

Patricia Imbarack  
Cristobal Madero SJ *Editors*

# Catholic Education in Latin America

An Ongoing Project



EDICIONES UC



Springer

# Catholic Education in Latin America

Patricia Imbarack · Cristobal Madero SJ  
Editors


# Catholic Education in Latin America

An Ongoing Project

 Springer

*Editors*

Patricia Imbarack  
Faculty of Education  
The Pontifical Catholic University of Chile  
Santiago, RM - Santiago, Chile

Cristobal Madero SJ   
Department of Education Policy and School  
Development  
Faculty of Education  
Alberto Hurtado University  
Santiago, Chile

ISBN 978-3-030-75058-9

ISBN 978-3-030-75059-6 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-75059-6>

Jointly published with EdicionesUC

Translation from the Spanish language edition: EDUCACIÓN CATÓLICA EN LATINOAMÉRICA. Un proyecto en marcha by Patricia Imbarack and Cristóbal Madero © Ediciones Universidad Católica de Chile, 2019. Original Publication ISBN 978-956-14-2459-3. All rights reserved.

Translation from the language edition: Educación Católica En Latinoamérica. Un proyecto en marcha by Patricia Imbarack, and Cristobal Madero SJ, © EdicionesUC 2019. Published by Ediciones UC. All Rights Reserved.

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2021

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publishers, the authors, and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publishers nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publishers remain neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG  
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

# Foreword

The title of this publication is extremely suggestive. “Catholic Education in Latin America, a Project in Progress” places us immediately within clear boundaries: a type of education, its value and a specific geographical region.

In retrospect, an important part of the continent began the new century with demands for social rights aimed at improving and ensuring the well-being of the population, especially the most excluded. In parallel with these social demands, the combination of economic growth and social policies has had an impact on the improvement of various indicators, especially on the reduction of poverty and indigence. All of the above, combined with various cycles of political instability and democratic consolidation efforts.

For its part, the religious situation of the continent has also undergone relevant changes, in many cases produced by internal crises. The atmosphere of Christianity that made possible broad expressions of Catholicism has disappeared. We find ourselves before a new reality, a Christianity that is de-territorialized, de-institutionalized and secularized. Karl Rahner states that the situation of diaspora is for us, today, a saving obligation. That is, we should not consider this situation of diaspora only as a misfortune, but we can recognize it as allowed (not as mandatory) by God, and calmly draw the consequences from it.

Within that context, I welcome the initiative that has given rise to this publication. It is a systematic and sustained work over time that has resulted in a collegiate book, promoted by academics from two Catholic universities, Pontifical Catholic University and Alberto Hurtado University. To bring together academics from different latitudes, in a production that synthesizes experiences and research on Catholic education, is of vital importance in the current scenario of our happening as nations and particularly as a continent.

Every day we work seriously to support, lead and manage identity factors that enrich the essence of our being as Catholic educational institutions. It is in this identity that the university contributes to Christianity, and that Christianity cannot

be explained without the university, in a dialectic of mutual enrichment. From this perspective, the elaboration and diffusion of this publication responds to needs and challenges in a triple dimension; those presented to Catholic educational institutions, requirements from the Church and demands on a social and cultural level.

## **Catholic Educational Institutions**

It is an essential part of our mission to reflect on the present and future of Catholic education in the face of the rapid changes in the region. In fact, the Organization of Catholic Universities of Latin America and the Caribbean (ODUCAL), to which the Pontifical Catholic University is attached, plans to address regional challenges together in its 2019–2020 work plan. In doing so, it calls on Catholic universities to participate actively in local, national and international public discussion on issues relating to culture and the social, economic and political-institutional development of Latin America and the Caribbean. The focus is placed upon adding a high level Christian perspective to the public debate, in which the concern to systematize research, to “create networks”, in the words of the Holy Father Francis, cannot be left out.

A correct understanding of the challenges posed by contemporary culture, and the formulation of meaningful responses to those challenges, must promote the broadening of reason: to make it capable of exploring and embracing aspects of reality that go beyond the purely measurable on the one side, and a sensibility to what is transcendent to the spirit.

There is a need to research and teach in tune with the nature of the contribution that Christianity can make to the humanism of the future. The university spaces are communities especially oriented to encourage such reflection and intellectual exchange.

Faced with this challenge, “we aspire to build a frontier university that, based on its Catholic identity, imagines new realities, broadens opportunities and commits itself to society”—this is how our development plan as a Pontifical Catholic University reads—and that “prevents the divorce between reason and action, between thinking and feeling, between knowing and living, between profession and service. Knowledge must always feel at the service of life and be confronted with it in order to continue to progress” (SS Francis, 2018).

It is in this confrontation that academic production meets the reality of the school, and turns its gaze on the being and doing of the Catholic school. It is a challenge to give continuity to research and to the recreation of a Christian culture in order to nourish the subsystem of Catholic education. This not only means outlining the central themes of research and the formation of qualified researchers in these fields, but also making it a priority to invest in them, to set up first-class research centres and to make part of the work of the universities available to a virtuous alliance with the Catholic school, and to serve the particular needs of this subsystem.

## **Requirements from the Church**

The complexity of the times also invites us to give space to rethink the ecclesial identity of the Catholic school. For the believing world, the assiduous reading of the signs of the times is a habitual practice: what do world events say to Catholic education? The precariousness and the progress of current times reveal to us the need for a renewed conformation of the educational system, of the forms of teaching, and of the organization of schools.

The events of the times should be read as a concrete invitation to rethink the relationship between the Church and the Catholic school, in the face of circumstances where the domestic Church takes on strength in relation to an institutionalized church. This is all the more urgent because of the great distrust that reigns in our societies with regards to anything that imposes a structure or resembles an institution. We must move harmoniously from an inherited Christianity to a Christianity born out of a personal choice.

In its 11 chapters, this book will open and illuminate definitions, views and perspectives. But above all, it has the potential to open reflections in order to rethink an educational system that can creatively go out to meet a man and a woman that look up to the sky, to God who can do everything, who changes everything and who heals everything. Catholic education has been entrusted with an immense and transcendent task for the new times and it is the Church which can be offered and renewed in the smallest educational communities.

## **Social and Cultural Demands**

Both school and university education have been at the centre of the Catholic Church's approach to public life. At the school level, religious education has been one of the priorities of the Church's work. It has promoted and defended the freedom of education when, in tremendously secularized and laicist cultures, there was a risk of reducing Catholic education to mere formation in religious values, without the possibility of shaping denominational ideals in, by and through schools. "Tradition has seen in teaching—and, more generally, in education—a concrete manifestation of spiritual compassion, which constitutes one of the first works of love that the Church has the mission to offer to humanity" (Benedict XVI, 2008).

In the society of the future, Christianity requires a strong will to shape and develop. In other words, the Church and its followers must have the courage to throw themselves boldly into the midst of the waves and leave the responsibility to God. To be aware of its mission. This is where Catholic education has all the tools to find creative solutions to implement a permanent reflection on those questions that are

of a fundamental order. This is where Catholic education has all the tools to find creative solutions to implement a permanent reflection on those questions that are of a fundamental order.

December 2019

Dr. Ignacio Sánchez Díaz  
Rector  
Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile  
Santiago, Chile



# Introduction

This book seeks to be a reference for all those who share the concern for understanding a system, a type of educational institution and a type of educational project that is aligned with the mission of the Church. In this introduction we want to give an account of why a book on Catholic education is necessary and, with greater specificity, why one on Latin America is urgent. The contribution of each chapter is mentioned at the end of this introduction.

## Why Writing a Book on Catholic Education?

Thinking about the binomial Catholic education leads to questioning the relevance of an education that is adjectivized with the Catholic in today's society. Both in the public and private sphere, and whether in the secular or religious sphere, thinking about Catholic education leads to a greater question: that of the relevance or otherwise of the religious in the public sphere, where education is one more manifestation. In other words, to delineate the contours of religion and the religious in a time of modernity (Berger, 2014; Casanovas, 2011) can be extremely demanding, but needed in order to speak about Catholic education today. After all, Catholic education is not just any kind of education. The Catholic Church provides the largest number of formal educational offerings in the world and this number continues to grow: in recent decades, students receiving education from Catholic institutions have almost doubled, and are growing at an even faster rate than the general population and that of the part of the population that defines itself as Catholic (Statistics, 2018).

The place of the religious in public life has experienced transformations not only at the social level in an evident way (i.e. the separation of the Church from the State), but also at the level of individual conscience of people, believers or not. This is a type of secularization characterized by conceiving of ourselves and social life within a framework of immanence where transcendental references lose their relevance (Taylor, 2009). In this scenario, the Catholic religious expression acquires a more individual, more subjective and private face, but precisely for this reason it is even more important and urgent to make it evident.

It is a religious experience that wants to continue to be relevant in announcing good news in the world through educational work (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2014). However, the deep wounds caused by sexual abuse, power and conscience from members of the Church, especially priests and religious church members, and the neglect of taking a stronger stand to repair the injustices of the past, challenge the virtues of a sub-sector of education that is intrinsically linked to the Church and whose decline affects its work proportionately and directly. Such offenses are possible only where faith no longer determines men's actions.

Although many of the cases correspond to events that occurred twenty, thirty or even forty years ago, and although the proportion of abusers is less than 6% of the total number of religious members, the magnitude of the abusive events themselves, both within and outside the school environment, in addition to the associated publicity, raises the pertinent question about the effect that these events have on Catholic educational establishments. Participating in the school community of a Catholic establishment would be charged with a different symbolism. As an example, after the exposure in the Diocese of Boston in 2002, the number of Catholic schools decreased by 14%, and the publicity about the cases of abuse in that type of school explains 5% of said decrease (Dills and Hernandez-Julian, 2012). The Chilean and Latin American reality does not differ much from what has been described, and it is Pope Francis who, in his Meditation for the Bishops of Chile of May 15, 2018, refers to a transformation of the Church with respect to its centre, becoming self-absorbed, losing its prophetic voice.

How, then, can Catholic education continue to be a relevant actor in announcing the good news in an entrenched Church? *“Very difficult times await the Church. Its real crisis has only just begun. There are strong shocks to be reckoned with. But I am also absolutely sure of what will remain in the end: not the Church of political worship, which is already discouraged, but the Church of faith. It will certainly no longer be the dominant force in society as it was until recently. But it will flourish again and become visible to human beings as the homeland that gives them life and hope beyond death”* (Ratzinger, 2007: 7).

Catholic education plays a relevant role within the Church both in a practical-functional sense and on a transcendental level. It is considered practical since it is in Catholic educational institutions where for many people the transmission of the faith and religious experiences take place. It is also transcendental, since a school is invited to be a domestic Church. The school community is an *Ekklesia* in the deepest sense of the word. But, the role of Catholic education in incorporating students into democratic life and social life is as important as the aforementioned. In doing so, it not only fulfills its role of forming women and men to live in the extended community, but also contributes from its perspective to the diversity of society. For those of us who understand that society has one of its foundations in pluralism, it is entirely relevant to recognize in the Catholic school one of the founding institutions of society, which provides and protects such pluralism. Catholic educational institutions expect from their students a generous commitment towards the society they live in, and a continuous desire to improve it. It is in education that this co-responsibility is most clearly imprinted on women and men.

To tell the truth, today any work in education appears increasingly difficult due to the conditions, often precarious for a large majority, and also due to the permanent and incremental contexts of change. In the case of Catholic education, these difficulties are compounded by living in a highly secularized culture, creates tension within the work of institutions in at least two ways. On the one hand, agnosticism, whose genesis is the reductionism of the intellect to functional and practical reason, which tends to suppress the religious sense so characteristic of human beings. On the other hand, the relativization and destruction of transcendental bonds, which consequence makes people fragile in their reciprocal relations. It is worth asking how Catholic education exercises an important space of influence in our society in a context that, although not new, is clearly here to stay.

Devoting a book to Catholic education allows us to approach in an updated manner the great challenges it encounters. With this book we want to contribute to the general reflection on three challenges: quality and excellence, the anthropological dimension, in particular the question of the woman and the man in formation and, finally, the dialogue between faith and culture. We identify these three themes as reading enclaves that Catholic education must cross and resolve satisfactorily in order to develop educational processes that respond to the needs of the present time; and although they are not treated explicitly in the book, these axes are transversal to each of its contributions.

The first challenge goes beyond the institutions and is divided among the various ways in which the Church approaches education. It deals with the tension between quality and magisterium. There is a tendency to consider that, because of its catholicity, the Catholic educational institution is obliged to compromise formation in the faith for quality and excellence. John Paul II shed light on this tension in the apostolic constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, of 1990. In such document he showed that the fact that an institution is Catholic (in this case, a university) does not mean its quality declines; but rather that it values this dimension to the maximum, since its *fundamental mission* is “*the constant search for truth through research, conservation and communication of knowledge for the good of society*” (*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, n. 30). From this perspective, a Catholic educational community is distinguished by the Christian inspiration of individuals and of the community itself, by the light of faith that illuminates reflection, by fidelity to the Christian message and by institutional commitment to the service of the people of God (cf. *ibid.*, n. 13). It is clear that the question of excellence is linked to the sense of that excellence—linked to a “what for”—which is stressed in the case of Catholic educational institutions. This tension is expressed between the pole of metrics, productivity indicators, and performance indicators (to name a few) and the pole of the construction of the Kingdom, the possibility of contributing to a more just country, more oriented towards the common good, which gives an account of the responsibility of one another. When Catholic educational institutions ignore or are unaware of this tension, they cease to be faithful to their *raison d’être* and could easily enter into inertia by seeking a kind of success that is absent from God or that seeks a God who is far from the correlate of effectiveness and efficiency that marks the current coordinates.

A second challenge is that which comes from the anthropological question of what it is to be human. This question constitutes a central theme in the work of Catholic educational institutions, since in its resolution the great decisions of the coming time are at stake: the conception of man and woman in filiation and relationship with God. Will God or will man be the measure of all things? The relationship between science and technology, between knowledge and faith, among other key partners, depends on the answers to these and other questions.

Finally, a third challenge is the relationship between faith and culture, a field that concerns especially Catholic education. This relationship occurs in a special way in the dialogue between Christian thought and modern science. Participating in such a discussion requires people who are particularly competent in each discipline, who are endowed with an adequate theological formation, and who are capable of dealing with epistemological questions at the level of the relationship between faith and reason. Such dialogue concerns both the natural and human sciences, which present new and complex philosophical and ethical problems.

All these challenges are associated with the great transversal challenge of identity. Identity leads every educational institution, including those of a denominational nature, to wonder about how they can differentiate themselves from their peers, but at the same time to identify common elements that allow them to feel part of a conglomerate of institutions that are at the service of the formation of future generations. Within this tension, Catholic education can be caught up in two equally dangerous paths: it can give in and mimic itself, losing its identity or, at the other extreme, encapsulate itself and transform itself into a ghetto, justifying itself in exclusion as a means of differentiation. Both ways of going about it obscure the beauty and opportunity of Catholic education in a pluralistic society that requires diverse formative offerings.

## **Why a Book on Catholic Education in Latin America?**

The reflection that this book invites the reader to have is not within a void, but in a very concrete way in a clear temporal and regional context. Although there is abundant literature on Catholic education at the global level, this is not the case for Catholic education in Latin America. The lack of Latin American reflection on Catholic education in the region is great. This is especially serious for two reasons.

The first has to do with the contribution of the Catholic Church in this territory what it has historically meant for the world of education. The first schools were linked to the religious orders that arrived to the continent, given the strong need to evangelize the American population and transmit the teachings of the Gospel. As soon as they arrived, and long before the royal decrees, the religious orders began to found schools. Later, the move towards higher education was the natural consequence of the binomial education-Church progress.

The second reason is that Latin America continues to be the continent that concentrates more Catholics in the world, even though it is experiencing important processes

of metamorphosis, centred on the decline of institutional affiliation to the Catholic Church, the increase of mistrust in the institution and especially the ecclesial hierarchy, the abrupt increase of religious disaffiliation and disbelief, and the increase of religious differentiation and individualized styles of religiosity (Aznar, 2017; García, 2018). A deeper reflection is needed given these reasons.

A little more than 60 years ago, the Conference of Latin American and Caribbean Bishops (CELAM) was created. Consistently, this conference has placed the theme of Catholic education as part of a reflection that has become more complex. Thus, for example, the only reference to education in the conference of Rio de Janeiro in 1958, refers to education and social justice. Medellín expands the theme of education to the education of conscience, and to its role in the formation of a new and liberated man. Puebla emphasizes that education must serve the new evangelization. Santo Domingo, in 1992, includes three new themes to which Catholic education must relate: the media, human sexuality and the indigenous world. Finally, Aparecida places the theme of the quality of education as a central one (Madero, 2018). There is a development of reflection on education from a pastoral perspective that has not had a parallel at the intellectual/academic level. After all, it is not accidental that the educational emergency declared by Benedict XVI (2008) had been assumed in a special way by the bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean. These bishops conceive the need to prioritize education because they consider it in a state of emergency (XXIII Inter-American Congress of Catholic Education in Panama, 2013). This book seeks to contribute to addressing such emergency.

Unlike Europe (Spain, Italy, United Kingdom, among others) or the United States, the development of the theme that is sought in this book is weak in the region. As an example, there are no centres dedicated to research on Catholic education, or academic journals specializing in the topic. In the same line, there are scarce research agendas that have Catholic education as the sole focus among the researchers who have generously participated in this project. For this reason, this book seeks not only to contribute to a reflection, but also to raise awareness regarding the need to make progress on an agenda in regards to this topic. That is why we prioritized the fact that its authors were Latin Americans. The realization of the difficulty in finding collaborators is in itself one of the main reasons that motivated us to pursue this project. In our opinion, this book seeks to be a first, more systematic effort to raise the voices of the region in terms of research in Catholic education, which are mostly the result of interdisciplinary and joint work.

## **Five Looks at Catholic Education in Latin America Today**

The fact that education possesses a situated, historical and contextualized nature makes its study a complex undertaking. Specifically, it makes a mono-disciplinary approach impossible. That is why we wanted this book to be a contribution from various disciplines to the understanding of education in this time and in this region.

The book is organized in five parts, which provides five insights into what Catholic education in the region is and does. In each of these sections, there are chapters that highlight the contribution of Catholic education to society and the Church, at the level of the challenges indicated in the first section of this introduction. From the point of view of regulations and reforms, the identity of the school and Catholic education, what happens inside classrooms, the context in which it is located and what it produces in individuals, this book seeks to create a dialogue between the Catholic school and society, the Church and the educational systems.

The first look points to the context of Catholic education in the region. In Chap. 1, Adriana Aristimuño—from the Catholic University of Uruguay—studies how the social, cultural and religious changes that have taken place in contemporary societies affect the way in which Catholic educational institutions in the Southern Cone respond assertively or not to current challenges. Then, in Chap. 2, Juan Cristóbal García-Huidobro s.j., delegate for school education of the Society of Jesus in Chile, offers from a contextualized viewpoint, the changes and curricular challenges experienced by Catholic schools in the continent.

A second look addresses the regulations and reforms that are occurring in the region, which affect Catholic institutions. The chapters that are considered here give an account of the regulations to which Catholic education in Latin America is subjected at present, given a context of permanent adjustment and reform administered by the central level. These are regulations of a legal nature, as well as those concerning management and organizational culture within the Catholic educational subsystem and its establishments. Diego Durán, current rector of the Catholic University of Maule, analyzes in Chap. 3 the tensions that regulations generate in Catholic educational institutions.

The third look corresponds to the characteristic identity and the identities of Catholic educational institutions, considering the students who are educated in Catholic institutions, the teachers and leaders who work in those institutions, and the Catholic educational institution itself as an organization in a public context. Thus, in Chap. 4, Mariana Molina questions the difficulties involved in the coexistence of different, if not contradictory, moral values in a given social system, and why Catholic education takes on relevance in such contexts. In this manner, she provides two case studies: Chile and Mexico. In Chap. 5, Patricia Imbarack and Angélica Guzman D. from the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile study the phenomenon of the choice of Catholic schools in Chile, investigating what makes a school project with a Catholic identity attractive. Finally, in Chap. 6, Rodrigo Mardones and Alejandra Marinovic evaluate the guidelines and teachings of the Magisterium that define the identity of Catholic education vis-à-vis the principles declared by the public policy of citizen education in Chile.

The fourth look is at the classroom. Here, Andrés Moro presents, in Chap. 7, perspectives and proposals regarding pedagogy and the curriculum in Catholic educational institutions in Chile, from the point of view of the teaching of religion. Then, in Chap. 8, José Ivo Follman s.j. presents a reflection on the change experienced since the 1960s in the Catholic school in Brazil. Specifically, he shows changes to the national organization of Catholic education in a context of strong market competition, and a

recent debate on the most appropriate forms of socio-educational inclusion practices within classrooms in Catholic and similar educational entities. Closing this section, Jaime Bonilla does the same, in Chap. 9, analyzing Colombia. Without restricting himself to religious teaching, the author places it at the center of the discussion given its importance as a vehicle for the transmission of faith.

The last look is at the individual as the subject of Catholic education. This is a reflection provided by Aldo Giacchetti. In Chap. 10, he assumes a relational understanding of education, and it is from this space that he proposes an integral look at the person who is being educated, revisiting the wisdom tradition as a possible alternative in the current context of change of epoch and decline of global approaches to the rescue of Catholic education.

We hope that these five views will allow the different types of readers the possibility of reading, where they most need it, illumination to stimulate their academic, teaching or pastoral work. For some, the complete reading will be a necessity, while for others, the focus on a specific look will be sufficient. Whatever the choice, we hope that this effort of an intellectual community will serve the purpose of bringing the good news of Jesus to the confines of Catholic educational institutions in our region... and beyond.

Patricia Imbarack  
Faculty of Education, Pontificia Universidad  
Católica de Chile

Cristobal Madero SJ  
Department of Education Policy and School  
Development, Faculty of Education, Alberto  
Hurtado University

## References

- Aznar FJ (2017) Religiosity in a secular context. *Scio J Philos* 13:297–318
- Belmonte A, Cranston N (2013) The religious dimension of lay leadership in Catholic schools: preserving Catholic culture in an era of change. *J Catholic Educ*, 12(3):294–319
- Benedict XVI (2008) Message of the Holy Father Benedict XVI to the Diocese of Rome on the urgent task of education
- Berger P (2014) *The many altars of modernity: toward a paradigm for religion in a pluralist age*. De Gruyter, Boston, MA
- Casanovas J (2011) The secular, secularizations, secularisms. In: Calhoun C, Juergensmeyer M, Van Antwerpen J (eds) *Rethinking secularism*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, pp. 54–74
- Dills AK, Hernández-Julián R (2012) Negative publicity and catholic schools. *Econ Inq* 50(1):143–152
- Ex Corde Ecclesiae, Apostolic Constitution promulgated by His Holiness John Paul II on 15 August 1990
- García JAS (2018) The process of secularization: notes on the historical change from religion to science. *Int J Sociol* 60(31):59–79

- Madero C (2018). New thinking about Catholic education from Latin America: what the bishops said at Medellin (1968), Puebla (1979), Santo Domingo (1992), Aparecida (2007). *Int Stud Catholic Educ* 10(1):30–43. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19422539.2018.1418944>
- Taylor C (2009) *A secular age*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA
- Schumacher EF (1990) *The greatest resource: education*. Hermann Blume, Madrid
- Ratzinger J (2007) *Faith and future*. Desclée de Brouwer



# Contents

## Part I A Look at the Context

- 1 **Catholic Education in Latin America: Schools in the Southern Cone Trying to Meet Changing Societies** ..... 3  
Adriana Aristimuño
- 2 **What Are Latin American Catholic Schools Teaching? The Urgent Challenge of a Christian-Humanist Curriculum Integration** ..... 13  
Juan Cristóbal García-Huidobro S.J.

## Part II A Look at Regulations and Reforms

- 3 **Religious Education in Contexts of Regulation: A Creative Tension?** ..... 31  
Diego Durán Jara
- 4 **School Education, Religiosity and Citizenship: An Approach to Laicism in Chile and Mexico** ..... 41  
Mariana Molina

## Part III A Look at Identity and Identities

- 5 **Choice of Schools: What Makes Catholic Education Attractive?** ..... 59  
Patricia Imbarack and Angélica Guzman D.
- 6 **Educating in Politics, Democracy and Citizenship: The Challenges of Chilean Catholic Schools** ..... 73  
Rodrigo Mardones and Alejandra Marinovic

**Part IV A Look at the Classroom**

**7 Christian Perspective on the Educational Relationship:  
A Look at the Classroom . . . . . 95**  
Andrés Moro and Marcelo Neira

**8 Catholic Education in Contemporary Brazil: A Story  
of Questions for Classroom Practice . . . . . 109**  
José Ivo Follmann SJ

**9 School Religious Education in the Classroom: A Reading  
from the Catholic and Colombian Context . . . . . 121**  
Jaime Laurence Bonilla Morales

**Part V A Look at the Person**

**10 Person and Communion in a Catholic University . . . . . 135**  
Aldo Giacchetti

**Part I**  
**A Look at the Context**

# Chapter 1

## Catholic Education in Latin America: Schools in the Southern Cone Trying to Meet Changing Societies



Adriana Aristimuño 

**Abstract** This chapter presents a review of the social, cultural and religious changes that have taken place in Latin America in the last decade. New information technologies, the use of social networks, and internationalization are also highlighted as sources of change. The chapter analyzes how these changes have affected the way Catholic educational institutions in the continent have reacted to them.

### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a set of social, cultural and religious changes that have taken place in contemporary societies, and which affect the way Catholic educational institutions in some Latin American countries have reacted to them.

Reference is made to global trends, with a focus on Latin America, especially paying attention to how these transformations have impacted the life of Catholic schools in recent years. Among the many transformations that have occurred, four were selected because of the strong impact they have had on school settings. While these changes have also affected higher education, this level of analysis has been left out of the scope in the chapter.

The analytical approach of the section is based on reflection and supported by evidence collected both from documentary sources and interviews. Empirical information is included on phenomena and experiences that take place mainly in the countries of the southern cone of the continent, due to the proximity and greater knowledge of the author of these contexts. An approach that includes the whole continent would also require a greater extension.

---

A. Aristimuño (✉)

Department of Education, Faculty of Human Sciences, Catholic University of Uruguay,  
Montevideo, Uruguay

## 1.2 The Decrease in the Number of Religious Members

The number of baptized Catholics has increased by 7.4% from 2010 to date in the world. However, in several regions, among which is Latin America, there has been a marked decrease in the number of religious members,\* engaged in education, a decrease that has been motivated by a crisis in the number of vocations. It should be noted that this is a phenomenon proper to some geographical areas, since it is not a generalized, global fact. In order to understand this phenomenon as a whole, it is necessary to consider some recent figures in different regions.

In 2017, the number of religious priests in the world was of 134,752, growing in Africa (+169) and in Asia (+768) compared to the previous year, but decreasing slightly in Oceania (−38) and very strongly in America (−477) and Europe (−742). The overall number of religious women also decreased, which in 2017 was 702,529, losing more than 10,000 from the previous year. The number also increases in Africa and Asia by about 2900, but decreases in Oceania (−232), and very drastically in America (−4288) and Europe (−9051). The largest religious order, with a special dedication to education for 450 years—the Society of Jesus—has decreased significantly in the last 40 years, from 36,038 Jesuits in 1965 to 17,287 in 2013.

One of the most important concerns of all Catholics today is the decline in the number of priestly vocations. The 2017 *Anuario Pontificio* captures the theme with the following words:

Finally, the data that deserves special attention is that relating to the progress of priestly vocations. Indeed, the number of seminarians, after reaching a peak in 2011, is gradually shrinking. The only exception is Africa, which for the moment does not seem to be affected by the crisis of vocations and is confirmed as the geographical area with the greatest potential.

