may be undergoing changes in their own religious attitudes and beliefs. This fact has been recognised by the Catholic Church and it has set up a consultative process, supported by the Irish Catholic Bishops Conference that will guide how religion is taught in Ireland. (May 2005)

The controversy at Scoil Thulach na nOg in Dunboyne in 2002 highlighted the difficulties that can arise when children of different religions are present when religious instruction for the sacraments is taking place. Later chapters of this work will include an interview with the former principal of the school, and with the INTO Secretary, John Carr, where this issue is raised. I was invited in to Dunboyne by the Principal to talk to the teachers and some of the parents on how the issue of religious education might be approached. In particular we looked at finding agreement on a set of core values that would underpin an Ethical Curriculum that would be agreeable to both major religious groups in the school, Catholic and Church of Ireland. This approach would be in keeping with the 1998 Education Act, which advocated pluralism and diversity of values. It was felt by the majority of the school community that the place for Religious Instruction was outside of school- hours, as it proved impossible to deliver this instruction to Catholic children without excluding the other children. There was no compromise and after many weeks of negotiation the Principal teacher was replaced.

This controversy highlights many of the issues that exist for Irish Primary schools from the perspective of patrons who are obliged by law to uphold the ethos of the school, the place of religious instruction in schools in the context of a pluralist Ireland and the inclusion of children from different cultural and religious backgrounds in predominantly denominational settings. The historical background to these issues will be explored in Chapter 2.

1.3 Research Background

The genesis of this research goes back to 1987 though the gestation period was mercifully shorter than that that. In that year I became a founder member of what was to become North Bay Multidenominational School Project, now known as North Bay Educate Together. My relationship with Educate Together has continued since then in several guises. Today I am Acting Chair of one of the new schools in the sector in my capacity as Patron Nominee. Throughout the years I have held positions on school Boards of Management, School Executives, National Executive and as an elected Director. I became interested in the sector because of the fact that the schools welcomed children of all religions and none and provided opportunities for children from different social, cultural and religious backgrounds to learn together. As a parent in the sector I appreciated that the schools were democratically run with a high level of parental involvement. Identity was important within the school community and respect was a key value that was evident in all interactions among all members of the school community. As a researcher in the field of education I was interested to find out how other members of the school communities viewed the schools and whether my experience was replicated. I was also interested in pluralist approaches to education and had been part of the Pluralism in Education initiative, which was set up in Dublin City University in 1995.

In 1998 I completed a thesis on Values in multidenominational schools. A key finding of this research was the need to look at the transmission of values, the relationship between values and ethos and in particular how the values related to the Core Curriculum in schools. The Core Curriculum is part of the religious education

policy of Educate Together schools and fulfils the requirement on school patrons to provide a Religious Education Curriculum. For many years each school developed its own individual curriculum, broadly based on the original curriculum set up by the Dalkey School Project in 1978. When individual Patronage changed to direct Patronage under Educate Together in 2000, the responsibility for the provision of a Religious Education Core Curriculum shifted to the National body. The religious principle put forward by the first Dalkey School Project was based on the creation of a school ethos, which reflected a society in which many social, religious, and cultural viewpoints co-exist. The religious education policy of the Dalkey School, in addition to the provision of a Core Curriculum also required the Board of Management of the school to facilitate any group of parents who wished to provide denominational instruction for their children. (Patron's Policy on Religious Education, December 1979.)

My initial research had highlighted the importance placed on the Core Curriculum across the schools in the Educate Together sector, both in terms of ethos and also in terms of identifying the key differences from a curricular perspective between Educate Together schools and denominational schools. The findings also highlighted a number of concerns around the diversity of curricula, the lack of in-service and pre-service training in the delivery of the different curricula and the unassailable fact that many of the issues covered by the Core Curricula had now been taken on board by new and emerging curricula in the area of Citizenship, Health and Safety and Social and Personal Education. A further concern arose in 2000 when Educate Together took over responsibility for the provision of a Core Curriculum for each new school. In practice this resulted in various existing curricula being put forward as stop- gaps until the schools were up and running. There was also widespread confusion in terms

of the myriad of titles that had been given to the Core Curriculum, which further weakened the identity of the curriculum in wider education circles.

As I entered the Educate Together research field for a second time on a formal basis, two key issues stood out for me as worthy of research. The macro issue concerned the position of Educate Together and its role in an increasingly pluralist Ireland. The micro issue concerned the importance of the Religious Education Core Curriculum in relation to providing a unified identity for the sector, fulfilling the legal obligation of Educate Together as a Patron and perhaps identifying best practice in the field of multidenominational education that could serve as a model for denominational schools faced with increasingly pluralist school populations.

1.4 Research Aims

The overall aim of the research was to conduct a study on the growth and development of Educate Together in Irish education at a time of increasing pluralism. To do this I had to be mindful of my own unique situation as an insider researcher with a direct involvement and connection with the research setting. Robson (2002) highlights some of the issues that may arise with insider research. These include the questions of validity and possible bias. Chapter 5 of this report demonstrates that through a truly reflexive co-operative inquiry, the position of insider research has been used to produce a transparent and honest research report where the reader is invited to construct his/her own perspective on the research. (Cohen et.al: 2000:106) The more specific aim was to initiate debate within the sector on a range of key issues that had arisen as a result of my previous research. One such issue was around the

status of the Core Curriculum, the links between the Core Curriculum and school ethos and the perception of the status of the curriculum among school principals. A second issue concerned the dramatic growth of the sector and the problems and opportunities that this presented for the Educate Together Movement. My previous research had identified a number of key values that underpin the schools within the sector. I wanted to revisit these lists of values and this time to include the children as part of the research community in order to talk to them about values, both personal and school based and present a picture of what children think of Educate Together schooling. Finally I wanted to seek out the views of other Voices in the field of education to gather their insights into Educate Together and what they perceived the role of the organisation might be in a pluralist Ireland. Throughout the course of the research I planned to chart the progress of the organisation from 2000-2006.

When Donald Schon coined the phrase 'swampy lowlands' he was referring to the unplanned for changes of direction that mark qualitative research. My decision to ensure that as many Voices as possible should be heard during the research resulted in a longer but far more exciting journey than I had at first envisaged. Like peeling an onion, each layer in turn led to another, even more interesting one. The most unexpected challenge was the development of The Learn Together Curriculum, an Ethical Education curriculum for the sector. This challenge had implications for the progress of the research but also made the research a worthwhile endeavour both on a personal and professional basis. The challenge in writing this research report has been to do justice to the intricacies of the research process and to allow the Voices of the epistemic community to be heard. In Chapter 5, I outline in more detail how I have tried to achieve this.

The research is presented from a timescale perspective rather than a thematic perspective as it allows the reader to chart the course of the research process and judge how well the emerging themes have been identified and taken on board as part of the next phase of the research. Chapters 2 and 3 set the context for the research by looking at the history of the emergence of the denominational National School system and charting the growth and development of Educate Together up to the present day. These Chapters also mark the beginning of the data gathering process as much use is made of primary and secondary sources. Chapter 4 uses literature to create an understanding of pluralism and its relevance to a changing Ireland, with particular reference to education. The chapter also explores some of the key literature in the area of Values in Education in Europe and beyond. The last section of the literature invites the reader to begin the visualisation of the Inclusive School. Chapter 5 outlines the rationale underpinning the choice of methodology and presents a model of research that is both iterative and reflective based on the hermeneutical axiom, that all thought implies interpretation and that the traditional elements of research methodology cannot exist in isolation from each other. Chapters 6-9 provide a description of the research, interpretation through the use of 1st Order and 2nd Order Narrative, ongoing evaluation and emergent themes. Finally, Chapter 10 presents a range of key findings, discusses the implication of these findings at local and national level for Educate Together, and looks to the future for multidenominational education in a pluralist Ireland.

The reader is now invited on board to view the story through his/her particular lens and to become part of the validation process.

Chapter 2   The National School System

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to locate the Educate Together movement within the broader picture of Irish National schools. The chapter will examine the emergence of the national school system in the early years of the nineteenth century and track its development through the twentieth century up to the present. Throughout this time, the system underwent fundamental changes in its aims, its objectives and its structures, culminating in the Education Act of 1998. From the perspective of the growth of the Educate Together system, there is a sense of the wheel coming full circle. The circle began with the original concept for national education as envisaged by the Stanley Letter of 1831 and travelled through a series of events, which culminated in the system of national education that exists in Ireland today. The major influences along the road include: the uneasy relationship that existed between Church and State, the vision of and commitment of the Chief Secretary Augustine Birrell, the power influenced in particular by Cardinal Cullen of Dublin, the equivocal role adopted by the First Dail towards education, the creation of the Department of Education in 1924, the insistence of the Catholic Church on the primacy of parents' rights while at the same time ensuring that parents were excluded through an Episcopal commission of 1934, the poor level of education of many people in an Ireland characterised by strong social inequalities and a system of patronage, inherited from the original Stanley Letter which made it impossible for individual groups unhappy with the system to set up schools. Despite these obstacles, there is no doubt that the national school system was, and continues to be a major factor in Irish life.

Fahey, (1992: p386): cited in Tovey and Share (2000) points out that education was the single biggest investment of resources of the newly independent Irish state. It was a major instrument in the political consolidation and rejuvenation of independent Ireland. It paved the way for mass literacy and according to the political scientist Tom Garvin (1998: p154) it accelerated the modernisation of Ireland and brought about a major change in the power relationships in Irish society.

2.2 The Kildare Place Society

Prior to the launch of the national school initiative, there were many attempts to provide education for the poor of Ireland. The most influential of these was the Kildare Place Society, also known as the Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in Ireland. The system was established in 1811 by a group of businessmen, bankers and lawyers and succeeded in obtaining government aid in 1814. It explicitly aimed at educating all denominations together and was successful in this aim, particularly in the early years. By the mid 1820's however, tensions had begun to emerge. The Catholic hierarchy opposed the Society on the grounds that it introduced passages from the Bible into daily lessons without reference to any denominational dogma or teaching. While this was a deliberate move on the part of the Trustees of the Society to avoid any denominational confrontations on issues or matters of controversy, the Catholic Church viewed it as proselytising and strongly voiced its objections on the grounds of its unsuitability for Catholic children. (Hyland and Milne, 1987) The difficulties voiced by the Catholic Church must be understood in the context of the time. Lord Stanley (1831) in his review of this problem recognised these difficulties and his introductory speech to the House of Commons on 9th September 1831 was a form of apologia for the failure of the Society. Yet he and

several other speakers at the debate 'regretted that the mere unannotated reading of the Bible should be considered by the Roman Catholic Hierarchy sufficient to damn completely the whole educational system.' (Johnston Auchmuty: 1937:pp. 82-83)

Catholic education had suffered greatly as a result of the restrictions placed on it by the Penal Laws. English policy in Ireland, according to Coolahan, (1981, p9) was to promote the English language and the Protestant religion through schooling. The Penal Laws forbade the setting up of Catholic schools and the education of Irish students abroad in Catholic schools. Professor Corcoran (1916) writing of state policy in Irish education cites from the Act of Uniformity of 1665.

> *Every schoolmaster keeping any publique or private school, and every person teaching youth in any house or family, shall subscribe to the declaration.. that I will conform to the Church of Ireland as it is now by law established.....and later take the oath of allegiance and supremacie and shall not instruct any youth before license obtained from his Ordinarie*

The laws were circumvented by those with resources who still sought education abroad, however under the reign of William 111 in 1695 a further act ensured that those who availed of this route forfeited all their goods and were instructed to return the child within two months (1703:Queen Anne). The vast majority of the Irish Catholic community received either no education at all or attended illicit "hedge" schools. These schools offered a wide range of subjects and in many instances went far beyond the level of primary schooling. The repeal of the Penal Laws through a series of Acts in 1782, 1792 and 1793 saw increased activity by voluntary groups in the field of education. Many of these groups, such as the London Hibernian Society, were actively proselytising so the reaction to the Kildare Pace Society must be viewed from the perspective of the climate of the time towards such forms of education.

The number of schools in Ireland at the beginning of the 19th century was estimated at 11,000. These schools catered for up to half a million pupils and were staffed by 12,000 teachers. Overall, it was thought that two in every five children of school going age had access to some amount of schooling. (Coolahan, pp 9-10) The provision of schooling however was still considered to be quite haphazard and there were no state regulations governing that provision. Whatever funding was available was channeled through the various voluntary groups such as the Kildare Place Society. There was a perception that this approach would do very little to meet the requirements of the Catholic population which was by far the biggest and most needy sector in Irish society. (Coolahan, P.12)

2.3 Lord Stanley's Contribution to the National School System

The involvement of the state in Irish education was an unusual move on the part of the British government and has been open to different interpretations. While countries such as Prussia, Holland, France, Spain, the Nordic Counties and Greece all underwent a greater state involvement in education at the beginning of the 19th Century, England moved at a much slower pace. It could be argued that the involvement of the state in the Irish system was a type of social experiment in advance of making any changes on the mainland. (O'Buachalla, P19; Coolahan, P3.) This is borne out by the fact that it took until 1870 to frame an Education Act, which gave the state a greater role in education. However, there were many other reasons why Ireland got a state supported primary system in 1831. Among these reasons were: the interest in education, which was evident through the voluntary agencies and the hedge school system, the possibility of using schools as a means of cultural assimilation and the pressure put on the British government by Irish members of

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parliament. Whatever the reasons, the result was a system of national education, which would lead to a unique relationship between Church and State, which still exists in the provision of Primary education up to the present.

An investigative commission into Irish education was established in 1824 and continued its deliberations until 1827. This commission ruled in favour of a government board to oversee a state-supported school system and it rejected the previous model of channelling of public funds through voluntary bodies. It also favoured a system of combined literary instruction for children of different denominations and the provision of separate religious instruction. (Hyland & Milne p98) Much of the impetus for reform came from Thomas Wyse, one of the leaders of the Catholic Emancipation Movement, (Wyse, 1901). Wyse had been instrumental in setting up *"The Friends of Civil and Religious Liberty"*, a joint group of Catholics and Protestants who proposed among other things:

- *That the State should have no established religion*
- *To attempt seizing on public education, with a view to converting it into a monopoly for any particular class or sect, is to disturb in a direct manner the order of society (Johnston Auchmuty: 1937: pp 74-75)*

A measure of the mood in Ireland at the time can be gauged from the minutes of a meeting of Catholic Archbishops and Bishops of Ireland held in Dublin on the 21st January 1826 that supported the common literary instruction of Catholics and Protestants, providing that sufficient care was taken to protect the religion of the Roman Catholic children and that no book to which the Roman Catholic Bishop could object, was used in the curriculum. When Wyse joined Parliament in 1830 as a member for Tipperary, he submitted a detailed plan for National Education in December of that year. Among the points he made in this plan were:

Let Catholics and Protestants be educated, wherever possible, in the same school.
Each in their quality of citizen contribute to it. Its object is to prepare future
citizens for a common country.

Due to a series of legal mishaps, Wyse did not get to present his Education Bill to

Commons, and on 9th September the announcement was made in The House of

Commons by Lord Stanley, the Chief Secretary for Ireland of the setting up of a

Board to oversee education in Ireland. The proposals were tentatively made in a letter

to the Duke of Leinster, **(Appendix A)** inviting him to become Chairman of the new

Board of Commissioners for National Education. (Hansard Parliamentary Debates,

1831, Hyland and Milne, p 99; Coolahan, p12) The letter was never underpinned by a

legal statute, due in part to the political climate of the day. However a more probable

explanation might be that if this were seen as some form of social experiment, it

would be much easier to change and amend if it fell outside the remit of legal

conventions.

Key points of Letter

The letter referred to the 1812 decision to appoint a Board to superintend a system of

national education in Ireland. This system should: 'admit children of all religious

persuasions and should not interfere with the particular tenets of any." It is clear

from this that as far back as 1812 there was a concerted effort to ensure that the

system of national education would not be hindered by disputes over religion.

The letter also clarified the role of the "Kildare-Street Society" as superintendent of

funding for national grants. Stanley makes it clear that such a system could not

continue due to its size and also the impossibility of 'connecting religious with moral

and literal education' through the policy of reading the Holy Scriptures without note

or comment. Stanley ascribed the ' purest motives' to this action but this view was

not shared by the Catholic Church authorities of the day.

The letter set out that in 1824-25 the Commissioners of Education recommended the appointment of two teachers in every school, one Catholic and one Protestant to superintend separately the religious education of the children. There was also an expressed desire on the part of the Commissioners of the time that the schools might come to an agreement on the selection of readings from the Scriptures, which would find favour with both persuasions. However, by 1828, a Committee of the House of Commons, sensible of the defects of such schemes, recommended the adoption of a system ' which should afford, if possible, a combined literary and a separate religious education, and should be capable of being so far adapted to the views of the religious persuasions which prevail in Ireland, as so to render it, in truth, a system of national education for the poorer classes of the community.' It is clear from this statement that there was a real interest on the part of the government to put in place a system of national education which would offer a compromise to both key religious persuasions but would also ensure that the most underprivileged in Irish society would have access to basic education.

The letter highlighted that the success of the proposed system of national education would depend on two things: the character of those appointed to the Board of Commissioners and the security afforded to the Irish that while 'the interests of religion are not overlooked,' that every care would be taken to ensure that the religious tenets of the pupils were not interfered with. To ensure that both of these conditions was met, Stanley strongly voiced the opinion that the members of the Board would have to be men of high personal character and that they must also profess different religious opinions.

It was the stated intention of the government that the Board would have complete control of the schools either erected under its auspices or those already in existence who would place themselves under its management. Thus was born a system of patronage, which to a great extent determined the current system in Irish primary schools. Applications for aid would be considered from all Christian denominations but the Board would be directed to look with most favour on three distinct types of application:

1. The Protestant and Roman Catholic clergy of the parish, or

2. One of the clergymen and a certain number of parishioners professing the opposite creed, or

3. Parishioners of both denominations.

Such a system it was hoped would ensure the multidenominational aspect of the schools. In cases where the application was exclusively denominational, the Board was advised to examine the circumstances of such an application.

The next section of the letter contained the roots of the administrative structure of the national school system, which still exists in some form to the present day. All applications for funding would be refused unless accompanied by assurances that the local application had sufficient funds to cover the annual repairs of the school and the provision of furniture; the payment of the permanent salary of the master; the purchase of books and school requisites at half price and in the case of a request for aid for the building of a school-house, 'it is required that at least one-third of the estimated expense be subscribed, a site for building, to be approved by the Commissioners, be granted for the purpose, and that the school-house, when finished, be vested in trustees, to be also approved by them'. This final provision paved the way for the local contribution to the provision of sites, which was to create a major

stumbling block for any group who wished to set up a school, and did not have the support of a parish or Church institution behind them.

Schools would be kept open for an agreed number of hours on either four or five days a week for moral and literary education only. The remaining one or two days would be 'set apart for giving, separately, such religious education to the children as may be approved of by the clergy of their respective persuasions'. The Board would also permit and encourage clergy to give religious instruction to the children of their respective persuasions, before or after school on the remaining days. This indicated a real support for the division of literary, moral education and religious instruction.

The powers of the Board also ran to the control of the curriculum through the vetting and selection of materials for literary and moral instruction and this same power could be exercised over the materials used in religious instruction, by the members of the individual religious persuasions, represented on the Board. Sacred Scripture would not be excluded from the combined literary and moral instruction, but the sections used had to have Board approval and such sections could not be seen as sufficient in themselves 'to convey a perfect and sufficient religious education, or to supersede the necessity of separate religious instruction on the day set apart for that purpose.' To ensure that religious instruction was delivered on the appointed day or days, the Board was mandated to ensure that a Register be kept in all schools to record the children who attended Divine Worship.

The Board had the power to visit schools or to vest that power in inspectors whom they appointed. A full report was to given to the Board.

Schools could appoint their own teachers but the Board reserved the right to fine, suspend or remove teachers and the teachers should have attended and received

training in a model school in Dublin. The Board could approve existing masters or mistresses. Each appointment had to have the approval of the Board who would examine testimonials of good conduct and general fitness for the position. The Board controlled all funds, which might be voted annually by Parliament. Such funds were to be used to: grant aid for the erection of schools, the payment of Inspectors, the payment of gratuities to teachers in schools conducted under the rules of the Board, the establishment and maintenance of a model school in Dublin and training teachers for country schools, the editing and printing of books for the moral and literary education curriculum, which would be provided at half price to the schools and the defraying of costs accrued by the Board.

2.4 Problems of Implementation

As already mentioned, the Stanley Letter, while laying down the principal tenets for a countrywide system of national schools, did not have, nor did it seek legal status. However, the implications of the conditions as laid down in the letter to the Duke of Leinster in 1831, did have far reaching consequences for Irish education. In essence, it put in place a system, where the locus of control lay with a centrally devised system, under the financial control of parliament but with the power to invest the running of schools in local authorities or groups, in this case specific Christian denominations. The Parliament allocated a budget. The Board controlled this budget and also controlled in effect the training of teachers, the curriculum, the provision of textbooks, the appointment of teachers and the approval of applications for new schools. At local level, the school buildings were often vested in the local trustees and the patronage fell to individuals who took the initiative to set up the school in the first instance and this was most often the local clergyman. The manager was locally based; usually a clergyman who could hire and fire staff, distribute salaries and take

responsibility for the general running of the school. Strong vestiges of this form of devolved power still exist within our education system, though some changes in the provision of school sites has come into effect in more recent years. There is evidence in 2005 of the greater central involvement in the running of schools, though patronage is still vested in the local group, as is the recruitment of teachers and the protection of the school ethos.

This cumbersome system, set in train by the Stanley Letter, has left us with a national system of education, which is unique in Europe. Most of our schools are in effect privately owned while our system of national education is predominantly public. The intricate and convoluted structure of national schooling has created many problems for movements such as Educate Together in their efforts to set up schools. The unraveling of the system cannot take place without the active participation of the Department of Education and Science and there has been some evidence in the recent past that they are positively disposed to addressing the fall-out from the structural difficulties left in the wake of the Stanley Letter.

However, the sentiments expressed in the Stanley Letter were to have a much more positive impact on those who wished to have children educated together, irrespective of religious affiliation. From the perspective of Educate Together and in particular the founders of the first multidenominational school in Dalkey, over 140 years after the Stanley Letter was written, the aspirations expressed in the letter to educate children together, regardless of their religious background was to prove a beacon of light for the new pioneers of such an approach to national education. Another aspect of the Stanley Letter, which is most important to current thinking in the Educate Together movement, was the provision of multidenominational teacher training through the Model School system. (O'Buachalla, 22-23; Coolahan, 23-24) One of

the issues that has arisen in the course of this research has been the denominational nature of the Colleges of Education that provide training for teachers at Primary level. The research will highlight that there is a need for major changes in this provision to cater for the growing number of Educate Together schools.

The aspirations of the General Lesson (Appendix B) also link the Educate Together sector back to the Stanley Letter. It has echoes in the Core Curriculum programme which is provided by each Educate Together school and which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 8. The General Lesson (Hyland and Milne, P. 114) was included in the Regulations for making application for aid to the new Commissioners for National Education. (1835.) In many ways it articulated the ethos of the proposed multidenominational system. Based on the principle of St. Paul that all men should live peaceably together, regardless of religious persuasion, it concentrated on the search for truth, the need to show compassion and kindness to all, to do unto others as we would wish them to do to us, to live peaceably with our neighbours and to behave gently towards all. Here again we have echoes of Hans Kung's humanum, (2002) and the notion of the Golden Mean, which underpins most religious and non-theistic belief systems. A copy of this General Lesson 'should be suspended conspicuously in the School Room,' and according to Rules for Teachers, (1846) every teacher should attempt to inculcate the principles of the lesson in the minds of the students. Religious images were stored away during secular instruction time and a tablet with Religious Instruction etched on it was posted outside the classroom when this subject was being studied. Values such as cleanliness, neatness and decency were to be promoted as well as truth, honesty, respect and obedience, kindly and affectionate feelings and disvalues such as quarrelling, cruelty to animals and vice were to be discouraged. All of this was to take place without any reference to religious creeds.

2.5 Denominational Reaction

The Board of seven commissioners, established under the 1831 scheme, did not have an easy task. From the outset, there was a strong effort made to maintain the multidenominational nature of the Board and it included clerical and lay representatives. While the intention of Stanley was the provision of a system of integrated schooling with a strong community emphasis, it was to prove difficult to realise this lofty ambition. Within 20 years of its inception, the system had become, in effect, denominational, with the role of manager being invariably held by the local clergy. The reasons for this were two-fold. The concept of the three main religious groups working together was optimistic, given the poor relations that existed at the highest level within the churches. Furthermore, it was impossible to find a denominational balance in most areas and any involvement of other religious groups could at best be of a token nature.

Reaction to the system of education, as outlined by Stanley, was swift. First to react was the Presbyterian Church, under the leadership of Dr. Cooke. The Synod of Ulster, 1831-1840 criticised the system on the basis of the power held by the Board over the choice of texts, the selection of teachers, the separation of literary and religious instruction, the removal of the Bible as the central focus and the right of clergy of different denominations to attend the schools and provide instruction. By 1840 the Synod had procured the right to funding for schools built without the aid of the Board and clergymen of different faiths could only attend the schools in their capacity as members of the public. There would be no further need for a separate day of religious instruction. The onus for excluding children of one denomination from the religious instruction of another denomination was no longer the responsibility of

the school manager but of the parent. While the discussions were taking place, the

Orange Order burnt or closed up to a quarter of the Presbyterian schools linked to the

National School system. (Whelan, 1998)

The Established Church objected to the National School system on the grounds that it

did not want to share control of education with any other group. It also opposed the

separation of secular and religious instruction and the lack of status of the Bible. In

opposition to the newly proposed system, it set up its own school system in 1839,

called The Church Education Society. The schools were open to children of all faiths

and children of the Established Church only, were asked to attend religious

instruction. However, all children had to attend scripture reading. At its strongest,

the Society boasted 1,861 schools which accommodated 46, 000 Catholics and 15,000

Presbyterians among its student population of 120,000. (Report of the Powis

Commission, 1870) The lack of funding and the disestablishment of the Church in

1869 meant that by 1880 children of the Protestant congregation accounted for 10%

of the population of national schools. Numbers in the Education Society schools fell

to 14,970 in 1881. (Coolahan, P17) It is important to note however that there was

some support for integrated schooling among the Anglican clergy. Foremost of these

was the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Whatley who was a Commissioner and advocate

of the system. (O'Buachalla, P21)

Catholic support for the new state funded, Church controlled system, was strong if not

unanimous. The most famous dispute involved Archbishop Murray of Dublin and

Archbishop McHale of Tuam who conducted a debate in the public domain as to the

merits and demerits of the system. (Costello, 1939.) Bishop Doyle of Kildare and

Leighlin expressed the support for the system most eloquently and displayed a

remarkably liberal approach to the issue.

I do not see how any man, wishing well to the public peace, and who looks to Ireland as his country, can think that peace can ever be permanently established, or the prosperity of the country ever well secured, if children are separated at the commencement of their life on account of their religious opinions. I do not know any measure which would prepare the way for a better feeling in Ireland than uniting children at an early age, and bringing them up in the same school, leading them to commune with one another, and to form those little intimacies and friendships which often subsist through life. Children, thus united, know and love each other as children brought up together always will and to separate them is, I think, to destroy some of the finest feelings in the hearts of men.

Fitzpatrick   (1880 p 148.)

The public controversy among the leading clerics in Ireland resulted in an appeal to Rome to issue a statement on the question of national schooling and its suitability for Catholics. In 1838 the Irish Catholic bishops formally approved of the scheme while the Vatican stated that the participation of Catholics in such a system could not be tolerated. (Hyland and Milne: p107) The impasse was finally ruled on by Gregory XVI in 1841 who stated that it was up to the prudent discretion of individual bishops and commented that the Catholic involvement in such schools over the previous decade did not adversely affect the Irish Catholic church. (Coolahan: p17, Kavanagh, p411) However, further unrest emerged when the Board of Commissioners was given a statutory footing and would henceforth act as trustees for all schools built with Board funding.

2.6 Teacher Training

The Stanley Letter stipulated that a central model school or training establishment should be set up for the training of teachers and that appointees to new schools would have to be graduates of this model school system. The Model School was established in 1834 and in 1835 the Commissioners unveiled their plans for the setting up of similar training establishments in each of the 32 school districts. The first of these was opened in Newry in 1849 and at least 20 more followed over the next ten years.

They were run as model schools and represented the best of pedagogical practice. They were under the control of the Board of Commissioners and operated on a mixed denominational basis. This did not meet with the approval of the Catholic Church. The 1850 Synod of Thurles, presided over by Dr. Cullen, condemned the principle of mixed education and also issued specific regulations in relation to model schools and the Queen's Colleges. The Church of Ireland had its own training college and in 1863 the Catholic Church banned all Catholics from attending model schools and also directed that no teacher who was trained in a model school would be employed in schools under Catholic management. This ban remained in force until 1924. The Powis Commission set up to examine the issue of teacher training reported in 1870 and recommended that ' the rules of the national board recognise this reality (the denominational nature of most schools) and that they be amended to take account of this situation'. (Hyland & Milne: p124) By 1883 the government decided to fund denominational training colleges initially in Dublin and later in Waterford, Limerick and Belfast. As already stated, the funding of denominational Colleges of Education still exists and has come under the spotlight with the growth in the Educate Together sector. Historically, during the course of this research I was invited into two of these colleges to deliver a series of lectures on the design and delivery of the Ethical Education Curriculum. The research will also highlight in Chapter 9 the negotiations with the Colleges of Education on how Educate Together can work with these Colleges to prepare teachers to work in a multidenominational school.

2.7 Post Powis

The Powis Commission of Inquiry reflected in its recommendations, much of what has influenced Irish National education ever since. Akenson (1970) refers to the contrasting fortunes of the National Commissioners and the Catholic prelates. The Commission was now an empty formula without teeth. By 1850, 70% of all national schools were non-vested or schools recognised as national schools for funding purposes but in effect run by local clergy on denominational lines. By 1870 this figure had risen to 77%. The only stipulation was that parents could withdraw their children from religious instruction. The Powis Commission of 1870, which included seven Roman Catholic and five Anglican Commissioners, was vociferous in its call for greater powers for denominational groups. The Commission was appalled at the condition of some schools and the overall standard of education attained by the pupils. In total it listed 129 conclusions and recommendations. These included recommendations: on teacher salaries and conditions of employment, that schools under Catholic and Protestant management in the same district would be recognised as single denominational, that religious instruction would be at fixed hours in schools with one denomination, that state aid should be extended to training institutions under religious control, that the practice of the Board publishing textbooks would be abolished, that local funding should amount to a third of the Board's grant and that all state aided schools would have management committees. Despite the resistance of Prime Minister Gladstone (Norman; 1965. p443-444), the recommendations of Powis slowly took effect and as Hyland (1997) puts it 'an uneasy compromise existed'. Schools were denominational in reality but the National School Rules continued to

uphold the original fundamental principles of a denominationally mixed system. The national schools were 'de facto' denominational with a predominantly denominational system of management, while retaining a mixed enrolment. (O'Buachalla: p25.) Common Christianity, according to Clifford (1987) was ostracised as proselytising and a danger to the faith. 'Not only was Christianity narrowed down to a narrow Catholicism, but all other types of Christianity were condemned as pernicious.' The dream of Thomas Wyse as outlined in the Stanley Letter of educating children together as a means of reconciliation had according to Akenson (1970: P157) 'been spun by sectarian forces until its religious orientation was almost directly opposite to that originally intended.'

2.8 Futile Efforts at Rationalisation

The lack of local funding and the overall lack of interest in national schooling at local level, was a cause for concern by the British Government. The Dale Report (1904) highlighted the poor condition of many of the schools and the poor standards that existed within the schools. An attempt to set up an education department with local education bodies was resisted by the Catholic Church. In 1907, the Chief Secretary, Augustine Birrell, introduced the Irish Council Bill. Under this Bill the existing boards, including the National School Board would come under the remit of the Irish Council. One of the roles of the Council would be to oversee the administration of an annual grant from the exchequer in respect of the services covered by the transferred boards. The Bill was rejected in May 1907. (Titley, 1983:p17-18)

The McPherson Bill (1919-1920) was a further attempt to create a democratic system of National Schooling in Ireland. It proposed the setting up of a centralised Department of Education, which would be responsible for the administration of all levels of education in Ireland and it also suggested the setting up of local education committees. These local bodies would have the power to levy rates but would not become involved in the management structure. Once again the Catholic Church launched a campaign against the Bill, Cardinal Logue issuing a pastoral letter, which described the Bill as pernicious and a threat to the eternal and temporal interests of generations of Irish children. Not surprisingly, it was dropped in 1920. The Catholic Church was by this time in charge of the management of the majority of national schools and would resist any attempts at making the system more centralised and more democratic. While much of the resistance to a mixed denominational approach to schooling came from the Catholic Church of the day, it can be stated with some certainty that the key protagonist in this resistance was the late Cardinal Cullen. His objective, to defeat Gallicanism, and to replace it with Ultranontanism, (O'Buachalla: p37) did not meet with the approval of all Catholics or indeed with more radical wings of Fenianism. However he succeeded in moulding church and education policy through his strength of character, his ability to create a cohesive church structure and his close attachment to Rome. His legacy was in effect the destruction of Wyse's Utopian vision of a mixed education and the birth of a strong Catholic system of school management which would influence our system of education up to the present day and allow for the inclusion of the Deeds of Variation which continue to ensure that the ethos is upheld throughout the entire the school. Thus as Ireland entered a new century in 1900, the Pastoral letter of Cardinal Logue and the bishops of the Catholic Church proudly proclaimed that: 'the system of National Education has itself

undergone a radical change and in a great part of Ireland is now, in fact, whatever it is in name, as denominational almost as we could desire'. (IER, 1927)

2.9 Education and The Irish Free State

The First Dail of 1919 set the tone for future state support for the Church view on Irish Education. It promised to support the bishops in the setting up and maintaining of a national system of education. (Dail Eireann Minutes for 4th March 1920 as cited in O'Buachalla.) This support referred to the Catholic Church stance on the McPherson Bill. Overall, the Dail exercised caution in regard to the education question and did not initially appoint a Minister for Education. In 1921, Sean O'Ceallaigh was appointed Minister for Education and his links with the Gaelic League ensured that the new minister would channel the education plan of the League into the mainstream of Irish politics. There was an immediate effort to put together a programme to formulate a general scheme for national education. The transfer of power to the Provisional Government led to the appointment of Eoin McNeill as Minister for Education. The setting up of the new department was accompanied by a series of structural provisions. This led to no real fundamental change except that central authority lay with the Minister and national schools were still under local control. The policy of the new government was definitely one of minimal involvement and financial constraint. MacNeill was unequivocal in his support of Church involvement in education and is on record as stating that an education system without the church at its heart is still born'. (Titley :p103) The non-denominational training college in Marlborough Street was closed in 1922 as a further indicator of the support for denominational education by the new government. (Glendenning: 1999. p26) From a legal perspective the drafting of the Constitution of 1922 enshrined the

right of all children to elementary education in Article 10 and Article 8 protected the right of the child not to attend religious instruction at school and guaranteed that no single denomination would be favoured in the provision of State aid to schools.

.....No law may either directly or indirectly endow any religion, or prohibit or restrict the free exercise thereof, or give any preference, or impose any disability on account of religious belief or religious status, or affect prejudicially the right of any child to attend a school receiving public money without attending the religious instruction at the school, or make any discrimination as respects State aid between schools under the management of different religious denominations.....

Cited in Hyland and Milne (1992:p3)

The Second National Programme Conference (1925-1926) however included in its report a comment on the teaching of religion, which would have wide reaching consequences and to a large extent, nullified the sentiments expressed in Article 8 of the Free State Constitution. A paragraph relating to religious instruction stated:

Of all the parts of a school curriculum Religious Instruction is by far the most important, as its subject matter, God's honour and service, includes the proper use of all man's faculties, and affords the most powerful inducements to their proper use. We assume, therefore, that Religious Instruction is a fundamental part of the school course. Though the time allocated to it as a specific subject is necessarily short, a religious spirit should inform and vivify the whole work of the school. (Report of the Second National Conference Programme cited in Alvey: 1991:p126)

The report also refers to 'the duty of a teacher to mould the perfect form of his pupils character,' through the inculcation of values such as charity, justice, truth, purity and patience. This could be done through secular subjects and the teacher must be mindful not to touch on matters of controversy in the presence of children of different religious beliefs. The Rules for National Schools were amended to include an abridged version of this statement but stated that there was no change in the fundamental principle (religiously mixed education) of the National School system. There appears to be some degree of confusion in this report as it does not clarify how a religious spirit can vivify the whole work of the school while, ensuring that parents had the right to withdraw their children from religious instruction. This posed

problems in particular, for Protestant parents whose children attended Catholic run schools. From a syllabus perspective, the Department of Education stated in the same report that it did not have any role in the setting of a religious curriculum as this was outside its competence. As a result this was left to the authorities, which ran the school. The confusion of the *de jure* and *de facto* aspects of national schooling was becoming even more intricate.

2.10 The 1937 Constitution and Education

The 1937 Constitution (1937) contained several articles dealing with education. These are included in Appendix C. Articles 42.1, 42.3, and 42.4 all deal with the relationship between the family, the state and the provision of education. While the family is recognised as the primary educator of the child, (42.1) the state will not oblige parents in violation of their conscience and lawful preference to send their children to schools established by the State, or to any type of school designated by the State. (42.3) If parents fail to discharge their duties for physical or moral reasons, the state can step in and arrange for education in its role as guardian of the common good. However, as Oliver Mahon (2005:p11) points out, the state plays a strictly limited role in education and will only become directly involved in the case where parents cannot discharge their duties. Article 44 of the Constitution deals with religion. Specifically, Article 44.2.4 decrees that the State will not discriminate between schools under the management of different religions in terms of the provision of State aid and that it also protects the right of any child to attend a school receiving public money without attending religious instruction in that school. A liberal interpretation of this article could suggest that the State should equally fund non-religious schools, which are privately managed. (Clarke: 1985:p323) Glendenning, (1999) notes that a

number of judicial rulings have interpreted the Constitution as offering implied protection for the denominational nature of schooling. In 2005 The Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, heard a case by made by Educate Together under Articles 9 of the Convention against the failure of the Irish State to ensure 'that there is an alternative inclusive (education) provision available to the population'. It recommended that the Irish State should promote the establishment of non-denominational or multi-denominational schools under Article 9 of the Convention. (Appendix D) The notes on this Committee show that the Irish government representatives at the Convention formally responded to the case made by Educate Together and that Mr. Frank Fahy, Junior Minister personally interjected to stress that all Catholic schools are inclusive and countered the fact of private ownership with an assertion that all such schools are public. (Private Notes of CEO of Educate Together: 12th March 2005) As well as the issue of provision of schools there are clearly problems also in terms of the denominational nature of the Colleges of Education, thus ensuring that all teachers are trained in a specific denominational ethos that is supported by the State.

One further aspect of the 1937 Constitution also impacts on education. Article 44.2.6 safeguards the property of any religious denomination or any educational institution and that this property cannot be diverted unless for the necessary works of public utility or on payment of compensation. The impact of this has meant that schools, which become empty, need not be given to the State to house another school type. The end result of the 1937 Constitution was to ensure the protection of denominational education, while also attempting to safeguard the right of the parent and the right of the child. The reality of this was to become increasingly difficult to uphold as curriculum and ethos became more closely bound together than ever before.

2.11 Strengthening the Links Between Church and State

The influence of the Catholic Church in matters of education continued to grow throughout the 1950's and 1960's. There are several examples of this including the Report of the Council of Education, which was published in 1954, and the Revised Rules for National Schools published in 1964. Both of these publications solidified the relationship between the Catholic Church, the State and education and made a mockery of the division of religious instruction and the remainder of the school curriculum. The Report of 1954 on the function and the curriculum of the primary school included a reference to Religious and Moral Training. While Coolahan states (p45) that this report contained nothing radical, from the perspective of religious freedom and parental choice as outlined in the Constitution, there did appear to be a major and concerted shift to merge religious instruction and school ethos and culture. Section 129 of the report states that the school exists to assist parents in rearing their children. The first duty of parents is to rear their children in the fear and love of God and as such that duty also became the first duty of the primary school. The school should fulfil this duty through the religious and moral training of the child and that the child should leave school, well versed in the knowledge and practice of his faith. This declaration took Irish education back to pre 1831 and made nonsense of the right of parents to withdraw their children from religious instruction. The report goes on to recommend the official recognition of the denominational character of national schools. By now only 3% of national schools were mixed and so it stated that:

Hence we consider that the theoretical object of the system of national education, which is to afford combined literary and moral, and separate religious instruction to

children of all persuasions, as far as possible, in the same school is at variance with the principles of all religious denominations and with the realities in the primary schools, and consequently that it needs restatement.

The Rules for National Schools published in 1965 further eroded the concept of a division between literary and moral education and religious instruction. Hyland (1997:p8) states that many of the safeguards relating to children of minority religions or of no religion were removed. These included the explicit recognition of denominational schools, (Department of Education: p5) and the removal of the clause, which required teachers to be careful in the presence of children of different religious beliefs. The Rules failed to make any provision for parents who did not want their children to attend denominational schools. In 1971 a Revised Primary Curriculum, (Curaclam na Bunscoile) was launched. The Teachers Handbook, which accompanied the Curriculum, clearly outlined the integration of all subjects and stated that the separation of religious instruction only serves to throw the whole education function out of focus. (P18) The religious stance taken by the Department of Education is clear from the Teachers' Handbook which links the formation of the student to school, home and church.

'Each human being is created in God's image. He has a life to lead and a soul to save. How he will develop will depend on the success or failure of the combined efforts of his home, his church and his school.' (pp12-19) The Curriculum also determined that 'a religious ethos would permeate the whole school day.'

The right of parents to withdraw children from religious instruction was now effectively impossible. We had a unique system of education in Ireland.

'The State formally recognised the denominational character of the national school and made no provision for, nor even adverted to the rights of parents who did not want their children to attend denominational schools.' (Hyland, 1990: p127)

2.12 Conclusion

This chapter has traced the development of the National School System in Ireland from the inclusive vision of Thomas Wyse to create a system of education which would offer a mixed education to the Irish poor and where Catholic, Anglican and Presbyterian could be educated side by side, with a combined literary and moral curriculum and a specific time set aside for denominational religious instruction. The vision of Wyse underwent many changes and faced many challenges. Not least among the challengers was the Catholic Church, at a time when it was attempting to re-assert its role in Irish life. The combined forces of the Church and the new and emerging Irish State gradually continued the work of erosion begun by the Powis Commission. School management became almost exclusively denominational and a cumbersome structure of grant aid and local control remained as a legacy of the Education Board. By 1954 the distinction between secular and religious subjects was blurred. The religious spirit of the school began to inform the way secular subjects were taught. The role of the teacher now involved saving the soul of his pupil in conjunction with the church and the home in a school setting where the denominational ethos would permeate the whole school day. However, changes were about to happen which would put the focus back on the principles of the Stanley Letter and influence Irish national education for the next quarter of a century and up to the present. The emergence of the Educate Together Movement and its slow but steady impact on Irish education at a time of increasing diversity will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 3   A New Voice in Irish Education

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter demonstrated how the system of mixed schooling as outlined in 1831, underwent a series of challenges from each of the main churches, and in latter years with the support of the Irish government, became in reality a hybrid and unique beast.

The issue of school choice was no longer an option for most parents. The majority of children attended their local Catholic National School and the small number of Protestant children attended the nearest Church of Ireland School. In the absence of such a school the pupil attended the nearest Catholic school. The provision for education as laid down in Articles 42 and 44 of the Constitution was drafted at a time when there was little call for mixed education and when the parent was recognised as the principal educator of the child. Whyte (1992 p4) described the provision for education as laid down in the Constitution as 'like some constitutional Rip Van Winkle, they have lain dormant for the most part since their enactment in 1937'. However a series of events was to awaken the sleeping giant from his complacency and give birth to a new voice in Irish education that continues to grow in strength.

3.2 The Setting up of the First Multidenominational School

The Marley Grange Episode

The changes wrought by the 1971 New Primary Curriculum effectively ensured that teachers were now required to take an integrated approach to education that included the full integration of secular and religious subjects throughout the school day. The curriculum also assumed that all children attending Irish schools would be Christian. (Curaclam na Bunscoile 971): p19.) Ireland now had a situation where the primary education system was receiving a high level of state funding for a predominantly denominational system of education that remained in the private ownership of the main Church authorities. Ironically, this situation arose at a time when Irish society was undergoing something of a transformation. The sixties and seventies were turbulent and evocative of Bauman's concept of liquid modernity. John Horgan (1997: p289) captured the mood of the time.

> *To be anticlerical did not involve the same social and political risks as hitherto. As the level of education grew inexorably, it was accompanied by a sense of impatience at traditional ways. Ireland became a sort of supercharged stereotype.*

A growing educated Catholic middle class took its loyalty to the Church less seriously as was demonstrated in one of the first detailed pieces of sociological research into Catholic attitudes, carried out in Dublin at the request of Archbishop McQuaid. (Garvin. 1982; p31) The Church also had undergone many changes due to the climate of ecumenism nurtured by Vatican Two. (Whyte:1980) Whether, however, Vatican Two, could be read, as an endorsement for the setting up of integrated schools (Burke: 1974. Cited in Hyland: 1993)) is open to debate but there was certainly a new questioning of topics that up to now were seen as the domain of the Church.

The advent of free secondary education in1967 and the debate generated by writers such as Christine Murphy in Education Times meant that education was a hot topic for discussion in many settings. This was also the time when the first community schools began to emerge at second level and the debate on Deeds of Trust was making its way into the public domain. The change from an isolationist to a more outward looking policy was highlighted by our entry into the EEC in 1973 and by the return of many emigrants who had been exposed to a more pluralist and a more outward looking approach to life in other societies. For many, the provision of grant aided university education, resulted in a more educated, and sometimes more socially aware, younger generation. Education was increasingly seen as the panacea for economic renewal and resulted in a 'radical rethinking in almost every field of Irish education.' (Lyons: 1973: p651) The fresh outbreak of sectarian strife in Northern Ireland was a further catalyst in opening up the debate on segregated education. A survey conducted in the Dublin region at this time showed that 61% of those surveyed believed that separate denominational instruction was seen as a major cause of the divisions in the North. (Mac Greil, 1997:p387) Finally, the introduction of Boards of Management for Primary Schools in 1975 slowly began the process of giving a voice to parents in the management of education, albeit not a democratic one (Coolahan: pp175-176)

In the Dublin area, several attempts were made to establish mixed schools. The best-documented account of one such attempt is that of the Marley Grange Residents Association. (Cooke, 1997) An education sub-committee initiated a survey of the residents to ascertain their views on what type of school they wished to have for their neighbourhood. The initial survey results, based on a 52% return, showed that 85.4% favoured a multidenominational school. The group approached the churches

to seek their support in the Management of the school and the acquisition of a suitable site. Negotiations collapsed and the Catholic Church proceeded to open its own school. The Church of Ireland followed this lead. The enterprise to open a school under joint denominational patronage had failed and subsequent attempts to set up multidenominational schools in Ireland necessitated that a School Company act as sole patron.