This decrease in both priests and religious has several consequences, especially if one considers their role in Catholic education, and that education and school systems constitute privileged spaces for the work of the Church in society. One of the most direct consequences of this decrease, and one that requires a more rapid response, is the fact that there are fewer religious members in formal educational centers and in all Catholic educational works in society. In recent years there has been a gradual shift in the leadership of the educational works of the Church to the laity, and one of the greatest challenges this implies is that of keeping the charism alive.

What impact does it have on a Catholic educational work if it is carried out by lay people, when it has always been carried out by religious? Does this imply a lessening of the strength of the message? What measures have the Church's hierarchies and orders in particular had to take to ensure that this transfer takes place in the least traumatic way possible? Does this generate any healthy transformation?

These are all pertinent questions that do not have one single answer. As a trend, it can be pointed out that for at least 30 years in Latin America this phenomenon has led to a gradual transfer of many Catholic educational institutions into the hands of the laity, or at most to a shared management with them, which has required a preparation and a renewed definition of roles and responsibilities.

The crisis of vocations has also had important consequences in the material field. In fact, many formal educational institutions located in contexts of poverty have had to close their doors, pressed by the economic difficulties derived from no longer being able to count on unpaid religious personnel, who had to be replaced by paid lay people. The economic equations in many cases have not resisted change and closure has been the only option. In this regard, the specialist in Catholic education, Gerald Grace, points out that the decline in religious vocations in recent years has greatly weakened service to the poor, one of the key aspects of Catholic education (Grace 2016).

The problem of the progressive closure of Catholic educational institutions located in contexts of poverty has affected some countries in the region in a special way. Since the last decade, the need to appeal to solidarity among peers was already being raised in order to prevent the service that the Church offered to the poor from continuing to deteriorate (Aristimuño 2007), proposing a kind of sponsorship of the weakest schools by the economically strongest ones. Aware of this reality, and responding to the loss that this has implied for the Church of Uruguay, four years ago the Archbishop of Montevideo created the Sophia Foundation, a network of Catholic institutions with a clear and very defined leadership, oriented towards innovation and collaborative work aimed at strengthening the weakest Catholic institutions in the pedagogical, organizational and economic areas. The Foundation began with a handful of institutions, and in just four years it has brought together a network of 20 schools throughout the country, covering nearly 4000 students. The network structure facilitates the existence at the central level of both pedagogical coordination and administrative management, which allows the institutions to be enriched with technical contributions, while at the same time relieving them of management costs that are shared, provided with coherence and distributed thanks to the central coordination.

### **1.3 Inequality and Increasing Social Violence, Especially in Poor Contexts**

A second set of societal changes that have impacted Catholic school institutions has to do with the high levels of social inequality that the Latin American region still faces, along with the negative impact of violence, organized crime and drug trafficking, especially in contexts of poverty. Although the region has experienced recent years of economic bonanza, and a healthy improvement in the distribution of wealth, both of which are palpable in different indicators that have improved for almost all the countries (growth of the GDP, decrease in the Gini coefficient), inequality still strongly marks the social panorama of the region. This is particularly challenging in countries where poverty and inequality include millions of children

and adolescents. On the other hand, some of the Latin American countries have high percentages of very young prison populations.<sup>1</sup>

Catholic education, as is the case with states, thus faces a strong challenge. Its mandate is to deepen and strengthen its works and work in the contexts of poverty, offering an alternative of values, effort, education and life project, as opposed to taking shortcuts to obtain easy money. In short, in these contexts, children are being contested between, on the one hand, educational works and, on the other, the forces of criminality, which are making a dent in the contexts of poverty throughout the region, recruiting adolescents and young people in situations of vulnerability. In countries such as Uruguay, where deficiencies in state education services lead to thousands of adolescents leaving schools each year, the challenge takes on dimensions never before seen. While its neighbours Argentina and Chile manage to get more than 80 and 90% of their students to graduate from high school, Uruguay barely reaches 40%. This means that thousands of young people each year are left out of the socialization circuits guaranteed by school education, and few alternatives and opportunities are offered to them. Inequality, poverty, and the growing violence that surrounds them generate a highly negative environment for them, their families, and society as a whole.

The number of civil society organizations (CSOs) involved in education has increased, many of them promoted and initiated by Catholic organizations. This challenge is very similar to what Gerald Grace pointed out 10 years ago to the leaders of Catholic urban schools in England: “*Among the main challenges that have been pointed out is the nurturing of the spirituality of young people, to counteract the external pressure of secularism, hedonism and materialism*” (2007: 320).

The Catholic Church has been present in many ways in the contexts of poverty in Latin America since colonial times. Catholic educational institutions in all contexts tend to dedicate an important part of their social and voluntary work to the attention and promotion of the population located in contexts of poverty and marginalization, and in fact the Catholic school system has become, through them, an important social actor. There are also numerous school institutions strategically located in these contexts, for direct service. There is also another way of being present, which emerges from the creation of institutions specially designed for contexts of poverty, such as the schools of the *Fe y Alegría* network, which constitute a response born in Latin America and a clear testimony of the work of institutions with Catholic roots in the face of the problems of the marginality of children and adolescents.

On the continent, the social contexts of poverty and, above all, of marginalization are home to high percentages of children. Table 1.1 shows how, instead of decreasing, the proportion of poor children in relation to the total population has grown in some countries of the region. It also shows how, in the country with the best levels of social equality on the continent (measured by its Gini coefficient of 0.38), such as Uruguay, the situation of poor children has worsened over time. This, in concrete terms, means that in that country almost half of the children and young people of

---

<sup>1</sup>For example, in Uruguay, according to the latest national census of prisoners, 35% of prisoners are between 18 and 25 years old, and 70% are under 35 years old (Ministry of the Interior 2010).

**Table 1.1** Poor children for every poor adult in 3 Latin American countries, years 2006 and 2014

|         | 2006 | 2014 |
|---------|------|------|
| Chile   | 1.5  | 1.7  |
| Peru    | 1.3  | 1.45 |
| Uruguay | 1.9  | 2.1  |

*Source* Adapted from INEEEd (2017)

compulsory education age live in households in the lowest income quintile (INEED 2017: 20).

In addition to requiring specific responses from the state school system, this situation has triggered concerns from the families of these children, as well as from different sectors of society. It is precisely within this framework that numerous responses from civil society, previously unheard of in Uruguay, have emerged for the foundation and implementation of different educational initiatives specific to the school system, to address these realities. Thus, in the space of less than 20 years, not only the aforementioned *Fe y Alegría* movement has been established in the country, but also a myriad of school education centres have emerged, located in contexts of extreme poverty, aimed at the lower secondary education cycle, which is where the most notorious levels of failure in the state education system occur, such as the *Jubilar*, *Providencia*, *Impulso*, *Los Pinos*, *Francisco* and *Espigas* centres. Except for two of them, the others are marked by a definite Catholic charism. These centers not only achieve better educational results than the state ones in these challenging contexts, but also carry out a silent work of social and community promotion of the communities that host them.

## 1.4 Changes in the Role of Women and the Ways in Which They Take on the Family Institution

In parallel with the previously mentioned changes, others have taken place that encompass all social strata, linked to transformations that have occurred in relation to the role of women and in the various forms in which she takes on the responsibility of the family.

Women's increasing access to the labour market has transformed not only working life but also family life. For decades now, families are constituted mainly by working mothers, which has led to new forms of internal family organisation and a renewal of the way in which men and women assume their parenthood. Today, other phenomena have also emerged, and they are related to the growth of the divorce rate and to the emergence of new family forms, such as blended families, the product of remarriages of spouses with children from previous unions, or families formed from same-sex couples. All of these changes in the family are immediately present in educational centres: the school is the first institution in society that must face up to and integrate these changes.



In this regard, it is revealing to know first-hand how these changes are lived out in two institutional environments with Catholic roots, but which serve two different social sectors. These are the private Catholic school with the highest enrollment and academic prestige in the country, and the aforementioned Sophia Foundation, which brings together and manages the poorest and most endangered Catholic schools.

Regarding the presence of the students' mothers in the labour market, the Rector of the Sacred Heart School, Fr. Marcelo Coppetti SI, states that this has implied a gradual passage of the institution to a double timetable, even at the level of initial education, which until two years ago was a single shift (personal communication, 14.06.18). In the area of the Sophia Foundation schools, the double shift is essential for the school to survive. As the director Fr. Julio Fernandez Techera, SI put it: "*A single shift does not work, if there is no extension of the timetable, the school dies*" (personal communication, 11.06.18).

This need to cover more hours of the students' lives is not only a question of quantity of hours, but also of quality of the educational processes and of the activities and contents to be developed, which places a component of greater demand for the shaping of the educational proposal. In these extensive schedules, a balance of different activities is sought, which has led educational institutions to incorporate elements that were previously the families' responsibility: more options in art, sports, languages, in short, in the promotion of integral formation.

The new family forms have also implied a process of harmonious integration of this reality into the institutional life of the educational centres. In the case of the Colegio del Sagrado Corazón, the families that make up the school are generally made up of upper-middle class families. According to a survey applied to students upon entry, 93% of parents have a professional degree and 75% live in a nuclear family, which then decreases throughout the school year due to the effect of divorces. The main mission of the school is to accompany and care for this reality in an adequate manner. About 6 or 7 years ago, some families became concerned about the situation of some parents who were on the verge of separation. The school echoed this concern, began to bring the parents together and a space was formalized for couples to accompany other couples, where today some 350 people participate (personal communication, 14.06.18). New family situations are also present, such as couples in a free union who register their children in the institution. Likewise, the school respects the homosexual orientation of its students, not discriminating against them in any way, as has happened when they have applied for volunteer work and have been selected.

In the area of the Sophia Foundation's schools, there have been no difficulties in integrating these realities. In the schools that make up the Foundation, there is a high percentage of couples in free union, and there are already some cases of same-sex parents. When asked about how these situations are handled, common sense prevails: in the words of Fr. Fernández Techera SI, they are handled "with common sense" (personal communication, 11.06.18).

## 1.5 A Globalized, Interconnected and Highly Technological World

It is clear that Catholic educational centers are part of societies that are interconnected in many ways to information and new forms of communication, where social networks have a prominent place. Children and adolescents are more than ever before -at all levels of society- connected to permanent flows of information of all kinds. This is a challenge for teachers and families from many angles: the saturation of information and images to which children are subjected to from a very young age, the dangers to health and physical and psychological integrity, cyber-bullying and various related issues. Families and educators need to be constantly updated about old and new ways in which technology affects children and adolescents, as well as finding positive and educational manners to take advantage of them. This is a new challenge that consumes a lot of energy and time.

Educators must consider technology not only in terms of how it affects the overall lives of their students, but also in its integration into their professional work. Keeping up with the use of the so-called ICTs (information and communication technologies) is a permanent and demanding challenge for education professionals, whether teachers, managers or administrators. Technology invades everything and constantly transforms it all. The irruption of technology also generates in Catholic education a concern about how best to realize this integration without losing sight of the charism and the evangelizing mission.

From the leadership of the educational systems, different initiatives have been launched to incorporate ICTs in education, such as “Perueduca, digital system for learning”, “Enlaces” from Chile that started in 1992, or the “Plan Ceibal” from Uruguay, in operation since 2008, among many others. All of them consider the need to diminish the digital gap that exists in their populations, and to integrate in an intelligent and attractive way for the students different forms of technology in the classrooms.

It should also be noted that digital literacy is now a skill as important as traditional literacy or mathematical literacy. In this regard, Catholic education is not exempt, and its performance as such is relevant, in all educational centers in each country. There is a growing interest in knowing how each country is positioned within this increasingly critical literacy for twenty-first century citizens. That is why the application of an international test that evaluates this competence, called ICILS (*International Computer and Information Literacy Study*), in which Chile has already participated and which others are preparing to join, is being strengthened in Latin American countries. This will be a new area in which Catholic education will be evaluated.

On the other hand, the limits of the “horizon” for children and adolescents today are much wider than the limits of that same horizon decades ago, mainly due to the wide world that technology displays. Nowadays, those who access technology literally have the world at a click away, and this affects the way they perceive reality and, therefore, their families, their education and themselves. The notions of privacy and intimacy are strongly questioned (Vargas Llosa 2012), and the construction of

self-image, so crucial in psychological development, is affected by all of this. This moves the limits that in the past gave much safety, and at the same time opens multiple opportunities that education can and does take advantage of.

For reasons of space, some of these phenomena are presented in a summarized manner, as well as their positive and negative implications for education, in the following Table 1.2.

**Table 1.2** Recent changes in globalisation and technological development and their consequences for educational establishments

| Changes in society   | Positive referrals, opportunities   | Negative referrals, difficulties  |
|--|---|---|
| Strong presence of technology in access to information and forms of communication                          | Extensive possibilities to create didactic developments that motivate and interest students<br>Creation of virtual learning environments that allow proximity despite physical distances<br>Opportunity to create learning and teaching networks for both students and teachers<br>Access to multiple sources of useful and relevant information for teaching | If access to technology is not facilitated, new gaps are created<br>Challenge for teachers to integrate technology into their teaching dynamics<br>Challenge for the teachers to manage their students in an agile and expert way that dislocate them from their old role<br>For institutions, it requires investment in technology |
| Access and daily presence of children and adolescents in social networks                                   | New forms of communication that allow proximity and immediacy in communications<br>For Catholic education, it is an opportunity to strengthen its proposal in values and the centrality of love in its anthropology   | <i>Cyberbullying. Grooming</i><br>Difficulties for both parents and educators in controlling the relationships that children and adolescents establish in the virtual world   |
| Internationalization, understood as a horizon greater than the of the everyday context in which it resides | Access to distant realities in the students' immediate environment expands their capacity for understanding and tolerance<br>More richness in the educational proposals, internships and exchanges are beginning to be integrated more frequently<br>For Catholic education it is an opportunity to deepen their universal anthropology                       | For institutions, it requires presence in networks and active participation in them<br>Demands greater knowledge of the international environment and invest resources in international programmes  |

Source Own elaboration

## 1.6 As a Conclusion

Four important social transformations have been presented as challenges and at the same time triggers of responses—adequate or insufficient—by Catholic school institutions. The degree of transformation that the responses present is obviously linked to the willingness to change that prevails in the institutions.

Catholic schools have experienced a significant schism in their leadership and management as most of their religious have withdrawn and been replaced by lay people. New forms of working are spreading, which are more democratic and widely shared, and which come with the foreseeable difficulties: changes in the spheres of power are not easy. At the same time, this facilitates a renewal and openness that the Church demands and needs. These same institutions in the continent face the growing power of organized crime and an increase in criminality, phenomena that are present especially in contexts of poverty and marginalization, populated by children and young people. Catholic school institutions are multiplying in these contexts and, above all, non-formal Catholic education is reinventing itself and leaving its humanizing mark for the good of children and their families. On the other hand, all contexts and social strata are experiencing new family realities and the strong presence of globalization and technology in daily life and in the world of knowledge. Both globalization and the omnipresent technology challenge the old ways of doing school in Latin American Catholic education.

Certainly, there are many challenges that these transformations -among many others—pose to Catholic education. A context that is in some ways challenging, as well as a promising opportunity to transmit the message of the Gospel in new and richer ways. Given the size of this challenge, the words of Pope Francis in a letter to the Argentinean Episcopate, which were taken up in the conclusions of the 24th Inter-American Congress of Catholic Education held in Sao Paulo in January 2016, appear as appropriate. This conclusion refers to the need to meet the new challenges posed by the man of our time, “to be a school on the way out”, rather than falling into pathological confinement. In the words of the Pope:

A church that does not go out, in the short run or in the long run, gets sick in the stale atmosphere of its confinement. It is also true that a Church that goes out can be affected by what could happen to anyone who goes out: an accident. In view of this alternative, I would like to tell you frankly that I would prefer a Church that is harmed rather than sick. The typical illness of the enclosed Church is self-referentiality; looking at itself, being bent over itself like that woman in the Gospel. It is a kind of narcissism that leads us to spiritual worldliness and sophisticated clericalism, and then prevents us from experiencing 'the sweet and comforting joy of evangelizing.

## References

- Aristimuño A (2007) Secularization: challenges for Catholic schools in Uruguay. In: Grace R, O’Keefe J (eds) *International handbook of Catholic education—Challenges for school systems in the 21st century*. Springer, pp 149–163
- Catholic Church (2017) Pontifical yearbook. Available at <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2017/04/06/ter.html>
- Catholic Church (2018) Statistical yearbook. Available at <https://www.religionenlibertad.com/mundo/40353/religiosa-el-mundo-pierde10000-religiosas-al.html>
- Grace G (2007) *Mission, markets and morality in Catholic schools. A sociological study of Catholic education*. Santillana, EDUCA, Buenos Aires
- Grace G (2016) *Faith, mission and challenges in Catholic education. The selected works of Gerald Grace*. World Library of Educationalists. Routledge, Oxford and New York
- Inter-American Congress of Catholic Education (2016) *Conclusions of the 24th Inter-American Congress of Catholic education, 13–15 Jan 2016*. Sao Paulo, Brazil. Available at [https://observatorio.duoc.cl/sites/default/files/conclusiones-24o-congreso-interamericano-de-educacion-catolica\\_2016.pdf](https://observatorio.duoc.cl/sites/default/files/conclusiones-24o-congreso-interamericano-de-educacion-catolica_2016.pdf)
- National Institute for Educational Evaluation (INEEd) (2017) *Report on the state of education in Uruguay 2015–2016*. INEEd, Montevideo
- Uruguay. Ministry of the Interior (2010) *I National Census of Inmates*. Faculty of Social Sciences, University of the Republic, Montevideo
- Vargas Llosa M (2012) *The civilization of the spectacle*. Alfaguara, Madrid

**Adriana Aristimuño** Professor at the Department of Education of the Catholic University of Uruguay, and Member of the National System of Researchers (SNI). Department in Education Sciences from the Catholic University of Leuven (Belgium). Her areas of research are educational policy, reform and change in education, and secondary education.

# Chapter 2

## What Are Latin American Catholic Schools Teaching? The Urgent Challenge of a Christian-Humanist Curriculum Integration



Juan Cristóbal García-Huidobro S.J. 

**Abstract** The chapter is an essay, which—based on the evidence available on how curricula are changing throughout the world—offers a reflection on the curriculum in Latin American Catholic schools and the current challenges for this structural and structuring dimension of school work. The chapter suggests that Latin American Catholic education is embarking on pedagogical innovations that tend to relativize the curricular dimension.

### 2.1 Introduction: An Evidence-Based Reflection on the Curriculum

When one visits Latin American Catholic schools, it is common to see people on pastoral work who, in the midst of the school structures, feel more and more burdened and isolated. They experience that their work is a permanent battle since there are few resources and collaborators. In addition, they perceive that their department or area (which has different names depending on the country and the religious charism of the school) is less and less a priority for institutions that are increasingly pressured to obtain greater academic achievements. This chapter does not specifically address this “drama of the pastoral worker”, but it delves into issues of educational content in Catholic schools, which relate directly with this problem. The main argument is that *the expansion of global modernity is imposing deep transformations to the core of the educational work, which are straining the foundations of traditional Catholic education.*

The chapter is an essay, which—based on the available evidence on how curricula are changing around the world—offers a reflection on the curriculum in Latin American Catholic schools and the current challenges in this structural and structuring dimension of school work. The notion of curriculum used is based on Bernstein’s ideas (1971). He proposed that all education systems socialize their students into a

---

J. C. García-Huidobro S.J. (✉)  
Ignatian Educational Network of Chile, Santiago, Chile  
e-mail: [jgarciah@jesuits.net](mailto:jgarciah@jesuits.net)

worldview through three elements: curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. Within this framework, the curriculum is *the agreement on what should be learned, along with the structure of educational trajectories that promotes this learning*. This agreement and this structure have explicit, declared elements, and implicit elements, which Jackson (1968) termed the *hidden curriculum*. Thus, the chapter assumes that the curriculum is more than a sum of disciplinary curricula. It is a cultural selection (Cox 2018) that includes certain educational purposes and a vision of the future that is embodied in subjects, experiences, practices, routines, and institutional culture (Tedesco et al. 2014).

The background of the reflection is what we already know about Catholic education on the continent, which is not much. The *International Handbook of Catholic Education* (Grace and O’Keefe 2007) has five chapters on the region, written by researchers from Argentina (Cambours de Donini and Torrendell 2007), Brazil (Streck and Segala 2007), Chile (Martinic and Anaya 2007), Peru (Klaiber 2007) and Uruguay (Aristimuño 2007). In sum, these texts point to three fundamental issues:

- a. There are many apologetic writings about Latin American Catholic education, but little evidence-based research.
- b. The 1960s and 1970s were crucial for Catholic education on the continent because of *the preferential option for the poor* affirmed by the bishops in Medellín and Puebla, but the landscape has changed a lot since then. During the 1980s and 1990s, most countries implemented reforms that created educational markets. This allowed for the expansion of school systems and facilitated the emergence of private (non-religious) schools, which now compete with traditional Catholic schools. Such a competitive situation, plus the processes of secularization of culture, have generated strong challenges to the identity of Catholic education in the region.
- c. Because of various factors, including access to public funding and admission and selection processes, Catholic schools may be reinforcing—rather than helping to diminish—the social segregation of Latin America. There are no definitive studies on the matter, but there is an awareness that this is a complex issue.

The chapter has five sections. After this Introduction, the second part describes the global trends in curriculum development that, like it or not, are affecting Catholic schools, posing complex challenges to the prevailing ways of building knowledge and identity. The third section reviews three studies from recent years that illustrate the implications of these global trends for curricula in Catholic schools. The fourth part addresses the question raised almost 20 years ago by Davis (1999): Can there be a Catholic curriculum? This section suggests future paths associated with a Christian-humanist curriculum integration that urgently needs to be envisioned and designed. The last section concludes that, at a time when the energy of the Catholic educational networks seems to be concentrated on pedagogical innovation (that is, on didactics), it is urgent to pay equal attention to the curriculum.

I have had the gift of visiting Catholic schools in Colombia, Guatemala and Venezuela. However, I am Chilean, and an important limit to my reflection comes

from the contrast between the broad—and diverse—reality of Catholic education in Latin America and my mostly Chilean experience. I mention this point because the region's processes of modernization have been disparate, and this touches the core of the chapter's argument. I ask the reader to forgive this limit and nuance my reflections where it seems necessary to do so because of differences in context that I could not capture.

## 2.2 Global Trends in Curriculum Development

Although curriculum development is something as old as the school institution (since every school assumes some agreement on what should be learned and some structure of educational trajectories according to this agreement), its professionalization occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century with the expansion of secondary education in the U.S. (Jackson 1992). Germany, France, and England had public secondary education systems long before the U.S., but they were elitist (Benavot and Resnik 2006). The U.S. decided to expand access, and this involved a huge management effort, as well as a rethinking of traditional (European) secondary schooling. The latter involved heated debates among philosophers, discipline specialists, sociologists, and people from the fields of psychology and administration, which were emerging in those years (Kliebard 1995; Lagemann 2000). Bobbitt (1918) created curriculum studies when he realized that this expansion effort needed a professional who had not existed until that point: the curriculum specialist. Thus, the first departments of curriculum studies appeared in the 1930s. A few years later, Tyler (1949/2013) published his famous *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*, which has guided curriculum development in many latitudes, including Latin America (Díaz-Barriga 1999).

With the rise of the U.S. as a power after World War II, the second half of the twentieth century was the period of greatest expansion of education systems around the world, along with American concern for the curriculum (Benavot and Resnik 2006). In this sense, although the foundations of Latin American school systems are European, their expansion occurred during the second half of the twentieth century, under the influence of U.S. ideas that arrived with the *Alliance for Progress*<sup>1</sup> (Díaz-Barriga and García 2014). The Mexican Díaz-Barriga (1999) noted that a key figure in this period was Mario Leyton, who studied with Tyler (1949/2013) in Chicago and then designed the Chilean curriculum reform of 1965. He introduced learning objectives into Latin American educational policies, the first step for standardized national assessments (Leyton 1970).

---

<sup>1</sup>The *Alliance for Progress* was an aid program for Latin America initiated by J.F. Kennedy after the Cuban Revolution. It sought to reduce poverty and illiteracy in order to strengthen democracies and reduce the risk of further communist regimes in the continent.



The educational policies of the 1980s and 1990s changed the shape of curriculum development. Gradually, global economic competition shifted the focus of educational policies from the expansion of educational systems—that is, increasing student enrollment—to quality (World Bank 2005; Tucker and Coddling 1998). This development was linked to public policies associated with standards that (a) understood the curriculum as the set of quality standards of each school system, and (b) increased the number of standardized tests to measure the achievement of such standards (Rizvi and Lingard 2010). From this perspective, curriculum development gradually evolved towards the development of national frameworks of learning standards, while giving schools freedom to develop their own curriculum projects, as long as they comply with the mandatory national standards (UNESCO-IBE 2017).

Currently, discussions on learning standards are dominated by two discourses (Spring 2015). On the one hand, economic organizations—such as the OECD—point out that labor markets will require youth equipped with so-called *twenty-first century skills* (collaboration, creativity, etc.). Thus, these skills should be at the core of school curricula. On the other hand, UNESCO (2015) and other humanist groups have sought to broaden this agenda by proposing the integration of four types of learning (Delors et al. 1996): (a) *learning to know*, which has been the focus of most school systems up to the present; (b) *learning to do*, in relation to acquiring practical skills; (c) *learning to be*, in relation to developing self-esteem and a mature identity; and (d) *learning to live together*, in relation to social, moral, and civic skills. There are also alternative visions of the curriculum (such as critical theories, or religious or indigenous philosophies), but these visions are marginal in global debates (Spring 2015). Sadly, some think that the drive of global corporations to build human capital has already become the key driver of global curriculum development (Postman 1996; Vargas 2017).

Taking a stand in these debates, several groups have proposed various frameworks of competencies for the twenty-first century. Pellegrino and Hilton (2012) led a study to integrate the frameworks originated in the U.S. and managed to group the competences in three areas: cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal. Their study also showed that “cognitive competencies have been much more studied than intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies” (p. 4). A similar study by Voogt and Roblin (2012), which included international (mainly European) frameworks, revealed something similar. In other words, everything indicates that the central focus of the frameworks of competencies for the twenty-first century is on cognition.

In parallel to these curriculum debates, comparative studies of curriculum frameworks since 1950 show a worldwide process of increasing homogenization of national curricula (Benavot et al. 1991; Kamens and Benavot 2006). That is, changes in global culture are causing analogous changes in national school systems and their curricula. Contrary to the idea that what schools aim to do has not changed in decades, the evolution of curriculum frameworks shows that the general expectation is that present youth learn very different things from those learned 50 years ago (Baker 2014).

In attempting to describe these changes, McEneaney and Meyer (2000) identified three trends: (a) a growing rationalization of our relationship with nature through scientific thinking; (b) an emphasis on transnational issues and perspectives over

national (or local) traditions; and (c) a growing focus on the individual—rather than communities—at the center of society. Based on these trends, almost 20 years ago they predicted (quite accurately) what the future of major school subjects would be:

- *Math*. Statistical data analysis would grow in importance.
- *Language and literature*. There would be an increasing emphasis on communication skills, “moving away from the correct use... of elite forms” (p. 206). English would become the *lingua franca*, becoming a part of all curricula around the world.
- *Natural sciences*. The key would be to learn to think scientifically, beyond learning specific scientific contents of one or another science.
- *History and geography*. There would be less emphasis on the history of each country, and the subject would be more like a collage of themes emphasizing the value of human diversity.
- *Civic education*. It would move from attention to the laws and governance structures of each region to human rights and international/multicultural perspectives.
- *Art and music*. The focus would be on students’ interests and their understanding of various forms of cultural expression.

Moreover, McEneaney and Meyer noted that “it is very difficult to find, in any country, real movements in the opposite direction, outside of decorative adaptations, such as dramatic emphases on national history or the authority of religious or ethnic traditions” (p. 204).

Based on other analyses, Baker (2015) indicated that the global process of homogenization of school content has at least three elements: (a) a growing emphasis on the development of high-order cognitive skills (over other human dimensions, such as aesthetics or spirituality); (b) an increasing importance of science as truth criterion (i.e., an expansion of the idea that valid knowledge comes from contrasting theories against empirical evidence); and (c) a greater appreciation of universal knowledge and values over local/community knowledge and values (e.g., tolerance of diversity has become more important than the very traditions of each national, religious, or ethnic community). Baker added that while curriculum debates are disputes over what should be taught in schools, his analyses (as well as those of Benavot et al. 1991; Kamens and Benavot 2006; McEneaney and Meyer 2000) are empirical findings of what has been happening. That is, beyond his judgment regarding what should be learned in schools (and how educational trajectories should be structured), this is how curriculum frameworks have *de facto* evolved around the world during recent decades.

Along with these post-World War II processes, critical theories of the curriculum emerged in the 1970s (Pinar 2008). In general, the criticism points out that countries have developed massive school systems to socialize youth in the codes necessary to participate in contemporary industrial-digital-rational society, internalizing the predominant culture as “the culture” (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Díaz-Barriga 2005; Goodson 1995). Apple (1979) stated that most modern curricula convey an individualistic and meritocratic view of the world, depoliticizing education (and society). The great Latin American exponent of these theories is Freire (1970/2005),

who proposed a *dialogical education* versus the predominant *banking education*. In this sense, critical theorists have examined issues of identity, ideology, and power in the curriculum, asking how diverse worldviews can be the basis for alternative curricula. However, these approaches have had little influence on public policy and concrete curriculum development (Wise et al. 2016).

What does all this imply for the purpose of the chapter? That the global trends in knowledge construction and identity development present very complex challenges for Catholic education in general, and for Latin American Catholic schools in particular. On the one hand, the demands on schools regarding what should be learned, and how educational trajectories should be structured are increasingly focused on cognitive development and the scientific mindset (which is becoming hegemonic). On the other hand, introducing into a tradition (that is, a narrative with ties to a community) has become increasingly difficult due to the global expansion of liberal ideas of the total self-determination of individuals and the imperative of universal inclusion, even at the cost of certain community minimums. While some of these trends are associated with eminently Christian values (such as freedom of conscience and inclusion), the overall anthropology that they promote is that of a deeply rational, self-determined person, with no local/community roots.

### 2.3 Curriculum in Catholic Schools

In *Desarrollo del Currículo en América Latina: Experiencia de Diez Países*, Díaz-Barriga and García (2014) pointed out that studies on the curriculum in the region are few and “they happen in the shadows” (p. 367). Moreover, most studies are analyses of reforms to each country’s curriculum frameworks (their content, their development processes, etc.). There are few studies on school-based curriculum, and even fewer on curricula developed in Catholic schools.

In this general context of little attention to the curriculum projects in Catholic schools, this section reviews three recent Chilean studies that touch upon the subject. The first is not directly about the curriculum but about the culture and structures of the schools, but—given the broad definition of curriculum in use—it allows to say several things about the curriculum in these schools (Martinic et al. 2009). The second study is on the hidden curriculum in elite schools, which include several Catholic schools (Madrid 2015). The third study is specific to the educational projects of elite Catholic schools (Cox and Imbarack 2017). No doubt, there should be research on the curriculum in Catholic schools in other countries, but the search for studies for this section was not very exhaustive. In any case, this review does not intend to make generalizations, but rather to illustrate—using these three studies as examples—the concrete effects of the global trends described on Latin American Catholic schools.

The work of Martinic et al. (2009) was done for the first Chilean Congress of Catholic Education in 2006. It was a qualitative study of 38 schools in different social and geographical contexts, based on 160 individual and group interviews

with various stakeholders. The objective was to understand the characteristics of the culture of Catholic schools.

The first finding of the study was that, indeed, Catholic schools had a particular culture, which favored community, high standards, and high expectations for all students. This culture was strongly supported by parents who “chose Catholic schools precisely because of their demands and severity in both academics and values” (Martinic et al. 2009, p. 66). Religious activities—such as masses, retreats, and workshops—encouraged the internalization of this culture and its messages.

The study also found that, for those interviewed, the core of Catholic education was an *education of the whole person* that addresses the cognitive, spiritual, physical and social-emotional dimensions of the student. However, in schools with less than 1,000 students this was easier to accomplish than in larger schools because academic and pastoral leadership were unified. In schools with more than 1,000 students there was a distinction of roles that implied that most of the teachers were chosen for their disciplinary competencies rather than for embracing the school’s educational project.

Finally, the interviewees highlighted that “the pastoral dimension is one of the most distinctive characteristics of these schools, seeking to educate whole-persons who imitate Christ, and to promote agents of change and leaders for society” (Martinic et al. 2009, p. 68). The study distinguished between pastoral actions that are (a) internal (aimed at spiritual education and transmission of the faith), and (b) external (focused on social action and service). According to the foundational charism, the schools placed more emphasis on one or the other type of pastoral action, but, in general, “students were quite critical of activities such as prayers, masses, and talks, which they felt obliged to attend... In contrast, external pastoral activities, which included volunteer work, were highly valued” (p. 69).

In sum, despite differences of context and emphasis, Martinic et al. (2009) found that Chilean Catholic schools shared a culture and identity of their own. In general, they all pursued an education of the whole student, so that children and youth could flourish in multiple dimensions, and sought to educate in the faith. However, the schools “seemed to be facing two contemporary problems” (p. 70): secularization and segmentation (social, on the one hand, and of knowledge and professional roles, on the other hand). In other words, Catholic education in Chile was facing difficult challenges around changes in society, culture, knowledge specialization, and the professionalization of school work.

The second study is an investigation by Madrid (2015) on the hidden curriculum in elite schools. In Chile, these schools are of three types: (a) *traditional Catholic*, founded before 1965; (b) *international* (mainly German, British, or French); and (c) *new Catholic*, founded after 1965, which are the schools preferred by the country’s present economic elite. The research sought to reconstruct the curriculum lived by 40 men and women between the ages of 19 and 45 who attended these three types of schools.

The main result of the study was that, in general, these schools offered a *managerial curriculum* characterized by training rational, autonomous, and cosmopolitan individuals. All of them emphasized academic excellence, with a special focus on

math and science (especially for men), causing students to conflict with other interests (e.g., the arts). In the traditional Catholic schools, however, “the curriculum was broader, emphasizing also the arts and humanities” (Madrid 2015, p. 115). Most of these schools promoted competition—through tournaments inside and outside the school—and had award ceremonies to recognize the best in sports and academics, as well as those who embodied the school’s spirit. In general, these schools also prepared students for a globalized world, cultivating “a fascination with European and U.S. cultures, which has been a hallmark of Latin American elites” (p. 120).

The third study, by Cox and Imbarack (2017), analyzed the educational projects of the elite schools run by the congregations Holy Cross, Jesuits, Legionaries of Christ, and Opus Dei (which, according to Madrid [2015], would be *traditional Catholic*, the first two, and *new Catholic*, the last two). The aim was to study the differentiation in Catholic education for the elite after the Second Vatican Council—and its reception in Latin America—in relation to concern for social problems and dialogue with culture.

The result was very clear: the traditional Catholic schools declared the intention to prepare students to transform unjust social structures and an authentic faith-culture dialogue, while the new Catholic schools did not mention social problems or cultural plurality (only the education of the whole person). In other words, the main finding was that “the orientations of the Second Vatican Council and the Latin American Episcopal Conferences... have been ignored by the two congregations... that began to educate the Chilean elite after the crisis of the 1970s” (Cox and Imbarack 2017, p. 250). In contrast, “Jesuits and Holy Cross... cut their historical ties with the traditional economic elite” (p. 250). The study claims to confirm that the sanctifying Catholicism of the new Catholic schools attracts the economic elite, while the social Catholicism of the traditional Catholic schools attracts the cultural elite.

Overall, the studies of Madrid (2015) and Cox and Imbarack (2017) showed that from the 1970s onwards two major types of Catholic educational projects were developed for the elite, with or without attention to the country’s social and cultural problems. Nevertheless, both types of schools have continued to “prepare their students for power” (Madrid 2015, p. 110), which has required them to educate the competencies that are necessary to exercise managerial roles. In this sense, it should be noted that the difference between the educational projects found by Cox and Imbarack is based on a comparison of documents. That is, it could be a discursive difference or one that only matters in intra-elite comparisons, but is irrelevant in larger comparisons (where the common factor would prevail: being elite schools). In fact, Thumala (2007) interviewed Chilean executives educated in Jesuit and Opus Dei schools, and found no significant differences in their ideas of effort, discipline, and duty.

The three studies illustrate certain effects of the global trends in curriculum development on Latin American Catholic schools, and introduce a factor not considered in the reflection so far: the potential differences in school curricula according to the social class that they serve. With regard to global changes in the way of building knowledge—such as the growing hegemony of the scientific mindset—, research shows that this is becoming central to elite Catholic schools. The greater focus on cognitive skills should clash with the project of educating the whole person—the

core of Catholic education—but studies do not refer to it, except for the reference that traditional elite Catholic schools have a broader curriculum offering than elite Catholic schools founded after 1965. Community life remains a central element of Catholic schools but their identity seems to be strained by: (a) technical requirements that force the hiring of specialists who do not necessarily adhere to the schools' identity; and (b) the motivations of parents for choosing these schools, which are more related to their academic accomplishments and their values than to the encounter with Christ at the root of these values. Along this line, the general recognition of the distinctive character of pastoral care in a Catholic school, together with the criticism of the mandatory nature of actions aimed at the transmission of the faith, illustrate well the consequences for these schools of the expansion of liberal ideas regarding the development of identity: community identity is valued, but its demands on individuals are rejected—either because they generate obligations, or because they imply limits that exclude—making the processes of rooting identity very complex.

At the base of all these points are the tensions introduced into Catholic educational projects by the expansion of global modernity, which has been stronger in Latin America since the 1980s. In this sense, if it is true that the reception of the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s and 1970s had a profound impact on the continent's Catholic education, it seems that the following decades have had as much or more influence (and beyond the competition for enrollment in the new educational markets). The effects of the cultural and epistemic changes of the last 30 years on the—explicit and implicit—agreements about what should be learned in a Catholic school, and how its educational trajectories should be structured require greater attention.

## 2.4 Can There Be a Catholic Curriculum in Latin America Today?

In general, Catholic schools tend to make normative statements about the centrality of the faith and values in their curriculum. However, what has been reviewed so far indicates that, in reality, this is very difficult (García-Huidobro 2017; Imbarack and de la Cerda 2016). According to Davis (1999), the problem can be traced back to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when Christian-humanists had difficulty in integrating the emerging concern for evidence-based knowledge into the curricula. Over the centuries, this led to a separation between reason and faith that marginalized the Catholic worldview in the formation of modern curricula. Knowledge became specialized, and—to survive within the national education systems—Catholic schools had to restrict what is Catholic to the dimensions of school life where secular society allows it: a religious education class and pastoral work outside of the classroom. The basic problem is that, in this process, Catholic education lost its *principle of curricular integration* (Davis 1999).

Based on Davis' (1999) thesis, this last section addresses the urgent challenge of *envisioning and designing a curriculum integration whose principle of integration is a modern Catholic experience*. That is, that preserving the fundamentals of the Catholic tradition, dialogues with the great contemporary cultural trends (and their school manifestation in the world trends in curriculum development). According to Bernstein (1971), for a curriculum integration to make sense (and, therefore, be effective) it is required that (a) the principle of integration is agreed; and (b) the content of this agreement is conceptually profound and sufficiently understood. The section assumes both conditions of the challenge.

From an epistemological point of view, integration demands a philosophy—or theology—of knowledge that connects the various curriculum contents with the experience of faith, and the overall mission of a Catholic school (Davis 1999). Since many scientific discourses claim that faith-based education is irrational and sectarian, this philosophy has to explicitly—and thoroughly—address the relationship between faith and science (Davis and Franchi 2013). Based on such a philosophy, Catholic schools should teach that the scientific method is a gift for penetrating the mysteries of the world, as well as address its limits and the ethical and power issues associated with its hegemonic expansion. *Gaudium et Spes* (Vatican II 1965) and *Laudato Si* (Francis 2015) offer valuable ideas for such a philosophy—or theology—that should highlight the positive relationship of Christianity with the world (and with science and human progress), as well as the differences between a Catholic view and purely materialistic views in which science is the only valid way to build knowledge (Davis and Franchi 2013).

From the perspective of identity construction, Hervieu-Léger (2005) proposed that modern secularization is not so much a crisis of belief—which is a structurally human issue—but a crisis of collective memory (because religion is believing as a part of a tradition). In this line, “the affirmation of the autonomous subject, the advance of rationalization... and the process of differentiation of institutions imply the end of memory societies [such as the family or religious communities]” (Hervieu-Léger 2005, p. 207). Similarly, the worldwide homogenization of curricula is associated with the formation of a cosmopolitan subject without roots. For this reason, ethno-religions that link their origin to ancestral communities and beliefs proliferate as resistance. In view of this aspect of modernity, the challenge is that integrated curriculum promote local/community-based identities, something that is complex—but not impossible—if the best modern knowledge is taught, which tends to strengthen abstract and universal identities (García-Huidobro 2018a). For this, dialogues between faith and literature, faith and history, and faith and art are as key as the dialogue between faith and science in the epistemological field.

In addition, the sociology of religion shows at least two major Latin American Catholic collective memories (Valenzuela et al. 2013). In contrast to Europe or the U.S., the shortage of priests never allowed Latin America to have what Hervieu-Léger (2005) called a *parochial civilization*. This meant that the common people's religious experience—unlike that of the elite—was very little related to priests and Catholic institutions (Valenzuela et al. 2013). This is why there are so many syncretic expressions of popular religiosity in Latin America. This difference in trajectories

between the common people and the elites could be at the roots of the continent's peculiar transformation of religion due to modernity. In Europe, modernization meant a general decline of religious practice, and in the U.S. it was associated with the expansion of a religious market. In Latin America, Morello et al. (2017) proposed the advancement of an *enchanted modernity* in which religiosity survives through daily practices of sacralization that, outside of the elite, overcome the Catholic monopoly (without significant institutional affiliation). To develop a curriculum integration that promotes religious identities with local/community roots requires paying attention to these diverse traditions and the type of socialization that each one demands (for example, in relation to the contents in humanities classes). It also requires asking about the injustice at the root of these differences, and what they have done to the collective memories of the faithful (of both the *oppressed* and the *oppressor*, using Freire's categories [1970/2005]). Current Catholic curriculum projects for the continent should help to reconcile wounded—and therefore angry, guilty, etc.—Catholic collective memories.

In *A Secular Age*, Taylor (2007) reflects that another central aspect of belief in today's global context—besides the cut-off of traditions—is that it no longer includes transcendence. That is, it becomes *purely immanent*, a belief in the *human*. According to Ugalde (2014), “this is more radical in Europe, but it also advances in Latin American societies” (p. 8). However, this is growing together with a deep *malaise in culture* (Taylor 1991), associated with what Han (2012) called *The Burnout Society*. So, it coexists with a deep yearning for transcendence, associated with beauty and love. Within a framework of freedom, since nothing is more aggressive in today's culture than imposition, Catholic curricula should take advantage of the fact that the general sensitivity is no longer contrary to the possibility of God—but simply considers it plausible, one more alternative—and propose spaces where the ineffable and the sacred are discussed. And not only, nor mainly, in pastoral spaces outside the classroom, but in the main subjects, wherever *truth, goodness or beauty* are explored.<sup>2</sup> As Ugalde pointed out: “When we speak of forming men and women for others and with others, these are not beautiful phrases... we express our commitment that educators and students discover with joy the hidden treasure that giving life for love is not losing it but finding it” (p. 8).

## 2.5 Conclusions: Urgent Attention to the Curriculum

Having said all of the above, my experience visiting Catholic schools in Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, and Venezuela during the last years indicates that, based on examples—and discourses—from Europe and the U.S., Latin American Catholic

---

<sup>2</sup>Truth, goodness and beauty are known as the *transcendentals*, the way to God according to classical medieval philosophy.



education is embarking on pedagogical innovations that tend to relativize the curricular dimension<sup>3</sup> (García-Huidobro 2018b). It is true that some of these innovations—such as project-based learning—relate to curriculum integration. But, as Beane (1997) pointed out, it is usually an integration without a philosophical (or theological) framework, more oriented by psychological theories of learning than by a holistic worldview. In line with what has been developed up to this point, this could end up diluting even more the already tense educational proposal of Catholic schools on the continent. For this reason, although pedagogical innovations are fundamental—and the times call for more active, and student-centered didactics—it is urgent to pay as much attention to the curriculum as to pedagogy.

In line with the previous section, we need a curriculum integration whose principle of integration is a modern Catholicism that (a) connects scientific and technical exploration—and development—with ethical awareness and spiritual search; and (b) promotes a universal and critical humanism, but with local identity and knowledge of—and hopefully affection for—the Christian tradition (and its historical, literary, artistic expressions, etc.). This challenge also includes deepening the idea of whole-person education, which has been emptied of meaning as it has been widely used without further precision or evidence to accompany the discourse. Curriculum integration and education of the whole person are related, but they are different things. There can be very different curriculum integrations, depending on their philosophical or theological underpinnings. In fact, evidence indicates that the world trend is to emphasize cognitive development (and scientific thinking), not a multidimensional education of the whole person. In the end, the challenge of designing a Christian-humanist curriculum integration is both theoretical and practical; it calls for profound—and sufficiently shared—ideas about the Christian project, as well as subjects, experiences, practices, routines, and institutional culture consistent with these ideas.

As stated at the beginning, the chapter did not specifically address the daily difficulties experienced by pastoral workers in Latin American Catholic schools. However, in reflecting on what schools are teaching within national (and global) education systems with strong demands, the chapter offers insights into these difficulties. Since modern processes of specialization have—symbolically—made pastoralists concentrate *what is Catholic in Catholic schools*, their tensions reflect a more general crisis of Catholic education within contemporary school systems, which is essentially curricular (that is, regarding the agreement about what should be learned and how educational trajectories should be structured according to that learning). For the same reason, the way out of these difficulties does not depend primarily on the pastoralists themselves. It depends on how each educational community re-links at the epistemological level with the Catholic tradition, helping to renew it so that it can illuminate a new future in today's modern—or post-modern—context.

---

<sup>3</sup>For example, the theme of the 2018 Latin American Congress of Catholic Education was “Management for Learning, Innovation and Creativity” (<http://www.congresociec.com/>).

## References

- Apple, M (1979) *Ideology and curriculum*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, New York
- Aristimuño, A (2007) Secularization: challenges for Catholic schools in Uruguay. In: Grace G, O’Keefe J (eds) *International handbook of Catholic education*. Springer, Dordrecht, Netherlands, pp 149–163
- Baker, D (2014) *The schooled society*. Stanford University Press, Stanford
- Baker D (2015) A note on knowledge in the schooled society: towards an end to the crisis in curriculum theory. *J Curric Stud* 47(6):763–772
- Beane J (1997) *Curriculum integration: designing the core of democratic education*. Teachers College Press, New York
- Benavot A, Cha Y, Kamens D, Meyer J, Wong SY (1991) Knowledge for the masses: world models and national curricula. *Am Sociol Rev* 56(1):85–100
- Benavot A, Resnik J (2006) Lessons from the past: a comparative socio-historical analysis of primary and secondary education. In: Benavot A, Resnik J, Corrales J (eds) *Global educational expansion: historical legacies and political obstacles*. American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Cambridge, pp 1–89
- Bernstein B (1971) On the classification and framing of educational knowledge. In: Young M (ed.) *Knowledge and control: new directions for the sociology of education*. Collier- Macmillan Publishers, London, UK, pp 47–69
- Bobbitt F (1918) *The curriculum*. Houghton-Mifflin, Cambridge
- Bourdieu P, Passeron JC (1977) *Reproduction in education, society, and culture*. Sage, Thousand Oaks
- Cambours de Donini AM, Torrendell CH (2007) Catholic education, state, and civil society in Argentina. In: Grace G, O’Keefe J (eds) *International handbook of Catholic education*. Springer, Dordrecht, Netherlands, pp 211–228
- Cox C (2018) Curriculum: Categorías de análisis, tendencias y gobernanza. In: Arratia A, Ossadón L (eds) *Políticas para el desarrollo del currículum: Reflexiones y propuestas*. MINEDUC and UNESCO, Santiago, Chile, pp 119–153
- Cox C, Imbarack P (2017) Catholic elite education in Chile: worlds apart. In: Bruno-Jofré R, Zaldívar JI (eds) *Catholic education in the wake of Vatican II*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, Canada, pp 232–255
- Davis R (1999) Can there be a Catholic curriculum? In: Conroy J (ed) *Catholic education inside-out/outside-in* (pp 207–229). Veritas, Dublin, Ireland, pp 207–229
- Davis R, Franchi L (2013) A Catholic curriculum for the twenty-first century?. *Int Stud Cathol Educ* 5(1):36–52
- Delors J, Al Mufti I, Amagi I, Carneiro R, Chung F, Geremek B, ... Zhou N (1996) *Education holds a treasure*. UNESCO, CDMX, Mexico
- Díaz-Barriga A (1999) La lectura de Tyler: Un síntoma de nuestra ignorancia sobre la historia y los procesos educativos. In: Furlán A Pasillas MA (eds) *Ralph Tyler: Lecturas comprometidas a cuarenta años de “Principios básicos del currículo”*. UNAM, Campus Iztacala, Mexico, pp 25–40
- Díaz-Barriga A (2005) Diversidad cultural y currículum. ¿Es factible una articulación? *Pensam Educ Latinoam* 37(2):52–63
- Díaz-Barriga A, García JM (2014) *Desarrollo del currículum en América Latina: Experiencia de diez países*. Miño y Dávila Editores, Buenos Aires, Argentina
- Francis (2015) *Laudato si: encyclical letter on the care of the common house*. Available at [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_encyclical-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_encyclical-laudato-si.html)
- Freire P (1970/2005) *Pedagogía del oprimido*. Siglo XXI Editores, CDMX, Mexico
- García-Huidobro JC (2017) What are Catholic schools teaching to make a difference? A literature review of curriculum studies in Catholic schools in the U.S. and the U.K. since 1993. *J Cathol Educ* 20(2):64–97

- García-Huidobro JC (2018a). Addressing the crisis in curriculum studies: curriculum integration that bridges issues of identity and knowledge. *Curric J* 29(1):25–42
- García-Huidobro JC (2018b) Notas para la renovación de la educación jesuita después de visitar las innovaciones en marcha en Catalunya. *Int Cathol J Educ* 4:23–48
- Goodson I (1995) *The making of the curriculum*, 2nd edn. Falmer Press, London, UK
- Grace G, O’Keefe J (eds) (2007) *International handbook of Catholic education: challenges for school systems in the 21st century*. Springer, Dordrecht, The Netherlands
- Han BC (2012) *The burnout society*. Herder, Barcelona, Spain
- Hervieu-Léger D (2005) *Religion: Thread of Memory*. Herder, Barcelona, Spain
- Imbarack P, de la Cerda P (2016) Noción y práctica de la fe en la escuela católica: Una mirada al caso chileno. *Teología y Vida* 57(4):509–538
- Jackson P (1968) *Life in classrooms*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York
- Jackson P (1992) Conceptions of curriculum and curriculum specialists. In: Jackson P (ed) *Handbook of research on curriculum*. Macmillan, New York, pp 3–40
- Kamens D, Benavot A (2006) World models of secondary education, 1960–2000. In: Benavot A, Braslavsky C (eds) *School knowledge in comparative and historical perspective*. Comparative Education Research Center, Hong-Kong, China, pp 135–154
- Klaiber J (2007) Catholic schools in Peru: Elites, the poor, and the challenge of neoliberalism. In: Grace G, O’Keefe J (eds) *International handbook of Catholic education*. Springer, Dordrecht, The Netherlands, pp 181–193
- Kliebard H (1995) *The struggle for the American curriculum: 1893–1958*, 2nd edn. Routledge, New York
- Lagemann EC (2000) *An elusive science: the troubling history of education research*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago
- Leyton M (1970) *Planeamiento educacional: Un modelo pedagógico*. Editorial Universitaria, Santiago, Chile
- Madrid S (2015) El currículum gerencial en los colegios privados de elite. In: Castro C, Gómez H, Reyes L (eds) *Desafíos y tensiones en la gestión del currículo: Teoría y práctica*. Santiago, Chile, Ediciones UCSH
- Martinic S, Anaya M (2007) The Catholic school in the context of inequality: the case of Chile. In: Grace G, O’Keefe J (eds) *International handbook of Catholic education*. Springer, Dordrecht, The Netherlands, pp 195–209
- Martinic S, Anaya M, Torrendell C (2009) Challenges, successes and problems of Catholic schooling in Chile. *Int Stud Cathol Educ* 1(1):59–72
- McEneaney E, Meyer J (2000) The content of the curriculum: an institutionalist perspective. In: Hallinan M (ed) *The handbook of the sociology of education*. Kluwer, New York, pp 189–211
- Morello G, Romero C, Rabbia H, Da Costa N (2017) An enchanted modernity: making sense of Latin America’s religious landscape. *CritAI Res Relig* 5(3):308–326
- Pellegrino JW, Hilton ML (eds) (2012) *Education for life and work: Developing transferable knowledge and skills in the 21st century*. The National Academies Press, Washington, DC
- Pinar W (2008) Curriculum theory since 1950: crisis, reconceptualization, internationalization. In: Connelly M, He MF, Phillion J (eds) *The SAGE handbook of curriculum and instruction*. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp 491–513
- Postman N (1996) *The end of education: redefining the value of school*. Vintage, New York
- Rizvi F, Lingard B (2010) *Globalizing educational policy*. Routledge, New York
- Spring J (2015) *Globalization of education: an introduction*. Routledge, New York
- Streck D, Segala A (2007) A theological-pedagogical turning point in Latin America: a new way of being school in Brazil. In: Grace G, O’Keefe J (eds) *International handbook of Catholic education*. Springer, Dordrecht, The Netherlands, pp 165–179
- Taylor C (1991) *The malaise of modernity*. House of Anansi Press, Concord, Canada
- Taylor C (2007) *A secular age*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
- Tedesco JC, Operti R, Amadio M (2014) The curriculum debate: why it is important today. *Prospects* 44(4):527–546

- Thumala BA (2007) Riqueza y piedad: El catolicismo de la elite económica chilena. Debate, Santiago, Chile
- Tucker M, Coddling JB (1998) Standards for our schools: how to set them, measure them, and reach them. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco
- Tyler R (1949/2013) Basic principles of curriculum and instruction. University of Chicago Press, Chicago
- Ugalde L (2014) Reflexiones sobre nuestro apostolado educativo en la actualidad. Available at <http://pedagogiaignaciana.com/GetFile.ashx?IdDocument=1546>
- UNESCO (2015) Rethinking education: towards a global common good? UNESCO, Paris, France
- UNESCO-IBE (2017) Developing and implementing curriculum frameworks. UNESCO-IBE, Geneva, Switzerland
- Valenzuela E, Bargsted M, Somma N (2013) ¿En qué creen los chilenos? Naturaleza y alcance del cambio religioso en Chile. *Temas Agenda Pública* 8(58):1–20
- Vargas C (2017) Lifelong learning from a social justice perspective. *Education Research and Foresight Working Papers Series, 21*. UNESCO, Paris, France
- Vatican II (1965) Gaudium et Spes: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. Available at [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html)
- Voogt J, Roblin NP (2012) A comparative analysis of international frameworks for 21st century competences. *J Curric Stud* 44(3):299–321
- Wise D, Hayward L, Pandya J (eds) (2016) The SAGE handbook of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. Sage, Thousand Oaks
- World Bank (2005) Expanding opportunities and building competences of young people: a new agenda for secondary education. World Bank, Washington, DC

**Juan Cristóbal García-Huidobro S.J.** Currently, he leads the Chilean Ignatian Educational Network. Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from the Lynch School of Education and Human Development at Boston College (U.S.), with a Master's degree in Engineering from the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, and a Bachelor's degree in Theology and Philosophy from the same institution. He worked for eight years in three Catholic schools in different social contexts in Santiago, two of which belong to Fe y Alegría. His topics of interest and research are moral and spiritual formation, curriculum studies, educational change, and curricular innovation in secondary education.