3.3 The Dalkey School Project

The history of the setting up of the Dalkey School Project has been well documented by Johnson, (1973) McGovern, (1989) Hyland (1993,1994,1996) Mulcahy (1998) and Steer. (1998). St. Patrick's Church of Ireland School, in Dalkey, Co. Dublin, had been a national school since 1894. It had catered mostly for working class, Church of Ireland children for the first fifty years of its existence. The numbers increased in the 1960's as middle class Church of Ireland children and later non-parish children began to attend. It grew from a two-teacher school with 52 pupils in 1962 to a five- teacher school with 151 pupils in 1970. In 1964 an extension was funded by the parish and a subsequent drive to appoint a third teacher led to an increase in the number of non-parish and Catholic pupils. (McGovern, 1989) The trend for Catholics to send their children to Church of Ireland schools had grown, as there was a perception that the denominational ethos of such schools might not be as pervasive as Catholic schools. (Hyland, 1993)   This was particularly evident in Dalkey, due to the drive to increase numbers, the size of the school, its reputation for innovation and its co-educational structure. A committee set up in 1966 to raise funds for materials. This committee was formally constituted as a Parent/Teacher Association in 1968. (McGovern: p29) Parents became involved in the day-to-day life of the school and raised funds to support extra-curricular activities such as music, drama and art. There was a need for

greater capacity if the school was to grow to an eight- teacher school. The cost of this building would be met in part by the Department of Education but the local contribution would still amount to 15%. The PTA agreed to fundraise for a major portion of this additional funding. (Johnson, p32-34) By this stage the parents would have liked the Church of Ireland Patron, the Archbishop of Dublin, to endorse the de facto multidenominational nature of the school. (Hyland, 1993) Following on two changes of rector in a very short period of time and evidence of increased tension between parents and the parish, the manager announced in 1972 that no further expansion of the school was planned and that priority of admission would be given to Church of Ireland children, followed by Presbyterian, then Catholic and then others. This was endorsed in 1974 by a letter from the Department of Education, dated 8th March. (Hyland, 1993)

> *As is stated in the Preface to the Rules for National Schools under the Department of Education, the State gives explicit recognition to the denominational character of national schools. In accordance with this principle, it would be expected that priority would be given first to children of Church of Ireland parents living within the school district (which is not co-terminous with the Parish of Dalkey); second to the children of other Protestant families and thereafter- to the extent to which space might be available-other children; and it is suggested that acceptance of children for enrolment, should, in future be decided on that basis.*

The importance of this document is noted by Hyland, as it clearly laid out the implications of the Rules for National School (1965) from the perspective of enrolment. It was to act as a spur for the Dalkey parents at the centre of the controversy. A letter written in June 1974 (Dalkey School Project 1976) by parents interested in setting up a form of multidenominational school identified five key principles that should underpin the school. These principles outlined that the proposed school should be child-centered, co-educational, multidenominational and with a management committee that would be predominantly democratic in character. It was proposed that the school would be run as a pilot project and that it

would have eight teachers and eight classes. These initial principles still underpin Educate Together schools. However the size of school in a number of instances has changed to16 classes and ultimately there are plans for a 24 class school into the future.

On the 23rd February 1975 an association named 'The Dalkey School Project' was formally constituted. The term multidenominational was adopted in order to ensure that the school would come under the denominational rubric as laid down by the Constitution. Hyland, (1993) gives a clear account of the size of the task facing the founding members of the organisation and also the historical impact of tackling a system which had remained undisturbed for over a century. Taking on board this task were parents from the original St. Patrick's National School group and some others who were from outside this group. Their strategy was to get one school open and then build from that basis.

> *The task confronting the Project was formidable. The National School System had been undisturbed for over a 100 years. There was an established equilibrium between the Department of Education, the Churches and the Irish National Teachers Organisation. There was a price for the Church's control of education. They provided sites for schools and they paid the local contribution towards the capital and running costs of their schools. .... The Dalkey School Project realised that the entry fee for any new partner into the network would be high and that it would have to fund-raise on a very large scale if it was to succeed in setting up a school.*

The experience of parents who had been involved in the St. Patrick's school experience no doubt impacted on the key principles which underpinned the proposal for the Dalkey School Project. This is particularly true in relation to the proposal for a democratic form of management structure. The co-educational principle may seem outdated today but at the time it was a reaction to the strict segregation of Catholic schools. The term multidenominational was chosen in order to come under the

denominational rubric for the recognition of schools but it always included other children, meaning those who did not belong to a specific religious group. (In conversation with Michael Johnson, founding member of Dalkey School Project, March 2003) Child centred practices had been introduced into St. Patrick's school prior to the introduction of the 1971 Curriculum and owed much to the influence of the Plowden Report in Britain which had been published in 1967. This was seen as a major element of the proposed school. Some of these principles may have expanded in meaning over the years to capture the full essence of the Educate Together ethos but as the research will highlight these key principles are still cornerstones in the building of the sector.

The Dalkey School Project, as Patron of the proposed new school, had to provide evidence of the need for a school such as they described. In August 1975 an attitudinal survey was conducted which was monitored by the three main political parties to ascertain the level of support for a multidenominational school in Dalkey. Based on a response rate of 77%, the results clearly favoured multidenominational education (75%,) co-education (81.5%) and democratic control. (75.6%.) Taken together, this showed that 53.6% of those surveyed favoured a multidenominational school, which was co-educational and under predominantly democratic management. (Survey: p5)

Political support for the setting up of the school was varied. The then Minister for Education, Richard Bourke of Fine Gael described the attempt as arrant nonsense in an interview in the Irish Press (29th September 1975)

There is at present a campaign for what its promoters call 'multidenominational' education in primary schools based on the suggestion that education in schools under the control of persons of their own religious faith and by teachers of their own religious faith promotes disharmony and dissention among the community. To my mind this is completely false. Indeed, I regard it as a libel on teachers to suggest that in educating children in accordance with the particular teachings and belief of the religion of the homes, the teachers implant seeds of intolerance and encourage attitudes of bigotry. It is also arrant nonsense.

In a later interview on RTE Radio in January 1980 he stated that his opposition was purely on social rather than religious grounds but this was refuted by the former Secretary of the Department of Education, Dominic O'Laoghaire, in an interview in Magill Magazine (1988) stating that the thinking of the Department of the time, 'was a fear, not of multi-creed schooling but of non-creed schooling.' Opposition also came from the Catholic Church. In an interview with the Irish Times in on 19th August 1977, the education spokesman for the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin was quoted as saying that the people of Ireland did not want multidenominational education. A hostile leaflet campaign, directed personally at individual members of the Dalkey School Project, was conducted in January 1978. Entitled: 'The Dalkey School Saga: has the government surrendered to the multi-denominational pressure groups?' it objected to the proposed school and stated that ' atheistic interest in the Dalkey School Project is clear. Ireland's system of education is denominational by Constitutional guarantee...........Dalkey could be a precedent for major trouble in other areas.' This leaflet originated from the offices of the Council for Social Concern in Ely Place, Dublin, also the address of the Knights of St. Columbanus. Such attacks impacted greatly on the founding members. Aine Hyland, (1993) described these years as some of the worst in her life.

Those of us who had given a lot of thought to what we were doing and who could see the issue in a broader European and international perspective felt that there was nothing revolutionary about the request to have the option of multidenominational education available in just one area of the country.

It appeared that certain sectors in Irish society found it hard to conceive of the notion that a number of Catholic and Protestant parents could favour multidenominational education. This issue was debated by Christina Murphy of the Irish Times (31st March, 1976) in an article entitled: "What the denominational debate is really about." This pointed to the fact that the power of the Catholic Church in Irish education could be slowly eroded if national schools started moving towards a multidenominational structure. Almost thirty years later this argument still has not become a reality, though similar fears could still exist within the church system. I was reminded of this recently when I overheard Educate Together described as the new subversives in Irish Education!

In 1977, with the return of a Fianna Fail led government, negotiations opened with the Dalkey group. The group had to source temporary accommodation, set itself up as a limited company in order to fulfil its role as Patron and design a Patron Policy on Religious Education. (Appendix E) At a meeting between Educate Together officials and officials of the Department of Education on 10th February 1989 the Department indicated that it would appreciate written clarification of the religious education policy. (Appendix F.) This policy clearly differentiated between religious education and religious instruction. The religious principle was based on the creation of a school ethos, which reflected a society in which many social, religious, and cultural viewpoints co-exist. The creation of a Religious Education Core Curriculum that

would prepare children to understand the religious traditions of life and allow for an exploration of the dimension of mystery and wonder at the core of all human experience was a ground breaking achievement. The relevance of the approach adopted by the Dalkey School Project was underlined for the authors of the Learn Together curriculum, who found themselves drawn constantly back to the aims of the first Religious Education Core Curriculum. The religious education policy of the Dalkey School Project also required the Board of Management of the school to facilitate any group of parents who wished to provide denominational instruction for their children. (Patron's Policy on Religious Education, December 1979.) Draft guidelines for the provision of denominational instruction indicate the changes that have evolved in the intervening period. The school premises is still made available for denominational instruction but outside of the school day. Appendices G and H, which formed part of an information pack at a workshop I attended in Limerick on 2nd March 1991, demonstrate the position on religious education at that time.

The Dalkey School Project opened on 1st September, 1978, in a building purchased by parents, supporters and a consortium of Project members. The number of students grew from 80 to over 300 within six years and at one point the school operated out of four different premises. (Hyland, 1993). By 1984 the school moved to a new, purpose built building, funded in part by a sum of £150,000 that had been raised by parents and supporters. Described by the Secretary of the Department of Education, Dominic O'Laoghhaire, (Magill, 1988) as a 'concession', when it first opened in 1978, the Dalkey School Project, proved to be much more permanent. The way was now clear for other groups to follow the example of Dalkey and to begin the process

of moving from an individual school to the sector we now know as 'Educate Together.'

3.4 Growth of Sector: 1981-1998

The struggle faced by the members of the Dalkey School Project to set up their vision of a multidenominational, co-educational, child-centred school with a democratic management structure did not deter other groups of parents from following this lead. However, the financial implications of having to provide a school site, a portion of the building costs and up to a third of the running costs ensured that the growth in the early stages was slow and incremental. What follows is a brief account of the progress made between 1984 and 1998.

Bray School Project: The school opened in temporary accommodation in 1981. It received much support and encouragement from Dalkey but was not allowed to open under the patronage of the Dalkey school as had originally been envisaged. It formed a Limited Company and took over its own patronage. By 1990 it had moved into a purpose built school which cost the Project £120,000.

North Dublin National School Project: 1984. This school was the first to open on the Northside of the city and its popularity ensured that parents who could not get their children places in the school were motivated to set up their own projects such as North Bay NSP. The struggle to find suitable premises for the school finally culminated in 2002 with the opening of a beautiful school. Their initial efforts were

hampered by the Department of Education who were reluctant to support new schools in areas where numbers were falling in the denominational schools.

3.5 From Schools to Sector: Educate Together 1983-1998

A committee was set up in1983 to co-ordinate the existing Projects and to support new groups that were coming on stream. The newly formed Educate Together took its name from the motto of DSP. It was initially envisaged that the group would form a mutual support system for schools but before long it took over the role of representative body for new and existing groups. The biggest challenge for the newly formed group came in 1987 when the Department of Education introduced the status of provisional recognition for newly opened multidenominational schools and also for Gaelscoileanna. Such a school was not entitled to any state capital funding and was obliged to rent temporary premises and make any necessary alterations. There was no indication as to how long it might take to receive permanent recognition. This new obstacle coupled by a reluctance on the part of the Department of Education to fund new schools at a time when numbers were falling in existing denominational schools came to a head in a Senate Debate in October 1986. (See Hyland: 1993) Sligo Project had been refused sanction to open in a disused glassworks and later to erect prefabs on grounds made available by Sligo VEC on the grounds that there was spare capacity in a local Catholic school. The then Minister for Education, Patrick Cooney, in reply to a query by Senator Michael D. Higgins about the Sligo case stated that it would defy reason to grant aid to what was in effect an 'experimental project.' His fear of 'having egg on his face and being the butt of indignant taxpayers' seemed good enough reason to justify his outlandish stance. The argument seemed somewhat

spurious in view of the fact that the existing schools were very successful and had long waiting lists. Minister Cooney also seemed to exonerate himself and his Department from any involvement in the impasse around the provision of accommodation, despite the refusal of the Catholic Church to negotiate with the Sligo Project on the issue of spare capacity in St. Anne's Primary School. He used the argument of the private ownership of schools to distance his Department from this particular problem, though the problem in the first instance had been raised by the Minister and his Department.

In an effort to help the project we drew their attention to the fact that there were empty classrooms provided at taxpayers' expense in other schools in the town. The management of those schools and the project people did not reach a meeting of minds, and in retrospect, that did not surprise me. .... There was nothing I could do about that because the State does not own the school. This is a private school and the school project when set up will also be a private school; it will not be owned by the State although it will be State supported and State assisted. This is the system we have. I have no power to twist the arm of any school board and say they must give these people their spare space. I can only point the people in that direction.

As a founder member of the North Bay School Project, I can empathise with the situation in Sligo In 1987, when our group got together to open a second school in North Dublin, we were met with similar obstacles. However, in that instance, the Department of Education were to find a solution to the problem. The Sligo situation clarified the limited power of the Department of Education, despite their huge investment in National schools. Hyland (1993) highlights the nature of the dilemma for the Minister.

Effectively he had the power to require the Trustees to repay the unexpired value of the grant if the building ceased to be used for national school purposes during the 99- year period of the lease and he could prevent the building from being sold during the period of the lease by refusing to relinquish his interest in the lease. But that appeared to be the limit of the Minister's control over the use of national school buildings, financed primarily from the public purse.

The appointment of Minister Mary O'Rourke as Fianna Fail Minister for Education in 1987 was a watershed for Educate Together. Her first move was to break the impasse in the Sligo situation and grant permission for the school to open in September 1987 in prefabricated rooms behind the old Model School. It is interesting that in the case of both North Dublin and Sligo, the use of the old Model schools to house multidenominational schools marked a link with the original spirit of the Stanley Letter to provide mixed education for the children of Ireland. O'Rourke's time as Minister would see the opening of seven Educate Together schools in total. According to her advisor, Margaret Walsh, Minister O'Rourke was committed to the provision of choice in Irish education and was always willing to meet with start up groups. (In conversation with Margaret Walsh, May 2005) As Leader of the Seanad, Minister O'Rourke's support for the sector is still evident given her recent response to the current funding crisis facing Educate Together.

Three Schools Open in 1987

1987 was an important one in the life of Educate Together. For the first time since the inception of the Educate Together concept, three new schools opened in that year. Equally relevant was the fact that the schools, located as they were in Kilkenny, Cork and Sligo, now meant that the idea of multidenominational education had spread outside of Dublin. Although these schools were initially located in temporary premises, parents voted with their feet and there were soon waiting lists in all three schools.

Ranelagh 1988

The focus shifted back to Dublin in 1988, with the opening of a school in Ranelagh. This was another ground- breaking move in Irish education as the title to the site of the school was transferred to the newly formed Ranelagh Multidenominational School Association by the Church of Ireland authorities that had decided to close the school. This newly formed Association was comprised of existing parents in the school, who on the advise of the Minister for Education, aligned themselves with Educate Together. The Department of Education agreed to the transfer of patronage in late 1989 and backdated provisional recognition to September 1988. Here was a new form of relationship between Educate Together and a school community and also between the Department of Education and two very different patron bodies. Today Ranelagh School operates out of an award winning architectural conversion of the existing school in a difficult and awkward site. The continuing work on the exploration of ethos and values marks this school out as a fine example of an Educate Together school.

Limerick 1989

Limerick School Project opened in the old Red Cross building in Cecil Street in 1989. The school soon outgrew these premises and moved some classes to an empty Employment Exchange Building in 1991. As a visitor to the Red Cross site in 1990, I was impressed by the dedication of parents who were willing to send their children to school in what were far from ideal conditions, with high ceilings and steep stairs. More recently, as part of this research, it was a pleasure to visit their current school which is an oasis of calm and contains wonderful, light-filled rooms and an impressive hall, yet still holds its centre city location.

Two Dublin Schools Open in 1990

South City School Project started life in 1987 and soon became an associate member of Educate Together. The Project was wide –ranging in its search for accommodation and there was an attempt to link it with the Ranelagh Project in 1998. It finally settled on Crumlin as its location and opened there in 1990. Its search over the three years to source rooms in existing school proved unsuccessful including a failed attempt to procure a Catholic Primary school in Milltown, which was sold through private treaty. The school opened in a Church of Ireland premises in Crumlin but due to a fire on the premises it finally re-located to Rathfarnham, where it now has permanent residence in an old school vacated by the Loreto Congregation. It is now a thriving school community with approved planning permission to extend and renovate the school building. While it still operates under the South City School Project patronage, the move to Rathfarnham meant that some parents chose not to move their children and they set up the Crumlin School Project. This division was quite acrimonious at the time and resulted in the exclusion of the new Project from membership of Educate Together. After a difficult transition, the Crumlin group moved to Griffith Barracks on the South Circular Road in 1994 and the Project is still located there, in temporary premises but with major plans for re-building.

The second school to open in 1990 was North Bay Educate Together Project School. The group of parents who set up this school were motivated to develop a second school on the Northside of Dublin because of their failure to find places for their children in the NDNSP in Glasnevin. The first meeting took place in the Cricket Club in Clontarf in September, 1987. This initial group called a second meeting later that

month and from that meeting a Steering Committee was formed. It was the intention of this group to locate their school in Clontarf but it soon became clear that it would be impossible to source a building in this area. The inaugural meeting of NBNSP took place on the 12th November, 1987 and from that meeting an Executive Committee was appointed. The search for accommodation began in earnest. A search for accommodation in existing schools proved fruitless. Greenlanes Church of Ireland School in the Clontarf area had five empty classrooms but the Board of Governors was not in a position to either offer rooms or give a site for prefabs. A school premises became available in Kilbarrack due to the amalgamation of two schools. The parents of both schools voted to move to the boys' school on Greendale Road, which left the girls' school vacant. This school was a two-storey building designed to cater for a Junior School and a Senior School and divided by a School Hall. We approached the local clergy and met with them to discuss the possibility of renting or buying a part of the girls' school. Already a commercial crèche was operating out of the pre-fabricated classrooms and, two community groups were using another part of the main building. Despite an amicable meeting with the Parish Priest of Kilbarrack in June 1988, we received no answer to our request for space. In July 1988, the group met with Educate Together to seek associate membership and support for our project. The first AGM (26th January, 1989) came and went without a premises having been found. On 27th November 1989, an Extraordinary AGM was held to adopt the newly drafted Articles of Association for incorporation as a limited company, thus replacing the original constitution. The site search was now frantic and all leads seemed to be proving fruitless. A meeting in the Dail with Minister Michael Woods, the TD for the Kilbarrack area in January 1990, opened the door for the first of our meetings with Minister Mary O'Rourke. By now the Kilbarrack school had reverted to the

ownership of the Department of Education. There was talk in the area that the Department of Health wanted to use the building for a Centre for psychiatric patients who were being moved from long term care. Fortunately for us, there was strong pressure on the Department of Education to locate a school for Gael Scoil Midhe, a local Gaelscoil that had lost its premises in nearby Donaghamede. It was a strange time in all our lives as we were thrust from anonymity into a situation where it was possible to answer your phone and find a Minister on the other end of the line. Eventually, the Gaelscoil was moved into the Senior School section. The building section within the Department of Education continued to present obstacles to the opening of a multidenominational school, in particular in relation to rent and insurance. A meeting with Minister Mary O'Rourke on the 14th March re-energised the group. A meeting with the Building Branch of the Department on 14th June offered confirmation of the availability of rooms for use by NBNSP. Places were offered to students on the following day. Site meetings took place on 5th July with the Department architect and a senior official, Mr. George Rowley. Mary O'Rourke's solution to the provision of a school building was a practical response and one that she referred to in her speech at the official opening of Bray in January 1991. (Appendix I)

I got hold of the file and we thought well this is what we can do and that was quite a step forward. Now that had been knocking around in my head for many a day. That we could in fact use buildings that were no longer in use. For after all the people that had set up that school were for the education of children-the theme of education was still what was going to be within the walls-albeit in an altered philosophy.

On 19th July, interviews were held for the Principal teacher and the position was offered to Maureen Costello. A phone-call from the Minister confirmed that the letter of sanction had been signed on the 20th August. Everybody pitched in on the 25th August to prepare two classrooms for the opening day! At 8.40 on 3rd September,

North Bay opened its doors for the first time to 23 young students, ranging from Junior Infants to 3rd Class and one teacher, ably supported by a member of the Executive. As a parent of two children, I took the very difficult decision to leave them in their existing school as I knew to remove them at this late stage would have a detrimental effect on teacher numbers for that school. The following year they joined the school by which time it had grown to a three- teacher school with over forty students. The building also housed a range of community groups and St. Michael's House. It took some time for the local community to accept the presence of interlopers from Clontarf into what had been a local school, in particular as numbers continued to decline in the amalgamated school. Today however, a large number of the students come from the Kilbarrack area

The lessons learned by our group were wide ranging. From a group of volunteers with more enthusiasm than experience, emerged a school of which we were justifiably proud. The learning curve from amateur enthusiast to professional negotiator was steep and rapid. Along the way we grappled with issues of ethos, with lack of understanding of what constituted a multidenominational school, with power struggles, with the dreadful fear of taking responsibility for hiring a professional teaching staff and the onerous responsibility of taking charge of our children's' education in a way that the Constitution could never have envisaged. Ironically, perhaps our greatest fear was the task of providing enough capital to keep a school up and running and to grow it into the future. The support provided by Educate Together and our attendance at monthly meetings as Associate Members was a lifeline where we could find support from existing schools and there was a strong sense of being a

member of a larger movement in Irish education as we grappled with the drafting of the Educate Together Charter, which was launched in Galway in 1990. (Appendix J) The Educate Together Charter was in effect an attempt to translate the principles of the Dalkey School Project Memo and Articles into a concise statement of values and objectives and was unanimously adopted by all members. Fifteen years after the original formulation of the Dalkey School Project, the wording had only slightly changed.

- **Multi-denominational** i.e. all children having equal rights of access to the school, and children of all social, cultural and religious backgrounds being equally respected,

- **Co-educational** and committed to encouraging all children to explore their full range of abilities and opportunities,

- **Child centred** in their approach to education,

- **Democratically run** with active participation by parents in the daily life of the school, with due regard however for the professional role of the teachers.

The wording of the last principle was changed in 1999 when the sector unanimously agreed to adopt the wording: 'Democratically run with active participation by parents in the daily life of the school, *whilst positively affirming* the professional role of the teachers.' This change came about in order to fully endorse the professionalism of the teacher from the perspective of the parent group. It was felt that this wording was a more positive affirmation of the role of teacher in an Educate Together school. As

Paul Rowe (2003) explains:

It has been the exact balance between this intense personal involvement of parents with their child's education and the objective, professional role of the teacher responsible for the education of all children in a class has had to be worked out. As in all schools, the most delicate and potentially difficult area is that which bounds the conditions and human relationships of those employed in the school. The huge benefits to be gained from the involvement of the parent body and parents in the educational programmes of the school had to be worked out in detail. Mistakes had to be made, policies developed, boundaries and roles defined. One of the greatest difficulties was that teachers had no training in operating in a school legally bound to democratic methods. Even today, no teacher training college in the state offers even a voluntary module that prepares young teachers for this environment.

3.6 Slowdown in Growth of Sector

Despite the presence of four new start- up groups in Terenure, Dingle, North Kildare and Galway, no further schools opened between 1990 and 1993. This was in part due to the departure of Mary O'Rourke as Minister but it must not be forgotten that the same problems that faced the existing schools were still present. In 1993, Gaelscoil an Ghort Alainn, the only Multidenominational Gaelscoil under the Educate Together banner opened in Cork. Today the school has a thriving community of 274 students and is moving towards becoming a 16- teacher school. However, it is still in temporary accommodation, housed in prefabricated classrooms.

Schools opened in Galway and Celbridge (North Kildare) in 1994. The news has been better for these schools with regard to accommodation. Both schools are now housed in permanent, state of the art school buildings, having served their time in temporary accommodation. The Celbridge school, designed by Grafton Architects won the Downes Medal of the AAI in 2004 and also the award of the RIAI. The site was fully funded by the State, who also covered the building costs, with the exception of a local contribution of €63,500. The school also houses an autistic unit, which

opened in 2004. Unfortunately, the efforts of the Dingle and Terenure groups did not yield any results.

The growth of the sector led to the call for a National Office, which would support new and existing schools and represent the sector as a partner in Irish education. This had been precipitated to some extent by the involvement of Educate Together in the negotiations leading up to the drafting of White Paper on Education in 1995. As Paul Rowe, the CEO of Educate Together outlined in his speech at the 3rd Ethos Conference in 2003:

> *By 1995, the incremental growth of the Educate Together sector had brought the recognition of the necessity to establish a permanent national office with paid staff This in itself brought forward the necessity for the adoption of quicker decision making systems and legal protection. As a result, decision-making by majority vote was adopted in 1995 and then the incorporation of the national body into a company limited by guarantee was completed in 1998.*

The National Office was recognised by the Department of Education and this allowed for the appointment of a National Co-Coordinator on a part-time basis.

The first eleven schools that opened as Educate Together schools included the term **Project** in their names. This led to the sector becoming known as the Project schools but did not necessarily lead to a type of enforced uniformity. The schools all acknowledged the key principles of the sector but each school ensured that it developed its own individual identity and ethos through informed and collaborative discussion among the partners in the schools. However, the term project for some could be interpreted as a type of experiment. By degrees the term was dropped as the sector became recognised as a permanent part of the Irish education scene.

After a 3 -year gap, the next school opened in Monkstown, in South Dublin. This school was closely linked to the original Dalkey School and for the first time in the

history of the sector a new type of patronage emerged, where Dalkey became the patron of the new school and supported it in its development. Today, Monkstown is still located in temporary accommodation but the school is on the priority list for site purchase and it is hoped that it will proceed to tender in the next year.

Lucan Educate Together also opened in 1997 after a phenomenal response to the first call for interest among parents in the area. This is not surprising as the school is located in an area of rapid growth and the planning authorities had failed to factor in the need for infrastructure in the design of this new community. The move from temporary accommodation in two storey prefabs to a new, purpose built school happened in a very short period of time. It would appear that there is a growing recognition on the part of the Department of Education that Educate Together can expedite the setting up of schools in communities such as Lucan provided they are given the necessary support. The Lucan school, when it opened in 2003 became the first state owned 16- classroom school in Ireland. Like North Kildare, the school also has a special autistic unit. It should be noted is that the greater the state involvement in schools such as Lucan, the more there is a need for Educate Together to look closely at the implications this may have for the sector for example in areas such as school size. The latest call from the Department is for the setting up of 24 teacher schools under the patronage of Educate Together. This will be something that will occupy the Board of Directors and the individual schools in the future. Lucan also became one of the first schools within the sector to have a truly multicultural intake. The latest figures show that up to ten nationalities attend the school and 27 children are receiving language support.

The next school to open in 1998 was in Ennis. Figures show that in September 2005 there were 155 students enrolled in the school. The school is still operating out of

prefabs and this has impacted on its growth. However, as outlined by the Principal at the Ethos Conference in 2002, the school caters for a large immigrant population because of its proximity to Shannon Airport and the movement of refugees and asylum seekers into the town. It is also one of the few Educate Together schools that consistently has children from the Travelling Community among its student body. Dublin was again the location for the opening of the next school in Castleknock in 1999. This school is also a 16- teacher school, located in temporary accommodation but building has commenced on new school, which will open later in 2006. It currently has 13 teachers and an enrolment of 336. There are 70 children receiving language support and at least 65 nationalities are represented. The multicultural nature of the intake is emphasised by large maps throughout the school, which display the home nations of the children. The growth here over six years has been phenomenal and it is not surprising, that along with Lucan, there is an active committee pursuing the notion of setting up a second level Educate Together school for the region. Over 50 children had to be turned away in 2004/2005.

3.7 National Patronage

Two key changes took place in 1998 and 1999 that led to a major acceleration in the growth of the sector. The first of these was the recognition by the Department of Education that an Educate Together patron could operate more than one school and the incorporation of the national body allowed for the development of centralised patronage. Consequently, all schools that have opened since 2000 are under the central patronage of Educate Together, as first envisaged by the Dalkey Project. Since 2000, there are 4 types of patronage in existence: those under individual

patronage, those under central Educate Together patronage, Gaelscoil Gort Alainn under the patronage of an Foras Patrunachta and combined patronage as in the case of Dalkey and Monkstown. This has led to widespread debate within the sector and there are some fears that this combination of patronage types within a small sector may lead to problems in the future. Some issues around voting rights at AGM's have arisen as those with individual patronage hold two votes while those under Educate Together patronage hold only one. A further issue arises around enrolment policies. Within those schools under direct patronage there is a strict 'first come, first served' policy while there is a measure of flexibility within those with independent patronage. These issues have formed part of a series of workshops held at recent AGM's and there is also a sub-committee within the Board of Directors that is examining the situation. There is a suggestion that schools may choose to opt for individual patronage after a three- year period but this option has not been exercised to date. The 'first come, first served' policy has also been tested through an Appeal under Section 29 of the Education Act. In the case of this appeal, the Appeals Board found in favour of the parents and against the enrolment policy. This is an issue that will need further clarification in the future. Another possible area of friction may be with the placing of Educate Together nominees as Patron representatives on new Boards of Management. It is not always easy for a new Board, mainly made up of enthusiastic parents to accept that, an outsider, who has not been involved in the setting up of the school, may take one of the hotly contested places on the Board. To date however, this has not caused any major problems. It is also the function of the Patron to appoint the Chairperson of the Board, to ratify all appointments and to ensure that the ethos is maintained. This has added a lot of extra work on already hard- pressed Directors and members of the staff of the National Office. The other key function that

must be exercised by the Patron is the provision of a Religious Education policy for each school under its patronage. The core of this research thesis is the development of such a policy.

The second big change, in January 1999, was the abolition of the requirement by the state that all Educate Together schools had to provide their own sites and pay 15% of the building costs of a permanent building. This wiped up to €1m off the fundraising targets of local school communities and removed what had been the greatest restraint on the progress of the movement. This change has led to an unprecedented growth in the number of schools.

In **2000**, Dublin 7 Educate Together School opened in rooms in Henrietta Street in Dublin City centre and later moved to the old School for the Deaf on the Navan Road, which it shares with a Muslim school. It has currently got 204 students and turned away 75 applicants in the last academic year. Two schools opened in **2001**, Le Cheile School in Drogheda and Swords Educate Together. The Drogheda school is located in temporary accommodation on the grounds of the Drogheda Grammar School where it hopes to establish a permanent building. It currently has 247 students enrolled. It is hoped to grow to a 16-teacher school.

Swords Educate Together also plans to become a 16 teacher school and in 2005 appointed six new staff members, thus doubling its staffing in a year. The work of the Principal Gerard Kelly in seeking a site for the school has identified a further interesting development within the sector. Located initially in the clubhouse of a local soccer team, the school needed to find a site very quickly. In 2004, the school moved into purpose built, prefab accommodation The site was provided free of charge by Gannon Homes, a major developer in the area and is shared with a local Gaelscoil. In June of this year these prefabs moved to another part of the site to allow for the

commencement of building of the new school by Gannon Homes. In this instance Gannon Homes are working in co-operation with Fingal County Council and the Department of Education. This development is a new departure and may mark the future trend for schools in new growth areas. There were 221 pupils enrolled as of 30th Septemeber 2005. Nineteen nationalities are represented and 17 home languages.

Seven new schools opened in **2002**. These were:

1. Waterford Educate Together

2. Tralee Educate Together

3. Navan Educate Together

4. Donabate Portrane Educate Together

5. Glasnevin Educate Together

6. Griffeen Valley Educate Together

7. Ardee Educate Together

This rate of growth is all the more amazing at a time when the denominational sector is almost static. The geographical spread of the schools is also quite interesting. Waterford marked the first Educate Together School in that city. The new Principal moved from Dalkey and set up in a community centre in the city centre. Initially, numbers were low but it has now enrolled 103 students and has moved to an alternative building and is actively pursuing a permanent base. Tralee is located in refurbished buildings in the town and has an enrolment of 100 students. In the case of Navan school, there were initial problems in the location of premises but these have since been resolved. It currently has an enrolment of 53 and there are a 15 nationalities represented in the school. There are also 3 children from the Travelling Community.

Donabate/Portrane started life in a Scout Den, then moved to Turvey Golf Club but has since moved to a site with purpose built prefabs. It is hoped that site will become the permanent home for the school in the near future. There were 195 children enrolled in September 2005 and there were 10 nationalities represented in the school. Glasnevin Educate Together, formerly known as North Central is housed in the building vacated by North Dublin Educate Together, the old Model School. This group began life in Clontarf but like the previous Clontarf group, it failed to find suitable premises. Several meetings were held with the Board of North Bay to examine the possibility of the group becoming part of the North Bay school or perhaps taking rooms in the school. Neither possibility was feasible given the limited space in North Bay and its reluctance to grow to a 16 -teacher school. There was also a desire on the part of the newly formed group to set up their own school. They opened in September 2002 and set up an Assisted Learning classroom in 2003. Despite the standard of accommodation, the numbers enrolled in September 2005 stood at 124

The Board of Directors expressed concern at the level of accommodation that some of these schools experienced when they opened in 2003. Some expressed the view that growth was too fast and should only occur when accommodation was of a more suitable standard. However, these concerns were also tempered by the notion that where there was demand for such schooling, every effort should be made to provide it. The story was better with the remaining two schools that opened in that year. Griffeen Valley started life in the Scout Den in Lucan, and then moved to the prefabs vacated by Lucan Educate Together and made its final move into a new purpose built school in September 2004. The school is the first of its kind to be built by the

Department of Education and the move represents the fastest move into permanent accommodation by any school in the sector. This wonderfully bright and child friendly building marked the first experiment by the Department in designing a school, which was constructed off site and assembled in a matter of 14 weeks. It has an estimated life span of 30 years. In 2005 there were 273 representing 26 nationalities with 29 home languages. Finally, in 2002, St. Mary's Church of Ireland National School in Ardee, Co. Louth transformed into an Educate Together School under ET patronage. It began a major re-development programme in 2003 and increased enrolment to 52 by September 2005.

2003 saw a slow down in growth from the heady days of 2002. Three schools joined the growing sector. Rush and Lusk Educate Together (RALET) started out in the Scout Den in Rush with 24 pupils and two teachers. By December a decision was made to move to the old Teagasc Training Centre at Blake's Cross in Lusk. As a Patron Nominee on the Board I viewed this building with some trepidation. Despite lovely wooded grounds, on a cold day in December, it seemed a forbidding sight. However, the move went ahead at Easter and it was soon transformed into a bright, comfortable space. The growth in numbers has been slow as the area of Rush and Lusk has till not reached maturity in terms of children of school- going age. Despite this, the projected numbers for the new academic year 2006 are 110. Like Swords, negotiations are ongoing with a number of developers working in the Lusk area but the problem is compounded by the dual catchment area of the children.

Newbridge Educate Together, formerly South Kildare is located in prefabs in the town and took in 38 pupils in 2005 to bring its numbers up to 89. There is a search for a permanent site and already 26 nationalities are represented in the school. Finally Wicklow Educate Together also opened in 2003 and currently has 87 students

enrolled. It is located in an old VEC building in the town. Like the others, the search is on for permanent accommodation. While these three schools began on a small scale, it is obvious that despite the lack of permanent sites, there is a growth in demand for places and this will continue into the future. There are currently no plans to develop these schools into 16 teacher schools.

In **2004** four more schools joined the sector. Two of these were located in the Midlands, a new ground for the sector. The school in Mullingar opened with 24 children in the local rugby club. There were 60 children enrolled for 2005/2005. Tullamore opened with 17 pupils in a prefab on grounds provided by a local landlord. Despite the falling through of accommodation within two weeks of opening, the school has 27 enrolments in 2005. It is working closely with the Department of Education and Offaly County Council to meet the needs of a projected increase in population.

I had the pleasure of visiting the East Limerick School in May of 2005. The school is located in Young Munster Rugby Club, where the 12 children, their teacher and a Special Needs Assistant treated us to a rousing rendition of 'Ireland's Call'. Despite the nature of the premises, by September 2005 numbers stood at 24. This is the second school in Limerick and given the success of the first, there is no doubt that numbers will grow in the future. Finally, Castaheany ETNS also opened in 2004 and is currently located in temporary accommodation on the grounds of Mary Mother of Hope Primary School. Numbers enrolled on September 30th 2005 stood at 170. The Department recognise the urgent need for this school in a growth area and it has located a permanent site, which is currently under negotiation. It is hoped that the new building will open in 2006. This school has been designated as a 16- teacher school but there is some pressure by the Department of Education to set up a 24 -

teacher school. The Board of Management has resisted this on the grounds that a school of this size would compromise the ethos but there will be other such challenges in the future.

In **2005** a further 4 schools opened in Tyrellstown and Balbriggan in Dublin, Gorey, in Wexford and North Galway. The students numbers enrolled on 30th September 2005 were 91, 53, 26 and 29 respectively. The figures for Tyrellstown are particularly interesting and demonstrate the huge demand for places in this area of Dublin. The Department of Education has undertaken to provide sites for both this school and Balbriggan. There are two schools scheduled to open in 2006, Letterkenny in Donegal and Blessington in Wicklow. Once again history will be made in Letterkenny as it will be the first school to open in Ulster.

A detailed spreadsheet (Appendix K) for the academic year 2005-2006 highlights student and staffing numbers, status of accommodation and growth trends over a five year period, 2001 –2006.

3.8 Conclusion

The growth in the Educate Together sector since 1978 to 39 schools in 2005 may not at first glance appear significant. However, if we set this growth against the decline experienced by denominational schools in the same period, the growth appears much more significant. In 2005 there were 6,631 pupils enrolled in the sector, an increase of 1,031 from the previous year. There were 388 teaching staff, an increase of 73. It is expected that within another three years if growth remains even at its current levels, the numbers will reach 10,000 based on the fact that so many of the schools are in the early years and will continue to experience a natural growth as they develop to full capacity. The new partnership approach between the Department of Education, the local councils and Educate Together as evidenced in Balbriggan and Tyrellstown

would appear to be the way forward in areas of growth within the larger towns and cities in terms of sourcing accommodation. However, as an organisation, the challenges faced by this level of growth are immense for a small organisation such as Educate Together. The multicultural nature of the classrooms, the training of Boards of Management, the management of the change process for the organisation as it grows, the role of volunteers and the training of parents to run schools in areas where there is little or no infrastructure in place, can put a strain on the organisation. Nor can it ignore the smaller schools like Gorey that represent a choice for parents where none had existed heretofore. Appendix K identifies that only 14 of the 39 schools are housed in purpose built accommodation and only one school of those opened since 1998 has managed to procure a new building. Yet of those schools that have been built or renovated, five of them received architectural awards at Irish and European level. There are many challenges ahead but the sector has come a long way from the pioneering Dalkey group who set out to provide a suitable education for their children and to test the spirit of the Stanley Letter.

Chapter 4 Literature Review

4.1 Introduction

The relevance of a literature review from the perspective of the research into

multidenominational education in Ireland is to attempt to contextualise the research

through the presentation of relevant reports, publications and statistics that highlight

the changes which have taken in place in Ireland in recent years. The review will also

examine the impact of an increased emphasis on values in education and the need to

articulate values in order to arrive at a consensus as to what constitutes the ethos of

the school. This review will ground the research process and situate the Educate

Together sector in the mainstream of economic, social and cultural change in Ireland.

These changes have seen us become a more racially diverse, more secular and

arguably a less tolerant country. The literature will focus the research and present a

range of concepts, which will in turn be used to scaffold the research approach and

inform the direction of the research process.

It is appropriate at this stage of the report to set the scene for the unprecedented

growth in the Educate Together sector that has taken place in the last decade and also

to attempt to clarify the role of the sector in what has been arguably one of the

greatest paradigm shifts to have taken place in our recent history. This chapter will

also track the change in mind-shift that has moved us as a society from the

monocultural certainty of the 80's, through the tentative excitement of pluralism in

the 90's, the emergent concept of multiculturalism in the latter days of the last century and the new language of interculturalism which appears to dominate the media and society today. Just as new words and phrases become part of our vernacular so these terms have found their way in a largely uncontested fashion into our everyday lives. This review will attempt to present, through the relevant literature, a true picture of the current state of Irish society and relate this in particular to the impact on Irish education.

4.2 Current Trends in Irish Society

Emigration, for one hundred and fifty years a constant and inevitable feature of Irish society, has reversed. Emigrants are returning and immigrants from other societies are arriving, but this migration is unsettling and thought provoking. The moral monopoly of the Catholic Church has changed. We celebrate the emergence of a new, secular, liberal culture, but at the same time we bemoan the decline of values and the moral bankruptcy of modern living. The Northern Question is subsumed by, discourse on globalisation, post nationalism and multiculturalism. The accelerated level of change has left us as a society in turmoil. Keohane (2004) puts our reaction to change into context by making reference to other periods of dramatic transformation in Ireland. These include changes such as those wrought by: the fall-out from the Act of Union in 1800, the dramatic impact of the Famine on rural Ireland and the emergence of emigration as a pattern that would live with us for many decades, the political upheaval in the aftermath of 1916, and more recently the entry into the EEC in the early 70's which brought us into a new relationship with the rest of Europe and changed our perception of identity from an outcrop on the edge of the Atlantic to a committed member of the European family.

The point of Keohane's argument is that while what he refers to as the *content* of change is unique to the institutions and practices and the cultural and historically context in which the change occurs, the *form* of change or as he explains it, the collective experience of transformation and the impact on society is common to all (P1 and 2). Nowhere is this more evident than in our sense of a perceived threat to our identity.

Identity

The phenomena that is change in society has been addressed at length by writers of note such as Habermas (2001) Beck and Giddens (1995) and Virillio (1985) In a society undergoing rapid change, such as Ireland, we experience a clash of cultures between old and new, national and international, traditionalism and modernity and our sense of identity can appear to be under threat. The rapid generation and dissemination of knowledge, much influenced by the growth in technology and the creation of sophisticated global highways, also influence this rate of change. Beck and Giddens (1995) refer to attempts to assimilate this knowledge as 'reflexive modernisation.' As we assimilate new information, so our ability to grasp the new knowledge, respond to it and act upon it increases exponentially. This rapid acceleration of knowledge processing in turn leads to even greater acceleration in knowledge production thus leading, to what Virillio describes, as the instant reflexion of knowledge. What is being described is a rate of acceleration of knowledge production and reflexion, which is cyclical or gyre like. The difficulty as Virillio argues is that the knowledge is running on empty or turning on its own axis, yet achieving very little. We have access to knowledge and the ability to process it almost instantly but we have no control over the rate of change. Keohane, (p5) draws

a comparison between the concepts of Virillio, Beck and Giddens and the rate of change in Irish society. The rate of transformation of our social, cultural, political and religious identities has fallen victim to reflexive modernisation and we as a society are at odds with the 'interplay between the globalisation of the local and the re-localisation of the global.' This concept is not a new one. The poet Patrick Kavanagh in his poem *Epic* captures the concept of the interplay between World War 2 and local issues in his native Monaghan:

I have lived in important places, times
When great events were decided: who owned
That half a rood of rock, a no-man's land
Surrounded by our pitchforked-arms claims..........
That was the year of the Munich bother. Which
Was most important?

This poem graphically illustrates the fragility of borders in our society. We as a society in Ireland as Keohane states 'have a foot in both – in many camps and the experience of living in contemporary Ireland is that of living in an between world.' (P.6). Bauman (2000) refers to this period of uncertainty and change as living in a time of *liquid modernity*. The use of liquid as a descriptor for this time of change is a very apt one as it captures clearly the concept, not just of a single notion of modernity but the constant river which links past, present and future. For Giddens (1995: P.56) this linkage puts tradition at the heart of modernity, the notion of history being developed and expanded from old roots to form new branches. Yet, at the heart of modernity lie the lessons, the myths and the influences of the past. These impact on the present modernity and form the post modernity of the future. The changing face or liquid modernity of Ireland will draw on past history and form the future. Against this background I want to place the emergence and growth of Educate Together, the multidenominational school movement in Ireland and attempt through this literature

review to explore the backdrop to this small, but significant sector and set a context for its role into the future. Keohane (2004: 196) talks of 'creating a critical, hermeneutic analysis of Irish culture under conditions of accelerated modernisation' as a way to discover unity in diversity. From the perspective of theorists such as Habermas, this unity is best achieved through communication and through this communication hopefully will emerge this unity. The research presented here is an attempt to facilitate such communication at a time when we grapple with our identity in a diverse and changing Ireland.

4.3 Diversity In Irish Life

In her address to the Immigrant Council of Ireland Conference on 11th December 2004, the former President, Mary Robinson, in her capacity as Head of the Ethical Globalisation Initiative, makes the valid point that in order for diversity to be valued it must first be recognised. However, for many in Ireland, the issue is not one of recognition but one of fear of being overtaken by immigration. The statistics show that migration has outstripped emigration in recent years. The average number of migrants into Ireland is relatively stable at 45, 000 while a corresponding figure for emigration stands at 25,000. It can be stated with some certainty that a percentage of migrants are Irish or of Irish extraction who are returning home but it is also evident that the new phenomena of migration into Ireland, whether transitory or long term is something that will continue. The success of the Irish economy means that Ireland is a country of almost zero unemployment. In 1988 The Economist identified Ireland as the poorest country in the rich North Western European belt. By 2000, the Index of Global Economies identified Ireland as the most globalised country in the world based on a range of economic criteria. This dramatic shift in our economy clearly identifies

the need to attract labour from outside of the country in order to maintain our economic growth. Statistics show that the vast majority of immigrants come from the newly enlarged EU and in particular from Great Britain.

Fig.1 Migration from within Europe

Year	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
UK	8,300	8,200	8,300	7,900	7,100	7,000	5,100
Rest of EU	5,000	5,500	5,800	6,800	7,100	5,800	6,100

Source: Central Statistics Office.

If we examine these figures, it is clear that with the exception of 2000, when 7,100 EU immigrants entered Ireland, the numbers have remained fairly consistent over the 7-year period. In total, it is estimated that the figures above include 55% of Irish people returning home during the year 1999. That figure had fallen to 35% of the total in 2002.

Wok permits granted to non-EU residents show that between 2000 and 2004 a further 155, 554 people entered Ireland in that 5-year period. Most of these permits were granted to people from Russia, Romania, South Africa, the Czech Republic and the Philippines. With the expansion of the EU in 2004, a significant number of Polish workers have begun to arrive in Ireland to work in the construction and hospitality sector.

Fig. 2 Employment Migration to Ireland from outside the EU

2000	18,000
2001	36,000
2002	40,000
2003	47,500
2004	34,054

The number of those seeking work permits to work in Ireland doubled in the years 2000-2001 from 18,000 to 36,000 and appears to have peaked in the year 2003 at 47,500. This may in part have been due to a perceived economic downturn or at least levelling off of the Celtic Tiger phenomena. Overall immigration levels, including EU residents peaked at 66,900 in the year ending April 2002 (CSO, 2003) and fell back to 50,000 in the year to April 2003. (MacEinri and Walley, 2003) These statistics, while not dramatic in themselves, demonstrate that immigration is a demographically and socially significant aspect of social change in Ireland since the mid 90's and can be expected to continue into the future, albeit at less dramatic rate than that experienced to date.

Another feature of the changing face of Ireland has been the number of asylum seekers that have come into the country in the last decade.

The following table gives a clear picture of the trend towards asylum in Ireland.

Fig. 3 Asylum Applications in Ireland

1991	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
31	40	90	360	420	1,180	3,880	4,630	7,720	10,938	10,325	11,634	7,900	4,766

Source: CSO: April 2004

The right to asylum is specifically written into the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and seeks to protect those people who have a fear of persecution in their own countries. Once granted the right to asylum, the term refugee is assigned to the former asylum seeker. The reason for the decline in asylum seekers after 2002 can be somewhat explained by the EU tightening of border controls throughout the EU. In

2003 there was drop of 22% in asylum seekers throughout the EU. (Kelly, 2004) In Ireland however, the drop was 32%. This steep decline can be ascribed to the changing conditions of asylum in Ireland. Until 2003, asylum seekers who were parents of a child born in Ireland could apply for residency based on their parentage of that child. Just over 6,000 non-nationals were granted residency on this basis between 1998 and 2003. (Kennedy and Murphy Lawless, 2003). The Supreme Court Ruling of January 2003 and the subsequent Referendum of June 2004 resulted in this right being removed. The 1998 Good Friday Agreement asserted the right to citizenship to all those born on the island of Ireland. The referendum reversed this concept of "jus soli" (based on soil). Article 9, approved by 75% of voters states that the government has the right to decide the citizenship of those born in Ireland without an Irish parent. It is also interesting to examine in closer detail the numbers of those who apply for asylum and how these applications are processed. The Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner shows that in 2002 a total of 11,634 applications for refugee status were received. A further backlog of 3,578 applications from previous years gave a grand total of 15,212 applications. The breakdown of this figure shows:

Withdrawals:	**6000+**
Transfers under the Dublin Convention	**191**
Unprocessable:	**586**

Of the remaining 8362, a total of 893 or 10.7 % was granted refugee status. If, as Robinson suggests, that up to 90% of applicants do not qualify as refugees, then it raises the question of why so many people want to remain in Ireland and why they

choose such an arduous route through which to process their applications? 'We must urgently implement a rights-based, humane, coherent and transparent immigration policy that rectifies these problems.' (Robinson: P6)

The responses to immigration and asylum seeking, has generated much debate in Ireland both from the perspective of those opposed to it and those who favour the notion of a more multicultural, more ethnically diverse society. The report of the Immigrant Council of Ireland (2004) clearly identifies the concept that immigration is not just a fleeting phenomenon and will not end with changes in the Irish economic situation. Many of these immigrants will become long -term members of Irish society. The report stresses the need for long term strategies to support an integrated, transparent, rights based policy on migration and as Robinson (2004: p2) points out, 'many of these ideas would benefit from the participation of different sectors, including civil society, business, academia and education, the legal profession and of course, government.'

Irish reaction to the increasing diversity of our society has been captured in some measure through the Eurobarometer, conducted twice yearly by the Directorate General Press of the European Commission. In the most recent report published in 2004 entitled Eurobarometer 62.0 the focus was on overall attitudes to European integration, to national and European identity and to EU images such as the European flag. The report highlights the contrast between our overall levels of satisfaction with membership of the European Union while we still hold a fear of endorsing European Union Treaty changes. There is an increase in our level of satisfaction at being members of the European Union, up from 71% to 77%. This compares favourably with the EU average of 56%. Eurobarometer 62.0 attempts to examine how proud people are of their national identity and how this compares with their sense of a

European identity. Up to 80% identified that they were 'very attached' to their own country while only 23% stated that they were 'very attached' to Europe. If we include the level of 'fairly attached' however, a further 72% state that they are fairly attached to Europe. Compared with the other 24 EU states what emerges is that the Irish sense of national and European identity is quite high. In terms of pride in our national and EU identity, 97% state that they are fairly proud to be Irish while 82% of respondents state that they are fairly proud to be European. This compares with a EU average of 86% and 68% respectively. Thus, it is evident that Irish people are proud of both forms of identity and in relation to the rest of the EU, 33% of Irish respondents actually stated that they were 'very proud' of their EU identity compared to the average of 16% across the 25 member states.

However, our sense of identity is not secure enough to support further European integration. Up to 56% of Irish respondents fear loss of national identity and culture compared to a EU average of 42%. Hope, enthusiasm and trust listed in that order express how Irish respondents feel about the EU. We in Ireland trust the economic support that membership of the EU can offer but interestingly we exhibit a high degree of fear that the building of Europe will involve the transfer of jobs to other member countries, which have lower production costs. We fear that an enlarged EU will lead to an increase in drug trafficking and crime and we want the Irish Government to decide on issues such as defence, immigration and refugees.

The European Union Monitoring Centre for Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) recently published a report on research conducted into Majority Attitudes Towards Minorities. The key findings from this research highlight that in Ireland we cannot afford to be complacent in our approach to combating racism and xenophobia. There are however some positive outcomes. The research looked at the results of

Eurobarometers from 1997 to 2003. It also included results from a European Social Survey conducted in 2003. The Eurobarometer looked at views of the then 15 EU states while the Social Survey included the findings from the 15 states plus the views of the then 10 candidate countries, which joined on May 1st 2004. The two pieces of research looked at the levels of resistance to multiculturalism, reactions to legally established immigrants, threats to culture and threats to the economic life of the country. An interesting aspect of the research was that respondents were grouped according to level of educational attainment and that those with the lowest levels of education were more likely to hold negative views on multiculturalism and its impact on national identity.

From an Irish perspective the following key findings are of interest.

- Resistance to multicultural society: 16.9%

- There should be limits to multicultural nature of society: 72.1%

- Opposition to legal rights for immigrants: 30.7%

- In favor of repatriation for legal migrants: 29.5%

- Resistance to Diversity: 28.92%

- Perceived collective ethnic threat: 54.36%

While these statistics may make for depressing reading, it is heartening to note that our level of resistance to a multicultural society has dropped from 24% in 2000 to 16.9% in 2003. This may be due in part to greater awareness raising of multiculturalism at all levels of Irish society and the introduction of measures to educate society on multiculturalism. However our high level of support for putting a limit on the extent of a multicultural society is third only to Greece and Germany.

Our perception of the threat of greater ethnic integration, measured around such issues as jobs, quality of life, and threat to our culture is also quite high at 54.36%. These figures indicate that we, as a nation, harbour fears of expansion despite our current stable economy. There is a challenge for educators to respond to this change in our society and prepare our children to be active, committed, positive citizens in this new, emerging society. The further challenge is to provide a choice of school types to reflect our growing diversity as a nation.

4.4 A Climate for Racism?

The question of whether Ireland should be concerned about the whole issue of racism is well demonstrated by Lentin and Mc Veigh, (2001), Farrell and Watt (2001) and Fanning (2002). Each of these writers highlights our tardiness in ratifying the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination. We finally ratified this agreement in January 2001, 32 years after it had first been introduced by the United Nations. There is no doubt that the issue of racism is now a public concern and Farrell and Watt identify 5 different types of racism that have been identified in Ireland, some of a long standing, others due to more recent changes in society. These include racism experienced by Travellers, refugees and asylum seekers, black and minority ethnic groups, migrant workers and women from minority ethnic groups. (P13) Our change from a country of emigration to one of inward migration has prompted awareness of the question of racism and how it can be addressed. The role of education in combating racism is one that has received much attention. However, the efficacy of this approach was questioned by Donal

O'Loinsigh , former President of the INTO who focused on the lack of provision for cultural diversity, in particular at primary school level. He writes of the predominance of denominational schools and raises the issue that:

> *If as a nation, we are to meet our obligations both morally and as an EU member and adhere to EU and UN policy and legislation that relates to the recognition and provision of multicultural education and equality of access to education of children of ethnic minority communities, then, not only will the very structures on which our education system is founded have to change, but also the culture and ethos of many of our schools.* (P 116-117)

The Education Act (1998) cannot work effectively without the proper structures being in place. As O'Loinsigh argues, it is impossible to address these rights in a school system that cannot provide choice for parents in a predominantly denominational school system. While this issue has been dealt with in with in greater detail in Chapters 2 and 3, it is important to raise it here in relation to the role of education in combating racism. If the role of a school ethos is to celebrate each member of the school community and respect their religious and cultural background, then this may prove very difficult in a denominational setting where the ethos of the school must encourage, foster and uphold a specific belief system as outlined by the Deeds of Variation. This results in a mere accommodation of difference, which is a far remove from the celebration of difference as envisaged by multidenominational schools. The Employment Equality Act, Section 37 (i) further ensures that denominational schools are legally entitled to take whatever measures are necessary to protect their religious ethos. O'Loinsigh (122-123) believes that the provision of intercultural education in such an ethos is not possible.

> *The present system will lead to one of the following, given the reality that non-denominational state funded schools are not allowed under our constitution; we will either have, at enormous and unnecessary cost to the state, a huge increase in the number and diversity of minority denominational schools or, preferably, in my view, a massive increase in the number of new schools through the multidenominational sector. P122-123*

4.5 Threatening the newly found national voice

There is no doubt that introverted, monocultural notions of what it means to be to be Irish have no place in an intercultural society.

<div align="right">Anastasia Critchley (2002)</div>

A comparison of the census figure for Ireland in 1991 and 2002 give us a picture of the place of birth of people usually living in Ireland

Fig.4: Place of Birth of those living in Ireland

Place of Birth	1991	2002
Ireland	93.8%	89.6%
Northern Ireland	1.0%	1.3%
Great Britain	3.8%	5.1%
Other EU countries	0.4%	0.9%
USA	0.4%	0.6%
Other countries	0.6%	2.5%

These figures show an increase of 4.2% in those born outside of Ireland in the 11 years between 1991 and 2002. While this may not appear to be dramatic, it is indicative of a swing in population from almost wholly monocultural to slightly multicultural in 11 years. This figure will of course include an unknown percentage of children born to Irish parents who have now returned to live and work in Ireland. There can be no doubt however, that when the 2006 census figures are published, the

percentage of those people living in Ireland who were not born here will have further increased and these figures will give a clearer picture of the ethnic origins of all who live in Ireland.

The figures for the 2000 Eurobarometer showed that 24% of Irish people supported discrimination against minorities, the lowest figure in Europe but only 31% supported the promotion of equality at all levels of social life, again the lowest level in Europe. A figure of 32% of Irish people felt that minorities enriched our cultural life, as opposed to a European average of 50%. However a more positive note was struck by the greater percentage of Irish people (70%) who supported the notion of children of different cultures being educated together and who believed that it would enrich the education of all.

Research conducted by MacGreil in the late 80's before the prospect of multiculturalism was a reality in Ireland, identified a significant minority of Irish people who expressed racist views. One example of this bias was expressed in reply to the question of whether they would welcome an American as a next- door neighbour. Of those sampled, 95.6% said that they would welcome a white American while only 59% said they would welcome a black American. The figure for Travellers was equally negative with 59% stating that they would not welcome Travellers as next-door neighbours. There is no evidence to suggest that these figures would be more positive if the research was conducted today.

The second Report of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance published in Strasbourg and adopted by the Council of Europe on 22nd June 2002 praised Ireland for taking a number of significant steps towards combating racism and intolerance including the ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of racial Discrimination, making a declaration at the same

time under Article 14 of this convention to allow individual communication to be accepted by the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. (CERD) This particular body has been referred to in Chapter 3, in relation to the case made by Educate Together under Section 14 of the Convention. The Irish Traveller Movement also made cases to the CERD in 2004 on the grounds of Racial discrimination. Ireland was also praised for passing the Employment Equality Act in 1998 and the Equal Status Act of 2000. In 1999, Ireland ratified the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and in the same year ratified the ILO Convention concerning discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation. The report praised Ireland for its liberal approach to citizenship, a situation that of course was to change within two years.

Article 28F of the above Report, specifically targets the absence of specific human rights education in the Irish classroom. It welcomed pilot initiatives in the field of human rights education and specified the need for in-service training for teachers in the delivery of human rights modules at Primary and Secondary level. The need to introduce such training as early as possible in the life of the child was stressed. It also highlights the need to ensure that the culture and background of children from minorities is reflected in materials across the school curriculum. The main concern expressed about the provision of education for minority groups related to language teaching. However Article 46 G of the Report refers to the denominational nature of Irish Education.

Many schools in Ireland are de facto denominational (to a large extent Catholic) and ECRI noted in its first report that this situation called for a particular attention to be paid to the needs of students of minority faiths. Although such pupils are not obliged to attend religious education, ECRI is of the opinion that the issue of providing alternative religious education or a form of religious education which embraces all faiths needs to be considered. ECRI also notes with concern reports that some Muslim girls wearing headscarves have been refused entry into certain schools, and stresses that such forms of discrimination should not be allowed to occur.

Vulnerable groups identified in the report included the Muslim Community, members of the Travelling Community and visible minority groups. The emphasis on education to counteract racism and intolerance is clearly evident throughout the report. The next report of this group is due in 2007 and will focus on the implementation of measures to counteract the problems that have been identified.

The Analytical Study on Education EUMC Raxen 3, which reported on Ireland in December 2002, praised the overall improvement in Irish education in the area of cultural diversity. The report highlights the fact that there has always been cultural diversity in Ireland. However, there is now greater visibility of diversity through the presence of up to 100 different nationalities in the country. Again the figures show an increase in the levels of racism in particular towards black people, Roma and Travellers and asylum seekers. (Garner and White, 2002) Profiles of respondents highlight the levels of hostility across all social classes and in both rural and urban areas. The report offers some misleading information with regard to Irish primary education by stating that all denominational schools are state schools. The inference here is that Educate Together schools are not state funded. This is fallacious and highlights a weakness in the research report. The fact that the sector is also described as non-denominational and that the number of schools for 2002 is incorrect, casts some of the background research on the report into some doubt. While there are no

figures available for the nationality of students at Primary Level, the statistics for 2nd Level show that of 9,345 non-nationals at 2nd Level, 35.3% came from the UK. 8.3% from Nigeria, 6.2% from the US, 5.9% from Spain and 5.8 % from Germany. It seems feasible to suggest that the picture at Primary Level would reflect those at 2nd Level. A further interesting statistic from this report shows the results of the PISA study of 2000, which tested thousands of students across Europe in reading and related tasks. Of the 27 countries that were tested Ireland was the only one where non-nationals outperformed nationals. In relation to what Ireland needed to do to ensure that our education system kept pace with the changing population and put in place measures to address issues of racism, the report looks at the key objective in The National Children's Strategy (2000) which states that: '*Children will be educated and supported to value social and cultural diversity so that all children including Travellers and other marginalised groups can reach their potential.*' It also revisits the White Paper on Education that calls for the framing of all education policy in terms of ' *human rights, tolerance and respect for cultural identity.*' This report in common with the Report of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance referred to already, welcomes the publication of the Employment Equality Act (1998) and the Equal Status Act. (2000) It goes on to highlight the publication of Guidelines for Traveller Education, both at Primary and Secondary Level; the SPHE and CSPE Currricula; the INTO guidelines on a Whole School Approach to Interculturalism and the work of NGO's such as the National Youth Council, Comhlamh and National Adult Literacy Agency. (NALA) While generally positive about Ireland and the improvements made in the provision of intercultural approaches to education, the report does highlight that there are:

Indications of issues related to cultural and religious diversity becoming an issue for consideration under the equality legislation specifically and through broader discourse related to education policy in general. Issues related to religious education and religious instruction at primary and secondary level is sensitive issues, particularly because of the management and religious ethos of many schools. (P45)

So what do analysts have to say of our reactions to this new Ireland? In 2004, Diarmaid Ferriter published a seminal book on Irish History during the 20th century entitled "The Transformation of Ireland 1900-2000." This book continues the move away from the 'morality tale' that was begun by Roy Foster in 1988. Ferriter's book challenges us to probe as opposed to presenting us with definite conclusions. Here in this book, we have a picture of an Ireland carved, not just by nationalistic fervour, but also by culture, social theory, religion, politics and emigration. We are reminded of the danger of 'reading history backwards' and from the perspective of modern day values and norms. However, if we return to the concept of liquid modernity that fuses past and present we begin to understand how our past has fashioned our reaction to the present and will impact on our future. We have as Lentin, (2001) so aptly described, just regained our national voice of contemporary Ireland and this in turn is now being threatened by the voice of 'the other' which also reminds us of our own recent painful, history of emigration. (P235) This revisionist approach has led us to question our identity as a complex entity. Ruairi Quinn's description of Ireland in 1996 as a 'post-Catholic, pluralist republic' highlighted a new rhetoric of equality and inclusiveness, which according to Ferriter (p751) did not find favour with all commentators. Others such as Jim Smyth writing in History Ireland in 2002 about the period up to 1992 described it as a class ridden corrupt society with levels of inequality and deprivation unrivalled in Ireland. Ferriter (p752) cites the social commentator John Ardagh who wrote in 1994 'as the church enjoyed a moral

monopoly, Ireland has never really developed the alternative found in many other countries of a liberal, humanist or socialist ethic of civic-cum –personal responsibility.'   While our standard of education had undergone a vast change with the introduction of free second level education and a grant scheme for the university sector in the late 1960's, the education system did not develop a culture of equality and tolerance. The moral monopoly of the Church and the strong links between church and state may have been partly responsible for the slow growth of the multidenominational sector from one school in 1977 to a mere six in 1987.   This picture as noted elsewhere in the work has changed dramatically in the last ten years, where it is today, along with the Gaelscoileanna, the only areas of growth in Irish Primary Education.   The role of education is once again at the forefront as a implement for social change and a barometer for how we can become an inclusive nation, comfortable in our own identity, yet welcoming of diversity and pluralism.

4.6 Pluralism in Education

Pluralism, according to Geraldine Smyth in her Foreword to The Pluralism in Education Conference proceedings, is a word that is semantically elusive. Smith contends that pluralism has variously been described as the end of rationalism, the birth of uncertainty, the beginnings of moral relativism where there is a school for every belief and where the community's well being may be given over to a political power which legislates for its thought process.   Quoting the philosopher Martha Nussbaum, Smyth argues that through the common grounding experiences of life as it is lived, we can begin to articulate our common humanity. (P4)   Her concept of a

shared humanity echoes that of Hans Kung's concept of the humanum or truly human part of society.

> *Pluralism is about how we can live together in the one world house, about how we can live with an ecumenical spirit. It is this context of respect and love that pluralism challenges us to resist the pull back into fundamentalist inertia or inertia. In the context of this ecumenical spirit, pluralism urges us to discover ways for diversity to live in some kind of communion. Pluralism and ecumenism mutually imply and condition each other.* (P5)

The essential aspect of pluralism is to respect and celebrate difference and to accept that there are many universes. While we consider that others are on the margin of our centre as opposed to having a centre of their own there will be no true pluralism in society. (Tracy, 1992) The motto of Educate Together states, 'no child is an outsider'. Therefore to paraphrase David Tracy, the sector tries to be truly pluralist through creating an ethos where there is one centre and which encourages and teaches all members of the school community to learn and understand the existence of other centres to which the individual child belongs. Thus they can grow and develop their sense of identity while respecting the multiple identities of others within the school community, be that a social, religious or national identity. John Kekes writing in 1993 wrote of the six theses of pluralism. These he defined as:

- The Plurality and Conditionality of Values

- The Unavoidability of Conflicts

- The Approach to Reasonable Conflict Resolution

- The Possibility of Life

- The Need for Limits

- The Prospects for Moral Progress.

In essence, Kelkes argued that there are many values worth pursuing and which people may hold in common; that the realisation of one value may by its nature force

a conflict as to what constitutes a good life; that a condition of a plurality of values is that we must learn to arrive at reasonable and rational compromises; that pluralism focuses on values as constituents of good lives; that a real understanding of pluralism demands that we differentiate between monism and relativism and that if we give up the idea of overriding values and if we regard all values as conditional we possess the ability to measure our moral progress both as an individual and as a member of a pluralist society.   Nicholas Rescher who dismisses both traditionalistic rationalism and dogmatic absolutism further discusses this concept of pluralism. There is a ground between the certainty of rationalism and post-modern relativism, which he deals with, under four distinct headings:

- Legitimate Diversity

- Restrained Dissonance

- Acquiescence in Difference

- Respect for the Autonomy of Others

Rescher's views equate with those of Kekes in seeking the middle ground and dismiss the concept of mere tolerance of difference in return for a respect for autonomy. This is an interesting point for those who are drawing up Guidelines for Intercultural Education in Ireland who still seem to be pre-occupied with the notion of tolerance as an acceptable yardstick. In contrast the celebration of difference, as opposed to its mere toleration is a key focus of the Educate Together ethos.

Pluralism became a part of the education agenda in Ireland in the 90's when the then President of Dublin City University Danny O'Hare initiated the Centre for Pluralism in Education. Two conferences were held which brought together a wide range of people both from the political and educational spheres who presented a series of well-researched arguments for a pluralist approach to the emerging role of cultural

diversity in Ireland. Key respondents explored a range of pluralist concerns which included education for diversity; human rights and the legal issues raised by diversity; ethnicity and identity; the promotion of diversity and examples of best practice from South Africa, England, Canada and the Netherlands. The second conference explored these issues from an Irish perspective. Pluralism was a foreign and alien term to many just a mere ten years ago and the Pluralism in Education initiative explored it from a range of realities including 'race, religion, language, culture, age, gender and minorities.' (Coolahan, P286) The question of tolerance was discussed at length at the first of the Pluralism Conferences. Tolerance was described as a baseline approach; with echoes of 'putting up with' and the term 'openness' was accepted as the preferred option. Yet, we still persist in using the term today in Irish education and several respondents used the term during my work.

Two other interesting approaches to pluralism emerged from workshops at the first Pluralism Conference. Neil McGurk, Principal of Sacred Heart, College in South Africa, (p131-132) one of the first schools to open its doors to all races following the Soweto student uprising in 1976 introduced the terms **'inculturation'** and **'interculturation'**.

> *In theological circles, the idea of inculturation has been used to describe the honest, serious attempt to enhance the culture of indigenous communities in the adaptation of the church as an institution in its mission of evangelisation. We have come to understand the process of inculturation as a more inclusive reality applicable to all the moments, which constitute the cultural reality of a community……………*
> *The added dimension of an inherently pluralistic society………the Rainbow Nation…emphasises the importance of Interculturation as a recognisable process of forging a unity in diversity.*

McGurk's exploration of these two concepts examines the role of values, both religious and moral and how these can be used to bring together dialectic interplay with the political and economic order in order to bring about distributive justice. His

emphasis on the interplay of these key elements has strong resonance in the Ireland of today as we struggle to come to terms with a more multicultural and multidenominational approach to life. He writes of what he terms the 'analogical' approach to culture, which looks for uniting values. Through such an analogy, students can come to a realisation of their own identity in terms of an understanding of other cultures. Equally, through interculturation the student can make her way into other cultures and faiths and then return to her own culture with a new and enlightened range of insights. At the core of this understanding is the recognition of a range of higher order values, which are held in common by all cultures. The philosophy underpinning "Learn Together: An Ethical Curriculum for Educate Together Schools", which is outlined in Chapter 8, is strongly resonant of McGurk's concepts. A multicultural society can be created within a school or a society, which creates a common culture or ethos, while respecting the range of cultures that exist within that setting.

McGurk's description of the curriculum as a learner-centred 'hermeneutical' in which students from diverse cultures and religions can explore their identities within the witness consciousness of others is an excellent argument for the use of culturally sensitive curricula to build communities of practice within a culture of common values and respect for difference. Other writers such as Rodger (1995) Banks (1997) and Garcia (1999) have looked at similar value based approaches to creating such cultures in schools in both the US and South America. There has also been much work conducted in Britain by educationalists such as Jarrett, (1991), Taylor, (1994) Robb, (1996 and 1998) and Haydon. (1997)

So where has the term 'pluralism' gone from the language of Irish education? The White Paper on Education published in 1995 identified pluralism as an underpinning principle in the formulation and evaluation of educational policy and practice. Yet when this concept of pluralism is explored a little further, it is clear that it refers in part to a plurality of education provision and sets any further policy developments squarely in the intellectual and cultural heritage of the past…the knowledge, beliefs, values and traditions transmitted through succeeding generations.' (P 6) Here again we find evidence of Bauman's notion of liquid modernity as the past is used to look to the future. The White Paper does stress that the democratic nature of our society requires education to embrace the diverse traditions, beliefs and values of its people. Four of the stated aims of education need to be looked at in greater detail. (P.10)

- To foster an understanding of and critical appreciation of the values-moral, spiritual, religious, social and cultural-which have been distinctive in shaping Irish society and which have traditionally been accorded respect in society

- To nurture a sense of personal identity, self-esteem and awareness of one's particular abilities, aptitudes and limitations, combined with a respect for the rights and beliefs of others

- To create tolerant, caring and politically aware members of society

- To ensure that Ireland's young acquire a keen awareness of their national and European heritage, coupled with awareness and a respect and care for the environment.

The first of these aims seems to echo the views expressed in the beginning of the document which pays a token lip service to pluralism, yet concentrates on those values which link us to a specific national identity. This may fit into McGurk's notion of inculturation or what has variously been described as the assimilation

model; an approach to culture which seeks to merge small ethnically and linguistically diverse communities into a single, dominant national institutional structure and culture. (Garcia, 1999 P. 377) It is in fact a leap of the imagination to ascribe the term assimilation to this approach, as there is no mention of anything other than the dominant culture. There is a case to be made for ascribing the second aim to a more multicultural approach. Here the emphasis is on individual identity combined with respect for others. Fanning (P.183) describes a range of multicultural approaches ranging from overt assimilation to strong multiculturalism. Citing the example of the Report of the Taskforce on the Travelling people in 1995, he concludes that much of what passes for multiculturalism is in fact a very weak form and is explained from the perspective of the dominant population who may perceive problems of ethnic groups as internally generated through inappropriate cultural, familial and community traditions. A strong multiculturalism would focus on transforming unequal social relations, shaping interactions between minority and dominant groups into egalitarian ones.

The third aim puts an emphasis on tolerance or base –line acceptance and again could fall either into the category of assimilation or weak multiculturalism. The fourth aim is a catch all one which focuses on the development of the democratic, environmentally aware citizen and does not appear to recognise the concept of diversity except from the perspective of our identity as Irish and European citizens with a duty to protect the environment.

The analysis of these aims serves to highlight the journey Ireland has undergone since 1995. In 1998 the Irish National Teachers Organisation published a report entitled, "The Challenge of Diversity: Education Support for Ethnic Minority Children". The

report identifies the need for intercultural programmes to address xenophobia and racism.

> *The monocultural education system in Ireland has to change in order to counteract racism and discrimination in schools. This is best achieved through the integration of intercultural education into the school curriculum. The INTO supports the view that intercultural education is the foremost strategy of schools against racism and xenophobia.*

INTO P35.

In 1999 the new primary curriculum was launched, the first real change in primary education since 1971. Unlike the White Paper, this curriculum specifically aims to enable the child to ' develop a respect for cultural difference, an appreciation of civic responsibility and an understanding of the social dimensions of life, past and present.' In 2001 at the World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa, Ireland made a commitment to develop a National Action Plan Against Racism. This plan also included education. In 2002 the Guidelines on Traveller Education in Primary Schools was launched, followed by a similar set of guidelines for 2nd Level schools in 2003. These guidelines referred specifically to interculturalism as the key to foster conditions conducive to pluralism; raise children's awareness of their own culture; develop respect for the lifestyles of others; enable children to make informed choices and to take action on issues of prejudice and discrimination and enable all children to articulate their cultural histories. There were strong echoes in these aims of the stated aims of many of the Core Curriculum programmes in Educate Together schools that had been in existence for over 25 years earlier. The recently published Guidelines on Intercultural Education in the Primary School (2005) build on the aims of the Guidelines on Traveller Education and specifically set out the rationale of the

Department of Education in their use of the term "intercultural". According to the guidelines (P.3)

> *The term interculturalism expresses a belief that we all become personally enriched by coming in contact with and experiencing other cultures, and that people of different cultures can and should be able to engage with each other and learn from each other. In Ireland the approach to cultural diversity is interculturalism.*

The Raxen3 Report of 2000 was explicit in its rationale for the intercultural approach to education. Interculturalism is described as an approach that implies the promotion of interaction, understanding and integration among and between the different cultures and ethnic groups on the principle that ethnic diversity can enrich society, without glossing over issues such as racism. (p52) The report recognises the importance of multiculturalism as an acknowledgement of diversity and a celebration of different cultures and the economic and social support needed for its integration into society. However it argues that multiculturalism is based on the premise that minorities need to change to fit in with the majority and smacks of the earlier assimilation approach. Multiculturalism is criticised on the basis that it operates on the level of toleration and better community relations rather than acknowledging the need to change the negative attitudes and practices of the majority population. The concept of interculturalism is widely advocated by the European Union in its policy statements and through specific programmes and for that reason all policy issues in Ireland now come under the remit of the intercultural banner. Noel Dempsey, the then Minister for Education gave a working definition of interculturalism, in his address to the National Conference Promoting Anti-Racism and Interculturalism, which I attended in Malahide in November 2002. In his speech he stated that interculturalism is:

Essentially about dialogue and interaction and tailoring of programmes to meet the specific needs of different target groups. It is about inclusion by design not as a default or an add-on. It challenges us to create more flexible and relevant education systems, not only for minority linguistic groups, but also for Travellers, people with disabilities and people in disadvantaged areas. It is about realising that one size does not fit all and that we must plan to welcome diversity and to cater for it and in doing so we will benefit in the process. It is also about promoting equality and providing positive actions to combat the barriers groups face in accessing and benefiting from education.

The intercultural approach is a synthesis of the learning from multicultural and anti-racist education approaches, which were in use in the US in particular, and also in Britain since the 1960's. According to the Department of Education and Science, the role of education should not just reflect society but also influence its development and Irish education has a key role to play in the development of an intercultural society. There are strong parallels between the Minister's speech, the Guidelines on Intercultural Education and the Learn Together Ethical Curriculum. However, it would appear that one key component is missing and that is the need to address the multidenominational aspect of a changing Ireland. While the Minister's speech refers to the need for dialogue and interaction in the whole area of diversity, it seems odd that in a work of such importance as the Guidelines produced by the NCCA and the Department of Education and Science, there is only one short section on Religious Education. (P.86) In effect the writers, while noting the freedom of choice to choose forms of religious expression and acknowledging the importance of *tolerance* towards the practices, culture and lifestyle of a range of religious expressions and convictions, do not engage with the issues of catering for religious diversity from the perspective of intercultural education.

The Education Act (1998) places the responsibility on individual church authorities to provide curricula in religion, which reflect their ethos. This is used as a rationale for the non- inclusion of audits of religious education curricula in the Guidelines. However, the Council of Europe, at its meeting of European Ministers of Education in Athens on November 10th –12th 2003, adopted a ' declaration on intercultural education in the new European context'. The Council placed a strong significance on ' increasing awareness of the inclusion of interfaith dialogue as an element of intercultural education through the analysis of religion as a cultural phenomenon as well as the exchange of ideas and examples of good practice among practitioners.' This issue will be revisited in the Conclusions section of this research. However it does serve to highlight the difficulties that exist in a system where the state cannot engage on an issue of such key importance. Nor can it debate the equally contentious issue of how interculturalism can truly work in an ethos which by law in most cases is denominational and where the religious foundations of such an ethos must permeate the whole spirit of the school. It is also noteworthy that Educate Together, with its accumulated experience in the field of democratic, inclusive, intercultural education was not consulted in drawing up these guidelines, despite the call from the Council of Europe to engage with educators and educational researchers with experience of stimulating interfaith dialogue and identifying models of best practice in the field. It would appear that an opportunity has been lost to widen the debate in relation to cultural diversity and how it can be explored through the Irish Primary School curriculum and to question some of the issues that have been raised in this debate by the Education Act of 1998.

The other question that still remains unanswered is how can Ireland use the best possible approach to pursuing issues of cultural diversity? Fanning (2002) argues

that, interculturalism has a contested meaning within equality policy discourse. It was adopted by the Travellers' organisations as a means of addressing cultural assimilation. In particular it was used in the education context as a means of addressing the shortcomings of multicultural education through putting the focus on ethnic and cultural activities that acknowledged power and racism as major obstacles in the educational system and through targeting everybody in education whether or not they operated in a multi-ethnic milieu. (O'Connell, 1994 p 59). Fanning believes that interculturalism that does not address issues of justice and human rights and does not contest structural inequalities on the basis of ethnicity in Irish society is another form of weak multiculturalism.

The argument may rest in favour of a strong multiculturalism that offers the five dimensions of education as put forward by Banks (1995) Banks described the optimum conditions for a strong multicultural education system that have many comparisons with the Educate Together sector. *Content Integration* describes the range of examples from different cultures that are used by teachers to illustrate key concepts. *The knowledge construction process* uses a range of methods to help students understand, investigate and explore how bias and implicit cultural assumptions influence the construction of knowledge. *The prejudice reduction* dimension is a method to help students develop more democratic values and attitudes by challenging and exploring racist attitudes. *Equity pedagogy* is used by teachers to create equal-status situations in the classroom. *An empowering school culture and social structure* conceptualises the school as a social system, which is based on rights and respect for all members of the school community. Many of these dimensions are present in the Guidelines on Intercultural Education. The issue still remains as to whether these conditions can be realised in school settings, which may exclude a large

proportion of students who may not form part of the dominant denominational ethos. In a society where 98% of schools fit into this category, it may be difficult to realise the aspirations of the Intercultural Guidelines. The research will indicate that the conditions as outlined, can be realised in an Educate Together ethos as demonstrated by the work conducted with an individual school. (Chapter 6)

4.7 Other Voices

While much of the discussion in Ireland has centred on approaches to dealing with diversity in a changing cultural climate, it is interesting to examine how the debate has developed in the rest of the world. The US has been at the forefront in developing a range of responses to the issues of diversity. As can be seen in the work of educationalists such as Banks and Garcia, the emphasis seems to favour a strong multicultural approach. There are however discordant voices that dispute the efficacy of the efforts to create a multicultural society. To the forefront of this group is Richard Bernstein. He quotes from the French writer Robespierre in the opening of his book, Dictatorship of Virtue. Robospierre described terror as "naught but prompt, severe, inflexible justice; it is therefore an emanation of virtue". Sticking to the French theme, he refers to the French word "derapage" which literally translates as skid or slide. It was used in France at the time of The Great Revolution of 1789 when as Bernstein describes it, the enlightened universalism of the Declaration of the Rights of Man gave way to the Committee of Public Safety and Terror. He states that the US is threatened by a narrow orthodoxy imposed by the very values that are supposed to define a pluralist society. (P.3-4)

I am speaking of multiculturalism, which is the term that has emerged to encompass a host of activities, a number of different ways of seeing things………… Certain other words are being used as well, most common among them being "inclusion" and

"diversity" and these too are rhetorical crystallisations of the, as it were, diverse tendencies arising from the multicultural sensibility.

Bernstein argues that a trawl of the electronic data bank shows 40 articles relating to multiculturalism in 1981. By 1992 this figure had risen to 2,000, a fifty-fold increase in 11 years and that this increase did not represent a sudden, dramatic change in American cultural make-up. He argues that the term multicultural is misleading and that it neither relates to multiplicity of races or to culture. Like France during the Revolution, Bernstein believes that multiculturalism is a bureaucracy of the good, demanding even greater commitment from a recalcitrant nation. 'It is a universe of ambitious good intentions that has veered off the high road of respect for difference and plunged into a foggy chasm of dogmatic assertions, wishful thinking and pseudoscientific pronouncements about race and colour.' (p8) While Bernstein's views are extreme, they do awaken us to movements, which can, if not properly thought out and implemented, lead to greater disunity and an expanded concept of moral and cultural relativism. Here again, Bernstein returns to the value of respect as key to understanding of difference, respect for self and respect for others.

The voice of Jagdish Gundera, (2000) co-founder of the International Association of Intercultural Education, is one of the most prominent in the field of Interculturalism in Britain. Gundera's concept of interculturalism is based on the belief that diversity is measured, not just on race, but also on language, religion, territory and class. Membership of the model of the modern unitary state, according to Gundera, is predicated on the fact that its members can operate within certain linguistic patterns and can accept the concept of a common history, religion and set of cultural practices.

Religion, if present, should be one that if not believed in, is accepted by all.   In terms of current education in Britain, Gundera (p.72) is not in favour of segregated schools.

Separate schools or curricula do not assist in bringing about intercultural understanding. They reinforce misunderstandings, and by negating the children's knowledge and educational potential, they negate the whole concept of intercultural learning. What is important within our complex societies is to develop cross cultural negotiation and learning, and to develop common and shared core values. A rigorously selective but intercultural curriculum, which may necessitate a reappraisal of what is the relevant canon of knowledge for children, can play a critical role in helping shape such values. The curriculum/classroom do not work in isolation from the community.

Gundera draws attention to the complex role of schools in developing a common curriculum based on a shared value system, which will subsequently inform the functioning of a civil society.   The rise of narrow identities has become a problem in Britain and indeed there is evidence of a rise in polarised communities within Ireland also. It is imperative to create spaces where parents and the community can have a "Voice" in education and this aim has been realised by Educate Together schools within Ireland. The creation of a school ethos, which is truly inclusive across moral, spiritual, cultural and social values, is acknowledged by Gundera, (P.79) as essential to creating a sense of *belongingness* which transcends narrow definitions of identity and constructs a more pluralist understanding of life.   Gundera deals in depth with the issues raised around the provision of education, which respects religious diversity and uses example from across the wide spectrum of Asian countries. Acknowledging the difficulties posed in multicultural Asian institutions for believers of one faith to learn about other faiths or non-believers to learn about believers, he advocates a Kuhnian approach.

What is required is not merely religious instruction but a complex Kuhnian understanding of teaching about faiths and the knowledge derived from them. This can provide a way forward, out of the notion of a sterile, formal and strict division between secular and religious intellectual discourse. Inevitably it poses complex issues not just for educational policy but also for curricular reform and teacher education. (P.167-168)

4.8 Whose Values and What is Valued?

The work of Gundara in particular raises many issues, which have emerged during the research process and will be dealt with in detail in this work. Among these is the relevance of values; the search for common values; the call for education which recognises and respects multiple voices within the school community; the search for the Kuhnian concept of the *humanum*, the provision of intercultural curricula and the training needs of teachers in attempting to design, deliver and maintain what might be termed an equity pedagogy in an empowering school culture. Banks, (1995) McLaughlin, (1995) and Halstead (1996) emphasise the need for school communities to reflect on their values and to voice their values. Halstead (p4) identifies four reasons for a new approach to values in schools:

- Growing cultural diversity

- A growing gulf between government and teachers' values

- The perceived moral decline among young people

- The determination of governments to uphold certain values, for example by subjecting the contribution of schools to the spiritual and moral development of children to regular inspection.

While this summation of values relates specifically to British schools, there are many echoes to be found in Irish education also. Halstead poses a range of questions, which make us think about values in education at a deep level. He raises the issues of public

and private values, the concept of shared values, the reinforcement of existing values, which may disadvantage religious or cultural groups, the concept of absolute values or merely changing and relative ones and the transmission of values. This final point on whether schools should instil values or teach children to explore values is a debate that has not yet taken place in Irish Education.

Attempts to define the term values have ranged from things that are considered good such as beauty, truth, love, honesty and respect to what might be termed to personal and social values. One definition, which has found approval, is that of Raths, Harmin and Simon. (1966,P28) ' Values are beliefs, attitudes or feelings that individuals are proud of, willing to publicly proclaim and have been chosen from alternatives without persuasion and are acted on.' This definition contains the concept of choice and the living out of the values in daily life. Mary Warnock (1996 P. 49) attempts to analyse values from the post-modern perspective that everything is relative and located in a specific narrative and argues that within our classrooms there is a high degree of moral consensus. Within such settings she claims that teachers cannot remain morally neutral. So while not advocating the concept of absolutism with regard to values, she believes that 'schools are the breeding ground of the individual conscience, simply because it is more than a home, a society, and it is within this society that the shared values which inform the conscience are predominantly exercised.' Warnock's statement locates the school at the centre of the values debate and also raises the notion of shared or common values. Margaret Reynolds (2001) locates Warnock's approach in the non-rational domain and contends that such an approach demands commitment to a set of core moral values from teachers and that this commitment is transmitted to students through practical experience. This approach would appear to have some merit, especially in the study of equitable school ethos and culture.

However, the onus on teachers to model moral values is something that requires much study on the part of schools and teachers' unions. The rationalist approach on the other hand based on the modern liberal theory of John Rawls is based on the encouragement of students to make rational decisions through a focus on moral dilemmas. Much of the theory underpinning such an approach to values is based on the developmental approach to moral decision making as advocated by Kohlberg. (1981). This approach locates the justice as the highest form of development. The work of Gilligan, (1982) a research colleague of Kohlberg, disputes this approach and locates caring as the highest form of development. Dismissed by many as a feminist perspective, her research would appear to indicate a predominant focus in human thinking towards either justice or caring. Therefore the rationalist approach, to be understood in a school setting, needs to encompass both concepts. In practice, it puts the role of the teacher as facilitator and is premised on values such as freedom, respect and equality. Reynolds (p. 23) puts forward a third approach, which is located in the recognition of common values and the habituation of students into these values through critical reflection

> *It would seem that schools need to agree on what their values are and then become centres of reflection where teachers and other colleagues reflect on the values which they hold and which they think are important to human flourishing. This view takes into account the individual but contextualises personhood within cultural, moral, social and political life in society. It acknowledges the specific nature of being human and the **telos** or purposes which are appropriate for us as human beings.*

From an Irish perspective there is a lack of familiarity with the concept of discussing values outside the arena of religious education. Research conducted in 1998 as part of an international study into values in education, (Stephenson et al, pp61-95) tested the approach to values in education against four paradigms: religious monopolism, moral universalism, consensus pluralism and moral vacuum. The research found that

religious values and general social values have traditionally been seen as synonymous in Ireland. However there was strong evidence to support the notion that Religious Education is taught with an emphasis on universal human values such as honesty, fairness and care for others. This would suggest an emphasis on moral universalism but there was also strong support for consensus pluralism through an emphasis on tolerance, respect and democracy. Specifically in Educate Together schools, a total of 34 values were identified with respect and the development of self-esteem seen as the key values. (Mulcahy, 2000; pp83-95) The identified values were categorised under the headings of Personal, Moral, Political, Educational and Environmental. The categories mirror the findings of the Values in European Education Project (VEEP) conducted in 1993. The VEEP findings indicate that values are located in many aspects of school life and include moral, social, national, cultural, religious, aesthetic and ethical values that are located in a whole school ethos and not just in individual curricula. The findings from this research led to the recommendation to schools that values should be encouraged that enhance 'the humanistic and international dimension of education.' (Barr: 1994:p9)   Research conducted by the Marino Institute of Education (1999) into school culture and ethos, asked respondents to rate a range of ten values in terms of actual values and espoused values. This research is somewhat skewed because the values have been pre-selected thus prohibiting the respondents from including a wide range of values. Primary students rated the ethic of hard work as the highest actual school value and also their preferred value. Teachers selected the development of a well- rounded person as their ideal value while they believed that academic achievement was the actual value, which was most important in schools. Parents also selected the development of a well-rounded individual as their ideal value while they believed that academic achievement was the

actual value most emphasised in schools. The value of social justice ranked very close to the bottom among parents in Northern Ireland and the Republic alike, though respect was ranked in second place. (pp36-39) Among primary students surveyed, social justice was ranked last as an actual value and an espoused value. The findings of this research are hard to analyse because of the chosen set of values, the disparity between the values selected, for example sport and music in the same list as Christian Values and the absence of a rationale for the selection of these specific values. It does however pose the question of the commonality of values that was raised by Reynolds' concept of finding a link between rationalist and non-rationalist approaches to values in education.

There has been much debate within education as to whether it is possible to locate a set of common or core values. The idea that there is a core of agreed values which can be accepted by everyone is anathema to many who believe there is no set of moral principles which are valid universally. (Reynolds, P.2) This relativist position partly reflects the view that different cultures have different traditions and sets of values, which are held to be acceptable or true. James Jarrett, (1991) presents two sets of values identified by De Witt Parker (1931) and Paul Taylor, (1961.) These typologies do overlap in the realms of the moral, the aesthetic, the intellectual and the religious. Jarret himself identifies a range of educational values such as the development of humane feelings, aesthetic taste, an active concern for the rights and duties of a citizen, participation in family life and appropriate attitudes towards nation, community, work and friendship. (P13-17) The concept of disvalue is also introduced by Jarrett to explain the need to introduce an ethos, which reflects on the reduction of pain, ugliness and impoverishment in the world.

In the discussion on pluralism, reference was made to the work of Neil McGurk in a school in South Africa (1996). He highlights the need to engage in the dialectical interplay of values in order to bring about distributive justice. His concept of the analogical approach, where children explore their own identities through an exploration of the cultures of others is an attempt to reach an agreement on a set of core values for a school community. This concept seems to missing from the Marino research. Alex Rodger explored this idea further with a school community in Buenos Aires in 1995. Rodger supported a leading school in the city in reaching consensus on a set of values through an exploration of The Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have done unto you. Using this concept as a starting point the school community identified a common set of values, namely:

- Integrity

- Respect

- Responsibility

- Friendliness

- Commitment

- Tolerance

- Fairness

- Care.

Rodger admits that it would be naïve to assume that values which people claim as their central conviction are always those that govern decision and action. (Rodger: P9) However, it is clear that there is a school of thought that believes that values are more than personal preferences and that moral judgement is much more than personal opinion. (MacIntyre, 1982)

While the concept of values in education has become part of the language of education in recent years, there is still little agreement on what is involved in the debate. Hill, (1991:p3) described much of the thinking around values in education as 'a vague and woolly notion' and there has been little debate on how to clear up this confusion. It is important to clarify from the outset the difference between Values Education and Values in Education. Research conducted by Montgomery and Smith (1997) in Northern Ireland Schools identified an ideological rift between these two approaches to values. Writers such as Barr, (1995) and Pickard (1995) describe Values Education, as a form of Moral Education, while Values in Education was associated with a form of Moral Inquiry by most of the interviewees in the Northern Ireland research. Similarly, in my previous research (Mulcahy, 1998) there was a tendency on the part of the interviewees to equate values in education with things like the school ethos and culture and the Hidden Curriculum. However there was a concern that values should be articulated and made more public. (Mulcahy, 2000: P94) It is interesting to note at this point that the Marino research on values was used to arrive at a definition of ethos. Again, respondents were presented with a range of definitions and 27% chose the definition that 'ethos is the expression of the school's core values which determine its character and guide the daily life and direction of the school.' (P 40) However, the research also seemed to suggest that many parents and students do not see themselves as contributing to the school ethos. The co-relation between all three pieces of research is the need to provide space for teachers to articulate their values. This increased emphasis on values and their relationship to ethos would appear to necessitate a change in emphasis in teacher education to allow room for such exploration and reflection. Similar views on the need for teacher

education in the area of values are expressed by Bartolme (1994) and by Reynolds, (2001).

In Britain, Halstead and Taylor (2000) attempted to review the most recent research into values in education. They summarised the most important questions and issues that arise in the values research field. These include:

- The Relativism and Absolutism Debate: Do you young people take their cue from society about moral issues or are there absolute values?

- Consensus and Pluralism: Is it possible to have consensus on values in a pluralist society?

- Whose Values? What Values? Whose values should influence values in education and moral education and do values reflect the status quo?

- Gender and Moral Orientation: Are there gender differences with regard to values?

- Cognition, Emotion and Action: Is moral education a matter of cognitive development, or is a matter of developing attitudes and values and is there a link between cognition, emotion and action?

- Teachers' Values: Do teachers share the same values as students, are there common values and are teachers moral agents? What guidance and support do teachers need and are there ethical dilemmas that teachers confront?

- Aims and Outcomes: Should schools instil values or teach children to explore values?

- Parents and Schools: What do schools know of parents' wishes for values in education?

Many of the issues raised by Halstead have indeed been identified in the literature and there are no simple answers to the questions raised. What is important to note is the

consistency of issues around philosophy, methodology, co-operative value inquiry and the identification of common values which identity the ethos and spirit of a school community. There would also appear to be widespread agreement that moral values cannot be ignored in the values debate and are a vital component in the approach adopted by schools to the address values in education. The inclusion of moral development as one of the key themes of the Learn Together Curriculum, which is described in this research is an acknowledgement by Educate Together of the importance of the school in the development of informed students who can engage with moral issues but who are also influenced by the moral and rights based approach to education which underpins the sector.

4.9 Conclusions

This literature review has presented a picture of Ireland at the start of the 21st Century. It is a time of unprecedented wealth for our country; a time when the pattern of emigration has been reversed; a time when we are challenged to grapple with the removal of our comfort zone in regard to our Irish identity; a time when we are challenged by the increasingly multicultural nature of our society; a time when we have to match action with rhetoric in regard to our involvement as Europeans in an expanded EU. It is a time of challenge for our government and our government departments as they try to ensure that racial tensions do not become problems and that policies are put in place to educate our society on interculturalism. The semantics debate on assimilation, strong and weak multiculturalism and the European language of interculturalsm, while very important at many levels, is not relevant to the day to day integration of other races into Ireland.