**Part II**  
**A Look at Regulations and Reforms**

# Chapter 3

## Religious Education in Contexts of Regulation: A Creative Tension?



Diego Durán Jara 

**Abstract** In the form of an essay, a proposal is put forward for the interpretation of actions linked to changes in society, and the consequent regulations that are caused in the educational sphere in general, and in the religious sphere in particular. These actions have generated tensions in the context of religious formation which this analysis seeks to unveil, proposing a positive approach.

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter is a proposal of interpretation of the actions linked to the changes in society and the consequent regulations that are caused to the educational field in general and to the religious field in particular. These intentional actions generate tensions in the context of religious formation that this section seeks to unveil, proposing a positive approach. To this end, the construction will be oriented based on the question of whether religious education in contexts of regulation is a creative tension.

### 3.2 A Look at the General Context of Regulations in the Field of Education

In order to be able to give the point of view of how we perceive and how we act in relation to the different regulatory actions that “subject” the educational system in general and the religious system in particular, it is necessary to look at what is part of the basis that underlies, at least on the level of hypotheses, these actions on the educational system. This is necessary in order to understand the premise that sustains this construction that I propose and that says something about the explicit

---

D. Durán Jara (✉)  
Catholic University of Maule, Talca, Chile  
e-mail: [dduran@ucm.cl](mailto:dduran@ucm.cl)

or implicit intentionality of any regulation of the system. With this we underline that there are no formal actions such as regulations or norms and laws, which are not founded on some anthropology or vision of humanity: “*The educational systems of the countries are regulated by a series of axiological principles that respond to a predominant ideological model at a social level*” (Expósito 2018: 352), and that do not necessarily give account of a generalized agreement on an axiological or ideological framework. This would be what puts in tension or generates at least a questioning of the very bases that sustain the different educational projects in the centers dedicated to education.

Today, in the global context and not only in the particular context of Chile, we see ourselves, whether we like it or not, in the midst of great discussions that highlight the meaning of human existence itself, of its reality and of the role that it should play in the path of its development or its own happiness. Certainly, participation in these discussions or reflections is not always the result of a personal decision; they fill all the spaces by means of the great communicational advances, transforming us into often passive and unreflective consumers of these processes. These are the mechanisms that impact our ways of understanding or living our relationships, either within our families, within companies or in the ways of understanding or living organizations of any kind, especially educational or religious organizations. The person is the focus of attention, and this current reflection has led to propose transformations in their meaning and, therefore, in the role that is associated with them in everyday life. The discussion of the role of women, which is one of these themes, has undergone enormous changes in society, and what may have been accepted as true in the past, the present has taken it upon itself to deny it, persecute and sanction it. We are, temporarily, in the epicenter of a reflection on man, debating about his own existence and essence, about the own possibilities in the decisions or possible ways to observe in his becoming. In fact, if in the past certain elements were taken for granted from a biological or psychological perspective, today either because of a free choice, the social context or one’s own personal decision about existence, these dimensions are relegated to a secondary priority. Social agreements or one’s own personal decision would weigh more than nature itself.

This new way of seeing and understanding man and his relationships encompasses all the dimensions of the human being, including the political, social, economic, educational, family and, significantly, the religious order. As a common denominator in this is the conception of the person, especially with regard to personal freedom, the relationship between subjects, the relationship with ideas and the relationship with sexuality, among other links, fostering collective or individual responses. From a dichotomous point of view and, therefore, taken to the extreme, we seek on the one hand to intervene and impose, which would be subordinated to the objective of introducing a vision of concrete reality, which we already said would be intentional and would respond to ideological frameworks, as Expósito (2018) points out. It could also respond to criteria for building a curriculum as can be seen in Bernstein (1985) and, on the other hand, in an extreme opposite sense, we seek to generate actions for protection against this, which would come to account for those that seek to weaken the impact of these changes on some group, organization, or individual.

In other words, there would be a defense against the impacts of such actions, often considering that the other proposals seek to attack or destroy the above and not necessarily generate an alternative interpretation or acceptance of the marginalized in the previous understanding.

I say that all these transformations that are translated into regulations do not emanate from nothing, they are intentional actions, they are lucubrations taken to action and that are born from people's own reflections and experiences. It is the very analysis of existence or of how relationships present themselves in society that makes the critical look at them give an account of new ways of understanding them, changing the points of reference and, therefore, taking the discussion to different planes and to different languages. We all participate in these critical approaches to reality and we all feed them with our actions or ways of being. In other words, with respect to the way we look at history, the people in that history and their suffering or existence, the abuses, the discriminations, the critiques that are produced and new ways of valuing that same existence are constructed. What in the past was customary, for certainty or normality, is not so today. The references are different, and the sense of what is just, good and beautiful is not the same.

Now, it has been possible to move from one way of understanding to another, a product not only of knowledge, which historically was referred to a few, but also, by the level of access we have to it. Today, knowledge is rapidly expanding and that which is sensitive to the heart is expanding much more rapidly. It is this new knowledge or new interpretations of life and being, especially those that make room for experiences or realities that have been commonly sanctioned or postponed,—which apparently enjoy significant support—, that have led to the application of regulations in different areas, seeking to normalize behavior or establish a criterion of conduct, acceptable under these new constructions of conceptions and, for this reason, manifested through intervention in key areas such as education in order to massify them. These are expressions such as gender equality or freedom of choice regarding the body, among others. It is through policies and operating standards that the representatives of these ideas or new conceptions seek to have people apply or consider these new ways of understanding reality as minimum standards, in exchange, many times, for elements that can be traded for recognition or financing. In other words, conceptions based on theoretical constructions give specific answers to human beings' problems that satisfy their needs and, therefore, validate them as new ways of understanding their relationships. For this reason, their massification would be a legitimate component, using as a means tools of power such as economics or recognition. As means for this kind of influence or massification are organizations of world importance such as the United Nations, the OECD, the World Bank, UNESCO, among others, which manifest, through their declarations and principles, concepts of education, citizen participation, inclusion, gender, and freedom, affecting national conceptions themselves. In this way, in many cases they are transformed into policies or laws in different countries and, as a consequence for many, into moral or ethical norms—what the law says is assumed to be good or correct—producing a change in behavior or, at least, a tension with one's own conceptions, which are subject to the weight of communication.



It is these new conceptions that are the basis of the changes, which are at the base of the regulations on education systems in the different areas in which they must act upon. In the administrative-financial area, for some time now, different institutions of primary, secondary, and tertiary education have been required to have a greater degree of responsibility for the resources they receive and for the achievements they obtain through their use. This, which seems obvious, has not been the case historically, and the concept of *accountability* installed in this type of organization has also been part of the demands made by education financing agencies in our countries (Durán 2012). The State seeks, often through the control of financial resources, to control the curriculum or what is done in terms of objectives in the context of training. This occurs not only because of the scarcity of resources, but also because of the responsibility for results, as well as the level of dependence of institutions on those who finance them. Similarly, the same situation can be observed in the curricular context: major interests or major changes that occur impact on guidelines and, consequently, on regulatory actions on educational organizations (Durán 2008) and that refer to areas such as inclusion, gender, participation of students and their parents, rules for school coexistence, selection or choice of schools, changes in the curriculum, the teaching of religion, and many other areas.

### 3.3 Religious Education

We speak of religious teaching in order to give an account of Catholic education or any religious option in all areas of the educational system. Thus, this proposal for discussion is framed within the confrontation of differentiated bases between those who found the regulations and those who form the pillars of religious education.

As has been pointed out, the contexts of ideas and the social have changed and fostered new ways of understanding and seeing reality, a situation that leads us to see and experience a certain relativism in which the social construction of truth would definitely give way to the conception of objectivity as a social consensus which, in many cases, would be driven by an economic and/or social power, obviously not massive and therefore not permanent either, since we would thus assume a sense of permanent transformation linked to “advances” in the social or “modern” developments of the different conceptions at the base. From this perspective, time becomes a variable that affects change. The permanent, we could say the eternal, would have no place in these conceptions. The weight of the social agreement becomes very relevant. It is remarkable within this change the disjunctive between the reference to the eternal and the temporary, even in conceptions like the meaning of humanity.

These regulatory actions are precisely those that have an impact on the daily life and cultures of organizations. Thus, direct actions on schools can be seen with the intention to producing internal effects, as we observe in the officially declared objectives, in the case of Chile, from the Ministry of Education: “*Thus, the central objective of the Policy for School Coexistence is to guide the definition and implementation of actions, initiatives, programs and projects that promote and foster the*

*understanding and development of a participatory, inclusive and democratic School Coexistence, with a focus on training, participation, rights, gender equity and institutional and territorial management*” (MINEDUC 2015). As can be seen, the scope of this policy entails particular visions that provide the basis for demands in the field of education. In some way, then, in theory, internal organizational cultures seek to establish a relationship with the environment that will enable them to survive as organizations. In many cases, this means adapting their own internal cultures, generating bridges or establishing dialogues of rapprochement or mutual understanding. Here it is relevant to point out that, in this type of organization, the educational ones, the actors that participate in their construction are varied and are all immersed in contexts that are external to the organization itself, either in terms of values or ideology, and all in some way participate from these realities in the configuration or realization of those proposed by the educational organization. Parents and guardians, students, teachers, administrators, owners, bosses, etc., are all part of this reality and together they participate, consciously or unconsciously, in the construction of the ideals and objectives proposed in the different educational projects that sometimes contrast with those that are implicit or explicit in the policies of the State.

All these actors participate in the construction of the community, as well as in the internal debates or in the reflection on the internal realities and their understanding, either as a result of the discussion or simply of the testimony. Thus, in the Chilean case, as a result of abuses committed by teachers, personnel linked to education have promoted the generation of protocols by the State at the level of educational institutions—regulatory actions—, affecting in some way the relationship between teacher and student with the sole purpose of protecting it (MINEDUC 2017). In the same context, the cases associated with the participation of priests or consecrated members have also played a role in the way of understanding religious education and have left a hint of mistrust in it. Similarly, the consideration or updating of the understanding of gender has also produced changes that in a concrete way have led to modifications in the structure of the buildings or in the internal norms of coexistence (MINEDUC 2015).

Now there have been changes not only in this area, but also in the way we understand the world. The general discussion leads us to the comparison with the “developed world”. Our actions, even legislative, lead us to be more “modern” and not to give space to the traditional. Our educational experiences or transformations in the field of training have affected all our work transversally. Our curriculum is not our own; it seeks to respond positively to the standards of developed countries such as those belonging to the OECD. In this sense, the rankings are a way of assessing that quality and thus becoming a light for the road ahead.

However, it is not only the secular world or non-believers who are reflecting on new ways of understanding the world, this has also been part of the development of the Church itself and its hierarchy. It has not been uncommon for recent Popes to ask forgiveness for how the Church dealt with issues such as science, sin, power. It has also been transforming its way of relating to the world, to people, to error. For the Church, the great discussions of today are not forbidden or remote, it is enough to point out as an example *Laudato Si* or *Veritatis Gaudium* of Pope Francis, which

holds the common house and the Catholic universities accountable, respectively, or the different encyclicals or exhortations that have always had a link with the context at the moment of their creation.

As we have said, regulations are based on critical views of one's past and present. The questioning of ideas is part of a series of serious reflections on reality, among them, for example, abuses of power, violations of human dignity—especially of women—wars, an economy without a soul, hunger, sexual abuse—and in these, with great relevance, that of those who belong to the Church, an importance given because she is nourished by a publicly known doctrine that still continues to be a reference point for the world—God and the Church's outlook—which has a transversal weight in her evaluation. All of this has shaped a way of understanding and seeing the world and the relationships of people in it in a particular way, and this can be clearly seen in the different policies and actions on organizations, especially those in charge of people's formation. It is on this basis that the education system is the focus of attention and action of large organizations, but also of States. The basic premise is that this system is the best and greatest instrument of change in society. For this reason, it is the object of manipulation and of action on it. The way in which States, or any of the entities described above, act upon these organizations is through norms, laws, and regulations that end up limiting the areas of influence or power in the relation between students and teachers or between the politically agreed upon content of different curricula, as can be seen in Bernstein (1985).

From the religious world, the changes have also touched our doctrinal conceptions, our way of understanding the relationship between people or the relationship with sin. We have faced misery and frustration, not only in our own personal inconsistencies in the face of the great ideal of Christ, but we have seen the errors and miseries of ourselves, of our own Church, multiply, both in her hierarchy and in us, her pilgrims. The calls of the Pope are and have been eloquent and full of hope, but also of contradiction—as in the case of his defense of Bishop Barros during his visit in Chile in 2018—which have caused the waters to move, sometimes making us lose our convictions and to sink and extend our hands towards Christ, hoping that he will take us and lead us to safety as he did with Peter when, disturbed by the storm, he began to sink.

### 3.4 The Tension

It is in this context of confrontation between what laws, norms or regulations present as epistemological or ideological definitions and what religious inspiration manifests in its discourses or actions, and which we who are part of the Catholic Church announce, that tensions are generated and that put in opposition or in debate different ways of seeing life and ideas. Words like respect for dignity, inclusion, equal opportunities, freedom, are concepts that are defined differently and that per se are anchor terms that are motivating, attractive to the senses. However, many of them refer to different ideological or doctrinal frameworks that present different conceptions.

These words are so warm to the ear or heart that, on many occasions, they are adopted and become our interpretation, reorienting our actions and producing a tension with our declared faith or delivering arguments inconsistent with it.

There are many and varied examples of these tensions. Many of the sensitive cases present in the discussion of peoples such as abortion, euthanasia, education, participation, personal freedoms, gender, culture, homosexuality, politics or economic management contain conceptions that could “charm” thought and justify actions along these lines. I insist, we do not only look from the enchantment of the senses, but also from the disquiet of the religious experience lived, which leads us to relativize our own positions or foundations. Many times it is those who have felt marginalized, not considered, who discover in these new conceptions a sense of consideration for their reality: they see in them a path of personal development. Sometimes the social aspiration also leads us to assume terminologies in order to be accepted and recognized. Thus, given that being modern or current would not be attributable to just anyone, and it is enough to point out the link to a church to be informally labeled as conservative, our parameters become those that the world proposes to us or what organizations such as those mentioned above propose to us. Our own references are lost in this tension and words like liberal or conservative play a specific role in the configuration of support or power networks.

It is precisely these tensions that consciously or unconsciously manifest themselves in religious teaching and in those who have the responsibility to carry it out. They can be seen in the processes of regulation and reform of recent years in the world and especially in Chile. Regulations that seek to standardize behavior or actions on subjects, which under the prism of equal opportunity limits originality, homogenizes it or eliminates it from the public sphere.

### **3.5 God Makes All Things New: Looking Creatively at Tension**

These tensions do not leave us indifferent and we have been able to appreciate that, without much objection, all the changes that the law or the norms propose have been configured as changes within the educational organizations. We always end up finding the bridge that links, the dialogue that unites. This, which can be positive in many cases, could also be a sign of the limitations of our own conceptions or feelings of attachment to it, as well as from the management point of view, of the spaces of autonomy, especially for those institutions that are highly dependent on the State for their economy or, beyond that, of being officially recognized by the State. In this the State would configure an ideological imposition through reforms or regulations (Durán 2008). It is also possible to find arguments that show, from a Catholic conception, that the acceptance of the new winds is necessary because of how close it would be to the central message of Christ. Whatever the situation, today we are immersed in tensions that in some cases lead to personal questioning, not

only from a doctrinal or ideological point of view, but also from the living out of the faith itself, and it calls into question the traditional or the forms that we have been acquiring in the practice of our faith throughout our lives. It is the aforementioned regulations, which are translated into reforms, that tensions our conceptions and traditions, conflicting our own behavior.

The siren songs cloud our understanding, and so we ask ourselves how to respond to them in a context of Catholic education, universal and current education. This form of education centred on an ever new message—God makes all things new—is necessarily a major challenge that requires clarity and conviction, requires will and action, requires courage and wisdom, requires love and humility. Catholic education in this context of tension requires building from disorder, strengthening its pillars and reorienting its actions, but above all creating from tension, trusting in Him who can do everything. Rational decision in formation is not enough, will and dialogue in relation to the new times also play a preponderant role.

Creating from love and humility is an unavoidable step. We cannot face the new times without the necessary capacity to put ourselves in God's hands, in the hands of his Spirit. This allows us to really look at ourselves according to what we are, imperfect beings on the way to perfection, subject to error, fall and sin. This reality also allows us to look benevolently at others and ourselves, but also to embrace the Father and let ourselves be guided by Him. It is our own awareness of fragility that helps us to look at the one who is at our side with different eyes and see him as a collaborator in the construction of reality. It is what definitely guides us to participate in the common construction of reality. We all participate in it and, therefore, we accept that God speaks through second causes. All of us, believers or non-believers. This strikes at our pride and invites us not to look from the pulpit or through the eyes of someone who does not make mistakes.

This is not only an ornament on the way, humility and filial love allow for a different exercise of power, oriented towards service and dedication, a way of seeing the other differently, of welcoming and accepting and, what is clearer today, it allows for the recognition of errors and the correction of the course, it allows for the recognition of wisdom in the other and also for the recognition of their value. From the universal dimension of Christ's message and therefore of the truth, it would mean that the Good News is a gift and not an imposition. From this perspective, it is a gift to be offered, which would make a greater, historical difference from the submission to this message that so many people have experienced, issued by conquerors and the Church herself.

We need the clarity and conviction that together put ideas forward and project ideals. Knowledge, and access to it, is not enough if it does not become a testimony, or in other words, if it does not become part of our practical experience. The tension that we are faced with or that educational organizations in religious contexts are confronted with, puts into debate truths that we assumed to be unquestionable with arguments that are often attentive or sensitive to our reality or to the suffering of others, or simply to the demands of others, where free will is emphasized as a guarantee of freedom in the way of understanding and choice. In this way, if there is no theoretical clarity or testimonial clarity, understanding this as the consistency

of practice with the ideological, value-based or theoretical option, we will not be able to sustain our own conviction or that of those who see us. Even so, this certain coherence is closely linked to humility. We know that our strength is not enough, we know that sin is part of our reality, so if this clarity and conviction are not linked to a true longing for Christ, they are in vain and increase the tension.

This is why will and action give an account, on the one hand, of the strength to get started and, on the other, of the implementation itself. It is not only wanting, it is not only knowing or having clarity, in fact, it is not enough to be convinced if this conviction is not embodied, is not realized: that is why action, but not just any action, is an action with meaning, is a testimonial action.

Therefore, the testimonial character of our action is based on courage, on the capacity to put ourselves at the service of others and, therefore, without wisdom, a real testimony will not be possible. This wisdom is not only in listening to those who cry out the most, but also to the person who suffers in silence, even to the individual who is able to deprive himself of what he has, like the mother who was willing to allow another woman to take her child in order to avoid his death, as it is told in the book of Wisdom.

The tension of which we are part of, the one that is found in the political arena that configures the common space that the actors have to seek to achieve spaces of dominion over uncertainties (Crozier and Friedberg 1977) and that we often forget, is part of the existence of every organization. It generates negative effects by limiting development, by closing in on itself or by establishing a wall that separates the environment. However, if we are able to go to the root of the discussion, to go to the fundamental questioning with humility, clarity, courage and wisdom, we will be able to see that many of the causes have also been the product of our actions as a society, which have responded to parameters not updated in Christ and which can be approached in another way from humility and from the recognition of errors. Therefore, the tension becomes creative when it succeeds in enlightening and renewing our journey in Christ, when we have managed to listen to the other, when we have come down from the pedestal and suffered with our brother. It is the experience of God the Father that makes the difference, it is the experience of the son that does not separate us from the Father, that allows us to experience in a hopeful way the vicissitudes of daily life.

For this reason, transforming tension into creativity requires truthful and profound analyses for each organization, looking at itself with benevolence but with reality, and in that humility giving an account of the foundations of their projects and actions. Knowing what is done and how it is done is part of the evaluation of consistency: looking at interpersonal relationships, attention to the other and the consequences of those links. It is not enough to make a statement and it is not enough to give evidence. The explicitly declared desire is also important, but also the lived desire. To look at how current trends in all areas have permeated organizations, how the economic factor and market criteria, which have no soul, have gained ground in our decisions. The tension becomes creative when we assume that it is not others who are responsible for the new changes, but we assume our fragile reality and we are able to see, not from above, the sinful people who suffer and to whom we should extend

our hand, but we see ourselves in the midst of that people, because we identify with them, seeking to build together that new people, that new man.

## References

- Bernstein B (1985) Classification and framing of educational knowledge. *Rev Univ Pedagógica Nac* 15(1)
- Crozier M, Friedberg E (1977) *The actor and the system*. Ed. Du Seuil, Paris
- Durán D (2008) The role of the state in the effectiveness and improvement of education: towards an ideological imposition? *Rev IberoamNa Sobre Calid, Efic Y Cambio En Educ* 6(4)
- Durán D (2012) Teachers' perception and reaction to external evaluation. The case of SIMCE in shared finance schools in Chile. European University Publishing
- Expósito C (2018) Apuntes Universitarios. *Rev Investig* 8(2):31–48
- Ministry of Education (2015) National Policy for School Coexistence 2015–2018. MINEDUC
- Ministry of Education (2017) Maltreatment, harassment, sexual abuse, rape in educational establishments. Guidelines for the elaboration of an Action Protocol. MINEDUC
- Montero L, Valverde F, Dois A, Bicoocca M, Domínguez C (2017) Sex education: a challenge for Catholic education. *Educ Educ* 20(3):343–363

**Diego Durán Jara** Rector of the Catholic University of Maule. Doctor of Education Sciences at the Catholic University of Leuven (Belgium). His areas of study are the professional role of the classroom teacher, mathematics didactics from the methodology of research and educational management.

# Chapter 4

## School Education, Religiosity and Citizenship: An Approach to Laicism in Chile and Mexico



Mariana Molina 

**Abstract** This chapter reflects on the role of Catholic education in the formation of an identity based on religious morality in Mexico and Chile. It explores the link between secularism and religiosity in both countries, the importance of education in forging a civic identity, and the coexistence of Catholic and non-Catholic social projects. Finally, the challenges that all this implies for both societies are analyzed.

### 4.1 Introduction

The Catholic religion has been predominant in the Latin American subcontinent for almost five centuries. As an inheritance from the Spanish and Portuguese crowns, it shaped a good part of the private life of the parishioners; in addition, the presence of the Church in the public space provided it with an undeniable capacity to define the rest of the social spheres based on Christian morality.

Although today Catholicism continues to be the primary religion in Latin America, in the last few decades profound transformations have taken place at the regional level. The visible political and social diversification has been accompanied by religious diversification, and in that sense by a heterogeneity of moral convictions. This can be explained by the fact that spiritual beliefs are not restricted to a set of dogmas and rituals, but imply values from which the world is interpreted and acted upon. Thus, religious plurality is likely to be translated into equally plural principles.

Faced with this scenario, it is worth reflecting on a question: what relevance does a Catholic education have in the conditions described above? Here we propose to explore this question from an approach based on law and sociology. To do so, it will be necessary to analyze the conceptual distinction between laicism, secularization and religiosity, as well as the links that unite them. In order to place the discussion in the empirical field, reference will be made to the cases of Chile and Mexico.

---

M. Molina (✉)

“Benito Juárez” Extraordinary Lecture, National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), Mexico City, Mexico



Freedom of worship and conscience in both countries is guaranteed by their Constitutions, which establish state autonomy from the churches. However, the population retains its religious convictions and may place them at the centre of its understanding of the public sphere.<sup>1</sup> Unlike Chile and other political contexts, in Mexico secularism was born out of a rampant anti-clericalism on the part of the state apparatus, and for that reason its separation from the churches tends to be thought of as an affront to any manifestation of spirituality in the public sphere.<sup>2</sup> It is here that the break-up of Catholic hegemony poses important challenges for the design of an inclusive social project: the harmonious coexistence between the State and the churches goes beyond the negotiation with the representatives of a religious organization, since it implies defining norms that guarantee respect for the moral convictions of every person. In a society with increasingly diverse beliefs, education stands as a space in which values are transmitted and reinforced, identities are built, and social relations are woven.

This text seeks to reflect on the role of Catholic education in the formation of an identity based on religious morality, as well as on the challenges that this implies in two increasingly diverse societies. The document is structured around three axes: (1) the link between secularism and religiosity in Mexico and Chile; (2) the importance of education in forging a civic identity; and (3) the coexistence between Catholic and non-Catholic social projects.

## 4.2 Can We Have a Secular State in a Religious Society?

The word secularism is generally used to designate an attribute of those states whose functioning is independent of religious beliefs, norms, and institutions. This definition, proposed by authors such as José Casanova (1994), Roberto Blancarte (2008), and Émile Poulat (2012), among others, stands out not only for its practical simplicity but above all for its analytical potential.

In much of the discussion on the subject, the adjective *lay* is used to refer to a wide range of social phenomena. However, it should be noted that the apparent polysemy of the word is due more to the absence of consensus on what it means, resulting in confusion that makes dialogue difficult among those who study problems related to secularity.

Thus, for example, the Catholic hierarchy refers to those who are part of the Church but who do not belong to the secular or regular clergy as *laity*. In other words,

---

<sup>1</sup>As will be discussed in the next section, some pioneering authors of the theory of secularization stated that in modern societies religious beliefs would eventually disappear, since the primary needs of the subjects would be satisfied. This premise is maintained in works such as that of Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, who through a quantitative approach track the degree of religiosity in countries with different levels of economic development.

<sup>2</sup>This is shown by the survey carried out by the company Parametría, whose results were published in 2010.

parishioners whose life is lived outside the structures of the ecclesial institution are distinguished from those who are integrated into them.

It could be thought that, in order to solve the problem described here, it is enough to point out the difference between the meaning given to the word *laicism* by the clergy and that referred to in academic texts. However, even in the latter there are divergent definitions. Some studies describe as *secular the* contexts in which the influence of a hegemonic religion dissipates in the face of the growth of other faiths, or those in which spirituality loses importance for the general population. Although such processes may coincide with secularity, it is important to note that they are not perennial features of secularity.

For the purposes of this text, the concept of *secularism* refers to the legal-political attribute that marks the separation between the state apparatus and the doctrinal belief systems, their norms, their institutions and the leaders who represent them. This definition is similar to that formulated by authors such as Casanova, Blancarte and Poulat; however, it differs from them in that doctrinal beliefs may or may not be religious in nature. This means that laicism corresponds to a legal attribute to regulate the political system, regardless of the regime under which it operates. From the above, the following conjectures are derived:

- a. In a secular state, government institutions and the officials who work in them are autonomous from any doctrinal belief system. It is true that secularism means the separation of state and church(es), but the concept encompasses much more than a simple institutional distinction.
- b. State secularism can occur in political systems where a democratic regime is adopted, but it is not exclusive to these. Proof of this are cases such as the People's Republic of China or the now extinct USSR.<sup>3</sup> Having said that, the separation between the political and religious spheres does not necessarily lead to greater justice, representation or participation of citizens.
- c. Laicism implies respect for a series of rules applicable to the political system and according to which it is separated from the religious system. Thus, it is not strictly speaking a regime of coexistence but a juridical-political attribute, whose rules are expected to lead to schemes of social interaction that respect plurality.
- d. The fact that a state is secular concerns only the legal and political sphere, and it cannot be assumed that it will also move into the social sphere. Laicism is not always accompanied, as some authors seem to claim, by<sup>4</sup> denominational

---

<sup>3</sup>With the establishment of the USSR and after the Chinese cultural revolution, under the administration of Mao Zedong, both state apparatuses sought to eliminate religions as irrational. This led to persecution of believers and ministers of worship.