Education has been identified as one of the important vehicles for change through its role as a major social institution in our country. Surprisingly, there has been little debate in academic circles on the impact of increased diversity and the changing nature of our involvement with organised religion. Kathleen Lynch (2004: p. 3) believes that the largely denominational nature of our education system may in part be responsible for the paucity of research in the field of religious diversity in particular. The state approach to the creation of a form of cultural homogeneity (Coolahan, 1981) also ensured that difference was to all intents, obliterated and ignored. The problems faced by the Dalkey School Project in 1975 when it began the process of setting up the first multidenominational school in the country indicate the strong link between Church and State and their efforts to ensure that the concept of a totally monocultural approach to education was maintained.

More recently in Irish education the debate has begun to focus on the reality of multiculturalism in our society. There is much discussion on the role of values in education and whether these values can ensure an inclusive ethos where all children learn to respect and understand their different cultures in a school setting where values are understood and articulated. There has once again been a paucity of research in this area. There can also be some criticisms levied at the nature of the research, which is prescriptive rather than exploratory. However, the work of the Ethos and Culture Conference in 2000 and the subsequent ethos conferences hosted by Educate Together in 2001, 2002 and 2003 have served to broaden the debate on the need to bring issues of identity, values, culture, ethos and diversity into the public forum. There have been a number of legislative issues that have also impacted on how schools need to become more inclusive. These include the Education Act (1998) the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the Employment Equality Acts of 1998 and 2004

and the Equal Status Acts of 2000 and 2004. Schools are being supported in their efforts to bring about change by the Whole School Planning Officers located throughout the country. However, some key issues remain unresolved. Foremost among these are the exemptions in the Employment Equality Acts, which allows schools to positively discriminate on religious grounds in order to maintain the religious ethos of the school. There is also the issue of reserved places for trainee teachers from particular religious backgrounds in order to ensure a supply of teachers from that faith. The Equal Status Act can also positively discriminate in favour of a pupil from a particular faith background in order to ensure that the denominational ethos of the school is upheld. The Deeds of Variation of Primary schools obliges schools to articulate how they intend to uphold their particular ethos at management level, to ensure that there is no threat or impediment that would have a detrimental impact on the ethos and to at all times foster the ethos of their particular faith. There is a clear problem, as voiced by O'Loinsigh (2000), Rowe, (2000) and Lynch (2004), on how such an approach can in reality be truly intercultural.

> *What learners require for human development in the knowledge society is a*
> *set of educational experiences set in an ethos that provides them with the*
> *capability to see connections, to move with ease between different contexts, to*
> *have the skills to compare, critique, connect disparate items in a world that is*
> *always changing and often not in ways over which the individual can have any*
> *effect.*
>
> (Barr, 2000: p133)

Barr's challenge is one that will find resonance in many Irish schools today. The challenge for Irish education is to provide a truly inclusive culture that supports diversity, challenges racism and develops caring, concerned students who will engage with the inevitable issues that arise in such a fluid environment. The literature would

suggest that positive progress has been and that we can benefit from similar debates in other societies that have made this transition or more correctly are more advanced on the path of liquid modernity. It also highlights some of the anomalies that may impact on the creation of inclusive schools and set the scene for a further and more in-depth examination of the role of Educate Together schools in a more pluralist Ireland.

Chapter 5 Methodology and Methods

To imagine is to generate images, to see is to experience qualities. Both the content of the world and the content of our imagination are dependent upon qualities. It is through the perception of qualities-not only those we can see, but those we experience through any of our senses-that our consciousness comes into being.

Elliot Eisner: 1998

5.1 Introduction

I have chosen the quote by Elliot Eisner to begin this chapter on Research Methodology and Methods as it captures for me the essence of the task that faces a researcher in the field of education as they attempt to take the reader through the nuances and subtleties that constitute the research journey in all its multifaceted glory. Research begins with a hunch or an idea that initially may inhabit the world of our imagination. For me that hunch came at the conclusion of a thesis on Values in Multidenominational schools. The research left me with a number of unanswered questions and like Pandora's Box these questions led on to more and yet more. As Eisner highlights, the journey can begin in the soul or the imagination and through prolonged engagement, through observing qualities, interpreting their significance and appraising their value, what we term rather loosely as research begins to emerge. However, one rather important aspect of the research still remains and that is the transformation of the 'content of our consciousness' as Eisner describes the action of bringing the research into the public domain. It is only when the research has been shared with a public that it can truly be termed research. The audience serves a dual purpose. They are the sense makers who give validity to the research but they are

also the blank canvas on which the researcher practices his or her art of perception and articulation. In order to allow the audience to fully participate and understand the research process and to critically participate in the research, the researcher must present as complete a picture as possible so that the critic/audience can fully appreciate and critically evaluate the canvas or text that is the final research story. Without this research audience a vital component of the research is missing. The researcher must describe, interpret and evaluate the research and guide the audience towards the development of emerging themes or findings, which give credence and validity to the initial hunch that led to the research in the first instance.

If we conceive of the finished piece of research as an art form, then the initial chapters of this report form the backdrop or the canvas and set the scene for the drama that is the research itself, brought to life by the many Voices who took part in the unfolding research. Along the journey the qualities referred to by Eisner have been experienced, perceived, refined, described and new Knowledge generated. The critical reader will begin with a text and hopefully end with an understanding of the journey. As the researcher I move in a different direction. For me, what began as a journey of discovery ended in a text. This *active reflexivity* (Mason: 2005:p: 4) underpins the entirety of this research thesis, where from the outset I was engaged in the dual role of author and critic. The critical function now moves to the reader. This chapter on methodology and methods provides an opportunity to justify the selection of a particular research genre used in the work, to locate the genre in the context of the history of research methodology over the decades, to argue for an approach that respects both of the major research traditions, to offer a rationale for the choice of a qualitative approach to the work and to critically examine the role of the researcher/

creator in the research drama or story. The chapter provides an opportunity to share with the audience the fundamental issues that underpin the choice of a particular approach: issues such as the ethics of the research, access to the key players, the positionality of the researcher, (Sikes: p18: 2002), the ontological and epistemological assumptions concerning the search for knowledge and the ethical stance adopted in order to truly represent the Voices of the actors. The chapter will also allow the audience to begin an examination of the tools used in order to sculpt and fashion the research drama and the theoretical frameworks or value systems that influence interpretation and analysis of the emerging research.

5.2 Changing Paradigms

In 1962, Thomas Kuhn in his work, "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions", put forward the proposition that normal scientific research takes place in a specific framework and is predicated on the assumption that the scientific community knows what the world is like. Normal science according to Kuhn, can suppresses fundamental novelties because they are subversive of its basic commitments. Occcassionally, a violent revolution will rock the research field and a new concept or worldview is created. A shift in professional commitments to shared assumptions takes place when an anomaly subverts the existing traditions of scientific practice. These shifts are what Kuhn describes as 'scientific revolutions.' New assumptions, or 'paradigm shifts', require the reconstruction of prior assumptions and the re-evaluation of prior facts and can be resisted by the established community. Paradigms can be determined by political motives, by practical motives, and by professions anxious to jealously guard their own approaches to the generation of new knowledge within the research community. A paradigm according to Kuhn can transform a group into a profession or at least a discipline and guide the research of

that group. A paradigm shift can emerge when an encounter with an anomaly results in new and exciting discoveries or when existing theories fail to solve the problems defined by that theory. It can begin with the blurring of a paradigm and the consequent loosening of the rules for normal research. The new paradigm that emerges creates a very different universe of discourse.

In the battle that is sometimes dubbed the Paradigm Wars, it is at times easy to lose sight of the fact that the two key traditions, the Positivist and Interpretative Research Traditions, are methodologies or processes for uncovering truths. The table below represents an attempt to compare two approaches to educational research from the perspectives of both traditions. (Opie: 2004:8) However, as Wellington (1996:7) reminds us: 'Research can be messy, frustrating and unpredictable'. To hope that it can fit neatly into either of the positions represented below is to ask for the impossible. The chart does however serve to illustrate some of the key differences between the two traditions and as Opie states, 'actual research lies somewhere along the continuum between these two extremes'.

Fig. 5: Research Traditions

Quantitative Research Techniques	Qualitative Research Techniques
Objective	*Subjective*
Experimental	*Naturalistic*
Pure	*Applied*
Outsider research	*Insider Research*
Statistical Analysis	*Non-Statistical Analysis*
Impersonal	*Individual*
Certain Assumptions taken for granted	*Taken for granted assumptions investigated*
Macro Concepts: society, institutions, norms, roles, positions	*Micro Concepts: individuals, personal constructs, negotiated meaning*
Generalise from specific	*Interpret the specific*

↩--↪

Continuum

119

Writers such as Goetz and Le Compte (1984), Lincoln and Guba, (1994) Reichardt and Rallis, (1994) May, (1997), May (2002) Mertens (1998) and Opie, (2004) make reference to merging paradigms and building bridges between the many research approaches. Such bridge building, according to May, fuses the twin aims of *'how'* (understanding) and *'why'* (explanation) in social research. Such openness can liberate many researchers who slavishly adhere to one paradigm regardless of whether the elements of the paradigm are suitable for the research issue. There are those within the research community who are firmly entrenched in one camp or the other. Margaret Anzul (1993: P218) writing of the possibility of a marriage between the two paradigms is unmoved.

> *We hold that in terms of philosophic bases and their implications, such a marriage is impossible. But we are not now discussing marriages. We are discussing tolerance for our neighbour and the benefits of occasionally exchanging a tool over the back garden.*

While debate on the issue of the twin paradigms is a healthy and vital part of the vibrancy of intellectual discourse there is a danger that methodological discussions can become trapped within descending, interpretive circles. (May: 2002: 3)

5.3 Critical Influences and Choosing a Methodology

The work of Louis Cohen and Lawrence Manion (2000: pp1-41) provides an excellent overview on the twin traditions of positivist and anti-positivist research methodologies in education and examines the relevance of both traditions within an educational research setting. They identify the three means by which humans seek to

come to terms with their environment and to understand the nature of the phenomena that our environment presents: *experience, reasoning and research.* These elements are by no means mutually exclusive. Failure to make sense of a situation through one approach may in turn lead to an application of one or both of the remaining approaches in order to gain knowledge. In our search for truth we resort to our own personal experience and the experience of others through the ages. We make use of Aristotelian deductive reasoning and Baconian inductive reasoning through the testing of hypotheses and we utilise research methodology in order to find answers. However, in the application of research methodology divergent views have emerged. As outlined in the previous section, the really interesting aspect of the search for truth or more correctly truths lies in our interpretation of social reality. The two conceptions of the social world from a research perspective are based on four sets of assumptions.

Burell and Morgan, (1979) identified these assumptions from four key perspectives:

- The Ontological

- The Epistemological

- The Relationship between human nature and its environment

- The Methodological.

Our response as researchers to each of these assumptions will determine our approach to our research and identify what Maykut and Morehouse (1994) refer to as the postulates of the research design.

The **ontological** assumption is concerned with the nature of things and in particular the nature of the social world. It is concerned with whether a person sees social reality, or aspects of the social world as external, independent, given and objectively real, or as a social construct, a subjective experience and a result of human thought as

expressed through language. (Sikes: 20) Put more simply, the ontological assumption determines whether we take an objective or subjective stance in our research. When philosophers refer to the Ontological Question they are looking at the nominalist –realist debate, which situates our worldview on how we view reality, either as subjective, and linked to individual consciousness or as social reality external to the individual and imposed from without. Jennifer Mason (2005: 14) suggests that the manner in which we answer the ontological question is a fundamental one, which takes place almost subconsciously and comes even before we have identified a research topic. She also urges the researcher to familiarise herself with her ontological view of the social world which should be established and understood, 'rather than an obvious and universal truth which can be taken for granted.'

From my perspective as a researcher in the field of education, working with children, teachers, parents and the Educate Together organisation, it was clear that my ontological stance was firmly rooted in the nominalist, subjective approach to the research question and would necessitate the collection of subjective accounts and perceptions that might explain how the world is experienced and constructed by the actors who live and work in the Educate Together setting. It would also be important to seek out how others viewed this specific setting and to use methodologies and methods, which accorded with my ontological position.

If **Epistemology** is the theory of knowledge, then epistemological assumptions concern the nature of knowledge, the acquisition of knowledge and how this knowledge can be communicated to others. The aim of epistemology as first conceived by the Greeks was to achieve true and certain knowledge. This was what

differentiated knowledge from belief, episteme from *doxa*. Knowledge was oriented towards discovery and procedural objectivity involved the use of methods, which eliminated the scope for personal judgement in the conduct and description of research. The epistemological stance adopted by a researcher determines to a great extent which approach to research will be adopted. Central to the epistemology is the search for truth, the extent that claims are made about truth and the nature of the representation of this truth, be it local or universal. However, if we adopt a post-modernist stance, claims for truth are relative and absolute truth is unattainable. Griffith (1998:33) contends that the epistemological aspect of research is the focus of many disagreements among the research community. Burrell and Morgan quoted in Cohen and Manion, (2000: 6) locate the main focus of disagreement around:

> *Whether it is possible to identify and communicate the nature of knowledge as being hard, real and capable of being transmitted in a tangible form, or whether knowledge is of a softer, more subjective, spiritual or even transcendental kind, based on experience and insight of a unique and essentially personal nature.*

If, as a research community, we adopt a stance that knowledge is real, objective, measurable and quantifiable, then our role in the research is that of observer and we become aligned to the methods of natural science. If on the other hand we see knowledge as experiential, personal and subjective, we need to find ways of generating knowledge that places considerable emphasis on the accounts given by informants, either through interview or focus group or in some instances questionnaires. In my research described here, I was committed to a episteme that allowed me to take different perspectives, to see the world through many lenses, to shift focus as the different perspectives emerged and to be intellectually and theoretically versatile and eclectic in my handling and reporting of different Voices rather than reducing all of this richness to a single Voice: my own. Thus my

ontological and epistemological stance, were firmly in the qualitative domain. However, to conceive of the two paradigms as two completely distinct entities is somewhat problematic for me. What we know about the world is always a result of inquiry and is mediated by the mind. If this is so can we ever be truly objective or for that matter, truly subjective. Mindful of Opie's advice that research lies somewhere along the continuum between the objective and subjective approach, I was impressed by Eisner's merging of the two through the locus of experience. (Fig. 6) This idea conceived by John Dewey in 1938 suggests that through the locus of human experience we mediate our experiences and that this mediation is a product of the interaction of two postulated entities, the objective and the subjective.

Fig. 6: Merging the Locus of Experience

Objective

$\bigcirc$

Transactive ➲ ➾ *The Locus of Experience*

$\bigcirc$

Subjective

This approach owes much to Semiotics and the theory of how we mediate the communication process based on our objective and subjective selves. By recognising that, neither pure objectivity, nor pure subjectivity is possible and that all experience derived from the research text is transactive, we can apply other checks to our qualitative texts in order to arrive at a local truth. Eisner defines these tests as *coherence, consensus* and *instrumental utility*. (Eisner: 1998:53) In essence, coherence refers to the tightness of the argument presented in the research or what Goodman (1978) referred to as the rightness of the research. Consensus refers to levels of agreement around the research process. This can be achieved through

structural corroboration, such as the use of multiple data sources that help to paint a complete picture for the reader. The final test put forward by Eisner is concerned with the usefulness of the research, either in increasing our understanding of a situation or providing a guide to broaden our experience and help us to understand particular phenomena.

The third set of assumptions about the social world concern human nature and the relationships between human beings and their environment. Essentially this assumption examines how we respond to our environment. Do we respond in a mechanistic fashion or do we initiate action and make choices? This presents an interesting dilemma for the researcher because as human beings it may be impossible to choose a mechanistic approach to research while at the same time becoming involved in the research and forming relationships with the research community. Other issues may need to be considered in relation to this assumption such as power relationships in certain social settings, relationships between the researcher and the researched and an awareness that in a single piece of research such as I undertook, the power relationship can change depending on whether one is dealing with a CEO, a General Secretary of a large union, an 11 year old in a classroom or a fellow researcher.

As I have highlighted earlier in this work I have a long and involved engagement with the community that is Educate Together. This community is central to the research and to the tests of *coherence*, *consensus* and *instrumental utility* as outlined earlier in this chapter. Such an epistemic community can influence the research and lead it down roads and sidetracks it never envisaged in the first instance. An example of this would be the work on developing the Learn Together programme, which emerged

from the research process and was deemed so important by the epistemic community that it meant that process in this instance led to product. In answer to the relationship question as posed by Burell and Morgan, I chose to ground my research in the Habermasian (1974) concept of deliberate democracy where a selection of groups within an organisation or a society operate in a continual exchange to get a shared meaning. Thus the active reflexivity not only involved me as a researcher but also my role as part of the epistemic community. Through such reflexivity, the relationship between the researcher, the community of research, the text and the audience can be developed contextually, rhetorically, institutionally, generically and politically. (Clifford: 1986: 6)

The fourth set of assumptions put forward by Burell and Morgan concern the choice of methodology adopted by the researcher. I have answered the ontological, the epistemological and the relationship questions very much from the post-positivist perspective and I have been mindful of Dewey's concept of the transactive nature of experience. This approach allows us to avoid the dualisms of objective and subjective philosophies that have dominated much of educational research. I have worked as part of an epistemic community in order to improve practice within Educate Together and inform public opinion as well as political opinion. My view of social reality is influenced by how communities create, modify and interpret the world in which they live so the choice of a qualitative methodology in order to develop my research was unambiguous.

5.4 Understanding Qualitative Methodologies

The word qualitative as described by Margot Ely (1991: 3) denotes the primarily qualitative-as-descriptive nature of work within a research paradigm as opposed to the primarily quantitative emphasis of positivist approaches. Lincoln and Guba coined the phrase 'paradigm of naturalistic inquiry' in 1985 and later in 1989 changed this term to 'paradigm of constructivist criticism.' In Germany as early as 1900, the psychologist Wilhelm Wundt used methods of description and *verstehen* alongside more quantitative data. In the 1960's in the US, the work of Cicourel (1964) and Glaser and Strauss (1967) led to a renewed interest in qualitative techniques. The German philosopher, Jurgen Habermas, writing in 1967, recognised that a different tradition and discussion of research was beginning in American sociology and so began a new movement towards qualitative research in Germany. Denzin and Lincoln as cited in Flick (2002) describe the seven moments of qualitative research.

- The *Traditional Period*: 1900-1950. The beginnings of an interest in ethnography and the work of the Chicago School.

- *The Modernist Phase*: up to the 1970's and marked by the work in particular of Glaser and Strauss. This phase marked an attempt to formalise qualitative research.

- *The Blurred Genres Period*: 1970'- 1980's: This term was coined by Geertz in 1983 to describe an approach which stacked various theoretical models together such as symbolic interactionism, feminism, ethnomethodology and phenomenology. Researchers were free to choose a model or combination of models

- 1980's brought the *crisis of representation,* (Atkinson and Coffey: 1985), which brought into question issues of validity and reliability. As Coffey puts it; ' received canons of truth and method were challenged.' (Coffey:

20002:314) The process of displaying knowledge and findings became a major part of the research process. The evaluation of research and findings became a central topic in methodological discussions. While some may feel that this particular moment pandered to the positivist approach, I believe that it introduced the important concept of audience or reader into the qualitative field. It also ensured that data was available for that audience so that they could get a full picture of the context and process of the research.

- Postmodern Period of experimental ethnographic writing: Here Narrative replaced theory or theory was read as narrative. As Flick (2002: 10) points out, the day of the grand narrative had ended. Now the emphasis was on the discovery of small- scale theory and narrative that did not seek large-scale truths.

- A sixth 'messy' moment, was identified by Denzin in 1997, that notes the emergence of ' a cacophony of voices speaking with various agendas.' (Lincoln and Denzin: 1998: 409) This moment points to experimental representational styles that disrupt and re-centre the self of the researcher. The moment is represented by reflexive, experimental texts, multiple stories and styles. (Atkinson, et.al: 1999)

- Seventh Moment: Lincoln and Denzin vision of qualitative research in the future is a fusion of moments to arrive at a form of qualitative inquiry that is 'simultaneously minimal', existential, autoethnographic, vulnerable, performative and critical. (2000: p.1, 048) This moment is celebrated through making the Self visible in the research and introducing multiple voices, multiple stories, texts and dramas and a heightened understanding of the Other.

There is some evidence to show that these seven moments are representative of the entire qualitative research community. However, Ewe Flick, writing from a German research perspective, comments that German research has moved through the stages of discussion, methods and consolidation of procedural questions to a growing body of research practice. American based qualitative researchers are so caught up in the continuing crisis of representation that procedures or methods have been subsumed in the battle to clarify the practices and politics of interpretation. (Flick: 2004:10) Maybe the next moment of research will be to link the art of qualitative research, with a defined theory and a set of procedures or methods where we move seamlessly from the relationship between the Knower and the Known to link this in turn to Ways of Knowing.

Yeats equated this dilemma by using the image of the Tree in his poem 'Among Schoolchildren:

'Oh great rooted blossomer, art thou the tree, the blossom or the bole'?

Despite my preference for the adoption of a qualitative methodology from my ontological, epistemological and research relationship perspectives, I still had concerns around the level of fluidity as represented by the Seven Moments. Previous research conducted by me (Mulcahy: 1998) lay clearly in the final three moments. I had adopted a post- modern approach to issues of truth, I had adopted a reflexive approach and I had introduced the concept of Voice. With hindsight I adopted this stance because it was part of my worldview and to some extent was an instinctive response to how the research should be conducted and presented. In choosing an approach for this current research I returned to the core values that underpin qualitative research and made my choice around this. I hoped that the review would

help answers some questions that still remained before I chose a methodology or created one.

These questions included:

- The role of the Self in the Research

- The concept of reflexivity

- Research as art or process

- The representation of the many voices of the research process

- The mode of storytelling chosen in order to involve the reader as co-critic

- The Question of a search for Truth

- Am I seeking to improve?

- Will my work show evidence of *coherence, consensus* and *instrumental utility?*

- Was there a single methodology that could represent the many facets of the research process?

- Where was the theory?

A review of the works of Margot Ely, (1991), Strauss and Corbin, (1998) Elliot Eisner, (1998) Cohen and Manion, (2000) Amanda Coffey, (2001) Holloway and Jefferson, (2001) Tim May, (2002) Ewe Flick (2002 and 2006) Peter Freebody, (2003) Clive Opie, (2004) Jennifer Mason, (2005) and the many papers and books from Guba, Lincoln and Denzin and others that have already been referred to in this chapter identified a wide range of characteristics of qualitative research which in turn I tried to distil into an agreed list. Strikingly, a number of subtle, but noticeable changes have occurred in a 30-year period.

Qualitative Features

In an analysis of texts on qualitative research, Tesch (1990) identified a list of 46 terms that social scientists have used to name their version of qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba escaped the dilemma of defining qualitative research by stating that:

'It is precisely because the matter is so involved that it is not possible to provide a simple definition.' (Lincoln and Guba: 1985:6)

Sherman and Webb (1988) as cited in Ely (1991: 4) studied a range of research in the fields of education, history, biography, critical theory and phenomenography. Based on their results they identified five characteristics common to all the research modes.

1. Events can be understood adequately only if they are seen in context. Therefore the researcher is immersed in the setting
2. The contexts of the inquiry are natural
3. Qualitative researchers want those who are studied to speak for themselves. Therefore the research is an interactive process
4. Qualitative researchers attend to the experience as a whole, not as separate variables
5. Qualitative methods are appropriate to the above statements.

From this we learn that qualitative research is about living the experience and representing it as faithfully as possible. Jennifer Mason, (2005: 5)) reduced the definition to three key points.

1. Grounded in a philosophical position which is broadly interpretivist in the sense that it is concerned with how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced, produced or constituted.
2. Based on methods of data generation which are both flexible and sensitive to the social context in which the data are produced.
3. Based on methods of analysis, explanation and argument building, which involve understandings of complexity, detail and context and produce rich data. There is more emphasis on holistic forms of analysis and explanation.

While the earlier definition emphasised the concept of the lived experience, Mason's definition emphasises the philosophical underpinnings, the methods used and the fluid nature of analysis and explanation.

Finally I turned to the six features of qualitative research as defined by Eisner. (1990:pp. 32-39)

1. The research is field focused

2. The Self is an instrument that engages the situation and makes sense of it

3. The research is interpretivist from the perspective that researchers try to account for what they have given an account of. From a deeper perspective it aims to get at the meaning the events described have for those who experience them

4. The research gives Voice to the actors and the use of 'I' and descriptive language allows for empathy between the epistemic community, the researcher and the reader. Good qualitative writing allows the audience to become part of the process

5. There is detailed attention to particulars which gives a sense of the uniqueness of the case

6. Coherence, Insight and Instrumental Utility provide a criteria for judging the success of the research

Eisner highlights the fact that research can be qualitative by degrees, some more literary than others, some combining several forms of representation including the quantitative. Perception is central to his concept of qualitative work but perception is not an end in itself. It must be accompanied by the ability to fashion these perceptions through text.

Qualitative Design

The identification of the common features of Qualitative Inquiry answered many of the questions I had posed. It was permissible, even encouraged to bring the 'I' back into the research. I had always experienced difficulties working in a qualitative environment which encouraged the presence of voice in the text yet when it came to writing up an account of the research, there was an aversion to metaphor and adjective, the voice was neutralised and the first person, the 'I', disappeared to be replaced by a faceless Passive Voice. A story mode is encouraged in order to give a clear picture of context and setting. In order to fully do justice to all the voices, reflexivity is implied in the inquiry. Coherence, consensus and instrumental utility are very much part of the inquiry process and give me confidence around issues of validity and rigour. My decision to work in the Qualitative Mode was based on my answers to the Ontological, Epistemological and Relationship Questions. This choice was further validated by assurances around issues of Voice, the use of narrative mode and the value of creating communities of inquiry in order to achieve a more democratic approach to the research. Clifford Geertz (2000: 223) answers my question on whether, research, as we know it has gone too far down the road of art to the detriment of method. 'Faced with a world of pressed-together dissimilarities variously arranged, there is nothing for it but to get down to cases, whatever the cost to generality, certainty or intellectual equilibrium.' Getting down to my case had begun but under the surface questions on methodology, theory building and the search for truth still had not been fully resolved.

5.5 The Axiological Question

Before proceeding to the search for a theory I want to introduce a final question that was put forward by John Heron and Peter Reason in 1997 and that I feel has relevance to my field of research and to the choice of a methodology. This question they termed the Axiological question. It relates specifically to what is intrinsically worthwhile, what is it about the human condition that is valuable as an end in itself. It raises questions on the value of knowledge itself, the ultimate purpose of human inquiry. This axiological question roots research theory in the critical theory genre. Critical Theory is often conceived in the narrow sense of the western Marxist tradition of the Frankfurt School, stretching from Horkheimer to Marcuse and Habermas. This theory with its aim of liberating human beings from the circumstances that enslave them (Horkheimer: 1982:p244) was envisaged by the first generation of Critical Theorists as a means of transforming contemporary capitalism into a real democracy. However, the second wave of critical theorists and in particular Jurgen Habermas developed the concept of democracy to incorporate modes of inquiry that participants adopt in their social relations with others: 'how speaking and acting subjects use knowledge.' (Habermas: 1984:p.11). Reason and Heron argue that if we are true to the axiological question, or the Habermasian concept of how we use knowledge, then our participation in research implies engagement, which in turn implies responsibility. Three Voices come into play when we judge knowledge, the Voice of the research subject, the Voice of the interpreter and the Voice of the reader. Thus, critical theory as envisaged by Habermas and interpreted by Reason and Heron, through the Axiological question, involves a form of co-operative inquiry. Within such an

inquiry there is intentional interplay between reflection and sense making on one hand and experience and action on the other. Inquiry cycles move the research process between reflection and action and the inquiry method can inform and transform. A further feature of this form of inquiry is that the experience of the inquiry may lead into new fields of unpredicted action and creative insights as happened in my research. (Reason and Heron: Chapter 6) Given my stance on co-operative inquiry and epistemic communities I found a resonance in their argument. The participative research paradigm allowed for reflexivity and it allowed me to work in a social setting, i.e. Educate Together, a social grouping that had the capacity to impact on the social, political, economic, ethnic and gender structures within Irish society.

5.6 Philosophical Underpinnings

My work has always been influenced by the belief that people have a right to a say in decisions that affect them. I was conscious that in this particular research I was well known within the Educate Together community, as a Director, as a founder member of one of the schools, as an education spokesperson in the Press and on radio and later as author of the Learn Together programme. During the course of the research I also sat on several selection Boards for Principal Teachers and teachers and became Acting Chair of one of the newly founded schools. My selected theory would have to be true to me as a researcher and also to the research collaborators. My commitment to the good of the organisation also meant that when the research identified the need to design a product, this need superseded the desire to cleanly complete my research.

The philosophy underpinning my research was rooted in the field of critical theory as outlined in the previous section. Peter Freebody (2003: 50) situates Critical Theory as part of a four-way taxonomy of scientific inquiry. These are represented below.

Fig. 7: Taxonomy of Scientific Inquiry

Science	Natural Science	Social Science	Cultural Science	Critical Science
Object of Inquiry	Naturally occurring observable phenomena	Observable social activities	A group's shared history of actions	The structure of societies
Goals of Inquiry	To document and Prove	To document and give commentary on	To document and explicate	To highlight, document, critique and transform

The term Critical Science applies to research that is drawn from a variety of critical perspectives and has been become part of the vernacular of education research. It aims to make visible the political motivations and consequences of educational practice and in some cases the steps that might be taken by educators and communities to achieve this. The theory of critical science goes back to Aristotle and his contention that the generation of knowledge depends on the purpose it serves. According to critical theory, research is not an esoteric activity Habermas, (1971) describes critical theory as a means of generating knowledge, which is based on free communication between people. He describes this as 'the ideal speech situation', (Ashendown and Owen: 1999: 5) where:

- All beings capable of speech and action are entitled to participate in the process of argumentation: the principal of universal moral respect

- Participants have an equal right to introduce the question claims, to put forward reasons, etc: the principle of egalitarian reciprocity

- No participant should be prevented from exercising these rights: the principle of non-coercion.

- Critical Theory allows for the questioning of assumptions such as who constructs knowledge and whose interests are served.

The work of Habermas in particular, in describing the relevance of the emancipatory impact of critical theory through the arrival at a 'transcendental moment of universal validity', (Habermas: 1987: 322) convinced me of the rightness of 'critical theory 'as my overarching methodology construct. The boundaries of what constitute critical theory can however, at times, appear blurred. It should go beyond the mere description and analysis of what is and push that analysis into a framework of what could be. (Simon & Dippo: 1986). Yet, much critical theory research fails to marry theory and practice so that those members of societies that are the subjects of this theory are in effect more marginalised than ever. I wanted to ensure that my research did not fall into this category. It was my aim to involve the epistemic community of Educate Together as co-constructing, transformative critical theorists.

Rather than merely recording observable facts, participatory research has the explicit intention of collectively investigating reality in order to transform it. By linking the creation of knowledge about social reality with concrete action, participatory research removes the traditional separation between knowing and doing.

Maguire: 1987:3

Research can sometimes fall into the trap of being an academic exercise. However, at its best it can contribute to learning communities and make research a collaborative process with a practical as well as academic purpose. From a political perspective it

can give people a say in decision- making and build on ways of Knowing.   It

involves critical subjectivity and critical intersubjectivity through dialogue, feedback

and exchange. I have opted to use co-operative inquiry (Reason and Heron: 1998) as

the practical application of critical theory within the research process as it most

closely connects to my views on the ontological, epistemological and axiological

questions. The research report will demonstrate how the research moved through a

series of actions and interactions that included different members of the Educate

Together organisation. As the research will be represented from a temporal

perspective it will clear how each level of hermeneutic analysis both informed the

next stage and determined which Voices needed to be brought into the research.

Validity was ensured by presenting the key findings of each stage to members of the

epistemic community, in order to ensure coherence, consensus and instrumental

utility.

Fig.8: Model Of Inquiry

Critical Co-operative Inquiry

↑

Hermeneutic Analysis   ←   →   **Critical Methods**

↓

Second Order Narrative Theory
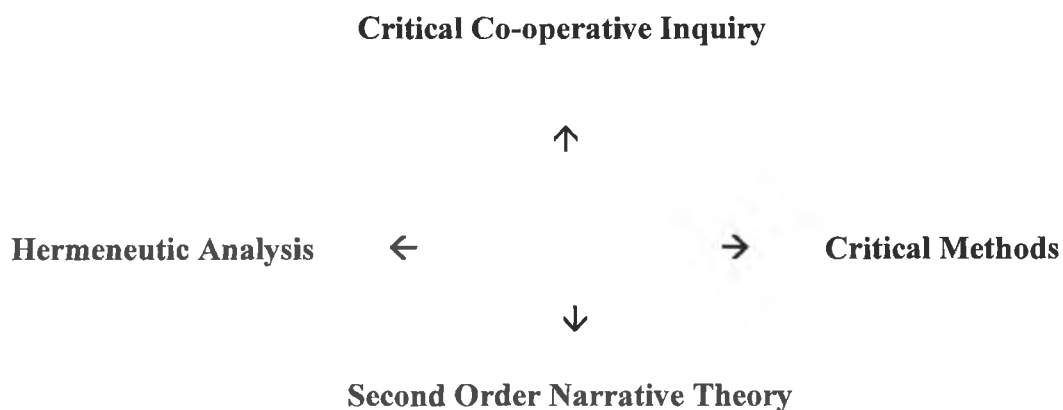
Figure 8 represents a graphic analysis of the methodology and methods used in this

research.   Critical Theory represents the philosophical rationale underpinning the

research. The practical application of critical theory in the research process is carried out through a form of co-operative inquiry. Through the use of critical research methods and by employing a hermeneutic analysis to the emerging theory, the work is then passed through the sieve of second order or second voice narrative and then presented back to the epistemic research community for further analysis and interpretation. The entire process is reflexive and iterative.

Co-operative inquiry according to Reason & Heron (1997) is used:

- To engage the epistemic community in democratic dialogue as co-researchers and co subjects
- To define the questions that need to be explored as the research progresses
- To present new knowledge on the topic in order to progress on to the next stage
- To engage in epistemic participation
- To acknowledge that researchers are subjects and subjects are co-researchers
- To democratise, not just research content but also research method
- To express living knowledge in practical service to people's lives
- To use language grounded in shared experiential content.

From my perspective as a researcher this approach did present challenges. These included managing divergence and convergence, ensuring that all Voices were represented, maintaining a democratic stance in relation to the ownership of the research, being pulled between finding a clean conclusion to my own research and yet recognising that if this was a democratic process, then I had to be prepared to be flexible around time frames and let things reach a natural conclusion. The political impact for example of the final Learn Together curriculum involved another set of

Voices from the Colleges of Education and the Department of Education and Science which I certainly had not envisaged in the beginning of the process.

This section on theory has largely assumed that critical theory can be used as a lens or a testing ground to guide analysis of the data and to test and hopefully verify the critical theory through the use of participatory inquiry. This assumes a deductive approach to the use of theory albeit in a postpositive guise. The research also needed to show emergent, inductive theory through a process of layering meaning and data. According to Glaser and Strauss, (1967) theory emerges from the data but as Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest it is not as simple a process as finding lizards under rocks. The data must be presented in such a manner as to ensure the role of the researcher is acknowledged and indeed the manner in which the researcher shapes the final product through the narrative. The term *bricoleur* as used by Denzin and Lincoln (1994) captures the essence of the part played by the researcher. A bricoleur or builder must handle multiple methods, decipher multiple perspectives, work across blurred genres, make choices, be multicompetent and preserve the democratic nature of the research. The act of marrying together all of these elements in the final narrative and the production of deductive theory that marries with the overarching inductive critical theory is achieved through the use of what Kerry Daly refers to as 1st Order and 2nd Order Narrative. The 2nd Order Narrative is a structure that shapes meanings and determines effects. It represents the interpretative commentary on the lived experience of co-operative inquiry that is represented in the 1st Order Narrative. The task of the 1st Order Narrative is to make sense of and change the local context while the function of the 2nd Order is to represent the local narrative on a bigger stage. The inductive theory thus produced, is in turn moderated by the reader or the

audience, and forms part of the reflexive, iterative approach that underpins the entire work.

5.7 Hermeneutic Analysis

In an essay entitled "Hermeneutics: a poetic of inquiry", Thomas Schwandt emphasies that our main task in research is to understand The Other, whether this be people or practices. He separates knowledge creation which can be accomplished through valid methodology from understanding and meaning making for which he points to forms of hermeneutics. Through dialogue and debate, or what he refers to as Socratic Midwifery, we arrive at new forms of understanding. (Schwandt: 2004:45) However, there is a tendency on the part of writers in the field of qualitative research to divide each of the research elements up into neatly packaged entities that will encompass the research, set limits on it, provide a theory and generate new knowledge. Yet, as my work has illustrated this is not always the case. The research design and its subsequent application, needs to be considered from the perspective of a range of assumptions. It is predicated on what Mason, (2005: 17-18) refers to as the intellectual puzzle. Puzzles, by their nature, force us to adopt a trial and error approach before we reach a solution. Likewise, within the research process, the puzzle of research design is very often how best to link all of the constituent elements into a discernable whole. Fig. 8 illustrated the interlinking of all of the elements of the research process through an iterative, reflexive approach. So it is not possible to divide any of the elements and treat them as separate entities. Just as the critical theory influenced the choice of co-operative inquiry, which in turn was influenced by the epistemic community, so too deductive and inductive theory are linked through

the researcher and the narrative. The analysis is also clearly linked to each of these elements through the interactive work of the epistemic community and also through the adoption of 1st Order and 2nd Order narrative. The model that best explains this approach is the Hermeneutic Model. Variations of this include Objective Hermeneutics as described by Flick (2006: 334-338) and Social Science Hermeneutics and Hermeneutic Sociology as described by Reichertz (2004) and Soeffner (2004). The concept of the *hermeneutical axiom*, that all thought implies interpretation, underpins the work of thinkers such as Heidegger, Gadamar, Wittgenstein, Kuhn, Derrida and Ricoeur. While these thinkers may diverge on the concept of Descartes dream of discovering a secure method for establishing unassailable truths, there is an implicit agreement that truth, in whatever degree, is arrived at through interpretation. This is not to say that the hermeneutical axiom implies that truth is no longer relevant as implied by nihilists such as Nietzsche and philosophers like Rorty who believe that we can 'contribute to the conversation' without making a claim to truth. In his work "Truth and Method", Gadamar puts forward the theory that the methods of natural science and indeed human science are not sufficient to yield truth in the human sciences. Human interaction can depend on variables such as tact, imagination and immersion in a particular intellectual tradition. Truth is contextualised but this is not a threat to the truth- value. If the context is clearly described and the conversations of the actors are presented in full to the audience, then a specific, local truth can be understood.

For Gadamar, the exemplary experience of truth comes when we take the time to dwell on the matter at hand in conversation with another.

Dostal: 1994:49

However, in his work "What is Truth", Gadamar acknowledges that when we recognise truth ' we almost always simultaneously cover over and forget truth, because we are of necessity caught within the limits of our hermeneutical situation when we inquire into the truth.' (1957). In terms of a hermeneutical analysis then, it is important to ensure: a well defined context, as wide a range of voices as possible, as many views as possible of a given situation, an acceptance that truth can be limited to a given context yet still hold the possibility of a broader understanding through a dialectical exchange between the members of the epistemic community, the narrative and the reader and in particular the 2nd Order Narrative of the researcher. This form of hermeneutical analysis (Fig. 9) is built on Paul Ricoeur's concept of the Hermeneutic Arc, which resembles Eisner's concept of the transactive nature of research as moderated by the locus of experience. (Fig.:6)

Fig. 9: Hermeneutical Analysis

Construction

Texts as versions of the World

Experience   *Interpretation*

Natural and Social Environments ←——————→ *Understanding, ascription of Meaning*
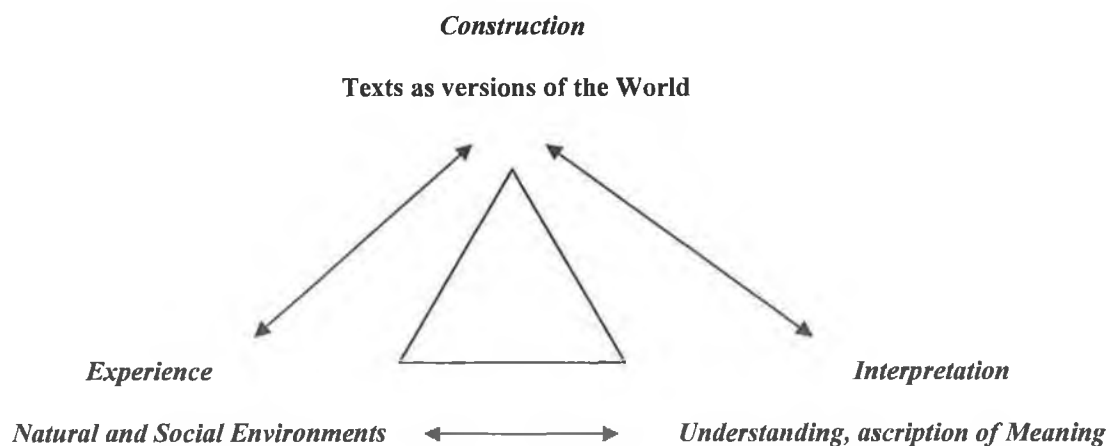
Mimesis, or the transformation of worlds into symbolic worlds, is a key feature of Ricoeur's hermeneutic. In Ricoeur's hermeneutic, mimesis at the first level is concerned with natural experience. The mimetic transformation in processing

experience of social or natural environments into texts takes place at level 2 or the construction level. The final mimetic transformation of texts into understanding occurs through the processes of transformation in the everyday understanding of narratives, documents, interviews, etc. This final, 3rd level of mimesis ' marks the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the hearer or reader.' (Ricoeur: 1981: 26) This mimesis is captured in the research through First Order Description and Interpretation and through Second Order Narrative and Analysis. The final mimesis is left to the reader.

An interpretation of the emerging data is made throughout the research through a constant dialectical integration between explanation and existentialist understanding. This approach is supported by the overall philosophical approach, the inductive and deductive approaches to the generation of theory, the multiplicity of Voices and the thematic analysis of large volumes of data through a pluralism of methods and a holistic approach to the entire research process.

5.8 Validity

At this point in the discussion on research methodology I want to examine the concept of validity in qualitative research and put forward the argument that validity is not a fixed concept. Validity is inextricably linked with the overall research design. It is present in the design of the methodology, in the choice of methods and in the approach to interpreting the data and writing the story. Mishler, (1990) defines validation as the social construction of knowledge by which we evaluate the 'trustworthiness' of reported observations, interpretations and generalisations. Lather, (1993) suggests that in qualitative research, validity can be tested through: situated validity where the research includes an emotional, reflective voice,

rhizomatic validity where the text presents several voices and several accounts of the same phenomena, reflexive validity where a text challenges its own validity claims through seeking out differences and contradictions in the research and finally ironic validity which invites the reader to further interpret the work from a post epistemic foundation. While these observations by Lather and Mishler add to the debate around validity and reliability, it seems more relevant to a debate on quantitiative research. The concept of validity, with its stress on rigour, reliability, canons of quality, coding and other such warlike terms does not sit easily with the concept of co-operative inquiry. Harry Wolcott (1990: 127-128)) suggests practical guidelines for ensuring trustworthiness in research. These include: acting sensitively in the research field, providing detailed notes of the research so that readers can make their own inferences and validation of the research throughout the research process from others involved in the same field. This practical advice in addition to validity of method and interpretation and what Spencer (2001: 450) refers to as 'strong reflexivity' ensures trustworthiness in the research. However, as I have already indicated, this trustworthiness is not a stand- alone or add- on entity within the research. It is an integral part of the research philosophy.

5.9 Methods

At the commencement of this chapter I made reference to the tools used in order to research, fashion and sculpt the research drama. The tools are variously referred to as methods or processes used in order to solve the intellectual puzzle that is represented by the research question. My task was to explore different parts of a process or phenomenon that is Educate Together. I was also aware that I would need to explore different aspects of the research in varying degrees of depth and with varying levels of

engagement. To address different levels from an ontological perspective I needed to choose a variety of research tools. My research involved children in Educate Together schools at one level and at another level CEO's, Education Officers and a high- ranking members of the Irish National Teachers' organisation. The level of engagement with one particular group involved in the design of the Learn Together Ethical Curriculum was prolonged and intense and lasted over a three- year period. Therefore it was clear from the outset that I would need to use a range of methods in order to arrive at as complete a picture as possible. Figure 10 represents a list of the Voices to be heard in the research, the place of each Voice in the research and the methods used to activate the Voices and make them part of the epistemic community.

Fig. 10: Voices in Research

Voices	Level	Method	Mimesis
Children	Local	Questerviews Interviews	Level 1
Former Students	Local	Interviews	Level 1
School Principals	Local/National	Questionnaires Interviews Workshops/In-Service	Levels 1 and 2
Teachers	Local	Workshops	Level 1
Members of Educate Together	National	Workshops Presentation of Work in Progress and Feedback	Levels 1 and 2
Co-Authors of Learn Together Curriculum	Local/National	Focus Group	Levels 1 and 2
CEO of Educate Together CEO of Children's Rights Alliance General Secretary of INTO President of St. Patrick's College of Education Members of the Education Faculty in St. Patrick's College of Education and Mary Immaculate College of Education Members of Irish Traveller Movement	National Level	Semi-Structured Interviews Meetings	Level 1
Parent	Local/National	Interviews	Level 1
Researcher	Local/National	2nd Order Narrative	Level 2

I have chosen to describe each method as it naturally occurs within the research process in the later chapters of this work. However, I would like to draw attention to the fact that use of questionnaires in what is a very definite qualitative research approach may puzzle some readers. My rationale for the use of initial questionnaires with school principals was to generate data that could be used to begin the process of co-operative inquiry. I was comfortable working in this mode as it offered me an opportunity to:

- Elicit information quickly

- To triangulate methodologies

- To inform the direction of the research by providing a picture of the school situation across the country

The research does not claim to fall into category of a mixed-methodology paradigm as described by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) as the different methods remain autonomous, working side by side. In my interviews with the 185 children from Educate Together schools, I used a questionnaire as a form of aide- memoir to conduct group interviews with the students. I discussed the questions with the students, got them to work in groups in order to discuss the individual questions and then used the questionnaires to get individual responses from the children. This approach I term 'Questerviews' and a form of this approach is described by Ewe Flick (2006: 37) The benefit of this approach was that it allowed the generation of a large amount of data, the children were comfortable in their own classrooms with their own peers, no child was isolated and there was an opportunity to get individual responses as well as a group response in certain aspects. Finally, the

responses were used to inform a more detailed group interview with a number of the students.

5.10 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to justify the selection of a particular research genre to conduct my work with the Educate Together community. In order to achieve this, I attempted to locate the genre in the context of the two major research traditions while arguing that some of the so-called wars between the paradigms are mere skirmishes or attempts to gain an upper hand. The chapter explored the development of the qualitative tradition from both an American and European perspective and identified the key issues that dominate the tradition today. Post –modernism may be passé in terms of research but it has left the ambiguity around claims of Truth, either local or on a grander scale. The question of Truth was looked at from the perspective of the hermeneutical axiom that connects thought and interpretation. I have argued that the choice of a research methodology cannot take place in isolation or can the components of research be neatly packaged into individual entities. As researchers we cannot speak of interpretation or analysis for example as something that takes place in isolation from the research process in its entirety. I have proposed a Research model, using Critical Theory as the key to unlock a co-operative inquiry that involves inductive and deductive theory. The narrative that is the research is fashioned in such a manner as to encompass interpretation and the research itself is developed through ongoing interpretation that informs the direction of the research. Validity, coherence,

consensus and instrumental utility are closely linked to the overall methodology through active reflexivity and the active participation of the epistemic community. Before the drama commences, I would like to return to one issue that I mentioned at the outset of this chapter and that is the question of positionality. Pat Sikes (2004: 18) defines positionality as 'where the researcher is coming from in relation to their philosophical position and their fundamental assumptions concerning social reality, the nature of knowledge, human nature and agency.' I think there may be a further consideration and that is the positionality of the researcher in relation to the epistemic community that they are working with. My involvement with Educate Together gave me a unique insight into the organisation and also gave me *access* to the wide spectrum of the research field. However, this position also raised ethical issues around access to privileged knowledge, the possibility that the research could have negative outcomes for sections of the organisation and that tensions might be raised by unanticipated outcomes. I was clear that my research would be open and not covert in any way and that as many Voices as possible should be heard in the research. The research design and the language used throughout the research ensured collaboration at all stages of the process and dissenting Voices were given an opportunity to speak. Data collection processes were ethical and consent was sought at all stages of the collection. Patti Lather (1986) talks of 'rape research', where the researchers enter the research environment, take what they want and leave. This criticism cannot be levelled at this co-operative inquiry. Finally, from an ethical perspective I have included myself as one of the research voices in Fig. 10, as part of the 2nd Level of Mimesis but also as a member of the epistemic community.