<sup>4</sup>Among the pioneering authors of the so-called theory of secularization, it is usually assumed that modernity is accompanied by the functional separation between the religious sphere and the rest of the social spaces. It is also assumed that, as this process advances, confessional beliefs are restricted to the private sphere, thus losing their visibility. Moreover, some of these authors assumed that modernization would have the capacity to meet the material needs of the subjects, and that with it the spiritual ones would disappear. Although history has sufficiently shown that this conjecture was wrong, the writings of Luckmann, Parsons, Berger, Martin and Inglehart are still

plurality, by a reduction in the spirituality of those who make up the social fabric, nor by the absence of a leading role for religious institutions in the political sphere.

The above premises guide the reflections in the following pages, which attempt to explain that state secularism does not always correspond to a secular society.<sup>5</sup> To that end, it is now appropriate to briefly describe the processes that led to the separation between state and church(s) in the cases of Mexico and Chile, as well as to discuss whether or not they are secular state apparatuses.

### ***4.2.1 The Establishment of Secularism in Mexico and Chile***

It has already been said that secularism refers to a legal-political attribute that marks the separation between the state apparatus and doctrinal belief systems, their norms, their institutions and the leaders who represent them. This definition is useful for making visible the rules that govern political and social relations, or at least intend to do so. In this sense, Mexico and Chile constitute interesting cases because, although in both there is a majority of believers, the way in which the public space is thought is essentially different. It is not the object of this text to delve into the historical trajectories that led to this result. However, it is worth briefly mentioning some turning points that influenced the legal provisions regarding laicism in both contexts.

The territories that currently make up these countries were controlled by the Spanish Crown since the sixteenth century; Mexico, as part of the Viceroyalty of New Spain and Chile, as Viceroyalty of Peru. It should be remembered that, unlike the colonial domination schemes, in the viceroyalty it is assumed that the inhabitants are subjects of the Crown and that the Crown should therefore protect them (Brading 2015). In this way, the salvation of souls through the thus understood true faith was the responsibility of those who administered the lands of the Spanish empire. The unity between political power and the Catholic religion was then exported to the regions that are of interest here. This means that the moral precepts of Catholicism not only influenced the consciences of the believers, but also the definition of the public space and the norms that would regulate social relations. The Spanish presence in America lasted about three centuries, and with it the alliance between the Crown and the Church.

Once independent, the new Latin American countries were faced with the dilemma of whether or not to retain the confessional state. While a total break with the viceregal political system had to be ensured, in the eyes of some patriots the Catholic religion and the authority of their church were necessary to maintain social order. As in much

---

references in the matter. It is worth clarifying that in the English language there is no conceptual distinction between secularism and secularization. Thus, the word secularism is used to refer to both phenomena and tends to reproduce the ideas outlined above.

<sup>5</sup>As will be discussed in more detail later, in this article seculars are understood to mean those societies in which religion has ceased to be the centre of social organisation.

of Latin America, in Mexico and Chile conservative political parties, which defended the above-mentioned position, and liberal parties, whose proposal was to strengthen State power by restricting denominational beliefs to the private sphere, were formed.

The struggle for Chilean emancipation began under the leadership of Bernardo O'Higgins, who also served as Supreme Director and drafted the first Constitution in 1818. In the Second Title of this text it is established that "the Roman Catholic, Apostolic, religion is the only and exclusive religion of the State of Chile. Its protection, conservation, purity and inviolability will be one of the first duties of the heads of society, who will never allow any other public worship or doctrine contrary to that of Jesus Christ".<sup>6</sup> This precept was maintained in the constitutional texts of 1822, 1823, 1826, 1828 and 1833 (Precht 2006). As in its predecessors, the latter claimed the official status of the Catholic religion and prohibited public manifestations of other beliefs. However, and unlike previous constitutional exercises, in 1833 the right of patronage of the<sup>7</sup> State was contemplated. From then on, the unity between the political and religious spheres became even stronger in the new Chilean State.

In Mexico, independence was obtained in 1821, the same year in which the First Empire was founded. Similarly to Chile, it was considered then that the break with Spain did not have to disrupt the union between politics and religion. In fact, the motto of the government of Emperor Agustín de Iturbide was precisely "Religion, Independence, Union" (Frasquet 2007). By 1824, after the dissolution of the Empire, the first Constitution was written. It stipulated that the Mexican nation would be governed as a federal republic, and Catholicism was maintained as the official belief system. The second constitutional text, from 1836, changed the regime to that of a centralist republic. The Catholic religion retained its status as the sole and compulsory religion until 1857. After a period characterized by the struggle between very diverse political projects and an ideological struggle in which conservatives and liberals clashed, a Constitution was approved that year whose primary purpose was to ensure the supremacy of state power over any other (González 1992). In practical terms, this meant stripping the Catholic Church of its traditional functions; furthermore, and unlike the Chilean case, in Mexico, a commitment was made to restrict its capacity to intervene in the public sphere.

The Magna Carta of 1857 gave way to a civil war that culminated in the triumph of the liberals, and despite some informal concessions made to the Church, it continued until 1917. On February 5, a new Supreme Law was enacted, in which the principles of the revolutionary group led by Venustiano Carranza, also of liberal extraction, were made concrete (Garciadiego 2008). Once again, the confinement of religious beliefs to the private sphere provoked opposition from the Catholic hierarchy and many of its supporters.<sup>8</sup> This process seems somewhat cyclical in contemporary

---

<sup>6</sup>Proyecto de Constitución Provisoria para el Estado de Chile [Online] Available at: [https://www.camara.cl/camara/media/docs/constitucion/c\\_1818.pdf](https://www.camara.cl/camara/media/docs/constitucion/c_1818.pdf).

<sup>7</sup>The right of patronage constitutes a bilateral act between the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, in which the latter grants privileges and obligations regarding the administration of the Church in a specific territory.

<sup>8</sup>The Church's opposition focused on five articles: Article 3, which establishes that education is secular, free and obligatory for all Mexicans; Article 5, which prohibits the establishment of monastic

Mexican history: it was repeated between 1926 and 1929, with the enactment of the Calles Law and the then President's attempt to create a national church subordinate to the State<sup>9</sup>; in 1933, with the establishment of<sup>10</sup> socialist education; in 1959, with the introduction of free textbooks<sup>11</sup>; and from then on, on multiple occasions depending on their content (Díaz 2013). Unlike the Chilean case, in Mexico it is assumed that religion is a private matter and that, therefore, public education should be as secular as the State itself. We will return to this point later. For now, it is sufficient to point out that the presence of religion in public order is conceived differently in the laws of the countries referred to here.

Laicism as a legal and political attribute would not reach Chile until the presidency of the liberal Domingo Santa María. The secular laws, enacted between 1882 and 1884, defined a greater capacity for state intervention in matters once exclusive to the Church, such as the civil registry and the competence to grant or not grant burial in cemeteries supported by public funds (Serrano and Jaksic 2000). These conditions can be thought of as antecedents to the 1925 Constitution, which allowed "[...] the manifestation of all beliefs, freedom of conscience and the free exercise of all religions that are not opposed to morality, good customs or public order [...]" (Nogueira 2006). Contrary to what might be thought, these provisions were not based on an interest in building an inclusive and participatory political order. As Felipe Portales (2017) states, the drafting of the 1925 constitutional text was more an attempt to consolidate the power of the ruling elite, with Alessandri at its head, through a presidentialist regime.

Although the 1925 Constitution formally eliminated the union between state and church and the monopoly of Catholicism in spiritual matters, it maintained a notion of the public sphere in which morality is indispensable. In fact, as Richard Fairlie (2006) states, the autonomy of the state structure was not thought of as an affront to the Church because its leaders were never enemies. The constant negotiation between

---

orders and, therefore, restricts one of the ways to incorporate individuals into the ecclesiastical structure; Article 24, which recognizes freedom of belief and worship but restricts it to temples and private homes; The 27th, which reaffirms that the property of religious organizations becomes the property of the Nation, and the 130th, which gives the federal authorities the power to regulate religious worship and eliminates the legal personality of religious organizations.

<sup>9</sup>This period, which in Mexican history is known as the Cristero War, consisted of an open confrontation between the Church and the State led by Plutarco Elias Calles. During his term of office, the Calles Law was enacted, which prohibited religious periodicals and denominational education at the basic level. In response, church leaders called for an economic boycott and suspended the celebration of masses. Some of its supporters then drafted an alternative constitution recognizing Catholicism as the official religion. The violence escalated rapidly, leading to an armed conflict that left between 25,000 and 70,000 dead (Larin 1968).

<sup>10</sup>Then President Lazaro Cardenas reformed Article 3 of the Constitution, defining public education not only as secular and free, but also as socialist. This constituted a hard blow for the Catholic believers, many of whom grouped together with the slogan "Yes to Christianity, No to communism".

<sup>11</sup>The publication of compulsory textbooks for all schools, public and private, meant that the State had the power to define the content to be taught at the basic level. For the Church this represented a violation of the freedom of parents to decide the type of education they wanted for their children.

them allowed for an orderly, peaceful separation and, therefore, profoundly different from what happened in Mexico (Serrano 2015).

This condition was maintained in the 1980 constitutional text and also in the 2017 Law on Worship, which recognizes the power of faith-based organizations to receive resources from both private and public institutions. Thus, it can be argued that Chilean laws regulate the coexistence of diverse belief systems without the need to exclude the church(es) from the public sphere.

At this point it should be noted that in both Chile and Mexico the overwhelming majority of the population identifies itself as religious, and that the Catholic confession is the most widespread in both cases. But then, why are the churches in Mexico, at least legally, relegated to the private sphere?

#### ***4.2.2 Heterogeneity Among Believers: Religiosity and Fundamentalism Are not Synonymous***

Just as there is confusion as to what laicism means, it is also common to consider that the totality of people with religious convictions maintain conservative positions, or that they seek to impose their moral precepts on others. It is true that some groups agree with this description; however, the social reality is much more complex.

In Mexico, for example, according to the last census, 95.4% of the inhabitants are believers and 82.9% profess Catholicism (INEGI 2010). At first glance, these figures would seem surprising in a country marked by the sharp separation between state and church, especially if one takes into account the violence with which state supremacy was imposed. However, the phenomenon can be explained by a simple conceptual distinction: secularism implies the autonomy of the political sphere from the religious one, but not the absence of religiosity itself.

However, it should be emphasized that there are many ways to understand religion and even to practice it. In line with Émile Durkheim (Davie 2013), it is proposed here that religions consist of systems of beliefs and practices that give meaning to subjects and provide them with a sense of belonging. But those who adhere to such systems do not always seek to transmit them to others or to extend them to public order. That point, apparently obvious, marks the difference between secularity and fundamentalism.

In this text we will understand secularity as that situation in which religion is perceived as a social sphere differentiated from the others. Fundamentalism is at the opposite extreme, and places religion as the axis that articulates the entire social system. Thus, for example, medieval European societies were organized on the basis of a fundamentalist scheme and with a confessional State: aspects as varied as the rules of the political and economic system, wars, artistic production and even social interactions were articulated on the basis of religion.<sup>12</sup> These conceptions are not restricted to the past; in some cases they remain in entire societies (Saudi Arabia, for

---

<sup>12</sup>It is no coincidence, for example, that the Jewish quarters were separated from the rest of the city.

example), and in others they coexist with secular notions. In other words, there are societies in which groups with different ideas about the role of religion in the social system coexist. Three arguments can be derived from the above:

- a. The claim that a large number of believers increases the likelihood that a confessional state will be established is false, and is based on prejudice. The case of Mexico is paradigmatic in this sense, since the state apparatus is secular despite being a mostly religious country. In Chile, where 19.3% of the population has no religious affiliation (Rodríguez and Mardones 2018), there is a much less clear-cut separation.
- b. Having religious convictions does not necessarily translate into a fundamentalist position. In this regard, the case of the organization Catholics for a Free Choice can be cited,<sup>13</sup> which celebrates the existence of a religious sphere but conceives the social system (and thus public order) as independent of it.
- c) It is essential to distinguish between two conceptual oppositions: the confessional state is opposed to the secular state, while fundamentalism is opposed to secularity. In no way can it be thought that laicism and secularity are synonymous, nor that one entails the other.

So far it seems clear that the separation between state and church(es) is due to historical reasons that sought to accommodate belief systems in public space (as in the case of Chile) or relegate them to the private sphere to ensure the hegemony of state power (as in Mexico). But the arguments presented here force us to think, beyond laicism, about the processes that lead to thinking about the social order from a fundamentalist or secular scheme. The following section aims to offer a reflection on this point.

### **4.3 Shaping the Citizens of the Future: The Importance of the Educational Area**

Of all the social spaces in which subjects develop, there is no doubt that the school is one of the most significant. There it is learned to coexist with peers and authorities outside the family nucleus, one acquires a certain independence, and one obtains knowledge that concerns both the academic and social spheres (Wentzel and Looney 2007). Although the subjects learn through family, friends, and even the media, the truth is that the school institution enjoys social recognition as an educator. For that reason here it is maintained that its influence in the formation of people is unavoidable.

Taking into account the above, and considering that students spend a good part of their day at school or in work related to school, it is suggested to think of school

---

<sup>13</sup>According to its own information, CDD is a non-profit organization created by believing women and men that, from an ethical, Catholic, feminist and secular perspective, defends the human rights of women and young people, especially sexual and reproductive rights, including access to safe and legal abortion.

as a community where three groups interact: (a) school personnel, (b) parents, and (c) students. It is also proposed that such communities are formed based on a set of principles that articulate intra- and inter-group relations and that are intended to be disseminated among students. In denominational schools, these principles are supported and justified by religion.

It must be admitted that the ideology of a school is not always consciously known and shared by its members. However, those who belong to an educational space tend to agree at least on some basic appreciations about the type of formation that is expected in it. Provided that both options are available, if the parents of a minor decide to enroll him or her in a religious school and not in a secular one, they will most likely be in agreement with the morals that derive from that religion. In the same way, it seems logical that the staff working in one or another type of institution should agree with the idea.

On the other hand, the schools also reserve the right to admit teachers and students who fit a specific profile. This premise is valid for any sector of education in terms of discipline, academic performance or career path, but is particularly visible in the private sector. In any case, the permanence of subjects in a school depends largely on their adaptation to the environment. This adaptation necessarily involves the kind of values that define it and that in some way prefigure daily interactions between members of the community.

In a study carried out by this author, Catholic and lay educational communities were compared with different models of formation. From the first category, one Lasallian<sup>14</sup> and two opposing ones<sup>15</sup> were explored. The second was considered a

---

<sup>14</sup>The Lasallian congregation was founded on the work of John Baptist de La Salle, who created the Brotherhood of the Christian Schools in 1684. In its beginnings the organization did not have the support of the ecclesiastical authorities, since it gave a certain independence to the laity to take care of the schools. In Mexico, the Lasallian presence is much later. It dates from 1905, and coincides with a period of radical secularism in France during which nearly 800 schools were closed and several priests were exiled. Lasallian education was organized on the basis of three elements: (a) the love of God as the basis; (b) association and teamwork for the service of the young; and (c) youth as the priority and the center of the school. In addition, in the school, service to others is imbued with an idea of fraternity, of community work, and of helping less-favored social groups.

<sup>15</sup>Opus Dei was born in Spain in 1928. Its founder, José María Escrivá, dedicated a good part of his life to opening centers to extend the work of the Gospel in his country and in the rest of the world. These efforts took shape in 1947, when he received recognition from the Holy See. The first opposition center in Mexico dates from 1949, and was the seventh to open its doors outside the Spanish borders. There are seven principles that permeate Opus Dei: (i) divine filiation, which recognizes everyone as a child of God; (ii) ordinary life, which involves service both to God and to others in daily activities; (iii) sanctification of work, based on a Christian sense; (iv) prayer and sacrifice, which refer to imitating Jesus Christ through prayer, attendance at Mass, reading the Gospel, confession and penance; (v) unity of life, which points to God as the guide in all aspects of the believer's life; (vi) freedom, which promotes respect for the opinions of others and gives the right to act according to one's own convictions; and (vii) charity, which includes both the desire to spread the message of Christ and to solve the social problems and material needs of others. These seven elements point in the same direction: God is placed at the center of both personal and social life, and for that reason he is to be honored in all daily activities.



liberal republican, based on the Escuela Nueva model, and<sup>16</sup> one of civic and family education.<sup>17</sup> In order to unravel the composition and the dynamics that are generated in such institutions, interviews were conducted with members of the three groups. The results of this study are not the subject of this article. However, it is worth mentioning at least three:

- a. In each school there is a more or less clear profile of the teaching staff, in terms of their background, their teaching techniques, and the importance they attach to the values of the institutional ideology. The Opus Dei schools are the most homogeneous in this respect; most of those interviewed have previous experience as teachers, studied in private, Catholic and oppositionist universities, and practically all consider religious morality to be central to the formation of students.
- b. Some trends can be seen in the reasons parents give for enrolling their children in one school or another. These are similar among members of the same educational community, but differ markedly when compared to others. Thus, for example, in the Lasallian school the reason most referred to is the school environment, while in the opposing ones it is Catholic values. Among the secular institutions, the parents of those who attend the Republican and liberal schools refer above all to the formation of critical thinking, while in the civic and family education there is no particularly outstanding reason.
- c. The moral discourse of the students who participated in the study differs according to the type of school in which they are enrolled, and most of them coincide with the values that are promoted in their educational community. Without wishing to reduce the complexity of the object of study, in general terms it can be said that those who attend Catholic schools tend to think about the social order based on a morality consistent with their religious beliefs. Just to cite some examples, almost all of those interviewed in denominational schools were against the termination of pregnancy, and although in Lasallian schools same-sex unions are approved, the tendency in the other two is the opposite. Non-procreative sexual relations are accepted among all the subjects of the Lasallian school; in the oppositionist school for men opinions are divided in half, and in the exclusive school for women the majority reject them. As for the lay schools, in both cases the majority of the students interviewed accept all three practices. In the annexed material to this chapter, the tables that synthesize

---

<sup>16</sup>The Escuela Nueva emerged in the nineteenth century, and consists of a movement of pedagogical renewal that seeks to replace the passivity of traditional education with a more horizontal scheme, in which students play an active role that facilitates the development of critical reasoning. This proposal was originally opposed to religious education, not because of its spiritual basis but because of its traditionalist model.

<sup>17</sup>Education in values for citizenship presupposes living together in a democratic environment in which students should be participants, but above all architects. This implies a deep knowledge of their rights and responsibilities, understanding themselves as part of an inclusive society open to dialogue. On the other hand, family education is based on the notion that the family constitutes the basic nucleus through which subjects acquire their knowledge, frameworks of interpretation, habits and practices.

the results of the study referred to here can be consulted, which are structured from the moral discourse of the informants around six dimensions: (i) life; (ii) the body; (iii) sexuality; (iv) the family; (v) gender roles; and (vi) belief in transcendent entities.

It should be noted that in all schools a strong sense of belonging was observed, not only among students but also among teachers and parents. In the particular case of those affiliated with Opus Dei, this institutional belonging is also nourished by the Catholic identity. This does not mean, of course, that all its members have homogeneous ideas or that Catholicism is the main component of their identities. However, it should be stressed that they have strong community ties that generate unity among their members.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that religious education in the public sector is prohibited in Mexico. The schools included in the study belong to the private sector, which accounts for approximately 13.6% of enrollment at the basic level (CEMABE 2018). It may be objected that the research is not very useful, since the number of religious schools in the country is small. In fact, this is a qualitative study and its conclusions cannot be extrapolated to the whole of Mexican society. However, the findings indicated here suggest that belonging to one or another type of educational model influences the moral formation of the subjects and the way they perceive the rules of the social order. In this regard, two considerations should be made:

- a. That the institutions that participated in the research are elite institutions, and set the explicit goal of training leaders. In that sense, the socialization of Catholic values during early age can have an important influence on the activities of the subjects who, once they enter adulthood, are part of the citizenry.
- b. That in countries where religious education is permitted in both the private and public sectors, denominational morality would be expected to have a more widespread influence on subjects' perceptions of the social order. So far, there is no information to support this conjecture; however, it seems logical if one thinks of religions as systems of beliefs and practices. In that order of ideas, the case of Chile entails an even deeper complexity. It is worth considering that, although there is no exact figure, in Mexico the percentage of religious schools is less than 13.6% (CEMABE 2018) while in Chile it is 50.5% (Celis and Zárate 2015).

In any case, it should be stressed that both countries share a historical predominance of Catholicism, which in recent decades has been broken down to make way for other religious denominations. Like all spiritual convictions, such doctrines entail moral precepts that in the eyes of believers are desirable in the social order.

It is therefore worth asking whether it is possible to design a project that is satisfactory for the increasingly heterogeneous believers and for those who have no religion at all.

#### 4.4 The Complexity of Formulating an Ideal of Society

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges facing Latin American countries is to define the kind of rules that are desired to shape the social system. These rules, which are embodied in the legal framework, are intended to influence the nature of social interactions and are therefore subordinate to a set of values. The problem, of course, is to define which values should serve as the basis. The historical dispute between liberals and conservatives takes on new nuances in contemporary societies, not only because of their increasing diversification but also because of the complexity involved in the coexistence of fundamentalist and secular groups.

It has already been discussed that a good part of the socialization of values during the early years occurs in the educational community and that, with all its differences, in the cases of Mexico and Chile this can be configured as much from a religious morality as from a lay one. Here we do not intend to argue that one is better than the other; however, it is worth making some considerations in this regard:

- a. Religious education offers tools for spiritual development that can be thought of as complementary to or supportive of the academic. The first case presupposes the autonomy of both; the second, on the other hand, subordinates academic and civic formation to denominational morality.
- b. The subjects who are socialized in religious educational communities do not necessarily develop a fundamentalist scheme of thought. However, and as has been shown in the author's doctoral research, in school models that place spiritual growth as the axis, it seems more likely that students will reproduce that type of conception (Molina 2016). The consequences of this can be thought of on two levels: (i) an individual level, which concerns one's own identity; and (ii) a social level, which implies an ideal regarding the way in which society should function.
- c. Students who are educated in schools with a fundamentalist model tend to think of themselves as agents of change in favour of a more just, peaceful and orderly society in the terms dictated by their morals. Thus, religiosity is part of their daily environment, but above all of the ideals for which they are willing to work collectively (Molina 2016).
- d. The fundamentalist thought would not represent any conflict in the hypothesis that the whole of a population shares a doctrine and the rules of private and public conduct derived from its morality. However, in societies whose members have different belief systems, fundamentalism can lead to confrontations when moral positions are not compatible. An example of this occurred in 2016, when men and women from all the states of the Mexican Republic joined a protest movement to reject the legal character of the union between people of the same sex, proposed by President Enrique Peña Nieto. The protesters were convened by the National Front for the Family, which is made up of a group of civil society organizations, most of which are of Christian origin.

If the primary function of the State is to guarantee the rights of all its citizens, then it should allow freedom of conscience. But at this point a tension is reached that

is difficult to resolve. If the freedom of parents to educate their children in the way they consider most appropriate is claimed, it is to be expected that the coexistence of subjects with diametrically opposed systems of belief and moral conviction will continue. This diversity does not necessarily lead to conflict; however, it must be considered that there are points where by definition no agreement can be reached between fundamentalists and secularists. This category includes the decriminalization of abortion and euthanasia, the death penalty, the legality of same-sex unions and the power to adopt minors, among many other examples. If, on the contrary, the State places limits on fundamentalist educational models, then it violates the freedom of certain groups of believers to act in accordance with their convictions, and in that sense forces them to deny part of their identity.

This text does not attempt to provide a solution for such a complex dilemma, but rather to point out the advantages and costs of the above options. If we consider the results of the study carried out for the doctoral project, it seems clear that the role adopted by religion as part of the model of training in educational communities has a strong influence on the values of the subjects and, therefore, on their notions of social order.

The premise that the school plays a fundamental role in the moral development of students did not go unnoticed by Chilean and Mexican government authorities. In the first case, the intervention of the Church in the work of education was not thought of as a problem because laicism did not eliminate the mechanisms of negotiation between the State and the Church structure. In Mexico, on the other hand, laicism was constructed as a strategy to strengthen the State in the understanding that it would be the only authority in the public space; for this reason, State predominance in education became a central tool to eliminate the influence of the Church.

The differences between Chile and Mexico are abysmal in that sense, however, in both countries a process of religious pluralization can be observed that forces rethinking of the principle of laicism as a legal-political attribute. In that order of ideas, here we try to establish a starting point for reflecting on the implications of religious education in its fundamentalist meaning, and to formulate new questions about the political and social model that is desired for our countries.

## **Annexes**

### **I. Moral positions on life**

| Positions Right (C) Wrong (CI)             | Death Penalty (PM) |    | Assisted death (AD)* |    | Termination of Pregnancy (EI) |    | Morality references      |                          |                          |
|--|--------------------|----|----------------------|----|-------------------------------|----|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
|  | C                  | IC | C                    | IC | C                             | IC | PM                       | MA                       | IE                       |
| School A La Salle Mixed                    | 3                  | 7  | 6                    | 0  | 2                             | 8  | Laity                    | Laity                    | Religious and lay people |
| School B Opus Dei Male                     | 1                  | 9  | 1                    | 5  | 1                             | 9  | Religious and lay people | Religious and lay people | Religious                |
| School C Opus Dei Female                   | 0                  | 10 | 0                    | 6  | 0                             | 10 | Religious and lay people | Religious                | Religious                |
| School D Liberal Republican Mixed          | 0                  | 10 | 6                    | 0  | 6                             | 4  | Laity                    | Laity                    | Laity                    |
| School E Citizen and Family Training Mixed | 3                  | 7  | 6                    | 0  | 3                             | 7  | Laity                    | Laity                    | Laity                    |

*Note* \*This topic (assisted dying) was not addressed in the individual interviews but in the group discussions, in which six students participated

**II. Moral positions around the body**

| Positions Right (C) Wrong (CI)                 | Tobacco |    | Alcohol |    | Drugs |    | Tattoos |    | Piercings |    | Dyes from colours |    | References moral           |                     |
|--|---------|----|---------|----|-------|----|---------|----|-----------|----|-------------------|----|----------------------------|---------------------|
|  | C       | IC | C       | IC | C     | IC | C       | IC | C         | IC | C                 | IC | Tobacco, alcohol and drugs | Body modification   |
| School A La Salle Mixed                        | 0       | 10 | 0       | 10 | 0     | 10 | 7       | 3  | 7         | 3  | 9                 | 1  | Laity                      | Laity               |
| School B Men's Opus Dei                        | 0       | 10 | 3       | 7  | 0     | 10 | 5       | 5  | 5         | 5  | 2                 | 8  | Laity                      | Laity               |
| School C Women's Opus Dei                      | 0       | 10 | 1       | 9  | 0     | 10 | 8       | 2  | 8         | 2  | 9                 | 1  | Laity                      | Laity and religious |
| School D Liberal Republican Mixed              | 2       | 8  | 2       | 8  | 1     | 9  | 10      | 0  | 10        | 0  | 10                | 0  | Laity                      | Laity               |
| School E Citizenship and Family Training Mixed | 1       | 9  | 2       | 8  | 0     | 10 | 8       | 2  | 8         | 2  | 8                 | 2  | Laity                      | Laity               |

## References

- Blancarte R (2008) Understanding the secular state. Nostra Ediciones, Mexico
- Brading D (2015) The New Spain: homeland and religion. Mexico, FCE
- Casanova J (1994) Public religions in the modern world. The Chicago University Press, EUA
- Celis AM, Zárate S (2015) Freedom of education and religious freedom: religiously oriented schools in Chile. *Temas Agenda Pública* (84)
- CEMABE (2018) Educational Atlas. Available at <http://cemabe.inegi.org.mx/>
- Davie G (2013) The sociology of religion: a critical agenda. Sage, RU
- Díaz A (2013) Actors and discourses in the contest for sex education (Thesis). El Colegio de México, Mexico (108 pp.)
- Fairlie R (2006) Las relaciones del Estado y la Iglesia Católica en Chile desde 1925 a 1940. *Soc Sci Online* 3(3)
- Frasquet I (2007) Mexico's other independence: the first Mexican empire. *Keys to historical reflection. Rev Complut Hist América* 33
- Garciadiego J (2008) The revolution. In: Torres A (coord.), *Nueva Historia Mínima de México*. El Colegio de México, Mexico
- González M (1992) El proceso de separación entre la iglesia católica y el Estado mexicano. *Quorum* (1)
- INEGI. Volume and percentage of the population according to their religion and type of religion (1950–2010) Cultural characteristics of the population. Available at <http://www.beta.inegi.org.mx/temas/religion/>
- Larin N (1968) La rebelión de los cristeros, 1926–1929. Editorial Era, Mexico
- Library of Congress (2017) Legal guide to the law on worship. Available at <https://www.bcn.cl/ley-facil/recurso/ley-de-culto>
- Molina M (2016) Good Catholics and good citizens. Socialization of values among adolescents in religious schools in Mexico City (Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Social Science with specialization in Sociology). The College of Mexico. Available at [https://ces.colmex.mx/pdfs/tesis/tesis\\_molina\\_fuentes.pdf](https://ces.colmex.mx/pdfs/tesis/tesis_molina_fuentes.pdf)
- Nogueira H (2006) La libertad de conciencia, la manifestación de creencias y la libertad de culto en el ordenamiento jurídico chileno. *Ius et Praxis Magazine* 2(12)
- Parametry (2010) Divide Mexicans into a secular state. *Parametric Chart*
- Portales F (2017) The myths of Chilean democracy. Catalonia, Chile
- Poulat É (2012) Nuestra laicidad pública. Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico
- Precht J (2006) La laicidad del Estado en cuatro constituciones latinoamericanas. *Const Stud* 4(2)
- Rodríguez S, Mardones C (2018) Figures and projections of Catholicism in Chilean society. *La Tercera*, pp 2–4. Available at <https://www.pressreader.com/chile/la-tercera/20180331/281517931677189>
- Serrano S (2015) The promulgation of the Chilean civil code and its effects on the Church in the second half of the 19th century. *Itinerant*, 5
- Serrano S, Jaksic I (2000) The power of words: the Church and the liberal state in the face of the spread of writing in 19th century Chile. *History* 33
- Wentzel K, Looney L (2007) Socialization in school settings. In: Grusec J, Hastings P (Coord.) *Handbook of socialization: theory and research*. The Guilford Press, EUA

**Mariana Molina** Coordinator of the “Benito Juárez” Extraordinary Lecture at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). Doctor in Social Science specialized in Sociology from El Colegio de México. Master in Political Sociology from the Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luis Mora. Bachelor of International Relations from the Instituto Tecnológico y

de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey. Her research interests are the sociology of religion, secularism and secularization, socialization of values in the educational community, and state-church relations in Mexico.

**Part III**  
**A Look at Identity and Identities**



# Chapter 5

## Choice of Schools: What Makes Catholic Education Attractive?



Patricia Imbarack and Angélica Guzman D.

**Abstract** Using a quantitative methodology, the chapter asks about the strategies used by mothers and fathers to choose the school for their children in Chile. It focuses on those who make the choice for Catholic schooling. The study shows that the parents who choose the Catholic school for their children are mostly parents who define themselves as believers, and who present fairly homogeneous characteristics in their composition.

### 5.1 Introduction

The conciliar and post-conciliar documents of Vatican II appear as a great framework for the educational role of the Catholic Church throughout the world. The emphasis is that Catholic education has a role within the secular world and is, in a sense, a role for the benefit of the world. In providing religious education within a state system, it follows that a Catholic school is both a religious and a civic institution. Its purpose, methods, and characteristics are the same as those of all schools. However, its formative purposes must be rooted in Christ, its teaching in accordance with the Gospels and the essential doctrines of the Church (Morris, 1998).

Catholic education often seeks strategies for dialogue with an ever-changing world and, in particular, many Catholic schools assume that openness and universality are the hallmarks of their catholicity, which would require the inclusion of non-believing students in their classrooms. These would come from families who do not necessarily share the educational project in its entirety, but who would still opt for it. It is key, then, to ask the question about the particularities of choice in Catholic education, what makes it attractive, and under what premises do parents and/or guardians prefer it? This is the central question of this research, and it is summarized in this article in

---

P. Imbarack (✉) · A. Guzman D.  
Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago, Chile  
e-mail: [paimbara@uc.cl](mailto:paimbara@uc.cl)

A. Guzman D.  
e-mail: [mguzmadr@puc.cl](mailto:mguzmadr@puc.cl)

three sections: first, a theoretical approach that allows us to approach the processes of choice, and second, to make visible the evidence of Catholic education; and finally, to close with a third section that shows the findings of the investigation in a significant sample of Catholic educational establishments in our country.

## 5.2 Choice of Schools

Research on *school choice* is longstanding and has been conducted mainly in the United States and Great Britain. Its focus may be on the first choice that parents make for their children's educational institution, or on what the literature reports as the second choice, i.e., the process of student mobility from one school to another. However, whether any mention is made of either of these two alternatives, it is possible to address both the choice process and the choice itself. With regard to the choice process, descriptive research that refers to the understanding of the parents appears, characterising in a comprehensive manner, generally through qualitative tools, how they make their choice. In the second case, what is relevant is to address the particularities of choice as a social phenomenon. This research investigates this last line and is based on cases of first choice.

Both from a point of view of process and de facto choice, there are at least two perspectives. One assumes that parents act as consumers and, therefore, choice presupposes an assessment of costs and benefits following their children's learning. This would lead them to choose the school from a broad horizon of alternatives and based on a set of clear, transparent, and known criteria of deliberation. The option finally adopted would reflect this decision-making process. This is what some authors call *rational choice*. On the other hand, some question this approach, understanding that many parents may have difficulties in accessing, interpreting, and/or assessing existing information. In this case, it would be a more "rational decision" than a "satisfactory decision", which would be based on subjective indicators of satisfaction on the part of the parents (Poblete and Madsen, 2013).

In Chile, since the 1980s, public policy has promoted such a scenario of election that a quasi-market logic has been configured in the education system (Román, 2014); this is due, among other reasons, to the transfer of public schools from the Ministry of Education to the municipalities, a phenomenon known as "municipalization of education".<sup>1</sup> Within this framework, the forms of financing were modified, installing a demand subsidy that presupposes an incentive to private schools and that is based on the assumption of competition as a space for the improvement of educational quality, since there are private educational establishments to which the State provides economic support equivalent to that provided to municipal schools.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the more

---

<sup>1</sup>Municipalization was a reform of the public education administration system, introduced in Chile during the 1980s. It was configured as a process of transferring this administration from the Ministry of Education to the commune in which each school was located.

<sup>2</sup>In Chile, educational establishments officially recognized by the State may be classified according to the nature of their administrative and financial dependence into: municipal, subsidized private,

students an educational institution attracts, the greater the economic income it will receive. The above consolidates a system based on free choice by parents and/or guardians, in a space of offerers who seek to attract a higher subsidy, which is in direct line with the number of students enrolled. This would allow parents and/or guardians to exercise this freedom by choosing the school that they consider to be of the highest quality and that best responds to their educational ideas (Corvalán, 2007; Paredes and Ugarte, 2011; Villalobos and Quaresma, 2015).

With regard to the variables that determine school choice, although the information is not conclusive, numerous studies have advocated budgetary restrictions and inequity of supply as determining factors, which in some cases also limit the preferences of parents and/or guardians (Torrendel, 2011; Gubbins, 2013). The first thing that emerges is that the majority of them choose on the basis of their economic situation, the geographic distance between the home and the available schools, and the information they have about the institution, prioritizing, above all, the quality of the schools. Quality that, in the national case, is measured by means of standardized tests, through the System for Measuring the Quality of Education (SIMCE). All of these findings come from studies of a quantitative nature.

In the line of qualitative research, the works led by Raczynski (2008, 2011) stand out in the country, those that focus on the process of election of parents coming from medium and low socioeconomic sectors. These studies conclude that the social representation of parents in education is a key aspect of the process, since the sectors with the most information seek to distance themselves from the social environments to which they belong, as they consider them precarious, and seek alternatives that provide spaces for social mobility. Later, Raczynski confirms the lax association between segregation and choice, since it is the very strategies and guidelines of choice that families deploy, strengthened in their position within the social structure, that foster segregation.

Finally, with regard to the factors associated with the election, Román (2014) systematizes the information collected at national level, in the following Table 5.1.

Faced with the phenomenon of school choice, there are both detractors and supporters, who argue for and against this practice. Those in favor argue that the value of free choice benefits the least privileged by giving the most deprived contexts the privilege of choice reserved for other socio-economic groups. Those who oppose this type of policy argue that free choice has the potential to segregate the education system.

This last aspect, segregation and its link to choice, has been addressed by a considerable amount of research. However, Flores and Carrasco (2013) conclude that choice by parents and/or guardians is limited to two elements of the education system: shared

---

and paid private. The last two are the object of this research because they house Catholic schools. The private subsidized institutions are privately owned and administered, but receive state funding, through a subsidy, per student enrolled in classes; and, the private paid institutions are the private institutions themselves, which receive direct funding from the families of each student.

**Table 5.1** School choice factors in Chile according to literature review

| <i>Categories</i>                                      | <i>Factors</i>   |
|--|--|
| <i>Location</i>  | Location (commune) and distance to home<br>Easy and free transfer  |
| <i>Price</i>   | Free or shared financing<br>Type of school administration: public or private   |
| <i>Characteristics of the students</i>                 | The type of students and families attending the school<br>Social class<br>Mixed status or only women/men school                              |
| <i>Quality school</i>                                  | Academic standards: SIMCE results or other related information (socio-demographic characteristics of students)<br>Representations on quality |
| <i>Characteristics of teaching—Training principles</i> | Values or principles<br>Educational project<br>Religious character<br>Curricular proposal<br>Teaching method (specialities)                  |
| <i>School order and discipline</i>                     | Student behavior<br>Student dress/uniforms   |
| <i>Infrastructure and equipment</i>                    | Facilities; condition of the property  |
| <i>Direct knowledge</i>                                | Information that flows through social networks and close family<br>Own observation and knowledge of the school<br>Children's opinion         |

Source Roman (2014: 169)

funding<sup>3</sup> and inequity in the spatial distribution of schools. This makes it clear that the impact of free choice on segregation responds to these restrictions of the system, inasmuch as they hinder voters, regardless of their socioeconomic situation, from choosing schools under equal conditions.

### 5.3 Particularities of Election in Catholic Schools

What is the advantage of Catholic school? The literature reports that, in general, Catholic schools offer more benefits than non-denominational schools; higher student retention and graduation rates, better access to higher education, lower dropout rates and higher scores on standardized tests, even more so when comparing urban and rural

<sup>3</sup>It corresponds to the economic subsidy regime that empowers the supporters of educational establishments to demand monthly payments from the families of the students, maintaining the right to receive financing from the State, according to the level or modality of the school.

educational establishments (Guzmán, Palacios and Deliyannides, 2012; Freeman and Berends, 2016).

In characterizing the particularities of choice in Catholic schools, researchers such as Madero and Gutiérrez (2012) argue that the Catholic school model exacerbates issues such as segregation, since it represents a choice marked, in particular, by the socioeconomic level of families and, therefore, restricted to the private sector.

In contrast to this view, some authors claim that free choice could have an impact on reducing segregation, since it allows for the social mixing of students, which is so typical of the Catholic school: a very special call for the most vulnerable as a mandate from Christ and an invitation from the Church (Soriano, 2017). The Church's commitment to education, based on the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, continues to be the promotion of the human person regardless of his or her condition, which it does by taking Christ as the model of man, in whom all human values find their full realization.

For Lockwood (2014), a multiplicity of factors accounts for the choice of the Catholic school. An education with a strong moral sense, a clear discipline, the existence of better academics and, therefore, the quality of the instructional process, appear as the main reasons for choosing a Catholic school. The following factors, in order of ranking, were class size, safety, location of the institution and the presence of student friends in the school. In summary, parents report a subjective perception of higher quality in Catholic schools.

It is also concluded that a considerable portion of parents choose on the basis of their own educational and religious conditions, but also of the establishments. Along these lines, Flores and Carrasco (2016) state that evangelical religious voters privilege schools of their own confession without considering performance, choosing schools with significantly lower performance than those preferred by parents of another religion or no religion. A study in the United States, where Catholic enrollment has declined sharply, concluded that the religiousness of parents, often not considered in research on school choice, had a large effect on demand for Catholic schools (Sanders, 2005).

Tangentially, since it is not their central focus, research on school choice reports some findings that give clues for Catholic education. This is the case of Bustamante (2010), who—for the Argentine reality—concludes that voters, when referring to the Catholic school, define it as a transcendental institution for their children, recognizing and revaluing its socializing function, which we could analyze under the concept of the civilizing function of the school. It is interesting that a significant percentage of parents have previously attended a Catholic school and what they value are the characteristics of this type of education, associated with a “good education”, respect, values and discipline, among others.

As a reference in Chile, we find the work of Madero and Madero (2012), who cross the selection variable with the choice of Catholic schools and conclude, based on the analysis of SIMCE's parent questionnaires, that families to choose the Catholic school—without considering the differentiating factor of their confession—“they do so taking into account, first, the values of the school (68.4%), followed by the prestige of the school (55%) and by family priority (36.6%). Those who choose non-Catholic

schools present a very different response structure: firstly because of the proximity to the home (55.6%), followed by the cost of the monthly fee (39%) and, finally, by family priority (35.1%)” (p. 1279).

The above-mentioned research suggests the need to generate new investigative approaches that allow us to understand complementary factors in school choice. In alignment with the above, this study sought to deepen the reasons for parents’ and/or guardians’ choice of Catholic schools, both private and subsidized.

Under the assumption that today we observe a significant reduction of education to merely technical and functional aspects, and that the current conception of the Catholic school is that of an entity providing a public, instrumental service, it was projected as a hypothesis that the preponderant criteria in the choice would not differ from those usually reported in the literature on parents and/or guardians who are believers or non-believers, both being guided mainly by external quality criteria.

### ***5.3.1 Methodology***

The design of the research for both the generation and the systematization and analysis of information phases resorted to the guidelines of the quantitative methodology, without completely abandoning the depth of the qualitative interpretation. The design was of an exploratory, descriptive and correlational nature. Exploratory, given the specificity of the topic, as it was supported by the theoretical framework; descriptive, insofar as, from a technical point of view, the dimensions and variables that were measured and analyzed were studied based on their configuring characteristics (description); and correlational, insofar as the relationships established between the dimensions and variables described were delimited.

### ***5.3.2 Sample Design***

A non-probabilistic sample was used, for convenience, based on the selection of “types”, typical of the Social Sciences. Although this does not make the conclusions representative, it does make it possible to approach a complex phenomenon whose first approximation is of an exploratory nature. The “types” were designed according to a set of homogeneous and contrasting criteria. The homogeneous criteria for selection were Establishment with General Basic Education<sup>4</sup> and Belonging to the Metropolitan Region.<sup>5</sup> The contrasting criteria were Allocation of subsidies by the

---

<sup>4</sup>Name given to the cycle of primary studies that are compulsory in several Latin American countries, including Chile.

<sup>5</sup>It corresponds to one of the fifteen regions into which the Republic of Chile is divided. Its particularity is to host Santiago de Chile, which is at the same time the national capital.

**Table 5.2** Sample distribution

| Dependence          |              |                       |      |
|---------------------|--------------|-----------------------|------|
| Socioeconomic Group | Private Paid | Individual Subsidized |      |
| High                | 508          | 0                     | 508  |
| Medium              | 0            | 248                   | 248  |
| Medium High         | 0            | 270                   | 270  |
| Lower Medium        | 0            | 58                    | 58   |
| Total               | 508          | 576                   | 1084 |

*Source* Own elaboration

State (Paid individuals and subsidized individuals); and Socioeconomic level (High, Medium, Upper and Lower Medium).

For the purposes of this research, an approximate number of 30 parents and/or guardians per school was estimated, a figure that was modified according to the size of the courses and the institutions involved. Finally, the sample was configured by 16 establishments, eight paid individuals and eight subsidized individuals, distributed by socioeconomic group, as indicated in the following Table 5.2.

The table shows the work with 1,084 parents and/or guardians from different educational establishments, which was accessed in the space of meetings of guardians, of first and second basic. The selection of these levels responded to the analytical criterion of investigating parents and/or guardians who responded to a first choice, with both courses being considered as the levels of entry into the school system in Chile.

### 5.3.3 Information Generation Tools

To generate the information, an ad hoc instrument was constructed, based on national and international literature, taking as a reference the SIMCE Parent Survey (2017) and the Spanish experience in characterizing families, ASP 08.045 (Díaz, Rodríguez and Fernández, 2009). Given the temporal impossibility of conducting a pilot test of the questionnaire, we studied the validity and metric consistency in the application, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.84.

The instrument was structured in three areas of investigation: a dimension of general characterization of the parents and/or guardians, an area regarding questions about choice and, finally, some questions about the particularities of the voter.

The analysis of the data was carried out with the support of the statistical program SPSS Statistics v.16, in a double entry, descriptive and correlational for categorical data, by means of correspondence analysis, a strategy typical of complementary multivariate exploratory methods, suitable for the treatment of qualitative data.

## **5.4 Results**

In order to answer the question about the particularities of the Catholic school chooser, the three areas of inquiry mentioned above were studied. The results were as follows.

### ***5.4.1 With Regard to the General Characterization***

The selector is mainly a parent and/or guardian of Chilean nationality, only 4% qualify as a foreigner. In 95% of cases, the chooser attends the meetings of the parents and their main relationship is as a parent of the student. As for their schooling, 45% have completed higher education, 2% have incomplete graduate studies and 16% complete; only 7% of those surveyed fall into the categories of: no schooling, incomplete and complete basic education.

As for their relationship with religion, the majority declare themselves as parents who are believers (92%), grouping in this category those who perceive themselves as believers and believers in their own way. Those who adhere to other religions are distributed in smaller percentages among Orthodox (15%), Protestants (7%) and others (3%). With respect to the particularity of “being a believer in my own way”, this religious affiliation is linked to feeling close to the Church, but without following rites such as the Eucharist, the sacraments or others, followed by the declaration of dissenting with some central elements of the Catholic Church.

### ***5.4.2 Regarding the Particularities of the Choice***

For a significant percentage of parents and/or guardians (79%), the educational institution corresponds to their first choice; and with regard to the continuity of studies, only 40% of the students had a nursery education of Catholic orientation, indicating a persistence in the characteristics of the choice.

With regard to the geographical location of the parents and/or guardians with respect to the educational establishment, 76% of the respondents reside in the same commune.

Regarding the pre-election process, 37% of parents and/or guardians only obtained information from the current institution where they enrolled their child, while 25% consulted two institutions, 18% three and 20% more than three.



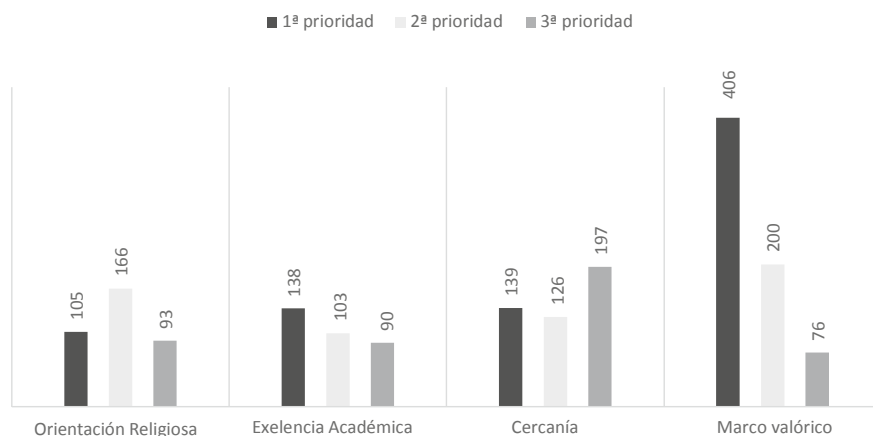
### 5.4.3 On Questions of Choice

Parents were confronted with a list of attributes to prioritize, organizing the first three reasons for choice. Some of the alternatives refer to characteristics such as: bilingual education, number of students per course, political-ideological project, vacancies, infrastructure, inclusion, environment, socio-cultural project, budget, discipline, recommendation, family tradition, religious orientation, academic excellence, closeness and framework of values. The last four are the most reported by those consulted, as shown in the following graph.

Figure 5.1 shows, as a first priority, the framework of values, followed by closeness, academic excellence and, in fourth place, religious orientation. As second preference, the value framework appears, followed by religious orientation, closeness and academic excellence. Finally, with respect to the third priority, the preference is for closeness, followed by religious orientation, academic excellence and framework of values.

Parents and/or guardians were asked indirectly about their satisfaction with the school, through questions associated with the possibility of change. Only 17% said they would transfer their child from one school to another, and half of them said they would choose a Catholic institution again, the main reason for change being the search for greater excellence in the formation of their children.

In a second order of analysis we worked by crossing some of the variables considered by the instrument, verifying whether or not there were relationships between them, through the elaboration of contingency tables and working with chi-square tests. Below are the crosses and variables in which this test was significant. The only conclusive finding corresponded to the relation between the number of schools consulted prior to the election (information) and the possibility of changing the educational establishment.



**Fig. 5.1** Preferencias según prioridad (*Fuente* Elaboración propia)

**Table 5.3** Information \* school change (Contingency tables)

|             |                            |                           | Change of school |        |        |          | Total  |
|-------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|--------|--------|----------|--------|
|             |                            |                           | Lost             | Yes    | No     | Not sure |        |
| Information | Lost                       | Recount                   | 7                | 4      | 6      | 1        | 18     |
|             |                            | % within change of school | 38,9%            | 2,2%   | 0,9%   | 0,5%     | 1,7%   |
|             | Only one (the current one) | Recount                   | 3                | 62     | 264    | 65       | 394    |
|             |                            | % within change of school | 16,7%            | 33,7%  | 38,1%  | 34,4%    | 36,3%  |
|             | Two                        | Recount                   | 4                | 43     | 169    | 50       | 266    |
|             |                            | % within change of school | 22,2%            | 23,4%  | 24,4%  | 26,5%    | 24,5%  |
|             | Three                      | Recount                   | 2                | 37     | 124    | 29       | 192    |
|             |                            | % within change of school | 11,1%            | 20,1%  | 17,9%  | 15,3%    | 17,7%  |
|             | More than three            | Recount                   | 2                | 38     | 130    | 44       | 214    |
|             |                            | % within change of school | 11,1%            | 20,7%  | 18,8%  | 23,3%    | 19,7%  |
| Total       |                            | Recount                   | 18               | 184    | 693    | 189      | 1084   |
|             |                            | % within change of school | 100,0%           | 100,0% | 100,0% | 100,0%   | 100,0% |

Source Own elaboration

Table 5.3 shows the relationship between the number of schools considered (from which information was sought) in the process of choosing one and the possibility for parents and guardians to change his/her child's school.

Of the total sample, 36.3% stated that they had only been informed of the student's current educational establishment during the school selection process. Contrasting this data with the possibility of changing their child's school, 38.1% stated that they would not change their child given the opportunity, while 33.7% would do so (Table 5.4).

What is observed is that at a 95% confidence level ( $0.05 > 0.000$ ), there is a correlation between the number of schools considered (out of which information was sought) in the process of choosing one and the possibility on the part of the guardian to change his or her child's school, that is, the more educational establishments were consulted, the greater the willingness to change his or her children from these.

**Table 5.4** Information \* Change School (Significance)

|                              | Value                | df | Asymptotic significance (bilateral) |
|------------------------------|----------------------|----|-------------------------------------|
| Pearson’s Chi-square         | 162,054 <sup>a</sup> | 12 | ,000                                |
| Likelihood ratio             | 44,262               | 12 | ,000                                |
| Linear by linear association | 1,953                | 1  | ,162                                |
| No. of valid cases           | 1084                 |    |                                     |

<sup>a</sup> = 6 cells (30.0%) have expected <sup>a</sup> count of less than 5

Source Own elaboration

### 5.4.4 Conclusions

From the results obtained, it is evident that the composition of the parents who choose the Catholic school for their children consists mainly of parents who define themselves as believers and who present fairly homogeneous characteristics.

This first finding shows that, in spite of being immersed in a predominantly secular culture, the Catholic school shelters and responds to a significant part of believers in our country. Although this gives an account of its identity and mission within society, it seems that, from the prerogatives of the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic school is not responding fully to the invitation to promote an inclusive opening to the world, bringing together believers and non-believers under its action, which leads us to ask ourselves how attractive Catholic education is to those who do not believe. Transforming Catholic education into an attractive option within society can, on the one hand, open up greater spaces for exercising a transforming role and, on the other hand, encourage religious mobility among young people and families by embracing the faith.

In the face of religious self-definition, parents and/or guardians place themselves within the framework of the faith, with the exception of at least 50% of the total number of believers who consider themselves “believers in their own way”, those who differ in certain aspects of the Catholic faith such as ritual participation or do not agree with some aspects of Catholic doctrine or institutionality. Although the reasons for the disagreement are not part of this research, it is projected that the Catholic school can play an important role in the evangelization of society; not so much by opening bridges between believers and non-believers, but by its pastoral work in strengthening and deepening the faith of those who have already received it.

In this universe of believing parents and/or guardians, it is striking that the most important reason for choosing Catholic schools is the framework of values, which weighs heavily on academic excellence. From this, it follows that Catholic schools are perceived as solid educational proposals, with a view to the value formation of the person, which can be equally attractive to non-believing parents and/or guardians.

Education in its totality is called to this function of forming in all the dimensions of development, it is what is usually known as integral formation, so it is valid to ask what is the particularity of the Catholic school in the global concert of formative offerings,

where clearly the accent should be placed on the centrality of the development of the bond with God as the absolute being and ultimate end of man. The risk of not assuming this task to the full lies in limiting the work of the Catholic school to such a formation in values, leaving out the anthropological conception open to the transcendent dimension of the human being, which should be an imperative of his or her identity.

Along the same lines, it is important to note that more than half of the parents and guardians consulted stated that they would choose a Catholic school for their children. This data shows the degree of satisfaction with the offer and the subjective and objective benefits that this educational niche represents. However, it opens the question for the other 50%, who would not choose this type of school. It is noteworthy that, when disaggregating by socioeconomic level, the upper and upper-middle levels are the ones that most agree to opt for a Catholic school when faced with the possibility of change, using as their main reasons the value orientation and religious formation.

Nevertheless, the process of choosing a Catholic school opens up many questions for future research, since it does not take place in a void but in a specific social, cultural and economic context, which—to the extent that it is transformed—has an impact on the decisions of individuals and institutions. Thus, for example, the installation of policies that influence the possibilities of school choice seems to be a substantive dimension to be studied.

A particular situation is the case of the School Admission System (SAE),<sup>6</sup> which has been gradually implemented in our country since 2016 and whose purpose is to facilitate the application process and expand the supply of schools for students, while seeking to safeguard the development of an objective, transparent and equitable process for parents and guardians who apply for their children to municipal and private subsidized schools (Sillard, Garay and Troncoso, 2018).

In this scenario some questions that arise are: how do these new political coordinates stress the formative proposals of the Catholic school? Will the Catholic school continue to educate students with a priority interest in the confessional? And, if this student body changes, how will this impact on the seals of identity of each community? And, consequently, how will institutional educational projects respond to this new reality?

In short, and in line with what has already been exposed, it is necessary to follow a path that strengthens the service that Catholic and confessional institutions as a whole offer to the population, and that strengthens the attraction that they generate as part of the market where voters can and should make decisions.

**Acknowledgements** Project No. 6187 /DPCC2017, entitled “Choice of Schools What makes Catholic education attractive to those who do not believe?” Funded by the Vice-Rectorate of Research and the Direction of Pastoral and Christian Culture UC. Co-authors of this research are Paula de la Cerda of the Faculty of Theology, and Macarena Lagos, Ignacia Escobar and Sebastián Pineda, of the Faculty of Education of the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile.