There remains then the writing up of the research and this final act also poses ethical questions. The reader must judge how well I have performed in presenting a true picture of the research process and the key findings. I will argue that the research writing is not neutral and that text cannot be used to hide behind. (Carroll: 2001: 102) I will present the report in the 1st Person, I will allow the Voices to speak for themselves and I will comment through the 2nd Order Narrative. While knowledge is multi-perspectived, pluralist and diverse, and as Martin Hammersley points out in such a setting we cannot as researchers remove all reasonable doubt, the methodology and methods that I have worked with in my research have informed the hermeneutical axiom. The final mimesis now commences.

Chapter 6 Visions and Values

6.1 Introduction

Endings can bring about new beginnings and this was the case with this research. In 1998 I completed research for my M.Sc. in Education and Training in Dublin City University. The research entitled: "Valuing Difference" it was based on a series of observations and interviews conducted with teachers and parents in 16 Educate Together schools around Ireland. The research set out to identify core values in Educate Together schools and to examine the transmission of those values.   The research identified the importance of the ethos in terms of the transmission of values, an ethos where children are treated as individuals and are encouraged to voice their opinions in the knowledge that they will be listened to and have their views respected. (Mulcahy: 1998: 95) The key values identified in the research were self-esteem and a respect for personal beliefs. Consensus pluralism emerged as the dominant theory in the research. Hill (1991: 23) equates consensus pluralism with the development of critical awareness of values, which in turn leads to the development of personal responsibility for the values we embrace in our lives. This approach was evident in the manner in which classes were conducted, the reliance of democratic interaction in the resolution of conflict and in the encouragement of values such as self-respect, individuality and the value placed on the recognition of other cultures and traditions. Consensus pluralism also underpinned policy making and decision making in most of the schools. My current research would allow me to test this theory in greater depth with the children in Educate Together schools and to view the development of a new Core Curriculum from the perspective of this theory. The initial research had also

indicated that there was an emphasis on moral universalism in some of the schools. Hill (1991: 24) describes moral universalism in terms of religious disagreement being viewed as an unnecessary complication in moral education. The theory is divided into two sub concepts.

1. Substantivism refers to the possibility of identifying moral principles common to all religions and the basis for key core values.

2. Formalism refers to how we relate to morality and it involves an openness to discourse on difference underpinned by the value of rationality. The concept can prove difficult in practice as it presupposes agreement on universal moral values. This theory is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8, which describes the emergence of the Learn Together Ethical Curriculum, a product of this current research.

The teaching of religion in schools is covered under Rules 68 and 69 of the Rules for National Schools. Rule 68 emphasises that ' of all parts of the school curriculum religious instruction is by far the most important'. Rule 69 outlines procedures for the provision of formal religious instruction and for facilitating the withdrawal of pupils if necessary 'where such religious instruction as their parents or guardians approve is not provided in the school for any section of the pupils'. Rule 35 provides for the provision of possible alternative arrangements for children unable to avail of religious instruction in their own denomination locally. The Irish Constitution, as already outlined in Chapter 2, subscribes to the concept of parental choice in relation to education under Articles 42 and 44. The First Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights was signed by the then Taoiseach, Eamon De Valera, in 1953 and it stated that ' in the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the state shall respect the right of parents to ensure that

such reality as the school education and teaching is in conformity with own religious and philosophical convictions'. This Protocol was finally incorporated into Irish law with the adoption of the European Convention of Human Rights in 2003.

The initial research had identified the importance of the Core Curriculum in the transmission of values and also as the key curricular approach to the fostering of pluralist attitudes in children. The Core Curriculum was the commonly used term in Educate Together schools to describe the equivalent of the Patron's Religious Education programme. The programme at this point in most schools was based on the first Dalkey Religious Education Policy (Appendix E). This policy had been developed into a more complete programme at a Summer In-service programme that took place in the Teachers' Centre in Blackrock from 3-7 July 1989. (Appendix L) My research highlighted the role of the Core Curriculum in helping children to look at the beliefs of others, to study world religions and allow them to discuss their beliefs and talk about them in class. The children learned that 'there is a place for everybody in the world.' (Mulcahy: 1998: 62) The curriculum affirmed similarities and differences, encouraged children to be sensitive to the rights and beliefs of others, allowed human rights education and peace education to be included in the programme and encouraged an understanding of all belief systems. However, concerns were expressed about the range of different curricula, the lack of support for new schools in developing curricula and the complete lack of training for teachers in the design, development, delivery, assessment and evaluation of such an important part of the school programme. Some teachers also indicated that while schools were obliged to provide discrete time for the delivery of the Core Curriculum, in reality this did not always happen in the schools. Finally, the research had indicated that some of the topics that formed the basis of the Core Curriculum had not been subsumed into a

range of programmes such as Relationship and Sexuality Education, (RSE) and Social, Personal and Health Education. (SPHE) This had impacted on the Core Curriculum in terms of a single identifiable programme within some of the schools surveyed.

I wanted to revisit these key findings and ascertain the views of the Principal Teachers on these topics. The results would be used to link the previous research with this new inquiry, to start the process of including the Voices of the sector and to use them as a basis for focussing on the needs of the sector. (Appendix M)

The use of a questionnaire in a largely qualitative research process has been discussed in Chapter 5. As I outlined there my use of this initial questionnaire with school principals was to generate data that could be used to begin the process of co-operative inquiry. Through this approach I had ready access to information and this information would be used to provide an accurate picture of the sector. Use of a questionnaire at the developmental stage is advocated by Greene et al. (1989) as a means of sequentially informing the second stage of the research. As the population of principals was a manageable size for a questionnaire, there was no need to select a sample group. The questionnaires were self-administered and sent via post. I hoped that the material was interesting, of value and clearly thought through (Davidson: 1970; Burgess: 2001: 5) so I was optimistic of a high return rate. I employed a mixed response format that allowed for short or extended answers and ensured that the principals had an opportunity to provide any extra feedback that they considered relevant. (Henerson et al:1987). The responses are coded through the use of a simple form of content analysis (Krippendorf; 1980)) and this in turn is used as a heuristic device to inform the next part of the research. (Seidel and Kelle: 1995: pp56-57). Examples of this approach are to be found in questions 3, 16, and 22. Open ended

questions are treated as narrative and are analysed through allowing the reader maximum exposure to the Voices of the Principals at the level of First Order Narrative and through my response in the Second Order Narrative. Examples of this approach can be found in Questions 28, 29 and 32.

The replies are presented in the first instance from the perspective of First Order Narrative. This First Order Narrative compliments the first 2 steps of Harry Wolcott's (1990), 3- step formula for the presentation of research findings, namely Description, Analysis and Interpretation Step. The third step equates with Daly's second Order Narrative.

6.2 Step One: Principals' Voices: Questionnaire

Nineteen questionnaires were distributed in January 2001. (Appendix M) The questionnaire was piloted with two schools in the sector and also with the Head Office of Educate Together. No changes were made to the original template. For the purposes of the questionnaire, the generic term Core Curriculum was used to describe all of the various programmes used in the schools. Sixteen replies were received after gentle prompting and a number of phone calls. Replies were received from both the newest and the oldest schools in the sector. While the questionnaire was anonymous, it did ask schools to identify the year in which they opened. Six schools included copies of their own Core Curriculum with their replies.

6.3 First Order: Description and Analysis

The initial questions were included to elicit information on existing curricula in schools, the nature of these curricula, the key aims and objectives and the level of parental involvement. The questions also attempted to ascertain the relevance placed

on the Core Curriculum within the school. A key question, Question 12, related to the issue of responsibility for drafting the Core Curriculum.

Question 2

Twelve schools replied that they had a written Core Curriculum and a further three were in the process of designing one.

Question 3

Respondents were asked to identity the key aims of their individual Core Curriculum. I have categorised the replies under six headings.

Fig.11: *Thematic Analysis of Key Curricular Aims*

Personal Growth Aims	*To support Personal Development* *To foster the art of self-knowledge and self belief*
Spirituality	*To encourage a sense of spirituality in the child* *To help children to learn to cope with grief and loss*
Justice and Rights Aims	*To foster equality, social justice and human rights* *To respect difference* *To foster good citizenship*
The Environment	*To foster a compassionate relationship with the natural world*
Belief Systems	*To foster an understanding of different Belief and Value Systems*
Ethos	*To represent the ethos of the school at curricular level*

Many of the replies quoted directly from the Educate Together Charter, while many others cited the 4 key principles of Educate Together as the rationale that underpinned all of the aims of the Core Curriculum. With the exception of Belief Systems, cited by 4 of the respondents, there seemed to be general agreement on specific aims. Some schools were most concerned with the personal development of the child while others opted for a strong Human Rights approach to the curriculum. It was interesting to see the mention of spirituality and the spiritual growth of the child as an important aim. There was one mention of moral development in the replies.

Question 4.

The Rules for National Schools clearly state that religious education must be given a designated time slot in the school timetable and that this timetable should be prominently displayed in accordance with Rule 69 (2b), Rule 54.1 and Rule 54.2. The replies indicated that only 60% of the schools had a designated time slot for the delivery of the Core Curriculum.

Question 5
The emphasis placed on a particular subject area may be gauged by the amount of support given to that subject through designated teachers who take responsibility for that subject within a school. It is not uncommon for Posts of Responsibility to be designated for particular subject fields. However, in 15 of the 16 replies, responsibility for the delivery of the Core Curriculum rested with the class teacher. In the remaining school, the school principal took the responsibility. The previous research indicated that interest in the Core Curriculum or Core Curriculum general area was one of the factors that was taken on board when selecting new teachers but teachers from other sectors or teachers taking up a first post may be disadvantaged if they are not familiar with the Core Curriculum. This issue will be revisited in Chapter

9 of the research as the call for in-service and pre-service training in delivery of the programme featured heavily in the latter part of the research.

Question 6

This question related to parental awareness of the Core Curriculum. In all but one of the schools surveyed, parents were informed of the content of the programme through a range of methods. The chief methods employed included:

- Introductory evenings for new parents

- Yearly class curricular meetings where an outline of the programme was presented to each parent year group

- Parent Handouts

- Newsletters

- Copies of the Core Curriculum presented to the parents

- Themes for each month posted out to parents at the beginning to remind parents of the content of the Core Curriculum.

In some schools parents were invited in to view the material for the Core Curriculum and teachers were happy to meet parents at appointed times in order to discuss any issues that might arise. School displays and Assemblies were also used to draw attention to what was happening in the curriculum. There was some resistance to making the material too explicit as it was felt that this would constrain the school in what it delivered. Interestingly, only one school mentioned the fact that parents were involved in drafting the curriculum.

Question 7

Parents were involved to varying degrees in the delivery of the curriculum in 50% of

the schools. This involvement related to a specific topic, where parents had particular

expertise and this might include a single input or a series of inputs on a specific topic.

Question 8

The majority of the schools had their own Core Curriculum booklet. Copies of these

booklets indicated that some were far more detailed than others. (Appendix N & O)

Question 9

In 50% of the schools, the booklet was distributed to the parents. No explanation was

given for the non-distribution of the booklet.

Question 10

Where booklets did exist in schools, they were generally developed within 3 years of

the opening of the school.

Question 11

Where schools had been in existence for a number of years it might have been

presumed that the booklets would be updated. However, most replies indicated that

the amount of time given over to the design of the initial booklet meant that there was

a reluctance to return to the task.

Question 12

This question sought to ascertain who had been responsible for the drafting of the

Core Curriculum. The list presented to the principals included the Executive as those

schools which were set up prior to 1999 have a Board of Management and also an

Executive that is elected by the parent body in the school and acts as Patron of the

school. This Executive can be re-elected annually.

The interesting aspect of this result is that, while the Executive as Patron, or Educate Together as Patron in the newer schools, is in fact the body responsible for the drafting of the Core Curriculum and for ensuring that the ethos of the school is upheld the results indicated that the Executive/Patron did not have any involvement in 40% of the schools. In the majority of cases (60%) the Principal and staff drafted the curriculum, while a minority of schools, 25% involved the other sections of the school community, such as parents.

Question 13

In 100% of the replies, the Principals felt that the Staff had ultimate responsibility for the design and delivery of the Core Curriculum. Principals strongly voiced this fact and while 40% did acknowledge that the Executive as guardian of the ethos has ultimate responsibility for the content, the impression given by the replies was that this was a purely paper exercise in signing off on the content. This was a worrying finding in light of the legal obligation on the Executive to uphold the ethos and to provide a written Religious Education Curriculum.

Question 14: Relevance of the Core Curriculum

Principals were convinced of the relevance of the Core Curriculum to the ethos and culture of the school. Many of the principals returned to the 4 principles of Educate Together, in order to locate the relevance of the Core Curriculum in relation to the ethos and culture. Words such as *'critical, 'imperative',' central,' 'fundamental'* and *'essential',* capture the feelings of the principals on this issue. The two quotes that I have selected highlight the passion with which principals wrote on this subject.

It is critical. It is through the Ethical Core Curriculum that the ethos is explored, mediated and delivered to the children. The ultimate aim is that the Ethical Core Curriculum informs the daily, lived ethos of the school at both informal and formal levels. (Principal Teacher for 10 years)

The Core Curriculum is to a great extent the practical, pedagogical embodiment of the school's ethos. It is what makes the school different and unique. (New Principal, Year in the sector)

These quotes are a flavour of what was submitted by the Principals and they represent the most animated responses that I received on the questionnaire.

Question 15

All were agreed that the Core Curriculum reflected the espoused aims of the school, though some principals commented that this was an area that might need to be looked at in greater detail. The values underpinning the curriculum, while espoused, were not necessarily made explicit in all cases.

The next question related specifically to values and in particular the values that underpinned their school community.

Question 16

The principals were asked to list the values of their school communities. I firstly looked at the top ten listed values and then I devised a grid of these values, using the same headings that I had used in my previous research on values. (Fig. 12) This divided the values into Personal, Moral, Political, Educational and Environment. (Mulcahy: 1998) This approach allowed me to map any changes in emphasis that might have occurred in the intervening period.

Top Ten Values

1. *Respect: For self, for others, for the wider community*
2. *Equality*
3. *Celebration of Diversity*
4. *Self–Worth*
5. *Inclusion*
6. *Cherishing each pupil*
7. *Human Rights*
8. *Democracy*
9. *Openness*
10. *Justice*

Fig. 12: Values Grid

Personal	*Moral*	*Political*	*Educational*	*Environmental*
Tolerance	Honesty	Equality	Cherishing	Respect for the
Acceptance	Integrity	Justice	each child	Environment
Openness	Respect for	Diversity	Ensuring each	Respect for our
Self-Respect	others	Commitment	child reaches	World
Self-worth	Respect for	to Pluralism	potential	
The ability to	Diversity	Democracy		
communicate	Sense of	Inclusion		
	responsibility	Sense of		
		Community		

The results from this section were not surprising and there was no major deviation from 1998. The biggest single change was the increase in the range of political values mentioned. This may in part be due to an increased emphasis on citizenship and the amount of discussion around issues of identity and a sense of community. Once again, the absence of any major emphasis on environmental values was somewhat surprising given the number of schools in the sector with a commitment to

environmental issues and the Green Schools initiative. These values will be re-visited

again in Chapter 7 when I look at the children's values.

Use of the term Core Curriculum: Questions 17 and 18

The term Core Curriculum creates confusion in some educational circles as it refers to

core subject fields such as English and Mathematics. Over the years a variety of titles

had begun to be used in order to differentiate the curriculum from other core subjects

or to emphasise the core aim of the curriculum. Four schools were happy to use Core

Curriculum. Of the remaining schools, here is a sample of some of the titles used.

Religious Education Ethical Programme
Ethical Education Programme
Multidenominational Programme
Ethical Core Curriculum
Religious Education Core Curriculum
Social, Personal and Multicultural Education
Religious Education and Ethics Programme
*Values Education *2: Cited twice*
*Religious Education Programme*3: cited three times*

Key terms appearing in the titles included Religion, Ethics and Values. The

proliferation of titles used did suggest that there might be a problem with this

particular aspect of the programmes as there was no sense of an identifiable

programme that could be recognised across the sector and in the greater education

community.

Relevance in a multicultural environment: Question 19

While there was 100% agreement that the Core Curriculum was suitable for

addressing awareness of and respect for multiculturalism, there was a feeling

expressed by some of the principals that more material could be added to focus

specifically on multiculturalism. One reply was interesting as it referred to the fact

that the school community was homogenous. This would suggest that at least one

principal equated work on multiculturalism on whether there was a multicultural presence in the school. This attitude would be at variance with best practice in the US, for example, where studies have found that work on multiculturalism is just as necessary, if not even more so, in schools or colleges, which are predominantly homogenous. The importance of developing knowledge, skills and attitudes to participate in and to help transform and reconstruct society is an important goal for all schools. (Banks: 1997:13)

Curriculum Content: Question 20

Most schools appeared to select the topics studied on a random basis to allow the maximum level of flexibility. The choice of topic was sometimes related to other course work or to issues that arose during the course of a term either in the media or at local level in the children's lives.

Question 21

In light of the replies to the previous questions, it was clear that the Core Curriculum was adaptable to change.

Question 22
The key themes covered by the schools in the previous 12 months have been categorised using the same categories as those used for values. In addition I have substituted Educational with a Belief Systems category. (Fig. 13)

Fig. 13: Key Themes Covered

Personal	Moral/Spiritual	Political	Belief Systems	Environment
Feelings	Spirituality	Famous	Festivals	The seasons
Myself	Care for others	Leaders	Religious beliefs	Recycling
Awareness	Dealing with	3rd World	Body decoration	Ethical aspects
Self Esteem	bereavement	Debt	Diwali	of the
Self-Respect	Listening to	Slavery	New Beginnings	Environment
Drug	others	Multicultural	Christmas	Planting and
Awareness	Famine	Customs		Growing: The
Stay Safe	Slavery	Amnesty		Creation Story
Programme	Special Needs	Famine		
Friendship	Fair Trade	Human		
		Rights		
		Fair Trade		
		Travellers		
		Inclusion		

Clearly, some of these topics could be included across two or more categories. An example would be slavery and Famine. These are moral issues but they are also political issues and may in the case of Famine be related also to the environment.

Delivery of the Core Curriculum: Questions 23 and 24

Half of the schools did not have a training system in place for new teachers. In the schools where training did take place it took the form of mentoring or induction, usually by the principal. The replies suggested that the principals were not happy with the level of training and described it as ad hoc and random. All the respondents agreed that Educate Together should provide training in the delivery of the Core Curriculum or at least guidance in developing a programme and amassing materials to

support the programme. One principal referred to the sharing of materials and methodologies that might happen through in-service.

Question 25

Key methodologies applied in the delivery of the Core Curriculum included story, poster packs, brainstorming, discussion, questionnaires, ICT, debate, art, drama, research, project work, visiting speakers, workshops, Circle Time, class visits and role play. The methodologies did not differ from other subject fields.

Question 26

Materials used in the delivery of the Core Curriculum came from a wide range of sources including NGO's such as Comhlamh, Trocaire, the National Council for Development Education, BBC, Channel 4, The Hope Catalogue and local libraries. Only one school mentioned that they got material from another school within the sector. Several principals expressed the view that this was the single most difficult aspect of the delivery of the Core Curriculum.

Case for a Common Core Curriculum: Question 27

Principals were overwhelmingly in favour of a Common Core Curriculum. They felt that this would create an identity for the sector, support new schools and put the Core Curriculum on a par with other curricula in the Primary school. A typical comment was:

As a staff, we feel that this is an essential requirement, especially for teachers and schools that are new to the sector. Otherwise, we are re-inventing the wheel, several times over.

However, a degree of flexibility was still seen as relevant.

I believe a common curriculum that offers a high degree of flexibility is probably the best way to go.

Problem Areas: Question 28

Principals identified a range of problems related to the design and delivery of the Core Curriculum.

Design Problems
Schools replicating the work of other schools

The translation of material provided by parents into a useable resource

Inconsistency in groups who design programmes

Too much discussion-too little action

Too much detail in a programme can lead to it being unmanageable

The study of belief systems can isolate 'non theistic or personal belief systems

No time designated for design

Delivery Problem

Lack of in-service training for new staff

The sensitivity required in the delivery of aspects of the programme such as religious

festivals, family structures, marginalised groups, etc

Schools located in temporary premises with no central resource bank

Allocated time not used consistently

Individual teachers can be isolated in the classroom

Difficult to deliver the section on World Religions as it is a vast area

General Issues

As it is not part of the National Curriculum, it can sometimes be viewed as an area that can be wholly integrated into other subjects. It may not be given the same commitment as other programmes

No study of what is being delivered across the sector and there is no concept of what themes might be included

Research required in this vital area

If the Core Curriculum isn't kept high on the agenda of schools, it may get lost. Like all curricula, it needs to be reviewed and evaluated

Parents can have conflicting views on what should be delivered

Area is too vague and too vast

The approach is too ad hoc

Lack of experience in delivering such sensitive material in a meaningful way

Very dependent on goodwill of people to develop a programme

Lack of funds to support design and delivery

Huge task for new schools at a time when resources are stretched to a maximum

Lack of expertise in the field

Lack of resources

Too loose, too broad

Positive Areas: Question 29

The Principals identified many positive aspects of the current approach. These included flexibility, a wide variety of viewpoints, the possibility for change and innovation, individual school identity through individual programmes, a visible part of the school life, open to discussion, individual ownership, parental involvement and enforced competency thrust on teachers as they are obliged to become involved in the design and delivery of the programme.

Some of the individual comments of principals capture the positive aspects very

effectively.

*When a programme for the Core Curriculum is designed for each school all these
involved in its design give a huge level of personal commitment, thought and
consideration to design and methodology. The Core Curriculum becomes personal
and then there is a sense of ownership. It also allows for flexibility and adaptation
to school circumstances.*

*I like the strategies and methodologies we employ. This inspires debate, dialogue
and conversation and the opportunity for cross- curricular activity.
The broader objectives inspire the staff to use their own resources and ideas. New
staff bring an added vibrancy and a visionary aspect. Often where there is a
specific interest, for example women's issues, gender, children's rights, poverty,
racism, the environment, etc*

Parental involvement means parental ownership

*The competence, openness, self-esteem and courage of the children in addressing
sensitive and difficult issues.*

Evaluation and Assessment of the Curriculum: Questions 30 and 31

The Core Curriculum had been evaluated in 3 of the 16 schools surveyed. Students

were assessed in 2 out of 16 schools.

Further Comments: Question 32

At this point principals were invited to make any further comments.

Eight replies were received and they focussed on the difficulties encountered, the

need for in-service and suggestions for future work in the field. The replies are

presented in their original format.

*This is food for thought. I will bring this back to our Core Curriculum Committee
to explore issues on training, design and approaches.*

*It is very difficult for new schools to start a programme from scratch. Maybe a
central outline programme could be put together for all schools and then each
school could work on adapting it if necessary. At least it would give new teachers a
concrete staring point.*

There is no shortage of good ideas but resources are the big problem.

An Educate Together position on who is ultimately responsible for the content of the Core Curriculum would be very useful. We'd be very interested to see the results of this survey. A day specifically for teachers to allow people from different schools to discuss this and other issues.

I feel that this area of the curriculum needs strong leadership in the school community if it is to be mediated and delivered within the ethos of the children and the school. It should be re-visited and re-evaluated on a regular basis.
I would like to further explore the methods and ways of developing from discussions on topics to implementing what the children have learned and putting it into practice. I would like to explore what living the ethos actually means in the school. Can we have workshops for parents?

As there can be quite a turnover/ increase of teaching staff within this sector, induction of new teachers would be greatly aided by the compilation of a common Core Curriculum programme and perhaps a summer in-service.

I feel that the Religious Education Core Curriculum is a vital instrument in educating our children about the ever increasing pluralist society and the consequential responsibilities this places on us as a nation.

6.4 Second Order Narrative: Interpretation

This first step in the co-operative inquiry journey had highlighted some very

interesting key points. The key aims of the existing Core Curricula as identified by

the Principals were wide ranging and encompassed the areas of personal growth, the

spirituality of the child, the fostering of awareness of justice and human rights issues

and the development of good citizenship, the fostering of a compassionate

relationship with the natural world, and an understanding of different value and belief

systems. These aims were underpinned by a school ethos that was

multidenominational in the sense of welcoming children of all religions and none in a

child-centered, democratic and co-educational setting. The Core Curriculum was

clearly identified as the curricular embodiment of this ethos.

However, the emphasis placed on these aims varied from school to school. One

Principal spoke of 'fostering a knowledge and understanding of different values and

beliefs in an atmosphere of enquiry and mutual respect.' Another spoke of upholding

the value systems and beliefs that children bring from their homes. For another

Principal the emphasis was clearly placed on justice and human rights.

Our aim is to foster and promote the principles of social inclusiveness and social

justice in relation to the school community, the local community and the global

community through the moral, personal and emotional holistic development of the

children.

For another the key aim was the nurturing of ' a sense of spirituality in the child and

to cultivate a sense of awe and wonder in the natural world through the provision of

quiet spaces of reflection'. Principals who were new to the sector seemed to focus

mostly on the 4 key principles of the Educate Together school movement. It seems

clear that the Principal had a key role in determining the focus of the Core Curriculum

and in developing and creating the ethos of the individual school. The White Paper

on Education (1995: 9) refers to ethos as 'the collective attitudes, beliefs, values,

traditions, aspirations and goals' that exist in a school. It is an organic element, arising

first and foremost from the actual practices that are carried on in that school on a daily

basis'. The word ethos is not specifically referred to in the 1998 Education Act.

Instead the term 'characteristic spirit' is substituted. This spirit is ' determined by the

cultural, moral, religious, social, linguistic and spiritual values and traditions which

inform and are characteristic of the objectives and conduct of the school.' (Chapter 2)

The influence of tradition is evident in the aims that have been highlighted as many of

them strongly relate to the original Dalkey School Core Curriculum and to the

Educate Together Charter. However the differing emphases placed on the aims

highlights the individual approach to ethos. Gaire and Hannon (2005: 38) refer to the

changing nature of ethos in what could be termed identical schools. They ascribe this

to the dynamic and changing nature of ethos and 'the extent of adherence to the

original founding principle, that depends on how well successive school communities

propagate and communicate shared values.' The place of the Principal in the

formation of this ethos in new schools cannot be underestimated. So too in the

development of a Core Curriculum, one school may emphasise justice and morality,

another the spirituality of the child and another respect of different values and belief

systems. This approach reflects the views expressed at an in-service course held in

August 1989 on the Religious Education Core Curriculum in a Multidenominational

School.

> *The statement of aims derives from the Patron's policy but it is to be expected that*
> *different schools will interpret their Patron's policies in different ways, therefore*
> *the statement of aims for different schools can vary in their approach and in their*
> *priorities, although fundamentally they should all be compatible with the broad*
> *philosophy of Educate Together. (1989: 3 Appendix L)*

The results also highlight some issues around the fluid nature of the delivery of the

Core Curriculum in schools. Failure to allocate a designated time slot to the delivery

of the Core Curriculum contravenes Rule 69 (2b) of the Rules for National Schools.

It could be argued that elements of the Core Curriculum were delivered in other

classes such as English or Art for example or at morning assemblies in some of the

schools. However, the failure to assess, evaluate or update the Core Curriculum

might indicate that the subject was not being treated in a similar fashion as other

subjects. The reply to the question on the design of the Core Curriculum and the

methods of delivery (Question 13) raises a further interesting point. Under the Rules

for National Schools, it is the duty of the Patron to provide a copy of a Religious

Education Curriculum when it applies to open a new school. Under the Education

Act of 1998 it is also the role of the Patron to ensure that the ethos is upheld. The questionnaire identifies the school staff as the focus for the design and delivery of the Core Curriculum, with a limited input from parents and a token role given over to the Patron to sign off the curriculum. In practice I am aware that many schools form committees of parents, teachers, the Patron body and Board members to design and plan the Core Curriculum, which is approved by each stakeholder at every stage of the process. Appendix O is one such curriculum that involved a working group and included artistic and material input from the children in the school. This new curriculum was formally launched with the parents and each parent was given a copy when a child joined the school. However this approach did not appear to be used in a majority of the school as indicated by questions 12 and13. There was also a high variation in the level of parental involvement in the delivery of the curriculum (Question7) and in the distribution of the curriculum to parents. (Question 9)

The questionnaire served to highlight the link between the Core Curriculum, the culture and the ethos of the school. (Question 14) This was an area of the questionnaire that got Principals animated and excited. Within the Core Curriculum, Principals could identify what was different about a multidenominational school and this aspect of the research is explored in greater detail in the in-depth interviews conducted with 3 Principals as reported in Chapter 9. Yet as I have identified earlier, the differing emphases placed on the aims of the Core Curriculum, highlight the different approach to ethos in the individual schools.

The study of values in education has become something of an overused cliché in recent years as researchers try to identify what is at the heart of education. The debate on values has been influenced by social plurality and, in particular, how this applies to religious and cultural diversity. The work of key writers in the field such as Taylor,

Halstead, Haydon, McLoughlin and Reynolds have been explored in depth in Chapter 2. Much of this debate has been generated by the postmodernist unwillingness to accept universal truths. Brian Hill (2003) outlines the 3 key responses to this dilemma. The first is the development of a global ethic that might re-establish community without demanding individual conformity to a particular worldview. (Küng and Kuschel; 1993) The second is the turning away from prepositional truth and the adoption of the postmodernist stance of religious universalism. The third is a renewed focus on spirituality rather than on religion in order to achieve self-actualisation. (Heelas: 1996) Hill advocates dialogue in our classrooms that encourages values negotiations between children of different faiths and affirms children's own beliefs. The key values identified as underpinning the school communities in the Educate Together sector in the areas of Personal and Moral Values are founded on respect: respect for the self and respect for others. These values are transmitted in a multidenominational climate that is committed to equality, justice and pluralism. The danger of relativism in such a setting is often highlighted by critics of a liberal approach to education. There is a danger that if schools argue that diversity is the highest value of all, then from a relative perspective, human rights and dignity of the individual can be challenged by conflicting values such as racism and lack of freedom. The answer lies in the acknowledgement of difference as a key feature of modern pluralism. A discourse model such as that presented by the Core Curriculum supports the concept of consensus pluralism through communication and heightened understanding of core values. This model equates with Margaret Reynolds third approach outlined in Chapter 4 that is located in the recognition of common values and the habituation of students into these values through critical reflection.

(Reynolds: 2001) This concept is also evident in the values identified by the Principals and the methodologies and materials outlined in Questions 25 and 26.

Principals also identified the Core Curriculum with Religion, Ethics, Values and Multiculturalism as evidenced by the replies to Questions 17 and 18. Throughout the history of the Core Curriculum there had been a perceptible move away in some schools from the inclusion of Religion in the title. However, in other schools it was seen as essential to keep the word in the title in order to satisfy the demands of the Department of Education and Science. Challenges to a change in title will be discussed in Chapter 8. However, the range of suggested titles could highlight certain confusion around the function of the Core Curriculum. Denominational schools in Ireland can be termed confessional schools where religious education is underpinned by a specific religion and where faith formation is part of the ethos of the school and a key aim of the particular religious education curriculum. 'Follow Me', the curriculum used in Church of Ireland school has as its first stated aim: 'to develop a knowledge and understanding of beliefs, worships and witness of the Christian faith and in particular of the Church of Ireland and other principal reformed traditions'. The message is unequivocal and straightforward. The key themes identified in Question 22 illustrate the broad nature of the Core Curriculum both in a general and individual sense. This was an issue that would have to be addressed if a common curriculum was to be developed. In Question 28, the vastness of the area of the curriculum, the fact that it was viewed as 'too loose, too broad and too ad hoc' support this contention. A further worrying trend was the reluctance that seemed to exist around the assessment and evaluation of the existing curricula. (Questions 30 and 31) If this was not occurring in the schools and if space was not provided to do so in an already

overcrowded school day, then it would be very difficult to assess the impact of the curriculum on the individual child. I was now convinced that any further co-operative inquiry must include the children.

The questionnaire provided support for the development of a common Core Curriculum that would provide an identity for the sector and help to overcome problems in the design and delivery of the curriculum at local level. The general issues raised around lack of in-service training, lack of a specific curricular identity for this important area and lack of resources and financial support for the support of the design and delivery of individual curricula needed to be addressed in any further research. Any new initiatives in the design of a common curriculum would also need to be tempered with the many positive responses to the current system of localised curriculum development.

As I left Phase 1 of the co-operative inquiry, I was aware that there were more questions asked than answered. As an individual I could not bring about the changes that were being called for but I could respond to the issues raised by the principals in the last question. I could present the results of the survey to a bigger audience. I could bring the issues raised to the attention of the Board of Directors of Educate Together and to the wider community of Educate Together. This I did through a keynote presentation to the audience of teachers, parents, Boards of Management and Executives as well as others interested in education at the first Ethos Conference for Educate Together held in Kilkenny in December 2001 which was the second step in the process. (Appendix P)

6.5 Step 3: Individual School Voice: First Order

This step involved a return to a local setting, a school where I had conducted part of my initial research and where I had been part of a review and planning group that had held three facilitated meetings in 1999. The school is located in the greater Dublin area and has a full quota of 240 children and 12 teachers. The concept of a review and planning group had been instigated by the Board of Management. The rationale underpinning the meetings was to include as many Voices as possible of the school community to plan for a future vision of the school, as it approached its 10th birthday. At the time I had been particularly struck by the Voices of children. They had articulated their current vision of their school as a place where:

- *We like feeling included and listened to*
- *We like the familiarity of everyone*
- *Here there is respect, warmth and forgiveness*
- *The teachers are welcoming*
- *Anybody's welcome*
- *The teachers know all our names*

Children's Statement (drafted with teacher support)

Our school is a happy place to be. It's an environment which is warm, safe, functional, welcoming, creative, energising and reflects everything that the school values.

The school staff had also drafted a Values Statement for the school in consultation with the children.

Values Statement: Teachers

School (Name) is a happy, caring, child- centered educational setting in which:

- *Children are stimulated, supported and guided to reach their intellectual, personal, emotional and social potential*

- *Difference is acknowledged and celebrated*

- *Teachers and support staff are valued and supported*

- *Parents are welcomed and included as partners in the education of their children*

- *All involved critically evaluate themselves, their values, etc. on an ongoing basis*

- *The curriculum is creatively and constructively developed*

- *Children with significant special needs are welcomed and integrated.*

Arising from these meetings a number of policies were developed to improve communication, plan to improve the building, review the Core Curriculum and examine the roles of the various committees. As part of the review group for the revised Ethical Education programme (Appendix: O) it was clear that the values that underpinned the school and were listed in the school Values Statement were a living part of the revised programme. A section of the programme was given over specifically to values and their place in the school. In 2001 and 2002 I had a series of three meetings with the members of the Executive, the Board of Management and the

Parent Teacher Association to review the progress of the initial planning meetings. During the course of these meetings work was conducted on drafting a Mission Statement for the school that would capture the essence of the school community. In preparation for this task the school community consisting of the staff and the various school committees was asked to highlight the values that they felt most captured the spirit of the school. The following list of values was agreed on.

Values of School A: Parents and Committees

- *Shared Vision*
- *Active Respect for all the community of the school*
- *Positive parental involvement*
- *Good communication*
- *Recognition of the role of values in a child's education*

Figure 14 indicates the perceived organisational values that were held by the teachers in School A and also the values that are encouraged in the children.

Fig.14: Values of School A: Teachers

Organisational Values	Values Encouraged in the Child
Respect as a core element in everyday decision making	Respect as a lived value
Encouragement and support of child to reach full potential	Acceptance of difference
Collaboration	Child-centered work ethic
Open	Positivity
Welcoming	Empathy
Democratic	Collaboration
Inclusive	Openness
Acknowledgement of child's individual values and also the group values	Global View
	Intercultural Awareness

Teachers also identified a set of values that were discouraged in the school. These included: *disrespect, racism, sexism, ageism, intolerance, complacency, self-centeredness, abuse of democracy, someone else's problem (SEP,) aggression, manipulation, smugness, arrogance and rudeness.* These could equally rate as organisational or individual disvalues and according to Jarrett (1991) are an

important element of the teaching of values in schools. They work in tandem with the teaching of values to equip students with what Dewey refers to as 'efficiency, sociability, aesthetic taste, trained intellectual method and sensitivity to the rights and claims of others.' (1916:28.) What is interesting from the perspective of the Educate Together is that these disvalues were viewed as important elements of creating a democratic community of education, not just to be discouraged in the classroom.

Teachers' Workshop

In response to the feedback on values and disvalues teachers requested a workshop on Equity Proofing the Teaching and Learning in School A. As facilitator of this workshop I supported the group as they looked at issues of:

Individual Difference

Different Learning Styles

Methodologies that Recognise Individual Learning Styles

Culturally Responsive Communication in the classroom

Equity in all interactions

How to make equity visible in the classroom through the physical environment, the language used, the teaching methodologies, the management of behaviour, the method of assessment and classroom integration.

Teachers became reflective practitioners in the midst of a busy school year and from this exercise the issues of values and in particular that of modelling of best practice through equity in the classroom, became part of the agenda of subsequent school planning meetings. At a subsequent Whole School Evaluation, the school was recognised as a model of best practise in the creation of an equitable classroom setting and in the positive 'characteristic spirit,' that existed in the school. The Whole School Evaluation Report also made reference to the strong bond between

parents and teachers and in interviews with parents, the team noted the 'openness and welcome' afforded to parents and the mutual respect between parents, teachers and the Board of Management. (DES: 2005) The final meeting with the group brought back together the staff, the Board of Management, the Executive and the PTA. At this meeting the findings from this previous meetings were distributed and the group drafted an agreed Mission Statement for the school.

Mission Statement

School A in partnership with parents/guardians, aims to educate our children to be fully functioning human beings who live out the values of respect and democracy in a caring, collaborative, safe and welcoming culture.

Roles

The final task of the group was to clarify the roles of the various stakeholders in the school and to return to the 4 Principles of Educate Together to test for understanding of these principles in action. The objective behind the first task was to clarify some difficulties that had arisen around role boundaries and the need to communicate through proper channels. In particular there was some confusion as to the role of the Executive or Patron of the school and this was not helped by the fact that this group could be changed yearly.

The role of the Executive was clarified as that of supporter and defender of the school ethos and the methods suggested for making this a more active task was through greater involvement in policy formation in particular with respect to the Ethical Core Curriculum and the development of a more equitable enrolment policy and an ethical fundraising policy. There was a clear understanding of the role of the Board of Management as that of being responsible for the day-to-day running of the school, liasing with the Department of Education and Science and the employing staff. The

issue of accountability was the single greatest concern expressed in relation to Board of Management membership. New legislation such as the Education Act, the Child Protection Act, the Data Protection Act and Health and Safety legislation were a cause for concern.

There was some lack of clarity about the role of the PTA. However, it was agreed that its principal role was to have a voice in the National Parents' Council. Otherwise it was seen as a support in the area of after-school activities and as a link between the parents and the school. Finally the role of the staff was very clearly identified as that of enabling each child to reach his full potential with dignity and respect, modelling best practise with regard to the ethos of the school and delivering a quality education in the spirit of the school.

The group was asked to give their views on their understanding of the 4 key principles of Educate Together and what these meant in practice in the day to day working of the school community.

The **co-education principle** was understood from the perspective of gender equality and in particular how this was worked through in a classroom setting. The issue of gender roles and how they are viewed by different religious and cultural groups was viewed as a new challenge to this principle. There was some concern that boys were being feminised in co-education settings in particular due to the absence of male teachers as role models. The **multidenominational** principle was viewed as the principle which marked the sector out as different and unique. It was around the concept of children of different beliefs and none working together and learning together in a spirit of enquiry. The information that children acquired at school about living and celebrating difference was fed back to the child's home and also forced parents to learn about difference and to respect it. There was some concern about the

term multidenominational as it was often confused with non-denominational in the media. A suggested change was to move to greater use of Educate Together to describe the sector.

The use of the term **child-centered** as a core principle often comes under attack by other branches of education, as it is not exclusive to Educate Together schools. It was described by the group as giving a voice to children and making them visible. However this voice had to be mediated by teachers and it wasn't always possible to meet all the ideals that underpinned such a principle. It was important that the school worked from the child's experience and helped them acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes to make informed decisions.

The **democratically** run principle happened in the school because people communicated and listened to each other and decisions were taken in a democratic fashion through involving as many of the stakeholders as possible. Examples given were the drafting of policies such as the school discipline policy.

The group rated communication as the biggest, single method of ensuring that the core principles were upheld. The agreement on values was the embodiment of the principles in this particular school.

6.6 Second Order Interpretation

The move to a local setting provided an opportunity to focus on the issues that were relevant to a school community that had been in existence for 12 years at this time. My initial work with the group was as a member of the Board of Management in 1999. The 1999 meetings set in train a series of events that culminated in a revised Ethical Curriculum, a new policy on communication within the school community and a greater clarity around the roles of the members of the school community. The

emphasis on values was a new departure for this particular school and the articulation of values raised awareness of the role of values and how they are transmitted in the school. When the revised Ethical Education Curriculum was published in 1999 it was built around core moral values.

The Core Curriculum allows an opportunity to guide children towards informed opinions through reasoned debates and discussions. To do this in a spirit of justice, which also incorporates caring for others and caring for the environment is a big challenge but one that we are committed to as a school community. (Appendix: O)

Core values such as self-respect, self-esteem, global worldview and equality informed the development of the curriculum. The return to a discussion on values in 2001 and 2002 and the development of a Values Statement marked a further move in the creation of an awareness around the relevance of values and their role in articulating and living an ethos. The values put forward by the various committees, vary slightly to those developed by the teachers. The majority of the committee members were parents in the school and so they tended to emphasise a shared vision and a high level of parental involvement. The teachers put greater emphasis on values such as democracy, openness, respect and values that they would encourage in the classroom such as intercultural awareness, empathy and a child-centered work ethic. Another important aspect of the teachers' responses was the introduction of the concept of disvalue. A focus on these disvalues must form part of the Values debate in an epistemic community and should inform future work on the Core Curriculum. However there was a general acceptance of respect as the underlying value in the school and the importance of the recognition of values in the education of the children The move towards the creation of equitable classrooms was a welcome further step in living out the values of the school, where individual difference encompassed not just

culture and religion but also the unique learning styles of each child and their need to be included.

The 4 key principles of Educate Together were accepted by this group and generally understood in the way they are described in the Educate Together Charter (Appendix J) and also in the recently launched booklet: What is an Educate Together School? (2005) Some challenges that were identified included the concept of gender roles in schools that have a multidenominational and a multicultural population. A further challenge for teachers in particular was the mediation of the child-centered approach to ensure that children's voices were heard and all decisions were taken with the needs of the child in mind, while at the same time ensuring that needs to be mediated with the rights of the other children. As a result the booklet on 'What is an Educate Together School' now refers to the children of the school and stresses that schools must balance the needs of the individual with the needs of the group.

Felicity Hynes (1998) describes the Ethical School as one where the interlocking rings of Consequences, Consistency and Caring are joined together in a Borromean Knot of Ethics. If one ring is cut then the whole system falls apart. An ethical community needs to be a caring one as espoused by Bateson: 1994; Frankfurt: 1988; Noddings: 1984 and Gilligan: 1982 and this is a necessary pre-requisite of any kind of serious inquiry. The Ethical School is built on shared values and makes decisions based on weighing up the consequences, acting on ethical principles and responding to the needs of others as human beings.   School A could well be described as an ethical school community underpinned by values of respect, democracy and co-operation. This is captured in the report on Whole School Evaluation (November 2005). 'There is a happy, positive and dynamic working atmosphere and team spirit in the school. Based on the Educate Together philosophy, the unique nature of each child is

recognised and the importance of nurturing the spiritual dimension of their lives.'
(2005:p7) I will return to this school in Chapter 7.

6.7 Step Four

The community of inquiry in moving from the general body of school Principals to a
school community had identified a set of common core values and explored these
values in a school setting. The inquiry had looked at the relevance of these values in
designing an Ethical Core Curriculum for School A. The key principles of Educate
Together had been explored and some challenges had been identified. Clarification
had been sought around the roles of the various groups in the school community. The
next step was to involve a wider group in gauging the response to Steps 1 and 2, the
findings of the research with Principals and the presentation of this research at the
first Ethos Conference in Kilkenny. In consultation with the newly appointed CEO of
Educate Together, I facilitated a Workshop at the second Ethos Conference in
Bunratty, Co. Clare in 2003. The focus of the Workshop was to give an opportunity
to the community of inquiry that had responded to the presentation on the research in
2001, to examine the concept of a common Core Curriculum and to move into the
next stage of the inquiry. The detailed results of the Workshop can be found in
Appendix Q. The Workshop itself was attended by over two thirds of the Conference,
an indicator of the relevance that people placed on this key area. A wide range of
Principals, teachers, parents and other interested spectators from the wider education
community participated. Appendix Q presents the findings of the Worshop under 5
headings: Benefits, Negative Aspects, Assessment, Name and Other Issues.
The majority of those who attended the Workshop favoured a Common Core
Curriculum approach. The discussion indicated that the group was anxious to
highlight the specific identity of Educate Together and to highlight the commitment of

the schools within the sector to the 4 Principles of Educate Together. Maverick growth was a concern for the group and it was felt that this could be prevented through a common curriculum that clearly underlined the ethos and values of the sector. Lack of assessment and evaluation were also seen as problematic with current curricula. Some of those in attendance focussed on the relevance of morals, values and respect in the design of a common core curriculum. The question was also raised as to whether the sector was grasping ethical, moral issues and whether a new curriculum would provide an opportunity to pursue this concept further. The wishes of the group seemed to be for the design of a skeleton curriculum that could be fleshed out by individual schools and used to provide a common induction for new teachers.

The main fears around the development of a common curriculum concerned a loss of autonomy and the end of the process approach, which gave ownership to schools. Another negative mentioned was the perception that existing curricula were paying lip-service to the established religions and perhaps ignoring areas such as humanism. It was felt that assessment of such an affective area of learning could prove very difficult and might involve some form of longitudinal study of past pupils.

There was overwhelming support for a name change but no real suggestions as to an alternative other than the vague area of Values and Ethics. The focus was also placed on the need for a curriculum that recognised the change to a Multicultural/Intercultural society.

The task of developing a Common Core Curriculum was not going to be an easy one and not something I intended grappling with as part of my research. However this was not how things developed.

6.8 Step Five

In consultation with the CEO of Educate Together and with the support of the Board of Directors I designed an Exit Survey for the audience at the first Ethos Conference in 2001. The survey, entitled 'Hopes, Expectations and Experience Survey' was designed to seek out the views of the Educate Together community on conducting a survey with 5th and 6th class students. (Appendix R) The Survey followed the design method of Arelene Fink (2005), where the wording of the survey was kept simple to ensure a high rate of response. There were 40 responses to the survey. The respondents supported the idea of surveying the pupils and were in favour of asking a range of questions about school discipline, whether students were happy at school and whether they were valued. The responses indicated that the school setting was the best place to conduct the survey and supported the idea of an anonymous survey. At this point I had intended surveying pupils in the early years of secondary school but the emphasis of the inquiry shifted more to the design of the Learn Together Curriculum and so this aspect was narrowed down to a number of interviews with past pupils and also with students in secondary school.