---

<sup>6</sup>Process that is framed within the Law 20.845 of School Inclusion.

## References

- Bustamante L (2010) Parent representations of the elementary school. Beliefs, opinions, ratings and images about the “good school” and the “ideal school”. Ibero-American Congress of Education. Goals 2021. Buenos Aires, Argentina
- Corvalán J (2007) The Chilean educational field. Restricted circulation report. Proyecto Equidad para la Acción. CIDE, Santiago
- Díaz V, Rodríguez J, Fernández J (2009) Education and family: parents and the general education of their children in Spain. Foundation of the Savings Banks, Madrid
- Education Quality Agency (2017) Parent survey, since, 2017. Available at: <https://www.agenciaeducacion.cl/evaluaciones/what-is-simce/>
- Flores C, Carrasco A (2013) Preferences, freedom of choice and school segregation. *Espacio Público* 2. Available at: <https://www.espaciopublico.cl/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/8.pdf>
- Flores C, Carrasco A (2016) Choosing what is there. In: Corvalán J, Carrasco A, García Huidobro JE (eds) *Mercado Escolar y Oportunidad Educacional: Libertad, Diversidad y Desigualdad*. Estudios en Educación Collection. Ediciones UC, Santiago
- Freeman K, Berends M (2016) The Catholic school advantage in a changing social landscape: consistency or increasing fragility? *Journal of School Choice* 10(1):22–47
- Gubbins V (2013) The subjective experience of the process of election of educational establishment in municipal school attorneys of the metropolitan region: a subjective experience. *Pedagogical Studies* 39(2):165–178
- Guzmán J, Palacios J, Deliyannides A (2012) Findings from focus groups on Latino Catholic perceptions of Catholic schools. *International Studies in Catholic Education* 4(1):50–67
- Lockwood R (2014) Factors influencing parental choice and enrollment in Catholic schools. Wilmington University, Delaware
- Madero C, Gutiérrez G (2012) The Catholic school in an unequal scenario. *Message* 61(611):38–41
- Madero C, Madero I (2012) School choice and student selection in the Chilean school system: who chooses whom: the case of Catholic education. *Mexican Journal of Educational Research* 17(55):1267–1295
- Morris A (1998) By their fruits you will know them: distinctive features of Catholic education. *Research Papers in Education* 13(1):87–112
- Paredes R, Ugarte G (2011) Should Students be Allowed to Miss? *Journal of Educational Research* 104(3):194–201
- Poblete G, Madsen CM (2013) Why do students change schools? Analysis from the perspective of family decisions. *Educational Profiles* 35(140):48–62
- Raczynski D, Salinas D, De la Fuente L, Hernández M, Latt M (2008) Towards a strategy of validation of public-municipal education: imaginaries, assessments and demands of families. Final Report. Fondo de Investigación y Desarrollo En Educación (FONIDE), Santiago, Ministerio de Educación, Chile
- Rackzynski D, Hernández M (2011) School choice, images, family assessments and behaviours and school social segregation. *Asesorías para el Desarrollo*, Santiago
- Román M (2014) Choosing and staying in low quality schools in a quasi-market education system. Choice or resignation? Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Education, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid
- Sanders W (2005) Catholics and Catholic schooling. *Education Economics* 13(3):257–268
- Sillard M, Garay M, Troncoso I (2018) Analysis of the new school admission system in Chile: the Magallanes region as a pilot experience. *Calidad En La Educación* 49:112–136
- Soriano JC (2017) Catholic school and theology of education in the face of the poor. *Corinthians XIII: Review of Theology and the Pastoral Care of Charity* 164:108–123
- Torrendell C (2011) School choice: between freedom of education and freedom of the market. Available at: <https://200.16.86.50/digital/658/revistas/vsi/torrendell1-1.pdf>
- Villalobos C, Quaresma M (2015) Chilean school system: characteristics and consequences of a market-oriented model. *Convergencia* 22(69):63–84

**Patricia Imbarack** Adjunct Assistant Professor, Department of Learning and Development, Faculty of Education, Pontifical Catholic University. PhD in Educational Sciences from the same institution. Her areas of research are the history of Catholic education, and life projects in youth.

**Angélica Guzman D.** Assistant Professor of the Department of Curriculum, Technology and Evaluation of the Faculty of Education of the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile. PhD. in Educational Sciences from the same institution. Her areas of research are curriculum development and strengthening of the teaching profession.

# Chapter 6

## Educating in Politics, Democracy and Citizenship: The Challenges of Chilean Catholic Schools



Rodrigo Mardones and Alejandra Marinovic

**Abstract** Analyzing the Chilean case in the last twenty years, the chapter critically evaluates the teachings of the Pontifical Magisterium that define the identity of Catholic education. The focus is on the declared guidelines of Chilean public policy for citizen education and the preliminary evidence reported by international measurements in the field.

### 6.1 Introduction

In recent decades, the world has witnessed a change in the model of political socialization of children and young people that occurs in the school system: the transition from civic education to citizenship education. The civic education model had been in place since the XIX century and coincided with the efforts of various countries to instruct future citizens in the functioning of the state and political institutions, to foster national identity, compliance with laws, and adherence to patriotic values. This could occur under a democratic, authoritarian or dictatorial regime.

Distinctly, the current model of citizen education is about political socialization for democracy; that is, the primary normative goal of citizenship education is to empower children and young people with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will allow them in adulthood to effectively exercise democratic citizenship (Campbell 2012). The idea of education for democracy has early roots in the twentieth century. For example, through the thinking of John Dewey, who became the reference point of the progressive education movement, which was embodied in Latin America in the new school project. However, it is only since the 1990s that a decisive turn can be seen in this direction.

---

R. Mardones (✉)

Instituto de Ciencia Política, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago, Chile  
e-mail: [rmardonesz@uc.cl](mailto:rmardonesz@uc.cl)

A. Marinovic

Escuela de Negocios, Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez, Santiago, Chile  
e-mail: [alejandra.marinovic@uai.cl](mailto:alejandra.marinovic@uai.cl)

The paradigm of citizenship education includes the political and legal contents typical of civic education, but also adds a series of emerging themes, the treatment of which has been particularly controversial in some cases. Among the latter are: the distinction between political, civil, and social citizenship; cultural citizenship and multiculturalism; peace and human security; memory and human rights; the environment, globalization, and the scope of global citizenship; and the policy of recognizing indigenous peoples and sexual minorities.

Although the concern of the Church has not been absent from any of these themes, the Catholic Social Teaching (from now onwards CST) does not have a specific and systematic reflection on citizenship education. It does have a reflection on politics, democracy, and citizenship, which correspond to the central themes of the new paradigm of citizenship education. It also has a substantive reflection and praxis on education. The analysis of these three areas and of education in general from the perspective of the Pontifical Magisterium makes it possible to identify implications for citizenship education provided by Catholic schools in order to strengthen their identity and educational work in this specific area. This exercise takes on special relevance in the context of changes in public policy regarding citizenship education in Latin America.

The study of the Chilean case is relevant because there have been intense reforms in the last two decades. Thus, this chapter will critically assess the guidelines and teachings of the Pontifical Magisterium that define the identity of Catholic education vis a vis the guidelines declared by Chilean public policy on citizenship education and the preliminary evidence reported by international measurements on the subject.

The second section presents the Pontifical magisterial reflection on the three axes of the new paradigm of citizenship education: politics, democracy, and citizenship. In the third section we do the same exercise in regard to the concern of the Church for the theme of education in general. The fourth section presents changes in Chilean public policy on citizenship education that have occurred since the 1990s and their implications and challenges for Catholic schools. The fifth section provides some evidence on citizenship education relevant to Catholic schools that comes from the International Civics and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS). The final section concludes and sets out the challenges facing Catholic education in the area of citizenship education.

## 6.2 Politics, Democracy and Citizenship

Politics, democracy, and citizenship—articulating axes of the paradigm of citizenship education—are and will continue to be “essentially contested concepts”, applying the idea of Walter B. Gallie (1955–1956). In the academic and political worlds, their definitions and conceptions abound. The CST takes up part of this debate and reformulates its message accordingly. It is abundantly clear that these are concepts which the CST considers to be of vital importance.

For *Gaudium et Spes* (1965: 74) politics is articulated in a community and exists to promote the common good. In *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013: 205) Pope Francis reaffirms



that despite being so denigrated, politics is a very high vocation and, oriented towards the common good, is one of the most precious forms of charity.

However, for politics to be charity, it is important not only its end (the common good) but how it is reached. As Zamagni (2009: 16) emphasizes, a society that is satisfied with justice alone is not authentically human. Gratuity—or gift—operates in a “supra-ethical” dimension as a supererogatory principle. Precisely, Benedict XVI in *Caritas in Veritate* (2009) calls to restore the idea of gift in the public sphere, the principle of fraternity being the one that best expresses it (Zamagni 2009: 13).

On this last point, since Gadium et Spes (1965: 92), which points out that the Church’s service to humanity is to be a sign of fraternity, this last concept has become more precise, especially in *Caritas in Veritate* (2009), and can properly justify freedom and equality, to become a moral root for politics and democracy (Mardones and Marinovic 2016). The implication for Catholic schools is quite direct: they should collaborate with the Church in the formation of citizens towards political fraternity.<sup>1</sup>

Joseph A. Schumpeter (1943: 343) defined democracy as the institutional arrangement for political decision-making by which certain individuals acquire institutional political power through the competitive struggle for the popular vote. This is a classic definition of procedural democracy; that is, it is not founded on principle, but simply describes a procedure. From this definition, political science has moved on to so-called “substantive definitions”; that is, incorporating the procedural issue, they refer at least to a principle.

Indeed, in his book *Poliarchy: Participation and Opposition*, Robert Dahl (1971) defines democracy as the institutional arrangement by which citizens select their leaders, but then exercise a high degree of control over them; thus, Dahl offers a definition based on the principle of *accountability*. More recent concepts place as much or more emphasis than *accountability*, notably: the consociative principle (Lijphart 1985), which seeks to ensure the inclusion of ethnic, linguistic, religious or regional minorities; as well as the participatory, deliberative and egalitarian dimensions (Held 2006). In line with the substantive definitions, Dewey himself (2011: 50) wrote early in 1916 that, more than a form of government, democracy “...is primarily a way of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience”.

Carozza and Philpott (2012: 15) note an ambivalence on the part of the Church regarding its adherence to democracy as a political regime. It is, however, John Paul II in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987) and in *Centesimus Annus* (1991) who—underlining the orientation to the principle of the common good—positively and clearly values democracy (Carozza and Philpott 2012: 20–25). While democracy was defined in a procedural way, the ambiguity of the Church seemed to be justified. For Zamagni (2009: 12) it is necessary to distinguish the order of means and the order of ends. Procedural democracy would be situated in the order of means; while substantive democracy would be situated in the order of ends. With an orientation towards the common good as the ultimate end and shaped by the principle of fraternity, there would be no other space than the full adherence of the Church to democracy.

---

<sup>1</sup>For an academic proposal on this point we suggest the volume edited by Mardones (2012) See also: Scherz and Mardones (2016).

With regard to the third axis—citizenship—it is important to remember that, according to the formulation of the British sociologist T.S. Marshall (1950), this concept distinguishes between social, political and civil citizenship, and argues that in order to exercise genuine political citizenship, not only civil rights and political rights, but also social rights must be guaranteed. The importance of this thesis is that it has become the basis of the paradigm of citizenship education (United Kingdom 1998; Mardones 2015), to which human rights and cultural rights issues have been added more recently.

*Pacem in Terris* (1963: 11–25) makes a comprehensive enumeration of political, social and civil rights, which is striking because it is an early pronouncement, particularly with regard to social rights, which 50 years later are still the subject of extensive debate. This enumeration of rights does not contradict T.S. Marshall's formulation.

For their part, human rights—particularly in Latin America—have become a central element of the paradigm of citizenship education. In this regard, the Church assumes in a decisive way the issue of human rights and of the poor with the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), with the foundation of the Justice and Peace Commission by Paul VI in 1967 and the subsequent local commissions, and with the Medellin Conference (1968) at the Latin American level (Klaiber 2009: 407).

In the context of the dispute over the treatment of the native peoples of the Americas, it was Francisco de Vitoria, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, who introduced the idea of the universal family in search of a single common good, as a systematic theoretical foundation of international law and human rights. But it is with Leo XIII, at the end of the nineteenth century, that the convergence of the Church with the secular vision of rights becomes explicit, although the sources were different; the idea of the universal common good on the one hand and the liberal conception of rights on the other (Carozza and Philpott 2012: 17–20).

The idea of the universal family in Francisco de Vitoria allows us to enter into the most recent philosophical debate on the global or national scope of citizenship in terms of cosmopolitans versus patriots (Nussbaum 1996). In relation to the above, we would have to conclude that the Pontifical Magisterium is univocally aligned with the side of the cosmopolitans. In fact, the Declaration on Christian Education Gravissimum Educationis (1965: 1) points out that the right to education is made concrete in accordance with culture and patriotic traditions, but that it must be open to the exercise of fraternity with other peoples.

*Gaudium et Spes* (1965: 23–24), for its part, recognizes the phenomenon of interdependence as one of the characteristic features of the modern world, together with the divine command that human beings should constitute one family and treat one another in a spirit of brotherhood. Citizens must cultivate a loyal spirit of patriotism, but not a narrow one; they must above all look after the good of the human family (75). Moreover, in line with his concept of authority, *Gaudium et Spes* (1965: 88) points out that the goal of world peace requires a world authority and that Christians must actively cooperate in establishing an international order which respects freedoms and promotes fraternity.

*Populorum Progressio* (1967: 17) emphasizes universal solidarity as a duty, since each person belongs to the whole of humanity. It also introduces the idea of a universal

solidarity of intergenerational character. It adds that the integral development of the person requires a development of humanity in solidarity; that is to say, nations must meet each other as brothers and sisters, generating a true communion among them (43), and that nations—especially the richest ones—have duties of justice, solidarity and charity towards the poorest ones.

The Church's reflection on politics, democracy and citizenship has been substantial in terms of its breadth and scope and its principled orientation. Although citizenship education can be anchored in this general reflection, it requires a specific descent that is still in the making and which should—moreover—be completed with the vast heritage and permanent educational work of the Church.

### 6.3 The “Extremely Important Education”

The Church's reflection on education deals with various aspects, among which are: education as a right and its contribution to individual growth, in terms of its contribution to social development, the demand for freedom of education and the contribution of Catholic education in a secular society, the community sense of the Catholic school and its link with the local sphere, formation in dialogue, the indispensable openness to transcendence and, finally, civic education.

On the first aspect, in *Gravissimum Educationis* (1965: 1)—the extremely important education—the Church claims the inalienable right to education and advocates an integral education, through which children and adolescents are prepared for participation in social life, with openness to dialogue and the search for the common good.

With regard to the second aspect of social development, *Populorum Progressio* (1967: 35) considers it essential that economic growth be accompanied by social progress. To this end, primary education should be a key instrument for development, with literacy being an essential aspect of social integration.

On the third aspect of educational freedom, *Gravissimum Educationis* (1965: 2) points out that all Christians have a right to Christian education and that it is the task of the bishops to provide this education in the various dioceses, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity. The State should not only tolerate religious education, but also, by recovering its contribution to society, it should decisively support it. Medellín (1968, Doc. IV, 12), for its part, considers parents as the “first and principal educators”, and should promote knowledge of their rights and duties, their organization in associations and their participation in school management.

The Church considers the contribution of both secular and religious education to the development of the human being and society to be valuable (Medellín 1968, Doc. IV, 29). In Medellín (1968, Doc IV, 18) the Latin American episcopate calls for the massification of Catholic education, so that all social sectors can have access to it, which is also mentioned in the Puebla Document (1979: 1040), as well as in the Santo Domingo Document (1992: 278). Finally, the Aparecida Document (2007: 340) insists that the state has the duty to guarantee freedom of education and the

possibility that parents can choose the type of education they wish to give their children (481).

With regard to the fourth aspect, Medellín (1968, Doc. IV, 19) highlights the community aspect of the Catholic school. It should be a true community made up of all the members who make up the school, linking itself to the local community and remaining open to the national and Latin American community.

Central to the Church's concern about education is the fifth aspect, which refers to openness to transcendence. *Gravissimum Educationis* (1965: 8) emphasizes that the Catholic school educates its students for the good of the earthly city and to serve the spread of God's kingdom.

Medellín (1968, Doc IV, 7) incorporates the idea of a "liberating education" of human beings with respect to cultural, social, economic and political servitudes; without losing sight of the supernatural dimension, which is central to all integral human development. "Liberating education" would consist of making the learner the subject of his or her own development. It should be a creative education that anticipates the type of society that one wants to build, that is conscious of human dignity, that favors self-determination, that promotes a sense of community, that is open to dialogue with the world, and that values local and national particularities in order to integrate them into a pluralistic continental and global unity (8).

On the above, the Puebla Document (1979: 1024–1030) states that the mission of the Catholic school is to contribute to humanizing and personalizing the human being by orienting him/her towards his/her ultimate transcendent goal. It points out that "evangelizing education" assumes and completes "liberating education" because, by contributing to the total conversion of the human being, it disposes him to encounter the Father and all human beings. Evangelizing education must humanize and personalize, it must be integrated into the Latin American social process with its lights and shadows and its need for re-evangelization, promote an education for justice, which implies a new participative and fraternal society and, finally, promote an education for service that encourages personal and community development, concludes Puebla.

Openness to transcendence has in turn a connection to others. In fact, Catholic education must be based on a true Christian anthropology, which implies an openness of the human being to God as Father and to others as brothers and sisters (Document of Santo Domingo 1992: 264; Document of Aparecida 2007: 332–335).

The sixth aspect is education and its dialogue with culture. In this regard, the Aparecida Document (2007: 329) points out that the purpose of every Catholic school is education and integral promotion—which includes the ethical and religious dimensions—through the systematic and critical assimilation of culture. For *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013: 134), Catholic schools seek to reconcile the educational function with the proclamation of the message of Jesus Christ, and in this function they make a valuable contribution to the evangelisation of culture.

For Morin (2015: 324–325) the evangelizing action of the Church during the twentieth century was outlined as a dialogue between the world and the Gospel, in order to discern the signs of the times, which the Second Vatican Council consecrated as a methodological norm. According to Morin (2015: 326) this is reinforced in later encyclicals, such as *Ecclesiam Suam* (1964) and *Gadium et Spes* (1965), where

Christians are called to train themselves for dialogue. Similarly, *Populorum Progressio* (1967: 54) suggests that the practice of dialogue is what underpins civil coexistence (54).

The Medellín Document (1968, Doc. IV, 3) points out that the Catholic school must respect the values proper to indigenous cultures, without ruling out dialogue with other cultures. The Document of Santo Domingo (1992: 263), for its part, conceives Christian education as the inculturation of the Gospel in one's own culture.

Finally, on the seventh aspect, specific to citizenship education, *Gaudium et Spes* (1965: 75) indicates that civic and political education should be taken with special care and that citizenship education would be of great importance for the entire population, especially for young people, so that they could play their role in the life of the political community. However, after this statement there are few references in the Pontifical Magisterium to the specific subject of citizenship education. One of them is found in the Puebla Document (1979: 1033), where it is stated that Catholic education should produce permanent agents of change in Latin America and that this is achieved through civic and political formation inspired by the Social Doctrine of the Church. Similarly, the Document of Santo Domingo (1992: 271 and 278) stands out in its exceptionality, when it affirms that in order to promote the dignity of the human person and solidarity, the civic and social must be integrated into education. In order to foster democratic formation, it adds, one must also promote the organization of all levels of the school.

What is proposed in the preceding paragraph is suggestive, but clearly insufficient to order a Church perspective on citizenship education. *Gravissimum Educationis* (1968), in its brevity and generality, it does not make explicit either the vision and the challenges for Catholic schools in this area. This systematisation is therefore a priority in a pontifical or episcopal document in view of the challenges that contemporary democracy imposes on society.

## 6.4 The New Civic Education and Catholic Education in Chile

The return of democracy in Chile in 1990 coincided with the paradigm shift at the world level from the civic education model to citizenship education. The new paradigm began to take shape as public policy in Chile in the second half of the 1990s through a series of reforms. The political controversies of these reforms during that period were fundamentally associated with the dynamics of the transition to democracy in Chile with its emphasis on memory and human rights, promoted by one sector and resisted by the other. For their part, the most recent changes have been overshadowed by other social demands on Chilean education, such as the end of profit and free education (Mardones 2020). Of course, Catholic education as a sector recognized by the state cannot be absent from this process that has the potential to

affect it decisively. This section reviews some ecclesial reflections that have emerged in connection with this process.

There are several public policy milestones in Chile that marked the shift from the civic education model to the paradigm of citizenship education, and which occurred in the 20-year period between 1996 and 2016. These are: (1) the reform of the curricular frameworks in 1996 and 1998,<sup>2</sup> which defined the fundamental objectives and minimum compulsory content, eliminating the subject course of civic education and enshrining the cross-cutting nature of the content of civic education; (2) the creation of the Citizenship Education Commission in 2004 and its report, which systematized the central elements of the new paradigm; (3) the curricular adjustment in 2009; (4) the reform of the curricular bases in 2013; and (5) the enactment of Law 20,911 in 2016, which requires schools to have a “citizenship education plan”.<sup>3</sup>

In its sole article, this last law mandates that all schools recognized by the state—and among them, Catholic schools—must include a citizenship education plan that integrates the curricular definitions in the subject, “...that provides students with the necessary preparation to assume a responsible life in a free society and oriented towards the integral improvement of the human person, as the foundation of the democratic system, social justice and progress... Likewise, it should tend to the education of citizens, with values and knowledge to promote the development of the country, with a vision of the world centered on the human being, as part of a natural and social environment” (Gobierno de Chile 2016).

The Catholic schools, which in Chile are grouped into private schools and subsidized private schools (which receive a state *voucher* for each student attended), in addition to the legal obligation have the missionary challenge that their educational project and specific plans give an account of their identity inspired by the Gospel, by a specific spirituality and, more generally, by the Magisterium of the Church.

Law 20,911 lists as objectives of the prescribed citizenship education plan: to promote the understanding and analysis of the concept of citizenship and the rights and duties associated with it within the framework of a democratic republic, with the purpose of building an active citizenship in the exercise and fulfilment of these rights and duties; to foster in students a critical, responsible, respectful, open and creative citizenship ensuring the learning of knowledge about the rule of law, political institutions, the education on civic virtues and human rights; promoting the appreciation of the country’s social and cultural diversity, participation, the development of a democratic and ethical culture in schools, a culture of transparency and probity, tolerance and pluralism (Gobierno de Chile 2016).

For their part, the curricular definitions referred to in Law 20,911 group together and list a series of objectives and contents (Mardones 2015), namely

---

<sup>2</sup>For Primary Education, by Decreto Supremo No. 40 of 1996; and for Secondary Education by Decreto Supremo No. 220 of 1998.

<sup>3</sup>The 2009 adjustment and the 2013 reform are technical modifications, but they do not alter the content, skills and learning that are set as objectives.

- a. *Knowledge*: democracy and human rights; national identity and international relations; social cohesion and diversity; political economy; and environmental education.
- b. *Skills*: use of public information; expression and debate; relationships with others and handling new situations; critical thinking and moral judgment; organization and participation; and problem formulation and resolution.
- c. *Attitudes* (or values): personal (responsibility, trust, honesty and loyalty); vision of the other (empathy and tolerance); social integration (solidarity and commitment to society); peaceful and democratic coexistence (collaboration, openness to pluralism and orientation towards freedom and justice)

At first glance, there does not seem to be a contradiction between these legal objectives and curricular definitions, on the one hand, and the Catholic identity of an educational project, on the other. In fact, if one considers the four cardinal principles of the CST, namely: the centrality of the human person, solidarity, subsidiarity and the common good (Zamagni 2009: 12), it is not evident that the body of knowledge, attitudes and skills prescribed by the state is incompatible with those that a Catholic school might propose as part of its identity. However, there are specific emphases which can be observed from a brief analysis of the CST and which point to what Catholic education should promote. Apart from the four principles of the CST, the specific emphases of civic education in a Catholic school would be given by an openness to transcendence, an orientation to social transformation, the development of a capacity for discernment about the signs of the times and a capacity for dialogue between faith and culture.

For Scherz and Infante (2015: 201) the *ethos* or identity of the Catholic school must be able to inspire the community, but it must also be able to be described analytically, and in this purpose they identify among the characteristics of this *ethos that are derived* from the Magisterium of the Church: the encounter with Jesus Christ, participation in the evangelizing mission of the Church, the quality of education, integral education, the generation of communion within an inclusive community and the commitment to solidarity and the transformation of the world.

Among other things, this translates into the education of responsible, critical, participatory citizens who contribute to the common good for the construction of the Kingdom (Scherz and Infante 2015: 207). The Catholic school is called to deepen the ethical sense of the exercise of citizenship and politics (Scherz and Mardones 2016). According to the Aparecida Document (2007: 328) for Scherz and Infante (2015: 208), Catholic education cannot be considered only as the acquisition of knowledge and skills, which would be equivalent to an anthropological reductionism; it must be constituted in a space of coexistence where a “heroic interest in the other” is matured.

Considering the evolution of public policy in Chile with respect to citizenship education, it is worth asking whether such changes generated public reactions, either supportive or opposed, on the part of the Chilean Episcopal Conference. In fact, in

some countries the Church has expressed itself against or with caution regarding some of the content and values promoted by public policies in this area.<sup>4</sup>

A first element to report from our exercise is that in Chile no points of public dissent were found regarding such changes in public policy. Together with this, one notes rather a relative absence of interventions referring to the theme of citizenship education specifically. The opinions that could be recorded are aligned with the objectives of such education, and point above all to the themes of participation and political transparency.

For example, in 2012, the message following the 104th Plenary Assembly of the Chilean Episcopal Conference referred to the Church's concern about the low voter turnout in the recent municipal elections. In this regard, the message says that only "...from a real and participatory democracy our country will be able to overcome the inequities and injustices that persist in areas such as health, education, work, the promotion of the family and the situation of native peoples."<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, in 2015 the Episcopal Conference offered the document "Coexistence in Chile: ethical challenge and respect for our dignity", and in its presentation the secretary general of the Conference commented on the actions to be taken by various social agents for the reconstruction of trust and, in terms of education, raised the need for civic education in all schools.<sup>6</sup>

Along with these interventions of a rather general scope on citizenship issues, the local Church contributed various documents of guidelines and orientations, which included contents related to citizenship education, along the lines of the integral education already described in the previous sections. In particular, the Vicariate for Education of the Archbishopric of Santiago (2016) collected the magisterial guidelines and explicitly referred to the education of responsible and participatory citizens, the importance of social and civic commitment and the need for training for coexistence and citizenship.<sup>7</sup>

The contextual analysis of this absence of dissent in matters of citizenship education and the offer of general teaching guidelines leads us to ask ourselves about the characteristics of the Chilean education system that allows for such an uneven coexistence. One element that, in our opinion, explains this phenomenon is the relaxation of

---

<sup>4</sup>For the case of Spain, see: Comisión Permanente de la Conferencia Episcopal Española (2007). *The Ley Orgánica de Educación (LOE)*, the royal decrees that develop it and the fundamental rights of parents and schools. 28 February 2007. Accessed 23 March 2018 from: <http://www.conferenciaepiscopal.es/documentos/conferencia/LOE.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup>"Iglesia manifiesta preocupación por baja participación en municipales y mantiene autocrítica por denuncias de abusos", *La Tercera*, 16 November 2012. Accessed September 30, 2018 from: <http://www2.latercera.com/noticia/iglesia-manifiesta-preocupacion-por-baja-participacion-en-municipales-y-mantiene-autocritica-por-denuncias-de-abusos/>.