The survey asked for opinions on what other issues might be included in such a survey with pupils and the responses indicated that it would be beneficial to ask pupils for their views on: the Core Curriculum, their understanding of what was meant by the 4 key principles of Educate Together, the values and ethos of their school, ways in which their school could be improved and what values they would take with them into secondary schools. There was strong support for the inclusion of past pupils in the survey.

6.9 Conclusion

The first phase of the research was now complete. The concept of an epistemic community was now well established and I had included as wide a range of Voices as possible. Key themes had also emerged. These have been identified through the First Order and Second Order narrative and they were mainly in the area of values, ethos and the Core Curriculum. At organisational level there were some themes also emerging around identity of the sector, the challenges to the 4 Principles, the policy on enrolment and the possible dangers posed by the unprecedented growth in the sector. The work with School A had demonstrated the value of communication and the amount that can be achieved when Voices are brought together for the good of the school. The Voices of the Children, who were key to this research, are captured in the next Chapter.

Chapter 7 Children's Voices

7.1 Introduction

The research had now reached a critical stage. The work in establishing an epistemic community had been a success and a wide range of Voices had been brought to the forefront of the research process. However, the nature of this type of co-operative research is that the direction of the research is a fluid entity that can be influenced by the more articulate Voices or those that have a pressing need to be heard. My role was to distinguish the key issues that had arisen and prioritise the next stage of the inquiry. The first phase of the research was now complete. The First Order Narrative had clearly identified the Core Curriculum as an area worthy of further exploration and it was becoming increasingly clear to me that the next stage of the research process might move into the design and development of some form of guidelines which would support the newer schools, in particular, in developing some common form of Core Curriculum. However, the Voices were equally definite that this Curriculum should not be imposed and that it should provide a form of template that the schools could build on in their own communities.

Other issues that had been raised were the links between the Core Curriculum and the ethos of the sector and the fact that the Core Curriculum would serve as a type of living symbol that would let the rest of the education community know what underpinned the Educate Together sector and made it different.

The importance of the Voices of the children in the school had been demonstrated by the case study of School A in Chapter 6 and their importance had been endorsed by

the response to the survey conducted at the 2nd Ethos Conference in 2002. This

Chapter is given over to the Voices of the Children. At the time the interviews took

place with the children, 4 tentative strands had been identified for a possible Common

Core Curriculum. These are reviewed by the children in their responses.

7.2 Children Talking

Ours is a hope profession. Children are the message we give to a time we cannot
see.

This quote taken from the work of one of my adult students in Dublin City University

captures the essence of the relationship between the child and the teacher. We work

in order to leave an imprint on the future and in my own work as an educator I have

never wavered in this belief. However, we rarely take the time to stop and ask the

children what their views are on the type of education we provide. The work of the

late Barry Troyna is one of the exceptions. He was constantly concerned with what

was going on in schools and believed that the technicalities of research should no

longer be artificially detached from the political, ethical and social arena of children's

lives. (Troyna: 1994)

Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child refers to the rights of a

child to have their opinions heard.

The child's right to express an opinion and to have that opinion taken into account in
any matter or procedure affecting the child.

Articles 13 and 14 refer to the rights of the child to freedom of opinion and to

freedom of thought, conscience and opinion. When we translate this into the research

field it is imperative that the opinions and views of children are heard. This is of

particular relevance in a piece of research that purports to be co-operative and that is underpinned by values such as respect and inclusion and the concept of a rights based organisation. The work of David Hay and Rebecca Nye on the spirit of the child (1998) is a good example of working with children to find out first hand what their views are on the sensitive area of spirituality. Hart (1992) argues that children must fully realise their right to participate alongside adults in community processes if they are to gain the experience they require to exercise their rights as citizens. His Eight Point Ladder of Participation moves from manipulative, decorative and tokenist participation through consultation and towards what he terms' child-initiated shared decisions with adults'. On an 8 point continuum, I would aspire to reach level 8 but in this instance as the Voices of the children would be initiated by me through my visit to their schools, I had reached Point 6 or the 'adult initiated shared decisions with children.'

Methodology

I wanted to discover the children's views on attending an Educate Together school and whether they understood the 4 key principles of Educate Together. I wanted children to talk about their values and their perceptions of the school values. I also wanted to see how values were lived out in the schools they attended and whether these values were similar to the values espoused by the Principals and to those identified in School A. In my initial Survey reported in Chapter 6 I had also hoped to talk to the children about their views on secondary school. However the scale of the work with children was reduced because of the increasing emphasis on the design of the Common Core Curriculum. From an initial plan to survey all the children in 5th and 6th classes throughout the sector, I scaled this back to 4 schools. These schools were chosen through direct invitation from the Principals as a result of my input at the

Ethos Conference in 2002. This method ensured that there was open access to the schools and that parental permission had been sought and given in advance of the visits. The work was completed over a 3- month period from March to June 2003. In order to capture to the fullest extent the Voices of 185 children, I chose an adaptation of a methodology referred to as Questerviews. Questerviews were used by Adamson et al (2004) to conduct research into health perceptions in Britain with a cross section of patients. The method they employed involved standardised self-completion questionnaires where the respondents were encouraged to discuss the questions and their responses as they completed the questionnaires. These discussions were then recorded and used in tandem with the analysis of the questionnaires in order to identify emergent themes. It was found that the discussions provided useful triggers to encourage expanded and more qualitative responses to the questions asked. In my case, I was working with groups of up to 30 children at a time so I adapted the method to include group discussion of the questions with support and explanation from me. Each set of questions was discussed and written responses were obtained before we moved on to the next set of questions. This resulted in a rich source of qualitative data and ensured that the more complex issues were understood with greater clarity. In any classroom setting there will be children with various levels of ability. This method also ensured that the children who may have had difficulty with writing were given an opportunity to verbalise their responses. Slight changes were made to the Questerviews during the course of my school visits and these are reflected in Appendices S and T.

7.3 First Order Description and Analysis: Blue School

Detailed analyses of each school can be found in Appendices U, V, W and X. . The Voices of the children are included in as much detail as space as allows but the full transcript of their Voices can be found in the Appendices. For the purposes of this report I have selected the key issues that emerged from the children's responses. For the purposes of anonymity, the schools are identified by colours: Blue, Black, Green and Amber. The Blue School is analysed in depth and this analysis is then used to inform the responses from the other 3 schools. Where there are key differences, these are highlighted. Schools are referred to by a colour to preserve anonymity.

The Blue school was the first school visited and here I met a total of 59 children. The decision to analyse this school in depth was influenced by the fact that the work with the whole school community as reported in the previous chapter also took place in this school. The school is located in North Dublin and has been in existence for 16 years. I visited the children in their own classrooms and was given freedom to spend time on my own with each class. I first visited 5th Class in the morning and completed my visit to 6th class in the afternoon. Each class visit lasted approximately 2 hours.

The average age of 5th Class group was 11, while that of 6th Class was 12. There was a predominance of girls in 5th Class while this was reversed in the 6th Class group. Both class sizes were large with 30 and 29 children, respectively.

The children noted several key differences between their school and denominational schools. In 5th Class, 100% of the students made reference to the multidenominational nature of the school, the absence of a uniform and the tradition of calling teachers by their first names. Students also made reference to the fact that

all members of the school community including the school secretary, the caretaker and visiting speakers were all addressed by their first names.

Over 60% of the students referred to the co-educational aspect of the school. A total of 18 students referred to the fact that the school was different because all cultures and backgrounds were treated equally. I was also struck by the importance the students placed on the concept of individuality and being allowed to have a voice in the school. This was evident from many of the replies.

Quotes

In our school there are boys and girls. We do not wear a uniform so we are individuals. We learn not to judge people by what they wear or the colour of their skin. Everyone has a chance to be heard and people are respected no matter where they come from or what they look like. (Female: Age 10)

We talk about religions and beliefs. Our school is all- inclusive and we have a students council which allows us to have a say. (Female: Age 11)

Anyone can come here because we are not hung up on one religion and we don't care how you look (Female: Age 11)

We don't learn any religion as a base subject. We study all religious beliefs and some others that don't have a God such as Nature and Humanism. (Female: Age 12)

In our school you can be yourself and dress as an individual and believe in your own religion and still be part of the school and feel welcome. (Male: 11)

We can express our individuality by not wearing a uniform. (Female 10)

The 6th Class group did not expand as much on their replies but again there was 100% agreement on the absence of a uniform and the multidenominational nature of the schools. Specific mention was made of the fact that the school was not Catholic and they also referred to the encouragement of individuality in the school. Key comments included:

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We all work together and learn to get on with people from all different backgrounds and religions

We respect difference and we are encouraged to have our own identity

We are able to be heard about our thoughts and we can be ourselves. I think it is good that we get to express our feelings

No one is left out and we have our own identity

We don't have uniforms so we can be different and unique from each other. It doesn't matter where you come from or what you believe in.

Children were then asked to give their definition of the term multidenominational. For most of those surveyed they equated the term with religion only. However, more than half of the 5th Class group and up to a quarter of the 6th Class group referred to the mixture of cultures, religions gender and social background in their school.

I think there are lots of different religions but I am only guessing. And I love that this school accepts all religions. I think it is a fair way to go about things. (Female: 12)

I think it means that everyone can be different (Female: 11)

I think it means a school with boys and girls and being different is good (Male: 12)

Multid means that it does not matter what gender or religion you are or where you come from. It sort of means all different and all equal. Everyone is different and unique. (Male: 12)

It means a mixture of colour, religion and different homes. It doesn't matter, you are welcome. (Female:11)

There was also a first reference made to a network of schools.

Our school is linked to other multidenominational schools in Ireland and they are all the same. (Male:12)

I then asked the children to elaborate on their understanding of the Ethical Core Curriculum as it is referred to in this particular school. A majority of children in

both classes equated the Ethical Curriculum with a study of religion. The other key issues referred to were:

The Environment
Human Rights
Respect for Difference
Anti-racism
Independent Thinking and Decision Making
Equality
Having the Courage to speak out
Good Manners

The key difference between the two groups was the emphasis placed by the 6th Class on the activation of learning through independent thinking and decision- making.

> *It's about people having an equal share or say and learning about the right thing to do. It's about treating people with respect and learning things from different points of view. (Male: 12)*

> *It's about respecting people and knowing their rights and yours. (Female: 12)*

> *I think it's about respect and courage to speak out. (Male: 12)*

> *It's about learning to work with others. (Female: 11)*

The key issue that emerged from the 5th Class responses was the emphasis on Human Rights, which may have been due to the influence of the particular class teacher.

> *It is about all different things like all different types of religions, the environment and famous people who supported Human Rights. We learn about decision making and being independent and being respectful to others. (Female:11)*

A further surprise was the emphasis placed on the environment. In previous research with this school the environment had scored a very low value rating. The change may in part be attributed to the Green Flag status of the school.

The children were asked to look at the 4 proposed Strands for the Core Curriculum Blueprint and then asked to rate them in order of importance. This was an uncomfortable exercise for the children and for a high percentage of both groups they opted to give them an equal rating. It could be assumed that this was taking the easy way out but the children were eloquent in giving their reasons. In particular the replies from 6th Class gave pause for thought.

> *They are all equal because they all have an effect on your life. If you took one away this school would not exist, as we know it.*
>
> *They are evenly important in life. Without them society would be destroyed. They are equally important for to live a good life.*
>
> *Because if any of them are taken away, all of them mean nothing. They are like a set of rules for a good life.*

These are very sophisticated replies from 12- year old children and emphasise the relevance of giving a Voice to the children. There is evidence of a deep understanding of the ethos of the school and the philosophy that underpins it.

Children were given an opportunity to discuss the 4 identified strands and then to elaborate on the meaning of these strands. Personal and Social were still included in Strand 2 at this stage of the research. There was a marked difference in the replies from both groups. The tendency in the younger group was to break the strands into their constituent parts, for example **personal, social, moral and spiritual development** and then to explain each term. The older group were more adept at linking their responses to their own lives and explaining them from that perspective.

In this strand, the younger group tended to gloss over spiritual development and where it was referred to, they explained it from the perspective of the inner self and being at peace with yourself.

'Know about your inner self'

'Be at peace with yourself'.

The older group referred to individuality and not being led by the gang and there were many references to growth of the self and being able to make decisions for yourself in a mature fashion. Some of the replies were fairly explicit on this topic!

Discover yourself and stick to your principles and be able to tell if you think something is wrong.

Be yourself and don't follow the gang.

I think spiritual is like your fear and stuff you think.

I think this is about developing your inner self.

This Strand helps us to shape our lives and make good decisions in the future.

Be yourself and be independent. You can't live with your Ma for 40 years!

Stand up for yourself and don't be afraid to be yourself.

There were no perceptible difficulties around the moral element of the strand. The responses indicated that the children looked at morality from the perspective of knowing right from wrong and making the right choices.

The Strand on **Equality** generated a very strong response in this school. The replies emphasised understanding difference, treating people fairly and accepting difference as part of life. Some saw it as the opposite of racism and at least one student spoke of the importance of responding to inequality when you observed it in

action. The replies showed not just knowledge of the concept but also the need to be active in this field as well. A sample of replies from the 5th Class group clearly illustrates this point.

This is about making sure that you know what is going on in the world and understanding that you can and can't change what's happening at times. Being aware of countries that have bad rulers and leaders and the problems that this can cause.

To know, understand and be aware of human rights and equal rights for everybody, every race, every religion and every nationality.

Equality needs knowledge and communication between all people so that we understand what is happening in the world.

Understanding and more importantly being aware and acting on inequality

Equality is so important and should be recognised everywhere, especially by young children so they grow up thinking that equality is good.

Knowing your rights and other people's rights and treating everyone fairly and being fairly treated yourself.

The replies from the 6th Class related equality more with the dangers of racism and the need to treat difference with respect, whether this difference was social, cultural or religious. There was a strong emphasis in the replies on the need to be pro-active when bullying was observed.

This is the opposite of racism. Treat everyone equally.

It is about being educated about difference in the world, understanding it and working for equality.

I think it is important because if you see someone being bullied, you should tell because it is important to treat people fairly.

The importance of knowledge of equality issues was also stressed

We need to know about difference and different cultures in order to treat people fairly and equally.

We must acknowledge all races as equal and to do this we must understand what equality means.

On the **Environment** strand the replies indicated that the children understood the concept of care for the environment and respect for their surroundings. Several mentions were made of recycling and composting and the need to keep surroundings litter free. A small number of students did refer to the stewardship aspect and the need to protect the environment for future generations. There were also a limited number of references to sustainable development and the need to keep the balance right in the environment in order to protect it. Sample quotes included:

It's our job to take care of the environment because everyone has to live here.

We should respect the environment so that the next generation can enjoy it too.

Don't waste our world through pollution.

We need to care so that in years to come the world will still be here.

If we don't care for the environment, we will upset the balance in nature and destroy it.

The 6th Class group tended to highlight the stewardship aspect a little more strongly.

The environment is important because we need to care for the habitats of animals and this is true even in big cities like Dublin.

I think that we should look after the Earth because when our kids grow up they will have to use gas masks like in Japan.

Look after the Earth and respect it in the same way as we respect everything else in life.

There are more than just humans on the planet. We are the one's who do the damage though.

The section on **Belief Systems** was answered quite comprehensively by both groups but there was some confusion between this Strand and the Equality strand. They argued that it was not necessary to divide the strands because if we believed in

equality for all then we also believed in the right of people to have different beliefs, be they god based or otherwise. Surprisingly, this argument was not posed in the other schools but it did form a major part of the discussions on the part of the Curriculum group that drafted the Learn Together Programme.

To respect other religions we need to have knowledge of them and understand them.

It is not about belief in any one God. People have many beliefs. We need to know about them but we hold our own beliefs also.

This is about equality, not difference.

People are different and religions are different. Our school teaches us about these differences so that we learn to treat people with respect and equality.

The 5th Class picked up on non-theistic belief systems and two replies in particular illustrate the importance of this aspect of the strand to the children's lives.

I don't have a religion but I do know about lots of religions and I respect people who have a religion. We are all individuals.

Respect people no matter what his or her religion is and I should also be respected as someone who has no religion. Respect is what is important.

Questions 12 and 13 were on issues of justice and how they were dealt with in the school. Both groups with one exception agreed that the Core Curriculum allowed for space to explore issues of justice and human rights. One student disagreed and felt that while it told you about issues of justice it did not allow for exploration. There was general agreement that the school did allow children to have a Voice when they were perceived to have done something wrong and that the school rules and the Student Council allowed for clarification around perceived wrong doings in the school. However this was by no means unanimous and other students questioned this view.

The Core Curriculum tells you about justice but it doesn't explore it. You are usually not given a chance to explain because people are too busy.

I think you can't defend yourself because they are adults

Our rules are fair but sometimes the penalties are a bit unfair and we don't get a say in what happens if we break a rule.

These comments came from the 6th Class group and the older profile of the student may have had an impact on the replies. However this comment from a 5th class student however shows a very sophisticated understanding of the nature of behaviour!

I think the rules are fair enough but if you behaved all of the time you would be bored out of your head and I think the teachers understand this most of the time.

The majority of students referred to 'having an opportunity to defend ourselves', 'being treated fairly' and 'having a chance to explain'. The replies also emphasised the importance placed on reaching an understanding of why a particular behaviour was wrong and the need to respect others.

This school is very just. We can have a say in the rules and if we feel one is unfair we can talk about it and maybe get it changed.

In every class room there is a set of rules. In the school there is a Students' Council and we meet with the Principal and discuss our ideas about the rules and other things to make the school a better place. So we do have a say and this makes the school a great place for us.

Justice and Fair Play is important in our school because we don't allow bullying and people being unfair.

Question 14 was an attempt to flesh out the level of awareness of environmental issues. Based on the previous replies relating to the environment I did not expect any dramatic results from this question. There appeared to be an attitude that caring for

the environment was a normal part of life and that there was no need to go into detail

when commenting on it. Children's replies also reflected the fact that environmental

awareness was part of their lives at home. The school may have supported the home

in this but did not instigate the level of awareness that the children felt towards

stewardship of the environment.

I have always been aware of the environment no thanks to the school but yes they are trying to help.

We do practical things here like recycling paper and batteries, cutting down on photocopying and developing a wild life garden and a wild hedge around the school.

I have known about caring for the environment from an early age but in school we also learn that nature is beautiful and that some people actually could destroy it through building car parks and houses. Without nature we wouldn't be living right now so we need to care for it for the future. It is our responsibility.

We plant vegetables, we recycle, we learn how and what our role is in taking care of the environment and this is an important lesson. Nature is special and we need it.

We made a song called Global Warming and we taped it and made a video.

The next series of questions was around student perception of values. We began by

discussing what we considered to be values and came up with a list including love,

respect, happiness, beauty and good health. The children then got into groups to

discuss their perception of what the school valued, their own personal values, what

they valued about their school and what values they would take with them when they

left school. For the purposes of this report I have combined both sets of values and

identified the top 10 perceived school values.

Perceived School Values
Respect

Self-Belief

Independent, free thinking individuals with a Voice in the world

The courage to be different

Hard Work

Being Happy

Being able to work together

Equality

Fair Play

Kindness

Respect was the overriding perceived value and this was not unexpected. However both sets of replies identified the importance placed on the individuality of the child, the ability to think independently and the courage to be different. Hard work and working to the best of your ability were also strongly perceived values. An unexpected value, though it did not reach the top ten was the value placed on good manners and good behaviour. These values are closely aligned to those identified by the teachers in Chapter 6.

Personal Values

Family

Friends

Health

Education

Pets

Home

Happiness

Individuality

Sport

Religion

These values typify Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Family, health, home, friends, the full spectrum of domestic life, are the key personal values identified in their responses. Some of the less cited but nonetheless interesting values included *my bed, my books, quietness and nature.*

The next element of this section asked the children to identify what the children valued in their school. These values were very much in line with the children's responses to their perception of what their school valued in them.

Children's Values of their School

Friendly atmosphere, a nice place to be
Friendship
Allowed to be myself/individuality
Everybody respected for who they are
Being respected by teachers
Equality
A good education
Having a Voice
Being able to trust my teachers
The ethos

This remarkable set of values exhibited a high degree of understanding of the inclusive ethos of the school, the emphasis on individuality and the chance to work in an environment where respect underpinned all interactions. Three quotes capture to some extent the higher order thinking skill of the children in relation to the school ethos.

> *When I leave I will value that I was allowed to wear what I wanted, to be an individual, to be me.*

> *My school teaches me things that no teacher ever could, like getting to understand and respect difference*

Hard to put into words. It is the people and the attitude.

The last word on this topic goes to a 5th Class boy.

This is a nice place to be and to spend the day. Thanks!

The final question in this section was an attempt to capture the lasting values, if any, the children would take with them from the school. Some of the responses were predictable but others were quite surprising.

Lasting Values

Friendship
Respect for people
A good education
Individuality accepted and encouraged
Respect for Equality: Religious and Cultural
Being allowed to express myself and be me
Respect for the environment
Independence
Having a sense of responsibility
No Racism

Friendship is the key value and this was replicated in the other schools. However, respect for others featured in 75% of the replies and the value of a good education is also high up on the list as it was cited in 50% of the replies.

Some of the quotes from 6th Class in particular capture the strong relationship between the school and the students.

I was allowed to be different (Female: 11 and male 11)

I was allowed to be independent and it was a great place to go to school (Male: 11)

In this school I was allowed to have my say and allowed to be different. I was treated with respect and I always remember that. (Male: 12)

This school taught me to value to be brave, to be responsible, to speak out and to care. I am happy that I went to this school. (Male: 12)

The comments in this last section on values were honest and forthright and in particular I was impressed by the openness exhibited by boys and girls alike in expressing their feelings. The lasting values identified by the students demonstrate that the value placed on individuality and on having a Voice was lived out by the children.

7.4 First Order Description and Analysis: Black School

The school is located in a building that formerly housed a school run by a religious order of nuns. The school has quite a dated look about it and is reminiscent of public buildings from the 1960's. As in all of the schools visited, the children were lively and communicative and were anxious to become involved in the research process. After a brief period of introduction by the Principal and the class teacher, the teacher left me alone with the group. We talked about the Core Curriculum in the school and they were aware that a new curriculum was being worked on. Their Principal was one of the authors of the new curriculum and some of the material had been used with them in order to get their reactions to it. Due to a series of misunderstandings and timetabling issues, it was only possible to work with the 6th Class group. This class was made up of 17 boys and 8 girls with an average age of 12.

The differences as identified by the children were quite similar to the first school.

Seventeen of the children used the word inclusive when describing their school .

There was 100% agreement on 3 key differences as far as the children were

concerned:

No Uniforms

Boys and Girls

Call teachers by their first names.

Unlike the previous school, they did not link the non-wearing of uniform with the

concept of individuality. They also gave a high priority to the multidenominational

nature of the school.

> *In most schools people just learn about the Catholic religion but here we learn about all religions. It is a mixed school and we accept everybody. We are all on first name terms here and we have our say in the running of the school through the School Council. (Female: 12)*

The children's understanding of the term 'Multidenominational' was also highly

developed. More than 60%of the group referred to the cultural, religious, racial and

social mix in the school. Some of the more interesting replies equated the term with

how children are nourished and how individuality is nurtured in the school.

> *It means you can be yourself, free to say what you want, dress as you like as long as you respect other people's opinions. (Female: 11)*

> *It means we take any child, despite religion, race or gender. (Male: 11)*

A notable feature of these responses was the language used to describe the entry of

children from different cultures and backgrounds. They were 'accepted', 'let in', 'not

excluded'. There was no use of the term 'welcome,' but one student did say that the

school was open to all.

In reply to the question on the content of the Core Curriculum few children made reference to religion, although it was the most cited aspect. The Blue School had emphasised Justice and Human Rights in their replies. Here the emphasis after religion and family was on issue of moral decision-making, ethical issues and equality. Mention of the Walk Tall programme and references made to issues such as personal safety, love and relationships would indicate a crossover between the Core Curriculum and other programmes such as SPHE and RSE.

The Ethical Core Curriculum is there to make sure that you don't go into the world naïve to the ways of the different cultures, the environment or the world in general. (Male: 11)

I think it is about learning and celebrating all the different religions and learning how to make the right decision and to respect, not to label people on what they wear, look like or believe. (Female: 12)

The Class exhibited a similar reluctance to classify the 4 proposed strands for the Common Core Curriculum. Where they did choose the results were Beliefs, Equality, the Environment and Moral and Spiritual in that order.

Questions 8-11 tested for their understanding of the proposed strands. As in the case of the Blue School, group discussion was followed by individual response. Again there was a reluctance to discuss the Spiritual element of this strand but children did make reference to the growth of the inner self and to learning about all aspects of the self. The moral aspect provoked interesting replies.

This is about conscience and doing the right thing (Male:12)

It means to grow and to learn to make decisions and to be happy with who you are. (Male: 11)

Developing yourself, how we behave around others, making moral decisions and deciding what things are valuable to you. (Male: 11)

The Equality strand was clearly understood to encompass social and cultural difference and there was evidence once again of the activation of this strand in their lives. There was no mention of gender equality and just one mention of equality for Travellers.

It means to understand and take awareness of all forms of equality and make sure everyone is equal (Male: 11)

I think it means to realise the way people are being treated because of their religion and their nationality and to do something about it (Male 12)

It means being aware that a Traveller is equal to someone who isn't, an oriental person is as equal as an American (Male: 11)

The replies on the environment ranged from the basic concept of not littering, to caring for the environment, respecting the environment, ensuring that it is looked after for future generations and an understanding that humans are not the only inhabitants of the planet. The responses were quite sophisticated in relation to the concept of Stewardship and Care of the planet for future generations and the concept of stewardship may have been stronger than in the previous school.

Don't damage the environment, mind the Ozone Layer and try to fix it. (Male: 12)

For everyone and everything, we should look after our world. We are the ones who have inhabited and changed the planet so it is up to us to keep it safe for future generations by keeping it clean and green. (Female: 11)

The key thrust of the replies on the Belief System strand centred on respect for religious difference. The children equated this Strand also with anti-racism, which would indicate an awareness of religious bigotry. There was also evidence that the children had grasped the concept that all beliefs are treated equally and are just as relevant as their own. Terms such as respect and understanding featured prominently in the replies. There was no reference to non-theistic beliefs.

It is important to know about other religions because you won't find it strange or something to be afraid of if you understand it (Male: 11)

If we understand other religions we won't offend or be offended. (Female: 12)

Seven students out of 25 disagreed that the Core Curriculum allowed them to explore issues of justice and fair play. This was quite high in relation to the other schools surveyed.

Given the high negative vote recorded in question 12, it was not surprising that a number of the students indicated that they were not given an opportunity to reason with the teacher if they had broken a school rule. The replies from this group of students focussed on the punishments given out in the event of a rule being broken. These included being sent to the Principal, getting extra homework or having a note sent to parents. For those who agreed that the Core Curriculum did allow for the exploration of issues of justice and fair play, there was still an emphasis on the consequences of rule breaking from quite a number of the students. Just over a quarter of the students in the class talked about justice from the perspective of being given an opportunity to speak about the incident and maybe reach a compromise agreement.

We don't really get a chance to defend ourselves, even though there is a Students' Council. We don't get any say in what way we are punished or what the school rules are. (Male: 12)
We would get punished and warned not to do it again or we might get a note sent home. (Male: 12)

When the replies were positive they placed a high relevance on safety in the school.

Justice and fair play work in our school by enforcing rules and regulations. The rules are mostly put down for safety. If somebody breaks a rule they get punished. (Male: 11)

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With 2 exceptions, the students agreed that the school had raised awareness of the need to take care of the environment. Replies to this question were fairly limited with just a few students expanding on their replies. Most of the replies referred to littering, recycling, keeping the school clean and tidy and aiming for Green Flag status.

Generations before us looked after the Earth and so should we. As you get older it does make you more aware about global warming, polluting the sea and killing animals. When you are young you do a lot about littering but as you get older you learn about bigger problems, e.g. Global warming. (Female: 12)

Children's Perceptions of School Values

From a wide range of values these were the ten top rated values.

Respect for others
Independent Thinkers
Personality
Equality
Student opinions
Honesty
Standing up for yourself
Loyalty to each other
Independent Workers
Obedience

These values bore strong resonance to the values identified in the previous school with emphasis being placed on respect and the fostering of independence.

My school values open-mindedness and being prepared to defend your way of thinking (Male: 11)

My school values us for being ourselves, for promoting and encouraging equality, for honesty, for not being afraid to voice our views and speaking out. (Male: 12)

The similarities continued in the list of personal values with the emphasis on family and home.

Personal Values
Family

Friends

Health

Pets

Home

Sport

Personal Possessions

Food

Nature

Teachers

While the list of values is generally similar to the first school the order is somewhat

different. The inclusion of school size and a multidenominational curriculum and the

inclusive nature of the school are quite specific to the sector.

Student Values of School
Individuality respected and encouraged

Friendship

Equality

A Multidenominational Curriculum

Small size

A Voice

Education

Respect

Inclusiveness

Safety

Here again, the encouragement of individuality is rated as key value.

> *This school encourages me to think for myself and I value that. It values respect and so do I. It is a small school and I value that it is multidenominational and I can learn about all cultures and learn to respect difference. (Female: 12)*

Lasting Values
Friendship

My individuality

Respect for Difference

My education

Equality

Social Skills

Having an inclusive education

Fairness

Open- mindedness

Good Memories

Here again the emphasis is firmly rooted in friendship, individuality and having a

respect for difference.

> *I will take away the value that I was allowed to be myself. This school gave me an inclusive education and I learned to respect everybody, whether a person is Black or White, Christian or Muslim. (Male: 11)*

> *Respect, equality, inclusiveness. These are the three values I will take with me to another school and for the rest of my life. (Female: 12)*

7.5 First Order Description and Analysis: Green School

The 3rd school was located in Munster and here I had access to both 5th and 6th

Classes. The school is located in a magnificent building with lots of light and colour.

The children came from a wide range of areas within the city and county. There were

217

28 students in 5th class and 26 in 6th class. The average ages were similar to the other schools surveyed. The differences identified were similar to the other schools. There was no reference made to the multicultural nature of the school though this was more evident here than in the other schools. Learning and working with different religions was a big feature of their replies, with some more specific than others.

All people aren't the same colour and don't have the same religion and this is normal life.

Instead of learning about one religion we learn about all religions and this is why I like this school so much. (Attended at least one other school)

Some of the more unlikely answers referred to the lack of strictness, the absence of male teachers, the absence of sport other than hockey and the fact that Irish was not spoken in the school. Again these comments came from students who had transferred from other schools.

In terms of understanding the term multidenominational both 5th and 6th classes made reference to the broader concept of the term encapsulating cultural and religious aspects. There was more of an emphasis placed on the welcoming nature of inclusion than was perhaps evident in the Black school.

It means that anybody is welcome and we do not focus on one religion

This, to me means, that anybody is welcome and we do not focus on one religion

Lots of different cultures and religions are welcome. Basically it doesn't matter where you come from or what you think.

Their replies to the question on the content of the Core Curriculum were more focussed on Belief Systems than the other schools. Other areas included bullying, equality and helping others.

Again there was evidence of a cross-curricular approach and the inclusion of topics from the RSE Programme, The Walk Tall Programme and the SPHE Programme. One student believed that the programme was unnecessary as the topics were covered in other programmes.

In relation to rating the proposed strands there was some variation between the classes. Fifth class strongly argued that these strands should not be separated, as they were all important. Sixth class were more specific and gave top rating to the Equality strand.

The spiritual aspect was once again glossed over by both groups. References were made to 'what goes on inside you' and in the 6th class group children made reference to 'the inner self,' 'the private self' and 'getting to know the self'. Others referred to 'growing from child to adult and understanding yourself.' The moral aspect was covered by reference to knowing right from wrong.

Under the Equality strand one girl used the principle of the Golden Mean to describe equality. *'Do unto others as you would like them to do to you.'*

In particular the 6th class group equated this strand with opposition to racism, sexism and capitalism.

They highlighted that it was not enough to have a knowledge and understanding of these issues but it was also necessary ' to know what to do and to make the right choices.'

> *I think it is important to know, understand and be equal in our dealings with all different types of people. I think knowing and understanding about equality means that you don't make decisions and you get to know the real people behind the colour or the nationality.*

The Environment strand was equally divided between an emphasis on keeping our environment clean and the concept of stewardship and sustainable development.

Some pithy slogans included:

> *Respect the world*
> *Wreck the world and its you who has to live with the consequences*

Respect the environment and Nature's boundaries.

The Belief System strand did generate quite an interesting response in relation to the freedom to believe in whatever you want.

Anyone can believe in anything they like. (Male:11)

People believe in angels and some in monsters. That is OK. (Male: 12)

In 6th class a student referred to the fact that it was not necessary to believe in a God to be religious and the curriculum made him comfortable with this concept. Another stated that he had learned that being an atheist did not mean that you were evil.

Questions 12 and 13 on the role of the Core Curriculum in relation to issues of justice and the living out of these principles in school also highlighted a different approach. While the majority believed that the curriculum allowed for an exploration of issues they were unhappy with the way things were handled in the school.

We don't get a chance to explain

*We can tell things through the school council but usually **nothing** is done about it. (student stress)*

A small number of students made reference to the Student Council as a means of seeking redress for issues that arise in the school.

In terms of the school raising awareness of environmental issues there was very little emphasis placed on stewardship and a number of students felt that they learned more at home than they did at school. However, in this school several references were made to school practices that support the environment, yet students felt enough was not being done.

Ideas come up but they are not put to much use.

The teachers think we are learning lots about the environment but if I didn't have a big garden at home and know about taking care of the environment from my family, I wouldn't have a clue.

Values

In this school we had a long discussion on the meaning of values. The key definition of values that we agreed on was: ***Values are things that are important to me and how I live my life***

Perceived School Values

The top 10 rated values differ somewhat to the other schools but Respect does come out as the top rated value.

Respect
Honesty
Fair Play
Responsibility
Self Discipline
Intelligence
Doing your best
Good Manners/Behaviour
Subject knowledge
Good name of the School

The value placed on individuality does not appear on this list, though it does feature in what the students valued about their school.

Personal Values

Family

Friends

Sport

Pets

Health

Freedom

Happiness

Life

Equality

Education

The inclusion of sport in the top 3 was a change here. It was also more difficult to

rate the values as a total of 40 values were listed.

Student Values of School

One of the key differences in this set of values was the inclusion of the school

building as the top value. This is a magnificent school building and clearly

appreciated by the children

The Environment/Building

Friends

Teachers

No uniform

Individuality

Caring, kind setting

Sport

Different nationalities and cultures

Respect

Multicultural setting

The final value set dealt with lasting values. There were no major surprises in this section.

Lasting Values

Friendship
Equality
Respect for difference
Respect for the environment
Freedom to speak your mind
Love of Art
Being part of a multidenominational school
Independence
Love of Learning
Fairness

7.6 First Order Description and Analysis: Amber School

Finally I visited the children in the Amber school, located in the greater Leinster area. This school is another wonderful example of a modern, light filled building. The setting was more formal in terms of layout and structure and teachers were not addressed by their first names. I spoke to 47 students during the course of the morning. In addition to the original set of questions I also included a specific question on non-theistic beliefs, as it did not appear to feature in the replies to date. Children were also invited to make any additional comments.

The question on difference did not generate any further insights but children did refer to the Project displays depicting different religions.

The meaning of multidenominational caused more problems here than in other schools with many leaving this section blank. Others referred to the co-educational nature of the school and 15 students referred to the religious, cultural and socio-

economic mix. Like the Green School the term 'welcome' was used to talk about difference.

Subjects studied in the Core Curriculum did not deviate from the previous responses with SPHE and RSE being mentioned by many of the students. 5th class made greater mention of the study of religions, while 6th class largely ignored this. In terms of the rating of the 4 strands 26 students opted to give an equal rating to all 4. There was no discernible pattern in the other replies.

An explanation of the strands was attempted by most of the students. The Moral and Spiritual Strand was poorly answered, yet where it was attempted some very good comments were made.

> *It means how you develop as a person, how you interact with others, how you make moral choices and decisions and how you look at your beliefs and those of others and make choices.*

> *Personal means knowing yourself and how you are going to grow up. Social means learning to get on with others. Moral means learning to live by the rules and spiritual means getting to know your inner self.*

The Equality strand was understood in terms of gender, culture, religion and social background. There were many references made to knowledge but none to activation of equality.

The children had a very good understanding of the Environment Strand and the school was very proud of its Green Flag status but there was no real mention of stewardship, sustainable development or the long- term impact of damaging our environment. However in the younger group there was clear evidence of a sense of wonder and awe about the environment.

> *All plants are living things. If we destroy them, we destroy the beauty of the Earth.*

The Question on non-theistic beliefs was clearly understood by 5th Class who talked of '*not having a religion based on God but based on Nature*', and, *'you may not have a religion but you still have a spiritual belief in life*'. The replies from 6th Class were far less promising though 8 did attempt it and one child referred to a 'non-God believing religion.'

The major religions studied were listed as Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism and Christianity. There seemed to be very little emphasis on Catholicism or Protestantism, a criticism that is sometimes levied at the sector.

Issues of justice and fair play were well dealt with in the Core Curriculum according to the children and in practice there was strong evidence that this also happened in school interactions. Democracy underpinned many of the responses.

If we break a rule from our school we might have to write it out but only when everyone is happy that they have determined what happened.

If there is a problem we talk about it and work through it.

The replies here are very similar to the first school studied and they seem to indicate a high importance placed on finding out the truth and ensuring fair play.

Perception of School Values

The Environment
Respect
Justice
Honesty
Fair Play
Friendship
Equality
Kindness and Caring
Helping Others
Anti-Bullying

Student Values

This list did not deviate dramatically from the trend in the other schools, though.

Health did not feature. Sport made it into the Top 10 as in the Green School.

Family

Friendship

Pets

Respect

Honesty

Caring for Others

The environment

Love

Sport

Freedom of Expression

Student Values of School

Students valued a 'great building' a friendly atmosphere and having a Voice.

Friends

Having a Voice

Being listened to

Being Treated with Respect

Equality

Great Building

Fair Play

Multidenominational Setting

Friendly Atmosphere

Teachers

At least one student perceived that his experience in a multidenominational school in

this city made him *'part of education history.'*

Lasting Values
Friendship

Happy memories

Having a Voice

Respect (Religion, Difference, Equality)

No Racism

Fair Play

Honesty

Good Teachers

Self Esteem

Care of others

The children in this school were given a final opportunity to provide any additional

information that they considered relevant. They were anxious to talk about the May

Day festival held in the school each year, their work with voluntary groups, project

work on different festivals and religions and the importance of the Student Council.

My lasting impression of the Amber school was of happy, contended children with a

balanced view of values.

My school is the best in the world and everyone is welcome. (Male:11)

7.7 Second Order Interpretation

My initial reaction to working with the children was an overwhelming sense of doing

the right thing by introducing their Voices. Their Voices made the research process

worth while, even if analysing the multitude of responses made a reality of Schon's

'swampy lowlands.' I wanted to find out their views on attending an Educate

Together school. They were clear and unambiguous in their replies. For them the key

differences were in the open culture of first name terms, the importance placed on

individuality, the openness to all religions and cultures and the absence of a specifically religious ethos. The concept of multidenominational was widely understood to encompass cultural, religious, ethnic and social elements. The CEO of Educate Together in Chapter 8 also raises the issue of this wider definition and understanding of the term.

In Chapter 6 the teachers identified the strands that were present in the Core Curriculum as: personal, moral and spiritual, political, environmental and religious. The children highlighted religion as the key strand but the other themes were mentioned in varying degrees. The research identified that the school determined where the emphasis would be placed. It was clear in the Blue school that it was in the area of Human Rights while in the Black school it was more in the area of Moral Development. This finding is relevant to the ethos of school and to how it can be true to the overarching ethos of the sector but still maintain an identity through the key values that underpin that particular school. Another interesting fact was the clearly discernible links between the Core Curriculum and the other programmes in the whole area of Personal Development and self-esteem. For some children the distinction was not clear.

There was strong evidence in favour of adopting an age and stage appropriate approach to the development of the Common Core Curriculum as the 6th Class in the schools were generally more comfortable with stressing the need to activate learning in the areas of respect and rights. Activation and stewardship in the area of the environment was also highlighted by a lot of the children. However, while this topic seemed to be well understood and most of the schools involved had Green Flag status, the replies did suggest that children either took study of the environment for granted in at least one school or did not move beyond a surface understanding in another. The

inclusion of an Ethical Environmental strand seemed well justified. The area of spirituality was another one where children did not seem to have the language to explain what it meant or how it might be fostered in their schools. Some children did make a good effort to focus on the intrapersonal self and the exploration of the private self. This is a difficult concept for 11 and 12 year olds to grasp but as exhibited by Hay and Nye (1998) it can prove a worthwhile exercise. The Equality strand was very comprehensively understood and interpreted by the children and encompassed all aspects of equality. However one group found it very difficult to separate this strand from the Belief strand as they were both underpinned by equality. Indeed the reluctance of all the children to separate the strands was taken on board in the design of the Common Core Curriculum. The relevance of the strands in the lives of Educate Together schools was captured by one of the responses in the Blue School:

They are all equal because they all have an effect on your life. If you took one away this school would not exist, as we know it.

One of the clearest examples of divergence in the perceived ethos of the schools was in relation to the activation of justice in the classroom. Some of the children from 2 of the schools had issues around how problems were dealt with in their schools and felt that they were not given a voice while the majority consensus from the other two schools was that their Voices were heard. These children also had a very balanced view of the rationale underpinning rules and talked of safety and respect for others. Another area of slight concern was the suggestion by students in one of the schools that

Anyone can believe in anything they like. (Male:11)

People believe in angels and some in monsters. That is OK. (Male: 12)

Fears around this type of interpretation were expressed in an interview I conducted with a parent from the Kilkenny School project.

> *For example the…teaching all religions and none…then it doesn't matter what you believe, that was one thing that I felt that sometimes passively comes across. When we're saying that we want to learn and understand about a lot of different systems that it almost suggests that they're all of a level…its almost like going into a sweet shop and choosing one or none and I do believe that there is an importance for speaking truth and I love to see children coming out of school not only having an understanding about what makes other people tick and understanding around the different cultures but that they would have some desire in their hearts to really have an understanding, a truth and desire to understand… (AppendixY P.7)*

This somewhat relativist approach to Belief Systems has been explored by writers such as Andrew Wright (2004) and David Jackson (2003) whose work tackles the concept of programmes that develop a secular approach to the teaching of religion. They pose the question as to whether in a postmodern world we can teach definite truths. In Britain the National Framework for RE (2004) supports the inclusion of children's worldviews including secular philosophies in considering ultimate questions and ethical issues. A world- view is a way of understanding the world independent of any religious belief or affiliation. The problem for a curriculum such as the Core Curriculum is to find a balance between teaching about religion while respecting world-views in an inclusive classroom setting, yet being aware of some of the more obscure beliefs outlined above.

I had feared that the children would have a difficulty with the concept of values. However, this aspect of the research proved to be one of the most exciting. The children produced 4 lists of values relating to their perception of school values, their personal values, what they valued about their school and lasting values. From these I initially listed the top ten values in each school. An analysis of the top values across all four schools identified the following lists.

Fig.15: Top Values

Perceived School Values	Children's School Values	Children's Personal Values	Children's Lasting Values
Respect	Individuality Respected	Family	Friendship
Independent, Free Thinkers	The Friendly Atmosphere	Friendship	Equality
Equality	Being Treated with Respect	Health	Respect for Difference
Fair Play	Having A Voice	Pets	Individuality Encouraged
Honesty	The multidenominational Setting	Home and Happiness	Having a Voice

Many of these values such as respect for self and respect for others, honesty and

equality are similar to those identified by the Principals. Another of those identified

by the Principals, respect for the environment, while not making it into the final list

was the key value identified in one school in the section on school values.

Two schools clearly identified the importance of the school's physical environment.

The schools in question were buildings of architectural merit and were welcoming,

child friendly spaces. Harries (1997) and Casey (1993) have researched the impact of

the spatial formation of the school building and linked it to the fact that pupils

perceive the school environment as an expression of how the adult world views them.

The work of De Jong (1995) also highlights the link between the built environment

and the hidden curriculum. For many years Educate Together has opened schools in

buildings that have been abandoned by other groups, in Scout Halls and football

clubhouses, indeed with the school sometimes divided by two clubs or halls. On the

other end of the spectrum newly designed Educate Together schools have taken top

architectural honours in Ireland and Europe.   The children's Voices demonstrate their appreciation of their environment. What of the other children who operate in less than ideal conditions?

On a more positive note, the children I met were confident and articulate and as one student stated 'attending school in an environment that was home from home.'

7.8 Voices Past and Present

The Voices that conclude this section belong to a range of students, past and present from 3 Dublin schools. Three of the children were interviewed in the Blue School the week after my visit. An individual interview was conducted in my home with a former student of the Blue School who had commenced secondary school. The third interview took place with a group of 21- year old boys who were former students of three North Dublin Educate Together schools.   The interview questions were open ended and conducted in an informal setting. (Patton:1990) They were conducted in order to uncover the richness of the participants' experience and to allow their voices to be heard. (Denzin and Lincoln: 1994) The choice of interview candidates was influenced by the qualitative concept of seeking out multiple realities and to flesh out the findings that emerged from the Questerviews. The responses were taped in order to protect the interviewee against any misrepresentation and to capture the vividness of the speech. (Stenhouse: 1982:p.267) I have chosen in this instance to allow the Voices to speak for themselves without a 2nd Order interpretation in order not to distract from the vibrancy of the replies. Through interviews we enter into another person's perception and see how things are viewed from this perspective. (Patton: 2002: p341)   The responses are presented under a range of thematic headings.

The children from the Blue School are identified as Child A, B and C. (Appendix: Z) The individual student is identified as Mark. (Appendix: A2) The former students are identified generically as The Boys. (Appendix: B2)

Understanding of Multidenominational

Child A: *We are all treated as equals no matter where we are from. We are all welcome.*

Child B: *This is true but the word means all religions or lots of religions*

Child A: *But it's also OK not to have any religion. We are all treated the same and religion isn't an issue for us in this school*

Child A: *I think it's a good thing to be able to ask questions when you have people from all different religions together.*

Mark: *Well we didn't do religion. It didn't matter what race you are or what religion you had. We were taught that we are all equal and all need to be respected. We found out a lot more about each other.*

Boys: *Different religions. You didn't know if people were whatever. Oh, yeah, we were people, not just labels and that was right across the board, regardless of who was in the school.*

The Four Strands
The younger children had a greater awareness of the 4 identified strands than the

former students.

Boys: *It's not like a subject. Justice and Human Rights was how we lived our lives in the school. Everybody in the school. It was a way of life.*

Mark: *They were all important. I think at school the respect for Equality and the respect for all different religions were the two that were the most important.*

Understanding of child-centered

Child A: *It means that all we work very hard to sort out any problems that we are having in school*

Child B: *We are all listened to. In a way we are all the same... ...No, we are all different but we are all the same, all equal. That is what we mean by child-centered*

Description of the Ethical Core Curriculum

Child B: *It imagines, all people, all colours, like all countries to be together. We are not expected to be one religion or another or to believe in one religion or another. So we are not expected to learn about one type of religion or one type of person*

Impact of Core Curriculum

Child A: *Last time we did a project on famine in Africa. I was disgusted with what he children had to suffer and I think we need to understand how they feel in order to stop it happening. I'm not going to eat tomorrow but I have a choice (24 Hour Lenten Fast)*

Child C: *When I' m older I am going to work in Africa. Not forever but to give something back. I think it is the right thing to do.*

Delivery of Curriculum

Mark: *For us it happened at different times and for different reasons. Like problems in Circle Time*

Boys: *We didn't always do Projects. Did we have a special time? No, we did it at different times.*

Child A: *We study it two times a week at least. Yesterday we had the Walk Tall programme and we talking about decision- making and it was very like the Core Curriculum*

Impact of Multidenominational Setting

Child C: *We are part of the outside world in a way that other schools aren't and we get a chance to look at things from a lot of different sides and take part and do things.*

Child B: *Other schools study subjects from their religion but we have an open mind because we can look at it from different angles.*

The Boys: *Yeah, we mix freely with all sorts of people. One of our other friends, he's very religious and that isn't an issue for us. We respect his beliefs even though we may not agree with them.*

Understanding of other Religions

(Discussing restrictions in other religions and whether they impinge on rights.)

Child C: *Right and we think when we look at these...say Islam for example...we think what a strict religion but that is how it is. And for Christians it is also strict but lots of people don't keep all the rules. They just go for Christmas and Communion and think it isn't strict but some of the rules are. Like for example priests can't marry.*

Child B: *A lot of children only learn about what other religions can't do...the strict side of it and they don't know some of the traditions and some of the nice things about these religions.*

Child C: *We're learning not just a bit of the picture, we are learning from the inside. (After being asked to elaborate) We are learning from people of these religions and how they live and not just what is in the news or in the papers.*

The Boys: *We didn't really look at things like that (how women are perceived in some religions) We went back and learned the story of the different religions, the roots of where it came from, it's customs. We didn't really take up any challenging issues. Maybe we were too young.*

The Moral Strand: Relativism

Child C: *There is no wrong answer because it is about what we think is right and what we think is wrong. (Emphasis from Child)*

The Boys: *They didn't teach us The Truth. They told us about versions of truth. This is what has helped me to understand different beliefs and different approaches to beliefs.*

Attitude to Human Rights

Child C: *I get very mad because everybody should be treated the same. We are all people and it doesn't matter about colour or culture. Maybe people are judged by their colour or their religion but that is not right.*

Child B: *If I saw somebody being badly treated because of their religion I could speak up because I would know what their religion was like. I'd have more sympathy.*

The Boys: *We treated everyone the same, regardless of sex, age, race, colour, class. We knew equality was a basic human right and it was really approached from that angle.*

Mark: *We celebrated Martin Luther King Day and we listened to his speech. If there was a problem like bullying. ..... there was a lot more people against the bully. He was made to think about why he did it and give his views. But there was very little bullying and it was a big no-no.*

Attitudes to Racism

Child C: *I think you should avoid categorising people by the colour of their skin at all costs and I think people are afraid. They avoid calling you coloured or black or brown and this is stupid. They are just people.....they don't need labels*

Child A: *God, people are judged on the colour of their socks. People come from different countries and it's a big deal if they want to live in Ireland? We don't own it and there is room for everyone.*

Child A: *Member of The National Youth Parliament: We were having a bit of feedback on racism and equality. We were having a discussion and this.....I have no idea who he was. This boy got up and said that obviously we must protect our culture and what are we going to do if they take over our jobs. And what about the homeless...our homeless people and people who are taking our money. That was what made me go rather than holding my breath so I put my hand up for the microphone. I said, " Because they are people too. I am sure a lot of people in this country are not Irish. They have been thrown out of their country because of war, or famine of something. When we were suffering from famine, America and Australia and England let us in. We have to return the favour.*

Child C: *Look at Spain and all the Irish people who have bought houses there. You don't have people saying: Get out, you can't live here, you're Irish.*

Non-Theistic Beliefs

Child A: *We had Christmas before it was celebrated as Christ's birthday. It was a celebration of winter. So we still celebrate Life in this way and nature even if we don't believe in God.*

Child B: We still have a big celebration on the 21st June for Midsummer. That is a celebration of life and everyone joins in. That's Humanist Day and it is Funday in the school and it is a big event. (This idea has been copied by other schools in the sector.)

The Boys: *Not sure. People who have no religion. It doesn't mean atheist anyway.*

Mark: *People who don't believe in God but they do believe in leading a good life. But in class it didn't really matter what you believed in. It was just the way it was and it was no big deal.*

Reaction to the School

Child B: *My parents talked to me about this and I am glad they choose it. …… I think it is a beautiful school and I never get up in the morning and don't want to come to school.*

Child C: *A school where people listen and everyone is respected*

Child A. *It's so small you know everybody*

Child C: *Things are I think the word is a democracy. We all get a say.*

Child B: *It is not about power. We all work together. I find it much more comfortable to know that we can talk to them (teachers) and if we wore uniform then they wouldn't really see us. You can tell a lot about people from how they look and dress. We are individuals and we can dress as we please to show how unique we are. I'd find it very confusing to call teachers Ms or Mrs. or Sir. You forget the important bit of who they are.*

The Boys: *It wasn't a competitive world. We weren't graded on our work.*

The Boys: *S. still recognised us all when we went back for the opening of the new school.*
The Boys: *Not everyone was confident. Unconfident, is it? But most of us knew how to stand our own two feet, how to respect ourselves and others.*

Mark: *I was much, much happier. The real change was in the last school it was all boys. Also the size. There was no bullying and we knew exactly what it meant to respect people who were different.*

Lasting Impact
Mark: *You can have a say, it is democratic, everyone is equal and you can be yourself and not wear a uniform and be treated with respect.*

The Boys : (if they had children) *I would want them to understand different religions, about issues of equality, about the things that are important to me. They will feel at home in an Educate Together school as it will be like the values of the home.*

Child A: *We have also learned a lot from our friends about difference. I think the school values difference and what makes us unique. In lots of schools you learn by the rules but here we learn from what we do and how we behave and how things are handled in class. We learn how to treat people.*

7.9 Conclusion

The words of the children have undergone a transformation from the level of natural experience, to the world of text through my analysis and interpretation. However, this proved to be the most challenging task of writing up the research as text cannot capture the vibrancy, enthusiasm and conviction of the children I met. I have attempted through 1st and 2nd Level Mimesis to recreate the natural experience as Faithfully as possible. To support this shift to the 3rd Mimesis I have used Lather's (1993) concept of rhizomatic validity with the inclusion of several voices and several accounts of the same phenomena. Chapter 8 continues the journey with a move into

the wider world of Voices at national level and the development of the Learn

Together Curriculum.

Chapter 8 Learn Together To Live Together

8.1 Introduction

Working with the children in the Educate Together schools had clearly identified the values that were important to the children and their commitment to live out the value of respect in their day- to-day lives. This respect was underpinned by the concept of Human Rights and Equality and the knowledge, skills and attitudes gained through the ethos of their schools to live in a multidenominational, multicultural world. However, the research was still at a local level.   I now wanted to introduce a range of Voices from both the organisational level and the wider national stage to put these Voices in context.   The first Voice at organisational level is that of Paul Rowe, the then, newly appointed CEO of Educate Together. The National Voices are the CEO of The Children's Rights Alliance in Dublin, the late Ray Dooley and the General Secretary of the INTO, John Carr. These were interviewed in 2003 and 2004. The interviews were semi-structured and the questions related to the emerging themes. However, the interviews were conducted from the overall perspective of the epistemic community model, where the interviewee became very much part of the research process and rapport was developed through the use of descriptive and explorative questions in order to achieve co-operation and participation. (Spradley: 1979)) I selected the interviewees based on their access to information, cognition of what was required of them and their motivation to become part the research process. (May: 1997: p116)

8.2 Interview with Paul Rowe

First Order Description and Analysis

The interview with Paul Rowe (Appendix C2) was conducted in December 2003, by

which stage the Common Core Curriculum group had been established.   Throughout

the research process he had been kept informed of the process and had been very

supportive of the concept of the epistemic community. I wished to interview him as

part of that community and seek his opinions on a range of themes that had emerged

to date. In particular I wanted to elaborate on the role of Educate Together in a

pluralist Ireland.

Rowe viewed the role of Educate Together as a provider of:

*an alternative, in an environment where there is an overwhelming monopoly of
privately owned religious primary education. And there are a number of different
strands to that role. Depending on the person's viewpoint. One strand is to exercise
choice, and the other strand would be the perception, that Educate Together is trying
to create, what should be the provision of state education, in the county. And it is
trying to recreate the type of all- inclusive nature of the National State System, (1831)
which was part of the initial concept.   (AppendixC2: Page 1)*

He attributed the accelerated growth in the sector to the lifting of certain restrictions,

in particular the 1999 removal of the obligation on the sector to provide sites for new

schools.

The 4 key principles of Educate Together had been scrutinised in the research to date

and it could be argued that these principles had been adopted at a time when the

concept of pluralism as we now know it was not a reality. The CEO was adamant that

the democratic system of governance and the child-centered approach has stood the

test of time well and remain '*a very appropriate model for the building of a proper

inclusive network of primary schools'*. Other sectors may now purport to espouse a

similar set of principles, but as Educate Together understands these principles they

still occupy a unique role in Irish education.

The big difference though is that the Dalkey School Project introduced a system of governance, which defined the ethos, or the fundamental policy for the school in a transparent and open and legally enforceable form, which is still distinct and still quite separate from all the other sectors of education. So for example, we are criticised for suggesting that we are child –centered and the implications being that other sectors aren't child-centered. The big issue is that our Boards of Management operate with the legal charge that they must be child- centered in the decision making process. Which does not apply to Boards of Management in other sectors and similarly there is a legal obligation on the Board to have all their policies grounded on what we call, the multidenominational principles. I suspect that in future years we will be calling it the inclusive principle......... (p3)

The ethos model of Educate Together, according to Rowe, gives a '*huge amount of comfort'* to the community of Educate Together, because there is widespread clarity of the ethical principles under which the schools operate. In reality, this approach offers '*a fundamental guarantee'* that the identity of a child or family in an Educate Together sector '*is guaranteed as a right, without application or without request.'* From a child-centered perspective, this, according to Rowe, has a number of ramifications.

Children from the age of four or five, or whenever they start, their experience in school... is that there.... fundamental to the educational process, is the fact that people think differently, is specifically recognised, and is cherished. From the educational point of view, we shift the entire function of the school, the function of teaching, from a paradigm, ...in which the school or the teacher is putting forward what is right, or the correct way of thinking, shifted that away into a paradigm that the school is saying there are these different ways of looking at a particular issue. And the emphasis is then placed on the recipient of the education, the child, or the student to be facilitated in evaluating those viewpoints. (p.5)

He argues that such a principle can work with children as young as 4 or 5.

But for a five year old, there is the underlying function that if Johnny sitting next door is a Presbyterian or a Muslim, or a non practising Catholic, or a very devout Catholic, that view point is equally valued, equally respected, and the word I would emphasise is equally cherished in the school, and there is no assumption in any way

or any aspect, of school life, that the school has an obligation to promote a particular view.   (P5)

It might be perceived as impossible to ensure that such an ethos could be developed across a disparate group of schools under individual or direct patronage. Rowe envisages that the implementation and delivery of this education philosophy can be supported through the promotion of best practice, through for example the development of a Common Core Curriculum and the promotion of informal Quality Control checks that can be used as guidelines for best practice. The development of a Common Core Curriculum should, according to Rowe, harness the 27 or 28 years of experience of Educate Together and distill this core experience, so that it can be used as a starting point, which can be enriched and improved. He considered the term Blueprint, adopted by the design team, inappropriate for such a model, as it suggested a dogmatic approach that must be followed by all.

The epistemic community demonstrated that there are many interpretations of the multidenominational principle and while Paul Rowe acknowledged this, he also cautioned against losing a successful brand.

> *The way we use the term in the Educate Together model, is that the school starts from a fundamental acceptance of the core identity of the child, ... And it is particularly defined in religious, cultural and social background terms, which is far wider than just simply the sense of denominational as recognised through religious affiliation. ... ... The name doesn't necessarily capture that but is the reality. (p11)*

Another issue that arose during the interview was the denominational nature of the Colleges of Education in Ireland and the lack of any specific provision for the preparation of teachers to work in an Educate Together school that has a specific form of governance and a multidenominational ethos. While acknowledging the fantastic contribution that teachers make to the sector, despite any formal training, Paul Rowe stated that the situation is far from ideal.

So there is quite a lot of work to be done in this area. And one of the things that we are quite concerned about is the rather easy way in which teacher training colleges and teachers unions, just say well, any properly qualified INTO member or person going through the teacher training college can automatically work in different ethical environments. And there has to be specific recognition from the teacher training colleges for teachers who wish to work in our sector. (p.9)

The Educate Together sector, according to Rowe, supports the concept of state owned schools and believes that the state should also provide for the training of teachers for all sectors.

Well I think the vast amount of state funding going into the running of teacher training colleges has to mean something. I mean you can say on the record that we are very disappointed historically that the State or the teacher training institutions have not picked up the potential of the Educate Together philosophy of education, and moderate government ...... In particular one, area of research we are directly advocating, here, is the potential for this model of education for the religious formation of children, and would appear to us to offer significant advantages, from the denominational model of national schools. And it is regrettable that the institutions such as Marino, or Mary I, or whatever, haven't actually looked at this. (p9)

The biggest problem, facing the sector, according to Rowe, is the absence of any form of mechanism whereby the Department of Education can set up new schools, a historical anomaly dating back to 1831.

This results in an absolutely shameful history in which, pioneering, inclusive schools, of incredible high quality have been forced to open in abysmal facilities, and I can run through them, and part of your research might to be actually go through them. The Dalkey School Project, two private houses and then on four rented campuses, before a building was provided, and Bray is a similar example and the North Dublin national school opened in a front room of a private house, North Bay one of the exceptions. Kilkenny opening and operating for many years out of a Scout Den, Limerick operating in the Red Cross building, and in two other locations, before finding and receiving any state supports, the number of schools that had to move into school buildings condemned by their previous occupants. The three schools which opened last year in Scout Dens or Order of Malta Halls in areas that state has actually reserved sites for schools and have no mechanisms what so ever to utilise those sites, to create a school. And this is the fundamental issue which is not going to go away, and as I say they are going to have to address, and what we would like to see, and we have asked, is the Department of Education, the planning section to sit down with us, and work a systematic, planned properly funded, system whereby we can create a national network of these schools. And those schools are planned for and funded, before they are needed by the local

community, and the local community does not have to go through torture for years before there is an appropriate course of action. (p12)

The decision of the Department of Education in 1999 to provide sites for Educate Together schools would appear to be support the notion that the State must provide accommodation for education which respects the lawful and conscience rights of families in their choice of school. This process however remains painfully slow. However, this can only be challenged by: '*a specific parent who can show that their education of their children is being impeded and their rights are being impeded as a result of the government policy'.*

The current system of privately owned schools has resulted, according to Rowe, in the Department of Education being unable to reallocate unused educational spaces, of which there are estimated to be 60,000 at Primary level. (No official confirmation of this) He cited the example of two Educate Together schools that had attempted to set up in the greater Clontarf area of North Dublin.

The 3 final areas that we touched on during the interview were the involvement of parents in the schools, the enrolment policy and the possible move into the 2nd Level sector. The democratic principle supports the involvement of parents in the schools as equal partners who have in many cases founded the schools. While admitting that the principle has to be managed through the articulation of clearly defined parameters, where this happens there can be '*a genuine partnership between the professional role of the teacher and the involvement of parents'.* At the time of the interview at least 3 groups were active in their efforts to set up a 2nd Level School. Paul Rowe believed that while the concept of the inclusive ethos could be transferred to a 2nd Level school,

the absence of an integrated philosophical approach to education could be a much more difficult issue for Educate Together to reconcile.

The final issue raised at the interview was the '*first come, first served enrolment policy*' that operates in most Educate Together schools. It could be perceived that such a policy was exclusive and failed to cater for marginalised groups such as Travellers or Asylum Seekers who may not be as au fait with the system as others. In response to this question Paul Rowe clearly identified the lack of places to meet the demand as the fundamental issue.

> *The difficulty with the first come first served principle, is, caused by the lack of schools and the lack of space. So we can either start tampering with the way in which we choose to get in to a school. ....Or else we can address that there are more people and more children going to our schools and we need to provide more and more spaces to accommodate demand. (p19)*

8.3: Interview with John Carr: General Secretary of the INTO

The interview with John Carr, (Appendix D2) was conducted in his office in the INTO and had been approved by his Press Secretary in advance. The purpose of the interview was to seek his views on the role of Educate Together, to explore the teaching of religion in schools, to examine the role of the Colleges of Education in the training of teachers to teach in multidenominational settings and to ascertain the views of the INTO on the issue of school accommodation within the Educate Together sector.

In reply to the question on the role of Educate Together in Irish education John Carr equated the development of the sector with the predominantly denominational nature of primary schools and their inability to accommodate difference.

They'll tolerate difference but within the existing programme they're not capable of reaching out and accommodating and giving I suppose equal rights to the children of different faiths and belief systems and as a result of that parents feel a need to create a different type of school. (p1)

He regretted that the existing system did not accommodate difference in a way '*that would nullify the demand for alternative types of schooling.*' Later in the interview he referred to the Churches position as one of ' tolerant indifference or even hostile contempt for other religions.' (p5) He questioned the concept of multidenominational as the term would imply that all children would have equal rights within that denomination. The schools might more correctly be called interfaith schools. Whether difference can be accommodated under a denominational ethos according to Carr, is difficult but not impossible but ' *a lot of work has to be done before the mindset of the church leaders change to accommodate difference*'.

The fact that many parents are indifferent to religion nowadays, in light of the fact that priests are less supporting and indeed many young teachers are non practising, then the question arises as to what we mean now by a particular ethos and whether or not the church would recognise that there are differences and that the churches should be reaching out to accommodate those differences. (p2)

During the course of the interview Carr voiced the opinion that the current system of setting up Educate Together schools in green field sites could be perceived as taking away choice from parents. His preferred option would be a community school model where the state would support the access of various beliefs and faiths.

Now whether Educate Together fits into a community school concept is a political issue I suppose, what need does the church have to be involved in education if it isn't interested in ensuring that it has a particular ethos? At that stage would the church say well look lets have an ethical programme and religious education programme and at that stage then I think the church's role would probably diminish because why would you need to control schools after that …… (p.3)

He expressed the opinion that the growth in the sector was as much due to the perception of parental control, a smaller context, a family type climate, freely available transport and a child-centered curriculum as it was to the multidenominational principle.

> *I think all of those issues influence parents, particularly the naïve parent at local level where there isn't a school and now somebody comes in to persuade them to go a particular route, they like what they hear and I think that that has as much to do with the establishment of multi denominational schools as indeed has the whole denominationa,. I don't think that's an issue at all. There are certain parents who like the idea of their children being brought up with openness to different faiths etc but for the vast majority of parents I don't think that's the reason. (p.8)*

For other educated, reasonably well off parents, according to Carr the impetus may be led by a dissatisfaction with the local school and so parents start with the notion of a co-educational school, then add on the multidenominational concept. Carr believes that the churches can accommodate other belief systems without abandoning their own ethos, an ethos that is firmly rooted in traditions such as St. Patrick's Day. Culture, according to Carr should be capable of being accommodated within the religious education programme. Should things continue as they are, Carr envisages a future where:

> *we'll end up in 20 or 30 years time in as bad a position as we are now because it will depend then on who is in first and it appears in an area like Liffey Valley and I understand somewhere up around Sandyford and a few others, that the Educate Together, because they are organised now, whereas the church was organised 20 years ago, they're in first with a particular message, which is attractive to people who as yet are not sending their children to school or some may well be and that we're just replacing one particular structure with another. (p.10)*

Prior to this interview the INTO had held a conference on the Teaching of Religion in the Primary School. (2003) Carr made reference to the reliance of the Catholic Church

on schools to provide religious instruction for the Sacraments and their reliance on teachers to:

provide the introduction and the formation which raises a strong ethical question that you are as a teacher responsible to the curriculum for the formation of a child in a particular faith. A faith that you yourself do not believe necessarily nor don't practice and you are inculcating a view that you do not believe yourself and how fair are you as a professional with professional responsibilities and professional integrity, how fair are you to yourself and to the child if you're in that position and you're forced, that may be the wrong word but you're obliged by the system to be responsible for the religious formation (p2)

In response to whether an ethical education programme such as Learn Together model should become more widespread he believed that the INTO supported the notion of religious education and didn't have a difficulty in introducing children to the beliefs and viewpoints of other religions, many of which contain the same characteristics of dignity, love, caring and compassion.

We probably haven't gone further than saying there should be a religious education programme therefore that would assume a God...and would assume that there would be a reasonable amount of time given to the articles or whatever you call it of the particular faith as opposed to ignoring them and saying well we're not going to tell the kids about what the Catholics believe or what the Church of Ireland believe or what's the difference between them and that. (p4)

Paul Rowe, in the previous interview had criticised the denominational stance of the Colleges of Education and John Carr was equally critical, though he did acknowledge that without an NCCA accredited module for religious education the role of the colleges was to produce teachers for the secular end of instruction. The NCCA had been approached to begin the process of designing such a programme but this to date has not occurred. However he did agree that if the Church could move from the stance that the Catholic Church is the *only true path to salvation,* the need for a denominational structure in the colleges would disappear.

Within schools Carr believes that a lot of attributes of multidenominational education are present because of the professionalism of the teacher and their desire to be inclusive of all children, citing the Dunboyne situation as an example of this in practice. Such problems that may arise at local level, according to Carr, in areas where Educate Together opens new schools, relate to teachers who end up on the denominational panel because of falling numbers. However, the INTO does not involve itself in the establishment of schools. In terms of substandard accommodation, Carr had made a statement at the INTO Congress (2003) that the state should insist that sanctioned schools should open in suitable premises.

> *The stance I took, I could have taken a stance, unless there's a premises don't sanction, but I took the opposite, if you're going to sanction a school and the parents have the right to have a school sanctioned then you've an obligation to provide for those children the same as any other child. (P.12)*

Carr returned to the question of ethos at the end of the interview and referred to the isolation of the teacher in the denominational school.

> *I made the point before that teachers stand alone and are isolated in relation to this ethos thing and the question of ethos. And in future we have to ask ourselves the question is the teacher going to be the only person responsible for maintaining the ethos when the teacher is indifferent or has stopped practising.... (P13),*

The solution, from John Carr's perspective, may not lie with multidenominational schools or with different faith schools for each tradition, it may best lie in ensuring that all schools reflect the diversity within their community.

8.4 Interview with Ray Dooley

At the time of the interview in 2003, (Appendix E2) the late Ray Dooley, was CEO of the Children's Rights Alliance, an organisation that oversees the full implementation

of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. I wished to follow up on some points made by Dooley at his keynote speech in Citywest for the 3rd Educate Together Ethos Conference in 2003. In particular I wanted to probe further into the rights of the child in terms of school choice and school ethos. I began by seeking his views on Educate Together.

> *I understand the practice here has been to have turned over much of the education to the various Catholic orders, with a small amount of education being provided by Protestant churches. And I understand that the impetus to a large degree for Educate Together was to provide a non-denominational educational setting, that's my understanding at least. However much of the focus of Educate Together goes well beyond that, I see it in terms of its link to the Convention, in terms of the basic principles of the convention of which there are 4. One of them is the participation of children, making sure the children have a voice, another is the principle of non- discrimination, all children have all of the rights in the Convention and all of those rights have to be respected equally. Third would be the requirement that in matters affecting children that the best interest of the child be a primary consideration and the fourth is the principle that all children have the right to the full development of their entire potential. Educate Together in its practice not only upholds but seems to me makes real those principles, acts on those principles in ways that are quite admirable and quite exemplary I think for other institutions. (p.2/3)*

It was his opinion that Educate Together was uniquely positioned to fulfil all of these principles in Irish education. In terms of the participation of children, Dooley believed that the Voices of children should be heard from the perspective of a ' *basic moral universal understanding'* that those who are affected by decisions should have their voices heard. There are no specific guidelines on how this can be achieved in practice. There was a perceived reluctance on the part of the Alliance to put forward a model of best practice but Dooley believed that ' *the Alliance would support such a model being developed'.*

> *The whole issue of rights is another story, one could say obligations as well as rights when discussing the subject matter, particularly with respect to children. Because every article of the UN Convention establishes that a right carries with it a set of obligations that the state has and that public bodies generally have to make sure that those rights are secure, particularly in terms of children, that's generally*

true for human rights   The Convention on Rights of the Child is certainly a good
model to begin practice   (p.5)

The Alliance would also be reluctant to get involved in enrolment policies at local

level that might be seen as discriminatory.

I mean there are many procedures, maybe they're not all equally valid but there
are certainly many that are reasonable and if we see that there are reasonable
efforts being taken and best efforts being made then I don't see us having any
organisational...to be critical or to insist that a same model be adhered to. (P.6)

However, in relation to the training of teachers to work with children from other

cultures, he was more forthcoming.

The convention is very explicit specifically in, generally in strictly discrimination
principle but specifically with respect to the rights of refugees or those who are
seeking asylum and making sure that they be provided the same level of education
that is otherwise available to society is something that we would insist upon. Not
only is it stipulated in the UN convention, it's a constitutional right here in Ireland.
(p.8)

The key question was whether children should be allowed to choose the type of

education they wanted. However, while Dooley believed that the Alliance would

support the viewpoint that the Voice of the child should be listened to, the Convention

does not erode the rights of the parent. In relation to whether a child could claim

discrimination under the terms of the Convention if he/she was excluded from a

religion class, Dooley agreed that this should happen but the outcome of such a

complaint is less clear-cut.

We would insist that those who are empowered with making the decisions put the
best interest of the child, put a primary consideration on that. Now is there a
scoring mechanism that we would use, no, but you can tell, there is a difference
between decision making processes that put weight on, take the child's best interest
into consideration and don't. (P. 10)

At this point in the interview Dooley mentioned the Dunboyne incident and whether the Alliance should get involved in similar type situations. One of the difficulties is that children do not come under the remit of Irish Equality Legislation. Under the 9 grounds, children are excluded up to the age of 18. However this concept has been challenged with the Equality Authority.

The final question was in relation to whether Educate Together should be more pro-active in promoting its agenda in the public domain. His response was supportive of the work being done by the schools in the promotion of human rights

> *I think that what's done in the classroom is ultimately most important and I think the emphasis on a curriculum that is supportive of human rights generally is what children's rights are about, children literally have, one of their rights it the right to, not just not be discriminated against but to grow up in a culture which respects human rights generally. To not learn that you have rights and that other people have basic rights would be a terrible disservice to children and a violation of their rights and conversely the extent to which that is incorporated into the curriculum is part of making their rights real because if people are not aware, if children are not aware of their rights, people generally not aware of their rights, you can be sure they're not getting realised... (p.13)*

8.5 Second Order Interpretation

The additional Voices, while on the periphery of the epistemic community, served a dual purpose in the research process. These were key informants who represented the Educate Together sector, the teachers' union and the Children's Rights Alliance. There was evidence of some discord among the Voices in particular that of Educate Together and the INTO. The role and function of Educate Together in a pluralist Ireland, while endorsed by Paul Rowe and Ray Dooley, was brought into question by John Carr. There are key areas of John Carr's interview that need to be addressed by Educate Together.

- That the current system of setting up Educate Together schools in green field sites could be perceived as taking away choice from parents

- That the majority of parents are more influenced by issues such as the perceived involvement of parents in Educate Together schools than they are in the multidenominational principle

- That teachers in denominational schools may lose their positions and be forced on to redeployment panels when a new Educate Together school opens in an area.

- That the growth of Educate Together as a patron could ensure that in time it will become as bureaucratic and as far removed from its local parent as the Church is today.

The lack of interest in a specifically multidenominational ethos was also voiced in my interview with a parent from the Kilkenny School Project.

I think there's a lot of disaffected people that have come to the school and feel quite strongly, they've got an anti single denominational view… schools aren't just a refuge for the disaffected but can get across the message that our schools ….and I actually think if its done right we can get across the message that our schools are about more than that. They are about those who are truly affected and engaged.
(Appendix Y)

While all 3 Voices endorse the concept of a form of Ethical Education curriculum, its function may not be viewed in the same light by all three. The INTO would support the development of a Religious Education Curriculum and had already been in negotiation with the NCCA to draft such a programme. Subsequent to this interview the Irish Catholic Bishops Conference set up a consultation process to develop a National Directory for Catechetics that would guide how religion is taught in Ireland. (May 2005) This body has not yet reported its findings. The Children's Rights

Alliance support the Rights based approach that would underpin the Learn Together Programme. From the perspective of Educate Together the newly proposed programme could be used as a model for all schools.

There are important messages contained here also for the Colleges of Education. The predominantly denominational ethos that still prevails may be a stumbling block to the training of teachers for a multicultural environment. This issue had not been directly challenged by either the Children's Rights Alliance or by Educate Together. From the perspective of the INTO the key issue was the absence of an NCCA accredited Religious Education programme. Therefore the Colleges could only provide training for the secular side of teaching. With the launch of the Learn Together programme, this situation was to change as will be highlighted in Chapter 9.

There was agreement between the INTO and Educate Together on the need to ensure that schools opened in buildings that reached an acceptable level of accommodation for teachers and children. In reality schools continue to open in sub-standard accommodation and this is an issue between the INTO and the Department of Education as to whether such schools should be sanctioned or not. This situation is still not resolved. The interviews demonstrated that in a changing Ireland, the old system of denominational education needs to be challenged. How the various stakeholders in Irish education respond to this challenge will impact on the future direction of Irish primary education. The biggest challenge for Educate Together is in how it responds to the increasing demands for more multidenominational schools and how it ensures that the guiding principles of Educate Together continue to be respected in the schools under its patronage and those with individual patronage that

adopt the moniker of Educate Together. The next section of this chapter outlines one of those responses: the development of the Learn Together Curriculum.

8.6 Learn Together First Order Description and Analysis

As a result of the Bunratty Workshop (Chapter 6) I was approached by the National Office to support the development of a Blueprint for a Common Core Curriculum for the schools under their direct patronage. This request was also formalised through the Board of Directors at its May 2002 meeting. (The term Blueprint was later replaced with the term Guidelines for reasons outlined in the interview with Paul Rowe. (Appendix C2) A subset of the epistemic community was thus formed to further the development of this programme. Mary Kelleher, an Educate Together Director and former parent in the sector had already begun work on identifying materials to support new schools in the area of the Common Core Curriculum. She had also worked on areas of ethos as a Board member in one of the schools. Frieda McGovern, a Principal with many years experience and with a strong commitment to the Core Curriculum also agreed to support the development of a set of guidelines for new schools. I had worked with this Principal on her Board of Management and on the Core Curriculum Development Group and also with the school community in a review of ethos and values. I had always been impressed by her vision and her commitment to ethos and I knew that she had worked with the Department of Education in designing curricula for the Early Start Programme. The final member of the group was Paddie Murphy, Principal of Rathfarnham Educate Together since 1990 (previously South City). Paddie Murphy had also served as a Director of Educate

Together and was gently persuaded to become part of this new stem of the epistemic community.

Two informal meetings were held in June and August to look at what had been achieved to date and to find some agreement on the next stage of the process. The three co-inquirers who had joined me for this section of the research journey had attended the presentations at the Ethos Conferences in 2001 and 2002 and were familiar with the research up to this point. Three key themes dominated the initial meetings. Foremost of these was the huge responsibility that we had taken on board to draft a common curriculum that would adequately address the needs of the schools without losing the sense of ownership and achievement that schools felt when they worked on the design of their own individual programmes. The second concern was that we as a group would acknowledge the immense work that had been undertaken by schools in drafting a Core Curriculum and publishing this within the individual schools. This huge task and the expense and time associated with it was well recognised by each of us as we had been involved in such processes within the previous 3 years. We did not wish to antagonise or cause any form of division within the sector. Our final concern was around the nature of the task. It was unclear whether this work would result in a specific curriculum that would be adopted by all the schools in the sector or just the schools under the patronage of Educate Together and whether our remit was to provide a full curriculum or a set of guidelines. At a meeting of the Board of Directors in September of 2002 it was agreed that the group would begin work on a set of guidelines or a blueprint that would support new schools and that the work of the group would come under the remit of the Education Committee of the Board of Directors. Other schools within the sector would be

invited to support the new curriculum and to take it on board in their schools if they felt this was appropriate.

In my capacity as Director I reported on the progress of the group at regular intervals. All the work of the Education Committee between September 2002 and March 2004 was focussed on the task of drafting the curriculum blueprint. In the course of the two initial meetings it was decided to develop a Core Curriculum Blueprint and to adopt the spiral approach that underpinned the Revised Curriculum for Primary Schools. (1999). This approach selects a particular strand or topic and develops this throughout the lifetime of the child. The development of the theme follows 'an age and stage appropriate' design method. The themes are developed in 4 stages: Junior and Senior Infants, First and Second Classes, 3rd and 4th Classes and 5th and 6th Classes. Each programme has a definite list of aims and each strand has a specific set of objectives which are introduced by the phrase: *Each child shall be enabled to*: followed by the objective. There was much discussion on what strands should be included and at this early stage of the process there was agreement on the inclusion of a Belief System Strand. The three further strands emerged from research of the existing Core Curricula and also from an analysis of curricula such as the Walk Tall Programme and the RSE programme. We also consulted the National Framework for Religious Education in England and Wales and the denominational religious education curricula, Alive –O and Follow Me that were in use in Irish Primary schools. Our task was to ensure that the selected strands would capture the essence of the Educate Together ethos, while not repeating material that was already part of other curricula. We began with 5 Strands:

Social, Personal, Moral and Spiritual Education

Belief Systems

The Environment

Justice and Human Rights

Grief and Loss

In light of the response from the children (Chapter 7) and feedback received at the 3rd Ethos Conference in Citywest in March 2003, the strands were revised. A detailed breakdown of the issues that were raised under the Belief System Strand can be seen in Appendix F2   It was decided that the Social and Personal element from Strand One was adequately covered in the SPHE Programme and might lead to further overlap. Ethics was added to the Environment Strand as we wished to include the concept of stewardship of the environment. At an early stage of the programme, the Grief and Loss strand was removed as it was felt that this could be covered in the Moral and Spiritual Strand. At this Conference also, the people present were asked to consider the range of possible titles that had emerged at the Kilkenny Conference in 2001. (Appendix G2) An analysis of 50 questionnaires showed that the word Ethical was contained in 25 of the responses. A further 12 respondents opted for Values Education. However, the authors, having discussed this title decided that it was too closely aligned to that defined by Superka, et al (1976). They defined 5 basic approaches to Values Education: inculcation, moral development, analysis, values clarification and action learning. From the evidence of my earlier research with the sector such an approach was considered too narrow to encompass school climate and ethos, which we wanted to be central to this new curriculum. (Mulcahy:1998:33) Three respondents made reference to the need to include Religion in the title as its absence might contravene the requirements of the Department of Education. This issue arose again at the AGM in 2004 but Educate Together was confident that a change of title would not contravene the Rules of the Department of Education. In

additional comments on the questionnaire the respondents identified the need to include Educate Together in the title in order to identity the curriculum with the sector. Some other interesting titles that were proposed linked the curriculum with the school ethos. These titles included *Croi na Scoile* and *Educate Together: Our Living Programme.*

The respondents were also asked to rate the Strands in order of perceived importance and to mention any other strand that they felt had been omitted. In common with the responses of the children, a number of the respondents had some difficulty with this exercise. However the results were clearly in favour of the Moral and Spiritual Strand.

Personal, Social, Moral and Spiritual: 29
Justice and Human Rights: 9
Belief Systems: 4
The Environment: 1
All Equal: 7

The replies also suggested that in common with the children the respondents had difficulty in separating Belief Systems and Equality. Another difficulty identified was in the separation of Moral and Spiritual from Belief Systems. Finally some respondents identified further strands that might be included. Among these were *Grief and loss, Rights, Democracy, Child as part of the Wider World and Personal Development.* However, the team felt that these programmes could be incorporated into the existing strands or developed as part of in-service by individual groups of teachers.

The stages of development of the Curriculum can be seen in Appendix H2. Over a period of 9 months between March and December each team member took responsibility for the development one Strand. The work was then discussed at team

level and some of the work tested out in two schools and fined tuned until we reached a consensus. The development of the Moral and Spiritual Strand proved to be the most challenging and we struggled with the ontological and epistemological differences that underpin for example, moral decision making. We adopted the approach outlined in Chapter 4 as espoused by Reynolds (2001) and located in the recognition of common values and the habituation of students into these values through critical reflection. The values underpinning the new programme can become part of the school atmosphere and climate through:

- *Providing children with a sense of security and care by recognising the priority of protecting them in times of trouble*

- *Designing and developing school policies that reflect the values inherent in the Ethical Education Curriculum*

- *Modelling best practice through a respectful relationship between adults and children*

- *Ensuring a positive teaching and learning working environment*

- *Creating an atmosphere of team spirit and co-operation*

- *Developing a physical environment that explicitly reflects the intercultural, inclusive nature of the school. (Appendix I.2Learn Together Programme: p.14)*

In relation to the Spiritual element of the strand, our aim was to help children build on their senses of awe and wonder and create quiet spaces for reflection and growth in self- knowledge through this reflection. However we were conscious that this strand could give rise to the greatest level of criticism at both local and national level and we needed to avoid the lowest common denominator of morality in our efforts to be

inclusive. In researching this particular aspect of the curriculum I had met with the following reaction:

I think we can think that child centred means that children can work out their own morality, I personally believe that's not a correct view, I've never met a child that you had to stop because they were being too good, I don't know if anybody else has. Morality and the concept of right and wrong I think are the things that need to be taught, something happens when you try and create a common morality drawing from different belief systems where you hit a kind of lowest common denominator in a sense and it becomes fear of taking a little step too far because somebody is going to be offended. (AppendixY p17)

The key aims of the curriculum were agreed by us and reflect the feedback from the entire epistemic community involved in the research process.

- *Foster in each child a knowledge and understanding of different value and belief systems in an atmosphere of inquiry and mutual respect*

- *Prepare our children to become caring members of a multicultural society with the necessary intercultural skills to enrich such a society*

- *Address issues of spirituality and morality in a reasoned and informed manner*

- *Facilitate in our children the ability to make reasoned and informed moral judgements*

- *To allow the opportunity for our children to cultivate their spirituality in a safe environment*

- *Raise awareness in our children of issues of equality and inequality in society*

- *Develop in our children an ethical and reasoned approach to caring from our environment*

The wording of some of these aims was altered slightly in the final edition and an additional aim was added to the list.

- *Provide children with a range of dispositions and skills to enable them to participate in and contribute to the democratic process and become informed, socially responsible and fair-minded citizens. (Learn Together:P.10)*

This final aim recognised the need to provide knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable the children to become caring members of a multicultural, multidenominational society. We also wanted to ensure that this curriculum would not be studied in isolation, but in addition to adopting a cross curricular approach that discrete time be made available for the delivery of the programme. (Learn Together:p12)

The theoretical underpinnings of the curriculum support a child-centerd curriculum that is age and stage appropriate. We agreed as a team that this would include a recognition of multiple learning styles, a wide range of delivery methodologies, an opportunity for reflection at both group and individual level and in particular the encouragement of reflective practice within the staff of the school. Schools are also encouraged to conduct a whole school evaluation of the programme at regular intervals.

The inclusion of a curriculum cycle (Learn Together:p.12) outlines the key stages of conducting a needs analysis, developing the curriculum, delivering the curriculum, assessing the learning, evaluating the programme, determining any further needs and moving back into a further needs analysis if this is deemed necessary. We included this curriculum for the benefit of the individual schools using the programme but also cognisant of the fact that Educate Together in its role as patron would undertake a similar cycle over a 5- year period from the launch of the programme.

The philosophical rationale underlying the development of the programme is outlined on page 9 and it recognises both the inclusive philosophy of Educate Together and the pivotal role of parents and guardians as the primary educators of their children.

Within Educate Together schools it has been recognised policy for individual schools to develop their own Ethical Education Curriculum. While the statement of aims and objectives for these individual curricula may vary in approach and in the priority afforded to specific themes, each curriculum has remained compatible with

the Educate Together philosophy. This philosophy recognises that children within our schools are given a sense of moral and ethical standards in the areas of honesty, respect, justice, integrity, trust and responsibility. This philosophy is the cornerstone for all our interactions as school communities. It recognises the pivotal role played by parents and guardians in the development of these standards.

The draft document was sent out to a number of readers for editing and correction. Some of their suggestions were incorporated into the final document. Oral feedback from Dr. Kevin Williams of Mater Dei Institute indicated that the work did not have an Irish flavour and seemed to ignore our cultural heritage and tradition that is closely bound up with our Catholic heritage. We took a decision at this point to include a number of Exemplars in the document. One of these involved the task of exploring pilgrimage from an Irish context and included reference to Clonmacnoise, Croagh Patrick and Glendalough. (p40) The Exemplar on the Environment looks at how the strand might be studied in Irish class.

The final stage of the development of the curriculum involved the actual design process. We worked with the design team in PCC to ensure that the finished product would reflect the co-operative nature of this work. We invited all schools in sector to submit artwork and poetry that would enhance the final programme. The final inclusions were chosen by the design team, in consultation with the authors. To complete the epistemic community, PCC is owned and run by two parents from the sector, who understood the ethos of the sector and had been involved in the design of two Core Curricula for individual schools. Prior to the final publication Educate Together took a decision that the work was now far more than a set of guidelines. Finally it was agreed to call the publication: *"Learn Together: An Ethical Education curriculum for Educate Together schools."* This final title reflected the views

expressed at the Ethos Conference in 2003 and captured the essence of what we hoped the curriculum would achieve.

8.7 Second Order Interpretation

Having made a decision to work on the development of the Core Curriculum with a subset of the epistemic community, my concern was to retain as many Voices in the research as possible and to ensure that the development of a product did not impinge on the co-operative process. I was now faced with the reality of the relationship issues discussed in Chapter 5. The active reflexivity of the research involved me as a researcher but I was clearly now part of the epistemic community. Through such reflexivity my dual role as researcher and as a member of the community of research was also complicated by the importance of developing a text for the audience, fulfilling my role as a Director of Educate Together and handling a potentially politically charged environment.

A further complication was the differing levels of expertise within the group. Clearly the Principals were the experts in the group in terms of their knowledge of the Primary School curriculum. From my perspective as a Lecturer in Education I was conscious of the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of curriculum design and development. The fourth member of the group emerged as Belbin's complete finisher and within a short period of time she also showed her talent as a Resource Investigator and also as a very strong motivator. As the product (Appendix I2) was a joint venture I have opted to focus on the process of the design and describe the issues that arose rather than focus on the actual product. I do so from an ethical stance as this product is a joint venture and jointly owned by the authors.

This entirely voluntary process took the group on a journey of discovery that involved consultation, negotiation, facilitation and communication across a range of communities. The final launch in October 2004 marked the culmination of this journey. Or so we thought! Chapter 9 continues the journey and highlights the impact of the response to the curriculum at local, national and international level.

Chapter 9 Opening Doors

9.1 Introduction

The Learn Together Ethical Education Curriculum was fittingly launched in The Ark children's centre in Temple Bar in Dublin on 4th October 2004. The launch was conducted by Professor Kathleen Lynch.   This chapter will highlight the key responses to the new curriculum, the facility it afforded to discourse with other education partners in Ireland and the impact it had on the local community of Educate Together. At the level of the organisation this chapter will also highlight new links that have developed with Ireland Aid and the Ireland Foundation and outline current research that is being conducted within the sector, due in large part to the current research.   In keeping with the reflexive nature of the research process, we exit the research with the Voices of 3 new Principals who outline the challenges facing Educate Together at local level. This chapter however begins with the responses to the launch of the Learn Together Curriculum.

9.2 First Order Description and Analysis: Responses

Professor Lynch in her address to the audience at the launch of 'Learn Together' acknowledged 4 major areas of achievement.

1. That children can be educated together, spiritually, politically, morally, and socially without any need for separation

2. That the curriculum identifies the common values that we share in our humanity and offer a pathway for educating our children to live in a pluralist Ireland

3. That it adopts 'a truly holistic approach to ethical education.'

4. That children will learn to 'name difference with a language of respect.'

The curriculum, according to Professor Lynch, helps to dispel the myth that Educate Together schools are *'are some type of godless or what I might call good-less place*s' through the identification of multiple ways *in 'which we can pursue our God or our sense of what is Good and Ethical.'* However, the difficulty in seeking a balance around the issue of the place of God and goodness in such a curriculum as "Learn Together" is highlighted by 3 further responses. During the early stages of the research I had conducted an interview with a parent from the Kilkenny School Project who had voiced an opinion at the Bunratty Workshop around the place of God in the proposed curriculum. In his interview he raised the concern that:

there is a little bit of a temptation in the whole ethos and the desire to be inclusive that whenever somebody comes up with a different belief to tend to say: "oh goodie lets have a class and lets encourage some thoughts and reactions"...but I think we need somebody...I'm not quite sure how we do it but I think there needs to be some guidelines... (Appendix Y p7)

He feared that Educate Together could:

preach itself a new system and that the new system could be driven by a philosophy of secular humanism or a new age kind of philosophy, getting all the beliefs and putting them in a mixing bowl and trying to create its own kind of religion, I do think that's a danger and I think that even though there may be an understanding among a lot of people that that is not what its about, but a lot of teachers don't appreciate that I suspect. (p8)

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Prior to the launch of the Learn Together Curriculum we invited this parent to respond to the draft document. In his view the document failed to answer his concerns, as '*he believed it was an impossible task to teach moral and spiritual principles without a definitive reference*'. (Faith/religious framework) While he expressed satisfaction at the inclusion of the principles of right and wrong he was less happy with an approach that *'seemed to favour a common morality that can be later interpreted in denominational instruction classes. '* Such an approach, he believed, might effectively purge God from being mentioned except in specific classes. (Email communication: 27th February 2004) This issue was also raised in conversation with Dr. Kevin Williams, Mater Dei Institute, who acted as a reader for the draft curriculum. According to Williams, unless a substantive moral position is adopted by Educate Together, teaching about belief systems in a moral vacuum, where several truths are put forward but no one is endorsed, may prove difficult for teachers. Equally teaching about moral issues such as capital punishment and euthanasia could prove very problematic for the teacher. (March 2004)

An email from Dr. Gerard Crotty of the Irish Humanist Society identified a very different response. He highlighted the fact that there was no mention of any key figures or movements in relation to non-religious thought contained in the curriculum. Nor is there a mention of atheism, humanism or any non-religious thinker. 'Buddha is there, despite small numbers of Buddhists in Ireland.' According to Crotty, the most recent Census figures of 2002 demonstrate the increasing numbers who classify themselves as non-religious in Ireland as this category is second only to those who classify themselves as Catholics. (Email communication to Educate Together Head Office: 17th February 2005)

A more positive response is identified by Kieran and Hession, (2005) who welcome the Learn together curriculum as a welcome contribution to the whole area of religious Education and Ethical Education the primary curriculum. *'They (strands) literally have broadened the concept of Religious Education as one of the 7 curricular areas and have placed it at the diversity, tolerance and anti-racist education at the heart of the curriculum.* (2005:Chapter 7)

Before I attempt an interpretation of these responses, I want to return to Dr. Lynch's address and her observations on the nature of inclusion in Educate Together schools. She pointed out that the language of inclusion that is endemic to the curriculum, *'will be of much lesser value if all the differences in our own society are not addressed.'* Referring to the old divisions of class, gender, sexuality and Traveller status in Ireland, she stressed the importance of naming and analysing these differences in any programme concerned with equality and justice. According to Lynch: *'There is a danger that we may overlook the familiar differences and divisions because of our depth of concern for newer and more visible differences.'* If inclusion is to be promoted it must be practised by ensuring that the teaching body is diverse in terms of ethnicity, religion, disability and social background. Equally, selection criteria should not discriminate against any group in society.

> *While the first come, first served principle may be a fair and equitable one in a society that is stable, where there is equality of information to all potential parents. etc, it may not be fair or equitable in highly mobile societies with deep class divisions. .... Our staff and student body need to be diverse if we are to develop school climates that enshrine the ethical principles we espouse in the Learn Together programme.* (AppendixJ2: p3)

9.3 Second Order Interpretation

Dr. Lynch's comments capture the essence of what we had hoped to achieve in the design of the new curriculum. If it was to adequately represent the sector and the epistemic community that had supported it, it was important that it reflected an ethos 'where no child is an outsider.' The common values that had been identified during the course of the research journey, in particular the value of respect are values that underpin educating children to live in a pluralist Ireland. These values are made explicit in the text of the curriculum. Both Lynch and Kieran and Hession praise the curriculum for the inclusive approach to ethical education and for Lynch such an approach encompasses giving the children a voice to challenge the language of disrespect. '*Enabling children to have a voice, to name their own world in respectful terms and to come to know the world of others who are different from themselves, in equally respectful terms*' may have been achieved in any case in the schools as evidenced by the children's replies in Chapter 7 but the curriculum guaranteed that this would happen in all of the schools across the sector and more importantly that this key role of the sector in a pluralist Ireland would gain legitimacy and recognition in the wider intercultural and education community.

The key criticisms of the moral strand are around the absence of a particular Truth stance on which to hang moral decision -making. This was always going to present a problem for some readers and in particular raises questions on the definition of multidenominational. The team were conscious that the belief system of no child and indeed no member of the Educate Together community should be compromised by the new curriculum. The curriculum does include reference to the 6 main religious groups and approaches a study of these religions from a viewpoint of understanding the beliefs of others who may not share their own belief. Moral education is not

based on any one religion or belief system but on the values of respect, inclusion, justice and caring that underpin the ethos of the sector. Williams point that the sector may need to adopt a substantive moral position with regard to ethical decision making may be valid but any approach to exploring moral issues such as he highlights would at all times reflect the beliefs of the individual child in the class and the role of the parent as moral guardian of the child. This is the essence of multidenomionational education and in such a climate the moral stance of the teacher is not compromised. Morality, according to David Carr (2001), qualifies as the kind of rational enterprise in which reasonable argument is both possible and desirable. In the Educate Together sector, it is more than just a Kantian concept of respect for others, though this is present, nor is it purely secular morality because it is influenced by socio-cultural and religious beliefs. The issues raised in the responses are not new. Similar issues were raised by Plato in the Euthyphro around the notions of right and wrong and whether they can be entirely dependent on divine command or revelation. Is something good because God commands it or does God command it because it is good? Moral responses cannot be disassociated from local socio-cultural expression and within pluralist communities such as those represented by Robb (1996) in his work with a pluralist school in Buenos Aires, the solution may lie with the agreement on a set of common core values across the school community. Where moral education is built on a commitment to the values that were identified by the children in Chapter 7 and where the idenity, both cultural and religious of each child is respected, then we might reasonably expect that such an education would succeed in fulfilling the aims of the Learn Together programme.

In my examination of Religious and Moral curricula I have found parallels between the values and human rights based approach to teaching about religion that was

devised by the Minister for Education, Professor Kader Asmal in South Africa and the Learn Together curriculum. The aim of the South African programme is to promote empathetic understanding and critical reflection on religious identity and difference. On a smaller canvas it would be beneficial for Educate Together to look at the approach to teaching about religion that takes place in Hamburg in Germany. Throughout the rest of Germany, children are divided into denominational groups for Religious Education. However in Hamburg for over half a century, it has been taught from the perspective of 'dialogical religious education.' (Weisse: 2003:p193) Within this approach, some of the key moral questions are raised and discussed through a dialogue that encompasses the main religious traditions and through creating pedagogical ways of thinking that shifts the cultural focus from the teacher. Much of the work conducted in Hamburg according to Weisse is based on the thinking of Hans Kung and his concept of a 'a world ethos.' (1991) An even stronger influence is the work of Hans Margull. Margull rejects the claims of religions to be absolute and the source of indivisible truth. He argues for a form of dialogical approach that is shaped by diversity, tolerance and active partnership and that aims to empower children in relation to society. Through such dialogue, a culture can develop 'where people recognise, respect and understand one another, a culture where there is a creative striving for truth as well as a reciprocal respect and tolerance of diversity.' (Doedens and Weiss 1997:p19) As the debate on the Learn Together curriculum develops and school communities take ownership of it, these examples from South Africa and Hamburg may open out the debate and bring it into an international arena.

In response to the Humanist criticism that they were not represented in the curriculum, I began a dialogue with Ann James, Education Officer for that

organisation. This culminated in the development of a humanist exemplar that mirrors the format of the Learn Together curriculum. (Appendix:K2) This will be made available to teachers and other organisations such as Amnesty International will be invited to give an input into the development of further exemplars.

The final aspect of the responses that I wish to look at is Dr. Lynch's references to the danger that 'that we may overlook the familiar differences and divisions because of our depth of concern for newer and more visible differences'. During the course of the research process the enrolment policy of 'first come, first served' had arisen as an issue for several wings of the epistemic community. This policy has been tested and found wanting in relation to a Section 29 Appeal but only on the grounds of not offering a place in one class while there were vacant places in other classes throughout the particular school. However, a far more serious issue for the organisation is the perception that the sector is elitist and middle class. Throughout the entire research process the term Traveller occurred only twice. Traveller culture is referenced under the Equality and Justice strand of the Learn Together curriculum and that is a positive start. However the sector was criticised by Irish Times journalist John Downes in an article headed: 'No Traveller Children enrolled in Educate Together Schools.' (Irish Times: 13th October 2004) The article also seemed to indicate that the commitment to inclusion and equality made by Educate Together was not sincere. While this allegation was refuted by the CEO in the letters page of the Irish Times on 16th October (Appendix: L2) and was based on capitation grants for children identified as Travellers in mainstream schools, it cannot be denied that the 'first come, first served' principle does militate against mobile societies such as Travellers and refugees. In an effort to address this problem a meeting took place

with representatives of Exchange House, representing the Traveller groups and Educate Together represented by the CEO and myself. The minutes of this meeting are contained in Appendix M2. While some very practical suggestions emerged from this meeting, there has been no action taken by the Educate Together sector to progress them further.

9.4 Some Outcomes: Local Level

At local level the epistemic community was consulted on 3 further occasions during the course of the research process: at the May 2004 AGM prior to the launch, at the national Forum of Educate Together on 16th October 2004 immediately after the launch and at the May 2005 AGM.

At the first of these consultations, the group was asked to consider ways in which the school community might take ownership of the curriculum. The key findings from this workshop showed that schools hoped to respond by involving all parents and those on pre-enrolment lists, by activating the Ethical Education Committee in each school and by celebrating the launch at local level. Schools should display the topics being covered by the children to keep parents involved and informed and parents should be given an abridged version of the document. Other practical suggestions included providing copies to local libraries, having portable ethos displays in each school that could be moved from classroom to classroom and displaying posters of the curriculum in each school. A key response was the need for the provision of training for all teachers in the delivery of the curriculum.

The workshop at the National Forum followed a presentation by me on the nature of the curriculum and the process of consultation that led to its development. The ensuing Workshop identified 3 key areas: the need for in-service training for teachers at local and regional level, the need to ensure that the entire school community including the Board of Management was aware of the curriculum and took ownership of it and the chance to use the curriculum as a means of re-energising the discussions on ethos in schools by using the launch to host an 'ethos day'.

The final workshop took place at the 2005 AGM. The workshop involved 3 particular strands: in-service and pre-service provision, opportunities presented by the Learn Together curriculum to engage in living issues that may arise and ethos challenges that parents and teachers may face that are not specifically referred to in the Learn Together curriculum document. The workshop was attended by parents, teachers, principals and members of start up school groups. Also in attendance was Bridget McManus, General Secretary of the Department of Education. I began with an overview of the work to date and then the group divided into 3 for the next stage of the workshop.

The group examining in-service and pre-service provision was composed of 5 school Principals. Their suggestions for in-service included:

- The provision of a team of Trainers to support in the delivery of Learn Together

- The dedication of a School Planning Day to delivery of training

- Cluster meetings of schools in particular area to advance materials for the curriculum

- The identification of one person in each cluster group who might deliver the training

- A Summer Course under the remit of the Department of Education and Science

- An Ethos Conference that could be dedicated solely to in-service

- Ongoing support through Workshops at AGM's and National Forum meetings.

- Schools might be invited to video models of best practice and to share these with the sector.

In relation to pre-service provision it was agreed to leave negotiation on this issue to Paul Rowe and myself as we were already in consultation with the Colleges of Education.

The second group looked at the opportunities that might be presented by the Learn Together Curriculum to engage in living issues that arose within the school or society. Some of the opportunities identified included: developing a school garden, recycling, organising a *Walking Bus* so that children could walk to school, examining issues around refugees and asylum seekers that may arise in the school or the local community, looking at local and global issues of conflict, using issues of grief and loss that may arise in school to further some of the bigger questions that arise for example around the afterlife and providing quiet spaces for reflective practice to support the spiritual development of the child in the school environment.

The Principal of a school in a greenfield site, with 32 nationalities represented in it's population, presented the workshop with a list of possible scenarios that had arisen or might arise in the future to challenge the Educate Together ethos. These challenges (Appendix N2) indicate clearly the issues that may arise for the sector as it continues to grow in areas of large populations where there is a strong multicultural, multidenominational population and where Educate Together may be their only

option of school type. The issues ranged from celebration of First Communion to exclusion by Muslim parents of their daughter from mixed swimming classes. Arising from the discussion the main response of the group was the need to clearly identify for parents the 4 principles of an Educate Together school. For individual schools this should be clearly laid out in a document drawn up in consultation with the Board of Management and the school Patron. There were no easy answers to these challenges and it was agreed that it might be up to Educate Together as a Patron of most of the schools in the sector to initiate discussion on these topics and to seek solutions.

9.5 Responses at National Level

The reports of the 3 workshops clearly identified gaps in in-service and pre-service training in both the area of the delivery of the Learn Together programme and in preparation to teach in a multidenominational school. Educate Together had already identified this issue and attempts had been made to engage with St. Patrick's College of Education in the mid 90's to devise a module on its teacher training programmes around the Educate Together sector. One of the most important results of the publication of the curriculum was the opportunity it afforded to engage in dialogue with the Colleges of Education around a curriculum that clearly identified the ethos of the sector. It might be argued also that in light of the ongoing debate around teaching religion in schools, that the time to engage in further dialogue was opportune. The CEO of Educate Together made formal contact with the Presidents of each of the Colleges of Education to highlight the lack of training for those students who wished to progress their careers as teachers in the sector. The Head Office of Educate

Together had ascertained that as well as the denominational nature of the Colleges of Education which has been referred to throughout this research report, that the Department of Education funded the teaching of denominational Religious Education within the Colleges through the payment of salaries of those who lectured on the Religious Education Certificate and Diploma courses within the colleges. Without these qualifications young teachers would find it impossible to find positions as teachers in the denominational sector.

Mary Immaculate College in Limerick and St. Patrick's College in Dublin formally responded to the request for a meeting to discuss these issues. An informal response was received from Marino College in Dublin through a lecturer in the Religious Education department there. The most prolonged engagement has been with St. Patrick's College and notes of these meetings as recorded by me can be viewed in Appendix O2. There are also notes of a meeting in Mary Immaculate College and in Marino College. (Appendix P2 and Q2) Since 2005 Educate Together has been given an opportunity to address final year students in both St. Patrick's and Mary Immaculate Colleges as part of the Religious Education Programme and Contemporary Issues in Religion.

The Notes on the meetings with St. Patrick's College highlight some of the difficulties that can exist when trying to negotiate with a number of interest groups within an educational institute. Between December 2004 and December 2005 a total of 5 meetings have taken place with a number of staff members in the college. The initial meeting was with the Intercultural and Development Education Committee and as a result of this meeting a number of recommendations emerged. It was clear that this group was interested in furthering relations with Educate Together from the

perspective of working and teaching in an intercultural setting. They were particularly interested in the Human Rights aspect of the Learn Together Curriculum and voiced the opinion that the curriculum might represent best practice in the area of intercultural education. A number of recommendations were made to further the process of developing links and foremost among these was a meeting with the president of the College, Dr. Padraig Travers. This meeting took place in February 2005 and was also attended by Dr. Mark Morgan. It was clear from the outset that there would be no obstacles put in the way of furthering relations between the two sides. Dr. Morgan was given the remit of moving the process towards actual input into the formal curriculum in the college. Dr. Travers also stated unequivocally that 'the college was committed to serve all schools in the National Education sector'. There should, he believed be an awareness of Educate Together in all courses throughout the college. Awareness of Educate Together would also be raised throughout the college population. Dr. Morgan also indicated that this could prove a very fruitful area for further research. The work of carrying all of this forward was given over to Dr. Rosemary Warren of the Education Department.

Three further meetings took place chaired by Dr. Warren and these meetings were attended by a number of lectures from the Philosophy Department, the Sociology Department and the Religious Education Department. Discussions continued on the best method to introduce a study of Educate Together into the pre-service training of teachers. Suggested areas were the Philosophy of Education, the History of Education, the Sociology of Education and Religious Education. The concept of an Elective was rejected as too inclusive as it would reach only a small percentage of students. Currently the situation is that the academic year 2006/2007 will be used to test out

how best to introduce the Learn Together programme across each of these areas. A promised Workshop to further this idea had not materialised at the time of writing.

In Limerick there was one informal meeting with representatives from the departments of Sociology, Education and Religion. (April 2005: Appendix P2) Here the focus was on involving Educate Together as part of a series of lectures on Contemporary Issues in Religious Education. This has happened in 2005 and 2006. Other possible areas include the study of diversity from a religious perspective in the Sociology lectures. The staff also offered their support for the delivery of in-service training for teachers in the sector. Both colleges were also interested in strengthening links with the sector through involving more Educate Together schools in Teaching Practice, thereby strengthening the links and exposing more students to the sector at a formal level.

The final meeting took place with Cora O'Farrell, a lecturer in Religion at Marino College Dublin. Cora has subsequently left her position in the college so this particular link has not been pursued. However, she had used the Learn Together curriculum with her students to demonstrate good practice in the methodology of religious education. She believed that an online programme might be the best approach to designing an in-service for existing teachers. This could also be used to 'flesh out' the material in the curriculum itself.

Progress in the area of pre-service has been slow but nonetheless positive. It was difficult not to feel part of education history during these meetings and indeed Theresa O'Doherty, Director of Education at Mary Immaculate made this points to her students when The CEO and myself addressed the final year class of 2005. She prefaced her introduction by showing a photograph of the notice that was put outside

the door of the schoolroom when denominational instruction was taking place in schools in the late 1830's and stated that she felt that history was being made when a denominational college opened its doors to a lecture on multidenominational education in the Second Millennium. The final result of these negotiations was the announcement by the Department of Education (December 2005) of the setting up of a Working Party to examine how to move this process forward.

9.6 In-Service Provision

However pressing the issue of pre-service provision, the key issue at local level was the provision of in-service training to deliver the Learn Together in schools. The curriculum had been deliberately modelled on the 1999 Revised Curriculum and teachers had grown accustomed to high quality provision of in-service training and materials in these areas. The Department of Education does not support the provision of in-service training in the area of religion as it falls outside the remit of the NCCA. The sector was not in a position to fund any major in-service provision as it faced a financial crisis with the withdrawal of the funding from Atlantic Philanthropists in 2005. In-service also requires highly skilled trainers who have access to funding in order to provide quality materials and to ensure a high standard of delivery. The biggest single cost would arise from the payment of supervision for teachers who attended in-service training and Boards of Management are not in a financially viable state to provide this funding.

An approach was made to the Ireland Fund to provide funding to support the Training of Trainers and a meeting took place in the offices of Educate Together with Barbara Sweetman Fitzgerald on 18th March 2005. As a result of this meeting a sum of

€10,000 was received in October 2005. A further sum of €15,000 was procured as a result of an application I drafted in consultation with the CEO to Development Co-operation Ireland (Ireland Aid) This was a preliminary grant under the Strategic Priority Fund to conduct a baseline study to ascertain the needs of staff around the design and delivery of modules to address developmental education from the perspective of 3 of the strands on the Learn Together curriculum. The strand not included was that on Belief Systems. A Needs Analysis Questionnaire was distributed to all Principals in the sector. (Appendix R2) A total of 31 replies were received. I compiled this questionnaire in consultation with Frieda McGovern, Principal of North Bay and Chris Lennon, Principal of the Dalkey School Project. The replies were collated by Frieda McGovern and presented to Principals at 3 in-service days in the Teacher Centres in Limerick and Drumcondra and Blackrock in Dublin in November /December 2005. I was present at two of these days and presented a session on the models of in-service that might be used to further the process of training for delivery of the Learn Together Curriculum.

The results of the Training Needs Analysis identified that most schools were familiar with the Learn Together Curriculum and that it was being used in 90% of the schools. A formal launch had taken place in 3 schools. The Principals identified a number of key challenges to the implementation of the programme. These included:

- Adopting a whole school approach
- Ensuring the curriculum permeates the life of the school
- Ensuring that it is values driven

The more day to day problems identified included the rapid growth of schools, thus putting further pressure on the Principals, teaching in multi-class situations in start up schools, new teachers who have no previous experience of the ethos of the sector, lack of planning time, lack of pre-service and in-service provision, not enough lesson exemplars in the curriculum and still some perceived overlap with SPHE and SESE. Principals believed that Educate Together could support the delivery of the new curriculum through in-service provision but even more importantly through providing forums where schools can discuss, learn and share together the challenges and opportunities of developing and creating an inclusive ethos in an Educate Together school. A further key challenge arises in relation to sourcing materials for delivery of the curriculum. The Principals identified that assistance was required in the areas of Belief Systems at Junior level and at all levels in the area of Moral and Spiritual Development and Justice and Human Rights. Interestingly, the preferred option for ongoing in-career development support was the provision of online materials but this option was closely followed by localised in-service. At the 3 sessions the preferred model of in-service was the cluster model where schools in an area could come together. There was overwhelming support for an all school approach as opposed to a cascade model where one teacher attends and carries the information back to the rest of the school.

Best practice identified by Principals for implementing the curriculum at whole school level included the development of the School Plan around the values identified in Learn Together, putting the curriculum as an item on all staff meetings and sharing information with other Educate Together local schools. As a result of this approach, in-service training was delivered to a cluster of schools in the Castleknock area of Dublin in 2005.

The bringing together of Principals had some unexpected outcomes. While the focus was on the Learn Together programme, other issues also came to the fore. At the Drumcondra meeting the challenges that had been raised at the AGM of 2005 were a major point of discussion. It was clear that the newer schools in the sector, particularly in the greater Dublin area are concerned by these challenges. There are concerns that despite the inclusive nature of the Learn Together programme, that some parents may see a need to withdraw children because of the mention of other religions. If this were to occur does it suggest that as a sector we are not embracing diversity? The clear message from the Principals at the Drumcondra Training Day was need for guidelines in these areas. There is a need to stress that if parents sign up to a particular ethos that they are not in a position to pick and choose what they want from this ethos and that it must be highlighted to parents that the ethos may not suit their needs. This issue is not just around religion but may involve one parent, for example, taking exception to how a child of another family is dressed in school. There are currently no clear guidelines in these areas.

The Limerick meeting provided the forum for a very different range of issues, including school buildings, falling numbers in one instance and local as opposed to sectoral patronage.

9.7 Outcomes

The publication of the Learn Together curriculum created a new set of challenges for Educate Together. On the one hand it moved the consultation with the Colleges of Education on to a much stronger footing than heretofore. While there are no definite plans for a formal input into the curricula at pre-service level, there are positive indications that will happen in the near future. Negotiations are ongoing and it is expected that a pilot approach to the inclusion of material on Educate Together will

happen at Sociology, Philosophy and Religious Education Level in St. Patrick's

College in 2006/2007. By this stage the work of the Government initiated Working

Party to examine the needs of the sector with regard to pre-service training should be

finalised. At in-service level the picture is less clear. As a result of the preliminary

Needs Analysis, a further submission was made to Ireland Aid to continue this work.

The application was successful and funding has been acquired over a 3 –year period

to develop a suite of modules, in co-operation with the teachers in the sector and

NGO's, that will support a sector wide approach to development education issues.

This development will be accompanied by in-service, focus group work to reflect on

the impact of the curriculum on school ethos and an evaluation of the new curriculum

to be conducted by Education Studies in Dublin City University. This is not the full

answer to the problem of in-service provision but it will go some way towards

ensuring that the curriculum is kept at the top of the agenda in schools.

In July and August of 2006 three, week- long in-service courses, funded by the

Department of Education will take place in Limerick and Dublin on the delivery of an

inclusive ethical programme in Primary schools. It is of interest to note that the

majority of those who have signed up for these courses come from the denominational

sectors. Much has been achieved and with very little funding but it must also be

recognised that this is due to the voluntary work of a subset of the epistemic

community. This situation cannot be sustained in the longer period and it may

necessitate the employment of a full time Education Officer to champion the ongoing

research and development. The publication has also generated interest from the wider

European community and an approach has been made by the International School in

Lisbon who wish to adopt the programme in their school. This will of course

necessitate training of the staff in the Lisbon School on areas of whole school ethos

and suitable methodologies for the delivery of the programme. As it currently stands the personnel are not in place to facilitate this training.

9.8 Closing Voices

The mimesis is now reaching its conclusion and over the course of this exposition the reader has been introduced to a wide range of Voices and a detailed level of mimetic transformation from social reality to text and textual transformation. Fittingly the final act of Socratic Midwifery (Schwandt: 2004:45) takes place in Chapter 9. Here I return to the Voices of the Principals, whom we first met in Chapter 6. During the course of the research they have increased in number from 18 to 39 and throughout the process their Voices have been encouraged and their views taken on board. The work on the Learn Together curriculum could not have advanced without the efforts of two of these Principals and at least three others have now come on board to deliver in-service training. The Principal is at the heart of the school and his/her leadership at individual school level contributes to the overall success and growth of the sector. However, the rapid level of growth, the growing intercultural nature of schools, the problems with accommodation and all of the associated problems with developing a new school can present challenges to the new Principal. Some of these challenges have emerged during the course of the research and I wanted to probe them in greater detail before I exited the research field. I have categorised their responses under 4 headings.

1. Reasons for joining the sector
2. Challenges around accommodation

3. Developing an ethos

4. School Size

For the purposes of the research they are identified by their first names: Tomas, (Appendix S2) Gerard (Appendix T2) and Margaret (Appendix U2). Each of the Principals had been in position for less than 4 years at the time of the interviews and each interview was conducted in the school. The interviews were semi-structured and the Principals were free to expand on any area they saw fit.

Reasons for joining the sector

Gerard was unambiguous in his reasons for joining the sector. He had joined the sector in order to get a position as Principal and also because he had worked in Saudi Arabia in a multicultural environment, though the school was based in a predominantly monocultural country.

> *As an individual teacher back home in a denominational school, a lot of the initiatives that I have introduced here would have been done there as well. But it was an island within a much bigger constellation of teachers. It's a different position to be saying the first teacher into the school. You have a much more influential role. In developing that ethos.*

His preconceptions of the sector are interesting in light of the comments made by other respondents, in particular by John Carr.

> *The only pre-conceived ideas I had was that it was very, very small, very, very smug, very, very middle class and very, very exclusive.*
> *It's a perception that the wider education community would have of Educate Together. Which I now understand was coming from not knowing people in the sector. I don't think the sector is very good at reaching out to other circles. The different partners, the different constituents in Irish Primary education were allowing that to happen. They allowed the threat to happen. I didn't know that many people in Educate Together, I did know some but they actually wouldn't have broadened my horizons very much with regard to the sector.*

Tomas had a very specific reason for joining. In his former position as Principal of a Gaelscoil in Dunbonye, his attempts to introduce an ethical curriculum to ensure that children from different faiths were not excluded, has been mentioned already in this work.

The issue of religion as the world knows at this stage became a huge one. All of us there ate, slept and drank ethos. Trying to find a resolution to a difficult situation. When it became clear to me that the type of situation that was going to be enforced in the school was not going to be possible to live with, I knew I was on a sticky wicket. I needed to get out one-way or the other and ET was the only area I was interested in. Because these issues had been resolved and I didn't want to battle them again. But also because I do believe that it is wrong to separate and it is wrong to segregate on the basis of colour, creed, class or anything else. The ET sector is the only sector of Irish education that has addressed that meaningfully.
I think Dunboyne shook the foundations of interdenominational education. It showed that there was a positive motivation behind it of trying to embrace the 2 religious traditions that have been the dominant force in Irish society down through the centuries. But society has moved on and the Christian tradition, the values that are there, are so similar that catering for just sections of the Christian tradition is a very limited way of addressing the changes that have taken place in Irish society.

Margaret's reasons for becoming a Principal in the sector were more straightforward. She had worked as a teacher in the sector for many years and took a decision to move out of Dublin. Having failed to procure a position in an Educate Together school in Cork due to lack of vacancies, she opted to apply for a Principalship of a new school in Munster and was successful.

Accommodation Challenges

Their experiences of accommodation issue in their schools was also somewhat different. Gerard's school had been relocated on a number of occasions. He described the accommodation issue as the single biggest challenge he faced.

A soccer club for two years, a one roomed unit in a factory for two months, a five day turn around period to moving into this pre-fabricated school which has subsequently been expanded into 4 units which I would describe as lack of vision and management from the DES. So we now have a situation where we have 4 buildings for an 8 mainstream school.

I would call it the single most stressful and only stressful part of the job for me.

When asked if he considered that schools should be sanctioned to open when facilities are not in place, he was emphatic in his reply.

I actually don't think...I mean I don't and I would have said this openly. None of us have a full view of where we are going when we take a significant step like taking a job in an Educate Together school. I don't think it's right. I really don't. It is such a fundamental flaw and it is such a huge contradiction between what we feel are the guiding principles of our sector and what we actually create. The environments we create for people to work in and for children to learn in. I think this is really, really poor.

The experience of Tomas was somewhat more positive. After a poor start his school was now located in a state of the art purpose built building.

We think we set up the school in record time. One of these days we will look at the Guinness Book of Records and realise we broke the record. Just over three years ago a group of parents got together and decided as there was no room in the Lucan Educate Together School there was a need to establish another one. So they got together and set up a committee. The following September provisional recognition was achieved. We opened in Lucan Scout Den with 24 students. Very grateful to the Scouts but we worked in poor conditions. Twelve months there and then twelve months in the prefabs vacated by Lucan Educate Together and then 12 months after that into the school. So two and a half years after the initial meeting of that group of parents we walked into this beautiful building. So we're thrilled.

Margaret's school, when I visited was still at an early stage of development. Two years on the situation has improved but at the time the school was located in the upstairs rooms of a local Community Centre.

Forgetting teaching challenges and all that it is really the premises. The fact that we find it very difficult to raise our numbers given the kind of building we are in and the situation where we are not attracting the local people, therefore we are attracting people who are traveling in, and it is not the best area in the world to travel into. The question that comes is where will be the next year and the year after and we don't know where we are going to be and that is difficult. The building itself is lacking in things like water.

A further problem for Margaret was the fact that the school was located at a distance from where it had originally been proposed to open. This was impacting on the intake of students and her experience mirrors those of many schools in the sector. Gerard strongly opinioned that the accommodation issue must be brought to the forefront by Educate Together.

> *I think nobody has ever articulated directly to me that a very high percentage of responsibility for building falls on the Principal. Every single Principal teacher I talk to that is the reality. Let's come clean about that. Let's just name it. Provide us with a decent environment to work in. Stop making us put a roof over our heads. I just can't reconcile that side of things. ...... The DES will tell us that it is part of recognition that for up to a period of 8 years the Board must make provision for accommodation. I have it laminated there in case it gets destroyed. The Board of Management from the point of recognition is responsible for accommodation.*

Developing an Ethos

I asked each of the Principals to describe their experiences of developing an ethos in their individual schools. Margaret felt that an ethos was something that just happened, that was part of what the school was from its inception.

> *I think you know you're getting into a very tricky area now, an ethos is what exists in any school it is not something we have been working on its just there and there's no question of the fact that it is exclusive to our school it simply is. We wouldn't be here if we didn't want it. The parents have worked on it, the other teacher, she wants it. We have made the point of discussing religious education and ethos at our staff meetings. If there were any breach in terms of the children's behaviour, which there are of course, we would always work around them with them. I don't see at as any great issue I just feel it is so intrinsic to what we are about.*

Some of the issues around ethos that Tomas articulated have been discussed in this chapter. Nonetheless it is interesting to see the challenges from the perspective of a specific school.

> *There are certainly difficulties and I think there are always going to be difficulties around the issue of religion. In a MultiD school, where the battles around Dalkey and Sligo and all the original schools, contributed towards a clarity around ethos. Nevertheless, there are people coming to these schools still and they are wondering if religion is taught and other similar type questions. I think a BOM and a Principal has to be so straight and direct from the very word go. When a child is*

offered a place in our school, parents get a letter, which states this is a multidenominational school, and there are two paragraphs on what that means and they are asked to sign it at the end. There is an initial meeting of incoming parents and the issue of Multidenominational what it means and does not mean is spelt out in the most black and white terms. There's obviously work to be done with the teaching staff, people who come out of college and even those working in the sector for 20 years. It is constantly a live issue and it needs to be discussed and debated at teacher meetings. It is constantly a work in progress if you like and I don't think that you ever can ignore it. It would be a huge mistake for a BOM and a new Principal to believe this is sorted. We inherit something from our Patron body but that does not mean that we don't have to think about this. You have to constantly keep it on the table and there are constantly challenges to your ethos in a school like this. It can come from a Catholic background; it can come from a Muslim background. They are probably the two main areas. Elements within those traditions find multidenominationalism hard to deal with. They constantly challenge and try to push the boat out so clarity is essential and a constant debate and discussion. And a redefinition and a refining of what exactly you mean by multidenominational.

Gerard was less explicit in his reply to this question. However his school was a living example of ethos in action. The School Charter for Inclusion was visibly displayed throughout the building. The Charter defined the school as a place: where every child is called by his or her own name, valued for his/her uniqueness, included in school activities, is safe, happy, friendly and helpful, is heard and taken seriously, has his/her privacy and belongings respected and where no child is an outsider.

How do you build up ethos? It's not just a visual think. I mean it really is much more complex than that. It's in the room. You are working with 30 children and it is there in front of you. How do you pick up a guitar and make music with the strings? How do you work with 30 children and make ethos come to life? I can do that as second nature and lots of the teachers in the school can. I find the question on ethos very difficult. I could talk about it forever but don't ask me to logically to reveal it to you.

All 3 Principals referred to the Ethical Curriculum and its key role in creating an ethos and supporting that ethos. As Margaret's interview was conducted prior to the launch of the Learn Together curriculum, she referred to the need for a common curriculum

to support new schools. She commented that '*the umbrella organisation needs to have a good umbrella up there to cover us and protect us, and to help us, and I think there is too much of a burden of responsibility on the individual school and the teachers.*'

School Size

During the course of this research in particular in discussion with the children the size of school has been mentioned. Traditionally the schools were single stream and only grew to a maximum of eight class groups. As the Department of Education has become more involved in the sector through the provision of sites, then they are tending to have an influence on school size. Many of the schools in the sector now have a double stream. The latest negotiations in Castaheany School, which opened in 2004, seem to suggest a 24-stream school. Gerard is Principal of a 16- stream school. His response to the notion of a 24 -stream school was unambiguous.

> *Because I think it would take the bottom out of the ethos. I know it sounds really basic but I do not have to work very hard at knowing every child's name and I know all the connections to the siblings, the cousins. I know the Mammies, I know the Daddies and I know the grandparents. That is, they are the parameters and the relationships happen because of that. Where there are good relationships everything is possible and everything is manageable. People can communicate and find a solution when there are issues. The absence of that type of relationship, the anonymity would create problems.*

I will return to the key issues raised in these interviews in the final conclusions in Chapter 10. However, the points made do highlight the crucial role of the Principal in ensuring that the sector continues to flourish.   This chapter of the work of the epistemic community is now closed but the Voices will continue to work on the issues that have been uncovered and be joined by more Voices as the Educate Together sector continues to provide a choice in an increasingly pluralist Ireland.

Chapter 10 Concluding Voice

10.1 The Journey

Six years ago I took the first tentative steps along a research road that had begun two years earlier as part of a dissertation I had undertaken in Dublin City University. This research had been conducted with a group of schools that were part of Educate Together, an organisation that today represents 39 multidenominational primary schools in the Republic of Ireland. At the time of the completion of the research in 1998 the sector had 16 schools, each of which was under individual Patronage. Growth had been slow but steady since the opening of the first school in 1978 in Dalkey.

The schools had been set up by parents who had overcome huge obstacles to ensure that their children were educated in a sector that was child-centered, co-educational, multidenominational and democratically run. The schools were located throughout Ireland from Sligo to Cork, in accommodation ranging from beautiful new buildings such as Dalkey to Scout Halls and Football Clubs. At the time the onus was on the parents to provide the site for a new building and to contribute up to 15% of the building costs. Not surprisingly a huge amount of energy was invested in fund - raising in order to keep the schools open. On the 23rd of January 1998 there was a verbal commitment from the Government of the day to provide a 100% funding for the building of new schools. That commitment, while slow to be realised provided a window of hope for start up groups around the country to begin to imagine that their dreams might become a reality.

In the 1998 research I discovered that the schools shared common core values across the personal, moral, political, educational and environmental domains. Foremost

among the values identified were self-esteem and respect. Schools identified the Core Curriculum as the single biggest factor in the fostering of pluralist attitudes in the children. However there was a widespread feeling of isolation and frustration in terms of devising the curriculum, sourcing materials and ensuring that the ethos was reflected in what was delivered to the children. Despite the relatively small size of the sector teachers felt that a liaison person should be employed by the sector to provide a link between the schools and give them a greater sense of identity. Further issues that arose related to the exclusive nature of the 'first come, first served enrolment policy and the goldfish bowl syndrome of teaching in a sector where parents were so closely involved in the school structure. Despite these criticisms there was widespread commitment for the principles of respect, honesty, inclusion, democracy and tolerance and for ensuring that these principles were lived out in day- to -day interactions within the schools. (Mulcahy: 1998:p87)

When I decided to take up where I had left off on this journey of discovery, these were the issues that I hoped to pursue. However this was to prove a journey that was focused and fashioned to a large extent by the epistemic community that grew up around the research. In this final mimesis I join with the reader in attempting to highlight the milestones of this journey and reach some final conclusions, still mindful of my dual role as researcher but also as a member of the Educate Together sector.

10.2 A Changed Environment

During the 6- year lifetime of the research changes have occurred at the macro- level of society and at the micro- level of the Educate Together sector. The pluralism that we talked about and debated at an academic level in the late 90's is now a reality.

Chapter Four identified the key aspects of those changes but it also highlighted the concept of liquid modernity as espoused by Bauman and Keohane. We are caught between the past and the present as we try to fashion our future. Our education system is still largely denominational, yet our society is trying to grapple with the concept of interculturalism. There is a tacit acceptance by the denominational Colleges of Education and by the INTO that this situation cannot continue unopposed. The CERD Ruling of 2005 and further submissions by Educate Together to such bodies as the UN Committee on the Convention of the Rights of the Child, the Irish Human Rights Commission and the Council of Europe's Framework Convention on the Rights of National Minorities are attempts to get outside bodies to look at this problem. John Carr's suggestion of Community Primary schools may be one possible route. However at the time of writing no major changes in the current system are anticipated. The declaration by the Council of Europe, at its meeting of European Ministers of Education in Athens on November 10th –12th 2003, has been referred to during the course of this research report. The Council in adopting a declaration on intercultural education in the new European context stressed the significance of increasing awareness of the inclusion of interfaith dialogue as an element of intercultural education. They believed that this could best be achieved through the analysis of religion as a cultural phenomenon as well as the exchange of ideas and examples of good practice among practitioners. Within the Educate Together sector, the motto: Learn Together to Live to Together, captures the essence of how this can best be achieved and is being achieved within their schools.

10.3 A Changed Educate Together

The organisation that is Educate Together has undergone radical change since 1998. At a structural level the biggest of these changes was its incorporation as a company with a Board of Directors. This new incorporated body had the power to act as a Patron and in 2000 the first school under its patronage opened in Dublin 7. At this point also there was a concerted effort to get all of the Educate Together schools to incorporate Educate Together into their names and to drop the term Project. This has served to give the sector a real identity in Irish education. The decision by the Department of Education to supply sites for schools and to cap the local contribution at 5% or €50,000 resulted in a fairly dramatic increase in the number of schools, albeit relatively minor in terms of Irish National Schools. The number of schools has risen by 22 since 2000. This level of growth has not been without its problems however.

Accommodation

Schools have continued to open in substandard accommodation in several instances. It is difficult to balance the increasing call for more Educate Together schools against the difficulties of procuring suitable accommodation but as the Principals have indicated, the problem of accommodation occupies a huge proportion of the time that could be better utilised in developing an ethos and ensuring that teachers, parents and students felt valued. If the sector hopes to continue to attract the highest calibre of staff, the accommodation issue must be addressed. When Educate Together does get the opportunity to be involved in school design, the numbers of architectural awards they have won for innovative school design indicate their commitment to the provision of high quality, stimulating environments.

A further issue around accommodation is the fact that school start up groups often open in areas far removed from their intended base. This impacts on school numbers

and can result in many difficulties for new schools. An example of this would be Rush and Lusk Educate Together that opened in 2003. It has already relocated from Rush to the outskirts of Lusk and for part of the last academic year was also operating out of a Golf Club in Donabate. It can prove difficult to establish an identity in such circumstances and there may be reluctance on the part of teachers to take on the challenges that emerge in such a climate as indicated by the Principal's comments in Chapter Nine

Many of the new schools are located in major growth areas in the greater Dublin region. These schools as illustrated in Chapter Nine may open very quickly after the start up group has formed. This outcome may be viewed in a positive light by those groups but it does not necessarily help other groups who have been struggling for years to open schools in areas where there is no growth in school populations but where they are determined to provide the choice of multidenominational education for their children.

There may be some merit in John Carr's argument that the opening of Educate Together schools in greenfield sites where no provision has been made for a school, could be perceived as taking away choice from the parents in that area. The question must be raised also about the commitment to an Educate Together ethos in such schools. The task of a committed staff in developing an appropriate ethos may be made more difficult in such circumstances but this is not an insurmountable problem. Interviews with three principals (Chapter 9) demonstrate their commitment to ensuring the development of an inclusive ethos in their schools, despite the difficulties they encounter in setting up a new school within the sector. However, it is an area where Educate Together, as an organisation needs to exercise caution.

A further issue in relation to the provision of sites in greenfield areas is the level at which individual schools have had to interact with firms of builders and local authorities in order to procure sites. This could become a politically charged issue and from an ethical perspective may damage the sector if not handled carefully. The sector must also ensure its continued support for the small start up schools that have always been at the heart of the organisation.

Relationships with the Department of Education and Science

The relationship between the Department of Education and Educate Together has undergone a seismic change since the opening of the first Dalkey school. Today, there is a transparent criteria based system for opening new schools, schools are in receipt of most grants from the day they open so the days of buying furniture at Board of Works auctions has thankfully disappeared. The Department of Education has now made the transition into State owned schools and the local contribution has been abolished. But this new relationship has come at a cost. There are indications that the Department will continue to put pressure on the sector to move to 24 -teacher schools. This research has indicated that right across the range of Voices from Principal to 11- year old child, the small size of the school has been one of the many positive attributes of Educate Together schools. There is a danger that the Department of Education may use the sector to provide patronage for schools in new areas, as it does not have the mechanism to do so. Should the Department gain further control within the system, other changes may also result. It is important that the sector has position papers on such issues as school size and to take on board the views of the school communities before such radical changes become part of a negotiating process to open new schools.

Enrolment

Educate Together has generally operated a 'first come, first served' enrolment policy in its schools. This issue has been debated at length by individual Boards of Management and by the Board of Directors. While this policy is an attempt to provide equity in a system where enrolment is oversubscribed, the criticisms levied at it by a number of respondents and in particular groups representing Travellers in Ireland, is also valid. This policy may also strengthen the perception of the sector as elitist and middle class. The policy has already been found wanting in a Section 29 Appeal to the Department of Education and Science and there are clear indications from the research that the Board of Directors should revisit this policy and issue guidelines to the schools under their patronage. It may also be necessary to adopt a positive discrimination policy in order to break down some of the barriers that prevent the schools from being truly inclusive.

Cultural Challenges

One of the questions that arose during the course of the research process was around the term multidenominational. While generally understood to encompass all denominations of all faiths, the schools are committed to ensuring that children of all religions and none are equally respected. However as understood by a number of the epistemic community the term also refers to children from all social and cultural backgrounds. Commentators such as s John Carr and Paul Rowe have been critical of the term and while Carr describes it as misleading, Rowe is reluctant to lose the term, as it is part of a very successful brand. There is evidence of confusion around the terms interdenominational, multidenominational and non-denominational also. The time may be opportune for the sector to look again at the term multidenominational

from the perspective of whether it adequately conveys the full richness of school cultures where the identity of every child is guaranteed, cherished and respected.

Educate Together schools today are truly multicultural as well as being multidenominational, thus many of the principles of inclusion and respect for difference are now being tested in real life settings. In particular many of the newer schools have up to 30 nationalities attending their schools. There are, according to some of the Principals, (Appendix N2) challenges that have arisen or may arise in the future to the inclusive ethos of the school. There may be parents who want their children excluded from the Learn Together programme on religious grounds. Specific activities like singing or dancing may not be acceptable to the parents of religious groups. Parents may object because the clothing worn by one child may be perceived to give offence to another child. A Principal confronted with such an issue needs support from the Patron body of the school to resolve it in a fair and equitable manner. In the early days of Educate Together similar issues arose around the provision of denominational instruction within school time. These issues need to be addressed and guidelines drawn up to support schools to live out the concept of celebrating diversity in an inclusive setting. The research here has identified that each school creates its own unique ethos underpinned by the 4 Principles of Educate Together. However there are certain issues that could, if not handled sensitively in an individual school, impact negatively on the sector as a whole. As the challenges are more likely to arise in schools under the patronage of Educate Together, this may be a task for a subgroup of the Board of Directors and some of the Principals in the newer schools.

Pre-Service Training

This research has been successful in furthering relationships with the Colleges of

Education who provide training for all primary teachers. Major anomalies have been

identified in terms of funding provided by the Department of Education and Science

to colleges to deliver training in denominational instruction, while there is no system

in place to provide similar training for would be Educate Together teachers. A further

issue is the denominational nature of the colleges. There has been much progress

made in furthering the relationships between the sector and the Colleges but this

needs to extend to the remaining colleges including the Church of Ireland College,

Marino College of Education and the Froebel College. There is a window of

opportunity for the sector to work with the colleges in devising modules to support the

delivery of the Learn Together programme as well as possible input into a range of

modules in areas such as Philosophy and Sociology. The furthering of the bonds

between the Colleges and the sector is a very positive outcome and one that should be

strengthened further when the Working Party promised by the Department of

Education and Science in December 2005, begins its deliberations.

10.4 Learn Together

In October 2004 the Learn Together programme was launched. This programme was

in response to an expressed need within the sector for a form of common Core

Curriculum that would support new schools in the delivery of the regulation Religious

Education programme. What began as a blueprint or a set of guidelines has

developed into a full curriculum that is used by all of the schools under the patronage

of Educate Together. It has also been adopted by several of the schools under independent patronage that have adapted it to match their own existing curricula. The curriculum is designed in such a manner as to allow freedom for schools to develop their own modules and to invite input from other agencies to work with them in developing these modules. One such example is the Humanist Module that developed as part of my research. The Learn Together Curriculum has generated a wide range of responses and provided a new range of exciting challenges for the sector.

Training: Learn Together has allowed for meaningful negotiations with the providers of pre-service training. The curriculum has articulated the ethos of the sector from a curricular perspective and the structures are now in place to begin meaningful discourse with the Department of Education and Science and the Colleges of Education for the inclusion of the curriculum and the inclusive philosophy underpinning it to become part of the education programmes in the colleges. The format this may take has not been fully worked out but the negotiations are at an advanced stage and there has been a raised awareness awareness of the sector within the colleges.

At in-service level the Department has funded three Summer Courses on the Learn Together Programme for existing teachers. Several of those enrolled are from the denominational sector so this outcome could have interesting repercussions for the wider sector of education in Ireland. The limited in-service that has taken place within the sector has allowed teachers to dialogue in a manner that has not happened since the first in-service course in 1989. This dialogue can serve to bring the teachers closer together and provide them with a forum for discussion. It can also help to forge an identity within the community of teachers as the sector continues to grow.

Research: The programme has offered an opportunity to pursue research with Ireland Aid in the delivery of the curriculum and also in terms of evaluating its impact. This research is an exciting opportunity to develop the programme and to make it available in all primary schools as a suitable curriculum for Human Rights and Development Education. The funding is in place to conduct this work over a three- year period. However, this work cannot continue to be undertaken on a voluntary basis without the support of a dedicated researcher who will lead the epistemic community in this exciting endeavour.

International Interest: The International School in Lisbon has indicated that it wishes to adopt the programme in its school. This may be the first of many international approaches. However, the sector does not have the personnel in place to deliver in-serviced training at this level. During the course of the research an online training course in the delivery of the programme was mooted and this may be the way to progress this further. The sector may also wish to pursue the development of links with the Hamburg schools described in Chapter 9 and also with the new Values in Education programme designed for schools in South Africa.

Challenges: The Learn Together programme created new challenges for the sector. One of these challenges was around the absence of the word religion from the title. However the title was chosen as a result of feedback from a wide range of Voices involved in the research process and has been accepted by the Department of Education and Science. The inclusion of the term 'ethical education' has attracted the interest of the wider education community at a time when there is tension within denominational schools at the continued onus on teachers to provide denominational instruction as part of their Religious Education programmes.

The programme has also generated discussion on the absence of a specific Truth base within the Moral Strand. This raises issues of moral relativism, the role of values in terms of moral decision- making and the neutral stance of the teacher. I have looked at this issue in Chapters 7 and 9 and am confident that where moral education is built on a commitment to the values of respect and human rights within a school climate where the identity, both cultural and religious of each child is respected, that the curriculum will succeed in its aim of 'facilitating in children the ability to make reasoned and informed moral judgements.' While the research with the children supports consensus pluralism as the overriding theory underpinning moral education within the schools, there was some evidence of moral universalism also. This whole area should give rise to many meaningful debates within the local and wider education community as we move into an era where the demand for Educate Together schools will continue to outstrip supply.

During the course of this research an informal Education Committee made up of Directors and invited members of the epistemic community met infrequently to discuss some of the issues that I have outlined. This Committee now needs to become pro-active in tackling these issues, in prioritising them and in setting up a structure to continue vital research with a range of members across both established and new schools. The pace of change within the sector can mean that such issues lose out to more immediate problems such as financing the National Office and dealing with day to- day problems within the schools. However, the issues that I have outlined can impact on how the sector is perceived in the wider education community and how it will grow into the future.

10.5 Values

This research has provided an opportunity for reflection on the values that underpin the community that is Educate Together. In particular it has allowed children to articulate their values and this to a great extent has been one of the most fruitful outcomes of this journey. The work reported in Chapter 6 with an individual school community also highlights what can be achieved when communities get together and talk about values. The values have been articulated also by the principals in the sector and have become the cornerstone of the Learn Together curriculum. These values need to be articulated by the epistemic community that is Educate Together as the education community looks to the sector as a model of best practice in education in a truly pluralist Ireland.

10.6 Journey's End

The final stage in this particular story is now complete. The research has identified a sector that, despite some minor areas of concern, is well poised to meet the challenges of a pluralist Ireland and to support other sectors in meeting this same challenge. My task in this report was to sift through the many Voices that formed part of the co-operative inquiry and distil from them the essence of what had emerged over the six-year period. I have tried to represent these Voices as faithfully as I can, and to include as many of them as possible in the final report. This has been an onerous task, but I have tried to remain faithful to Ricouer's Hermeneutic Arc throughout this process.

The community of Educate Together has always been a strong one. As it continues to grow and develop, the importance of listening to the Voices of all of that

community cannot be overstressed. If I had any doubts, the Voices of the children convinced me of the importance of this sector in education and its role in providing the children with a range of skills and values to enable them to participate in and contribute to the democratic process and become informed, socially responsible and fair minded citizens of a changing Ireland.

This school taught me to value bravery, to be responsible, to speak out and to care. I am happy that I went to this school. (Male:11)

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