<sup>6</sup>Cristián Contreras, "Iglesia manifiesta preocupación por baja participación en municipales y mantiene autocrítica por denuncias de abusos". *La Tercera*, May 6, 2015. Accessed on September 30, 2018 from: <http://www2.latercera.com/noticia/iglesia-es-necesario-saber-con-claridad-who-used-mis-financing/>.

<sup>7</sup>Arzobispado de Santiago. *Vicaría para la Educación* (2016). *Hacia un modelo de escuela católica*. Santiago. Accessed on March 23, 2018 from: [http://www.vicariaeducacion.cl/escuela\\_catolica\\_completo.pdf](http://www.vicariaeducacion.cl/escuela_catolica_completo.pdf).



curricular control that is operated through the Constitutional Organic Law of Education (LOCE) as one of the “leyes de amarre” of the military dictatorship.<sup>8</sup> On the one hand, the State can only provide broad curricular guidelines and minimum content. On the other hand, schools have ample freedom to decide on their educational objectives and methodologies, within the framework of a lax state control. In effect, the International Civics and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) describes Chile as a country in which, in comparison to the other countries in the sample, schools have a medium-high level of autonomy in regard to the allocation of resources, curriculum, teaching methods, teacher selection, and assessment.<sup>9</sup>

However, the underlying reason for this result is the lack of systematic reflection on the implications of the Pontifical Magisterium for the issue of citizenship education and the challenges that changes in public policy governing this matter pose to Catholic schools. This is particularly important in Chile, since, as we will see in the following section, in terms of measurements of education achievement the country, it is in a weak position in relation to other countries, which is made more difficult by the important socio-economic stratification characteristic of the Chilean education system.

## 6.5 Some Evidence on Civic Education in Chile and Catholic Schools

To better understand the implications of citizenship education for Catholic schools, one possible strategy is to look at specific educational projects in declarative terms, as Cox and Imbarack (2017) have done, for example, noting notable differences between schools in the extent to which they adhere to the CST. In a different, but complementary way, it seems to us useful to provide data that point more towards the results of Catholic schools in comparative terms, and to contextualize their relevance as actors in the Chilean education system. This in turn could offer hypotheses or findings useful for the study of this theme in other Latin American countries. The following is an analysis based on achievement measurements, with the assurance that this does not comprehensively cover what is really happening in the classrooms, which would be the subject of another study.

The main international measure of citizenship education is the *International Civic and Citizenship Education Study* (ICCS), conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). The ICCS has measurements from 2009 (38 countries) and 2016 (24 countries) and, in line with the new paradigm, includes indicators not only of civic knowledge, but also of values and skills. In this study, both in 2009 and 2016, Chile is below the average of the countries in the sample, along with the other participating Latin American countries. The results

---

<sup>8</sup>The so-called “leyes de amarre” were a set of rules dictated at the end of the government of Augusto Pinochet. In the case of the LOCE, it was published on March 10, 1990, the day before he left office.

<sup>9</sup>Table 2.4 of the International Report ICCS 2016 (Schulz et al. 2018).

between 2009 and 2016 show no statistically significant differences. How do these results relate to Catholic schools?

It is not easy to come up with a single definition of a Catholic school. In 2016, figures from the Statistical Yearbook of the Church in Chile indicated the existence of 1598 Catholic schools with 582,331 students enrolled, representing 13.48% of the schools in the country and 16.40% of the total number of students enrolled.<sup>10</sup> For its part, figures from the Ministry of Education of the Government of Chile for 2016 indicated that, out of the 11,858 schools existing in 2016, a total of 3936 are self-reporting with a Catholic religious orientation, representing 33.19% of the establishments.<sup>11</sup> These Catholic schools make up 37.40% of the 29.87% of subsidized private schools, and 31.13% of<sup>12</sup> private schools. In some regions, self-reported schools with a Catholic religious orientation have a fairly high percentage of the total. For example, in 6 of the 15 regions of the country, Catholic-oriented schools represent more than 40% of the establishments.

A different perspective is to consider student responses in the ICCS survey, as it includes the question of what the student's religion is, offering various alternatives. In 2016, 56.29% of secondary-level students self-reported as Catholic.<sup>13</sup> These students are spread out in schools of different socioeconomic levels, as can be seen in the graph below (Fig. 6.1).

Translation of chart needed\*

The numbers of Catholic schools, with a Catholic orientation, and the Catholic orientation of the students, ratify that the Church is a relevant actor in the context of the Chilean school system, in the different administrative forms of the establishments and the socio-economic levels. Together with this, the challenge of citizenship education in schools presents substantial differences according to socioeconomic strata. In the same way that the results at the national level of the countries participating in the ICCS 2016 survey are positively and significantly related to per capita income (see Fig. 6.2), including the Latin American countries, the average results of each school are positively and significantly related to the average socioeconomic level of the students in each institution (see Fig. 6.3). One implication of these facts is that the effort required to promote citizenship education is greater in the schools with the most vulnerable students.

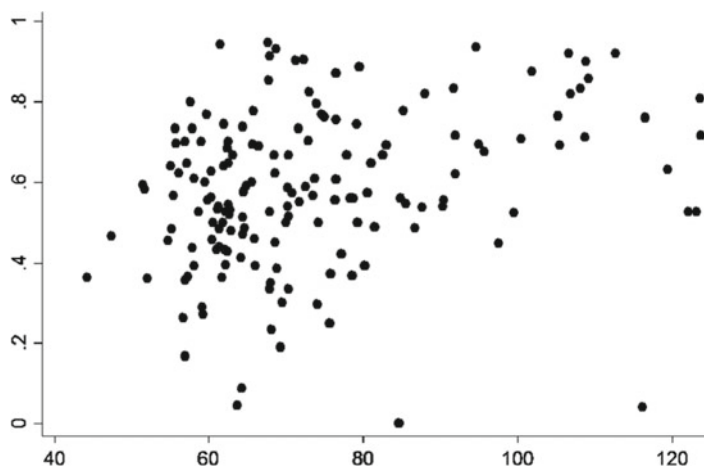
It is interesting to note that the school's average performance is also positively related to the percentage of students who are self-reporting Catholics. When data

<sup>10</sup>Source: Estadísticas Nacionales (Chile), Educación Católica en Chile, from the Anuario Estadístico de la Iglesia 2016 (2018 Edition). Accessed on September 29, 2018 from: [http://www.iglesia.cl/estadisticas/estadisticas\\_13.php](http://www.iglesia.cl/estadisticas/estadisticas_13.php).

<sup>11</sup>Source: Gobierno de Chile. Ministerio de Educación (2017). Estadísticas de la Educación 2016. Accessed 25 October 2018 from: [https://centroestudios.mineduc.cl/wp-content/uploads/sites/100/2017/07/Anuario\\_2016.pdf](https://centroestudios.mineduc.cl/wp-content/uploads/sites/100/2017/07/Anuario_2016.pdf).

<sup>12</sup>For a discussion on freedom of education and religious freedom, regarding self-reported responses by schools receiving tax funds, see Celis and Zárate (2015). For the concept of the Catholic school, see Celis (2015).

<sup>13</sup>The 95% confidence interval is (53.17 and 59.42). Own calculations based on ICCS 2016 survey data.



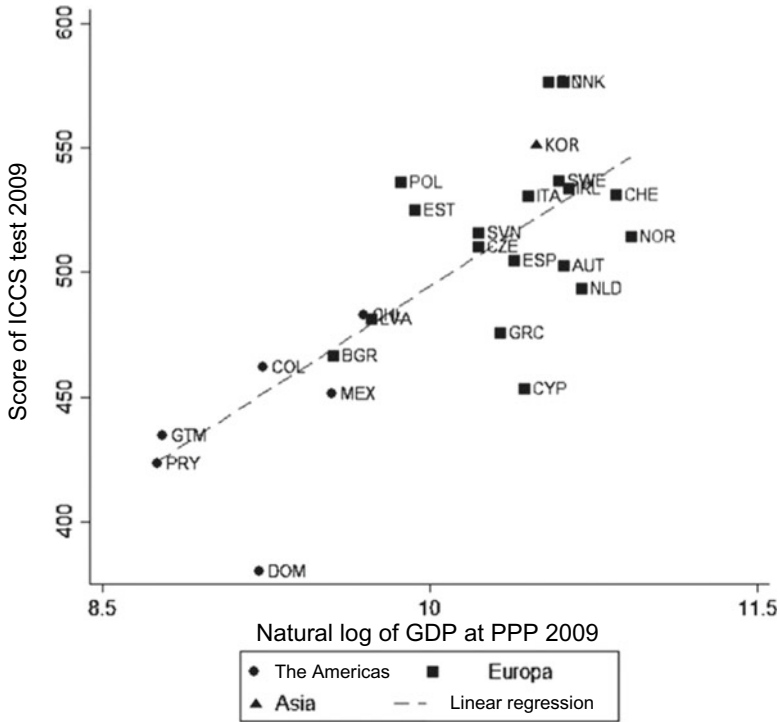
**Fig. 6.1** Percentage of self-reporting Catholic students by socioeconomic groups. School average 2016 (*Source* Own construction based on data from the ICCS 2016 survey in Chile. \*) The indicator of socioeconomic level is constructed from the data reported by the family of each student. Given that there is no information on family income, a factorial analysis is used with the available information and an indicator is constructed that weights the number of books in the home, the educational level of the father and mother, and the occupational status of both. As this is an indicator constructed in this way, what is relevant is the relative position of schools, rather than the number of the indicator)

are separated by schools above and below the median socioeconomic level indicator, the relationship between religion and performance on the ICCS test, controlling for socioeconomic level, remains significant only for schools with students of lower socioeconomic level. A disaggregated analysis by these two dimensions (% of Catholic students and socio-economic status) is represented in Fig. 6.4.

In the figure above, it can be seen that the schools that have a lower relative performance are those that have a lower percentage of self-reported Catholic students and that in turn have fewer resources. Schools that are below the median socioeconomic level, but with a percentage of Catholic students above the national median, have, on the other hand, a performance that presents a considerably greater variance, with many of them achieving high scores on the ICCS test.

These data suggest that the results of citizenship education do not depend only on the resources available to families and schools. Indeed, the data do not rule out the idea that a Catholic religious orientation can have a positive impact on citizenship education.

This is consistent with what Martinic and Anaya (2007: 198) propose; that is, that Catholic schools that receive fiscal contributions exhibit higher levels of academic achievement than non-Catholic schools under the same financial modality. The reason for this is that the identity of Catholic schools would affect the type of interactions that favour a sense of community, as well as the participation of parents and better learning expectations on the part of teachers. For Cea and Marinovic (2012: 218)



**Fig. 6.2** Results ICCS tests 2009 and 2016 by country, and GDP at PPP of respective year. (Sources ICCS 2009 and 2016 international reports, and World Bank GDP at PPP)

this is a type of interaction that could be measured in terms of generalised and interpersonal trust, which they consider to be constitutive of social capital.

### 6.6 Conclusions

The identity of Catholic schools is based on the CST. In the face of the new paradigm of citizenship education and the changes in public policy around the world in recent decades, it is worth asking what implications this has for that identity and for the responses that such schools will offer.

Although the CST does not have a specific and systematic reflection on citizenship education, it does have a general reflection on politics, democracy, and citizenship, which correspond to the articulating axes of this new paradigm. This valuable reflection is useful in the absence of specific exhortations on citizenship education, and constitutes a point of support for identifying the implications of the new paradigm on the identity of the Catholic school and for strengthening its contribution to society.

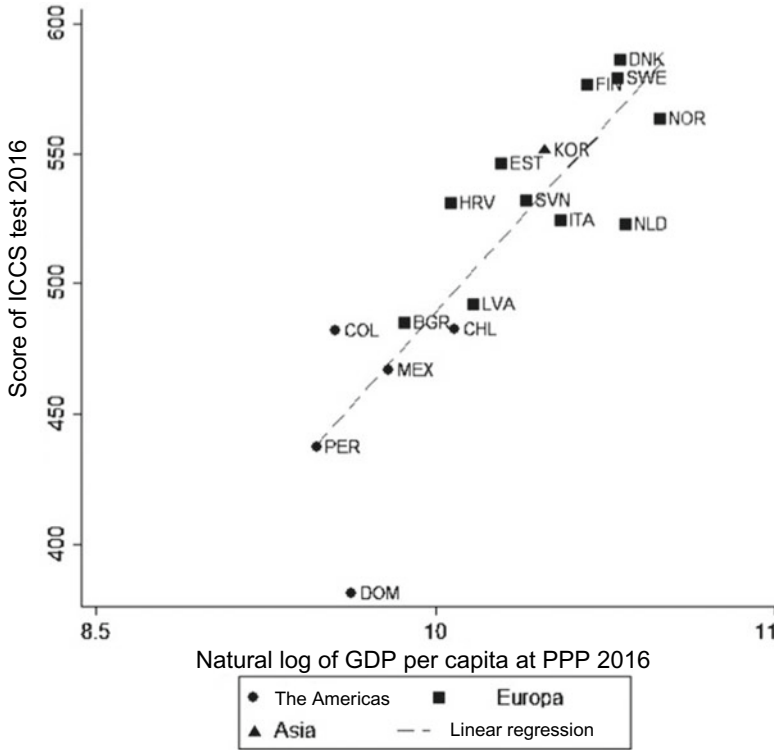
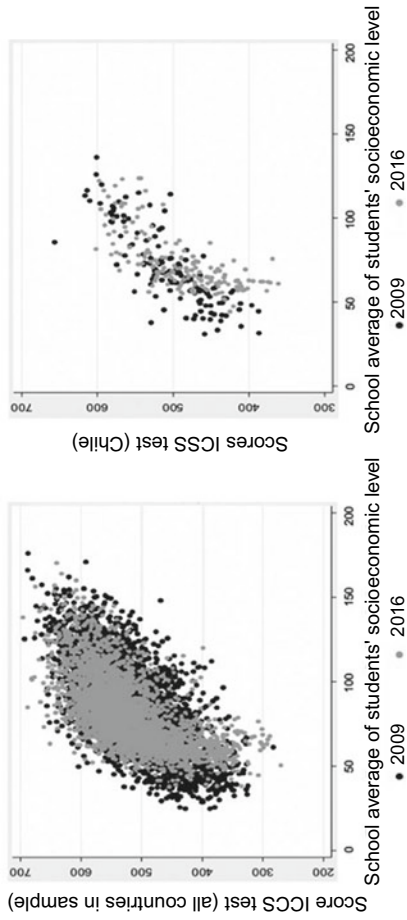


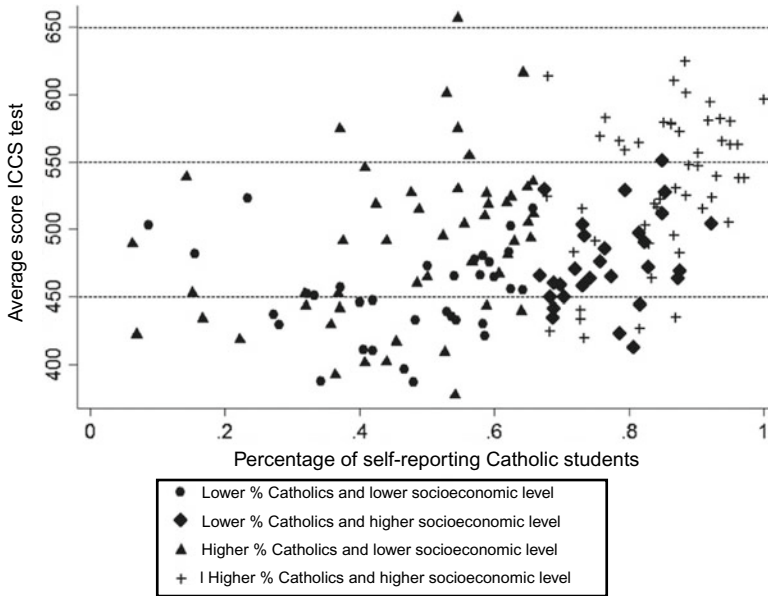
Fig. 6.2 (continued)

This chapter suggests anchoring the understanding of politics on the principle of fraternity, conceiving democracy in its substantive formulations (oriented to the common good and incorporating the principle of fraternity), strengthening citizenship in terms of rights and duties, deepening human rights and promoting the idea of global citizenship.

Given that the letters and documents of the Pontifical Magisterium are of a normative nature, it is possible to observe a greater or lesser gap between the principles that support the CST and what the institutional educational projects of Catholic schools propose. On their part, curricular definitions in Chile are broad, and state mechanisms for oversight are weak. This not only makes it possible for schools to formulate their plans with broad freedom, but has also meant that no confrontation between state and church is observed in Chile on this subject. It remains to be seen whether Law 20,911, enacted in 2016, will generate control mechanisms that will prevent this freedom from translating, as it has until now, into many schools being able to circumvent the themes of citizenship education, avoiding entering an arena perceived as potentially conflictive, especially in regard to historical memory.



**Fig. 6.3** Results ICCS 2009 and 2016, and school average of students' socioeconomic level (Sources Own construction based on data from the 2009 and 2016 ICCS surveys. For the explanation of the socioeconomic level indicator, see Fig. 6.1. (\*) 2009 includes Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Guatemala, Paraguay and Peru. Guatemala and Paraguay are only in 2009 and Peru only in 2016; the rest in both years)



**Fig. 6.4** Result ICSS Chile 2016, grouped by school average (*Sources Own construction based on data from the ICSS 2016 survey. Schools separated above and below their median percentage of self-reporting students who are Catholic, and above and below the median socioeconomic indicator. For an explanation of the socioeconomic indicator, see Fig. 6.1)*)

Considering, on the one hand, Chile’s weak position in the international sphere according to citizenship education measurements and, on the other hand, the relevance that Catholic schools have among the actors in the country’s education system, it is clear that such schools have an important role in improving this performance. This is not only because of their numerical relevance, but also because they are found in various types of administrative dependencies and social-economic strata. The challenges are especially relevant in the poorest strata, but it is precisely there where Catholic religious orientation exhibits a positive relation with performance in citizenship education. The study of how the Catholic identity of the school contributes to these results can offer light for promoting improvements. In this sense, it is important to explore in more detail the experiences of Catholic schools beyond the measurements, as they can provide valuable lessons for Latin American education systems.

**Acknowledgments** This work has received financial support from the Chilean government’s National Agency for Research and Development (ANID) through FONDECYT project N° 1171448, of which the authors of this chapter are Principal Investigator and Co-Investigator, respectively. The authors thank Anel Perretta and Esteban Concha for their valuable research assistance.

## References

- Campbell DE (2012) Introduction. In: Campbell DE, Levinson M, Hess FM (eds) *Making civics count: citizenship education for a new generation*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, pp 1–13
- Carozza PG, Philpott D (2012) The Catholic church, human rights, and democracy: convergence and conflict with the modern state. *Logos: J Cathol Thought Cult* 15(3):15–43
- Cea S, Marinovic A (2012) Capital social, confianza y educación. In: Mardones R (ed) *Fraternidad y Educación*. Ciudad Nueva, Buenos Aires, pp 205–242
- Celis AM (2015) La libertad religiosa como aporte al análisis de las reformas en materia de enseñanza. In: Imbarack P (ed) *Educación católica en Chile: perspectivas, aportes y tensiones*. Ediciones UC, Santiago pp 243–291
- Celis AM, Zárata S (2015) Libertad de enseñanza y libertad religiosa: los establecimientos escolares con orientación religiosa en Chile. *Temas de la Agenda Pública* 84
- Congregación para la Educación Católica (2017) *Educación al humanismo solidario. Para construir una civilización del amor 50 años después de la Populorum Progressio*. Ciudad del Vaticano.
- Cox C, Imbarack P (2017) Catholic elite education in Chile: worlds apart. In: Bruno Jofré R, Zaldívar JI (eds) *Catholic education the wake of Vatican II*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, pp 232–257
- Dahl RA (1971) *Polyarchy: participation and opposition*. Yale University Press, New Haven
- Dewey J (2011) *Democracy and education* [1916]. Simon and Brown, La Vergne, TN
- Gallie WB (1955–1956) Essentially contested concepts. *Proc Aristot Soc* 56:167–198
- Gobierno de Chile (1990) Ley 18.962, *Organica Constitucional de Enseñanza*. Ministerio de Educación, 10 March 1990
- Gobierno de Chile (2016) Ley 20.911, *Crea el plan de formación ciudadana para los establecimientos educacionales reconocidos por el Estado*. Ministerio de Educación, April 2, 2016
- Held D (2006) *Models of democracy*, 3rd edn. Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA
- Klaiber J (2009) The Catholic Church, moral education and citizenship in Latin America. *J Moral Educ* 38(4):407–420
- Lijphart A (1985) Non-majoritarian democracy: a comparison of federal and consociational theories. *Publius: J Fed* 15(2):3–15
- Mardones R (ed) (2012) *Fraternidad y educación: un principio para la educación ciudadana y la convivencia democrática*. Ciudad Nueva, Buenos Aires
- Mardones R (2015) El paradigma de la educación ciudadana en Chile: una política pública inconclusa. In: Cox C, Castillo JC (eds) *Aprendizaje de la ciudadanía. Contextos, experiencias y resultados*. Ediciones UC, Santiago, pp 145–173
- Mardones R (2020) The politics of citizenship education in Chile. In: Peterson A, Stahl G, Soong H (eds) *The Palgrave handbook of citizenship and education*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, pp 343–357
- Mardones R, Marinovic A (2016) Tracing fraternity in the social sciences and Catholic Social Teaching. *Logos: J Cathol Thought Cult* 19(2):53–80
- Marshall TH (1950) *Citizenship and social class: and other essays*. Cambridge University Press, London
- Martinic S, Anaya M (2007) The Catholic school in the context of inequality: the case of Chile. In: Grace G, O’Keefe SJ (eds) *International handbook of Catholic education: challenges for school systems in the 21st century*. Springer, Dordrecht, pp 195–209
- Morin J (2015) Perfil del educador católico que discierne en el diálogo para promover el desarrollo integral. In: Imbarack P (ed) *Educación católica en Chile. Perspectivas, aportes y tensiones*. Ediciones UC, Santiago, pp 318–340
- Nussbaum MC (1996) Patriotism and cosmopolitanism. In: Nussbaum MC, Cohen J (eds) *For love of country*. Beacon Press, Boston, pp 2–17



- Scherz PT, Infante C (2015) Ethos, misión y aporte de la escuela católica. In: Imbarack P (ed) Educación católica en Chile. Perspectivas, aportes y tensiones. Ediciones UC, Santiago, pp 195-216
- Scherz PT, Mardones R (2016) Educación y ciudadanía. De la crisis institucional a la fraternidad política. Documento de Trabajo No. 8, Serie Educación de Calidad para el Chile de Hoy. Arzobispado de Santiago, Vicaría para la Educación, Santiago
- Schulz W, Ainley J, Fraillon J, Losito B, Agrusti G, Friedman T (2018) Becoming citizens in a changing world. IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2016 International Report. Amsterdam: IEA
- Schumpeter JA (1943) Capitalism, socialism and democracy. Harper & Brothers, New York
- United Kingdom. Advisory Group on Citizenship (1998) Education for citizenship and the teaching of democracy in schools. Final report of the Advisory Group on Citizenship, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority London
- Zamagni S (2009) Fraternidad, don y reciprocidad en la Caritas in Veritate. Revista Cultura Economica 27(75/76):11–20

**Rodrigo Mardones** Associate Professor at the Institute of Political Science, Pontifical Catholic University of Chile. Ph.D. and M.Phil. in Political Science at New York University. M.P.A. Columbia University. B.A. in History from the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile. He has taught and researched on issues of public policy, decentralization and local politics, educational policy and citizenship education.

**Alejandra Marinovic** Associate Professor at the Adolfo Ibáñez University's Business School. She obtained her Ph.D. in Economics from Columbia University, New York. Her areas of specialization are international economics, applied macroeconomics and labor economics. His most recent research concerns trust and social capital.

**Part IV**  
**A Look at the Classroom**

# Chapter 7

## Christian Perspective on the Educational Relationship: A Look at the Classroom



Andrés Moro and Marcelo Neira

**Abstract** This chapter is the result of a synthesis of observations shared by the team of the Vicariate for Education of Santiago, and it maintains that the Catholic school must feel challenged both by cultural changes and by the current crisis of the Church which impacts communities in different ways. As a result of this questioning, it is necessary to propose a perspective that renews the look at the hallmark of Catholic education, at the ways in which this education is materialized in the schools and at some keys that make the difference.

### 7.1 Introduction

The present article is presented in a certain way as an opportunity to record the result of a synthesis and observations shared during the last time by the team of the Vicariate for Education of Santiago. It is about consequent reflections of the accompaniment carried out in their usual processes, considering also the value of the observations provided by five experiences to be highlighted:

1. The process of consultation and preparation of the X Synod of the Church of Santiago.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>The pre-synodal consultation process was carried out in two ways. The first was through downloadable cards available on the web so that each school could self-manage its own focus group according to a guideline drawn up by the Commission of the X Synod and adapted by the Vicariate to suit the school reality. In this process, 11,184 people participated, of whom 8722 were young people—6337 young people and 2385 young Catholics—and 2462 adults from different

---

A. Moro (✉)  
Vicariate for Education Archbishop of Santiago, Santiago, Chile  
e-mail: [ved@iglesiadesantiago.cl](mailto:ved@iglesiadesantiago.cl)

M. Neira  
Public Advocacy and Knowledge Management, Vicariate for the Education of the Archbishopric of Santiago, Santiago, Chile  
e-mail: [mneira@iglesiadesantiago.cl](mailto:mneira@iglesiadesantiago.cl)

2. The preparation of the renewal process of the Catholic School Religious Education (EREC) programs.<sup>2</sup>
3. The process of implementing the Catholic School Management Model.
4. The process of implementation of the Law of Inclusion in the Catholic Schools of Santiago
5. Permanent dialogue with school principals and educational foundations.

Based on these coordinates, it is necessary to point out that Catholic education must be challenged, both by cultural changes and by the current crisis of the Church which impacts confessional schools in different ways. All of this has allowed us to sustain a critical reflection on the meaning, relevance and the style that Catholic education should have, so that it continues to be a contribution to the development of society in the twenty-first century.

It is therefore necessary to propose a perspective that renews our view of the hallmark of Catholic education, of the ways in which this education is materialized in schools and of some key points that make a difference, since they invite us to understand the classroom as a sacred place and teaching as an act of love.

## 7.2 The Hallmark of Catholic Education Is Played Out in the Master-Disciple Relationship

Those who are involved in education may agree that everything is solved and made concrete in the classroom. Educational models, learning theories, pedagogical approaches, curricular adaptations, etc., all these elements converge in the classroom, achieving their coherence and depth only through something that is not learned so much in books or in the academy, but in life itself: **the relationship that each educator establishes with his or her students.**<sup>3</sup> If we understand pedagogy as a style

---

educational contexts, both from secondary and higher education, where 1188 reflection groups were set up with their respective minutes. Ninety-eight schools (8582 people) and 15 institutions of higher education (2395 people) participated. This first report also considered the responses of various parishes (211 people). The second way included the holding of eight pre-synodal assemblies with young people and adults, one in each zone and one of the Pastoral de Educación Superior (PES). Here, 340 young people and 96 adults participated. Both processes took place during the second semester of 2017.

<sup>2</sup>In the first half of 2018, conditions were created for the development of a participatory process at the national level for the renewal of EREC plans and programmes. This process, called “Religion to be +”, is convened by the Education Area of the Chilean Episcopal Conference (CECh) and is based on the reflection provided by teachers and academics from all over the country to generate a proposal for a Catholic religion class in accordance with the demands of the new regulations and the challenges of the current cultural scenario.

<sup>3</sup>The permanent relationship of this Vicariate with the Catholic schools of Santiago has been moved by the understanding and implementation of the Catholic School Model. However, the institutional crisis has led us to a necessary revision of the daily treatment, confirming—in the voice of the management teams—that to a great extent the denominational spirit of the schools is permanently played on the quality and warmth of the teachers. In addition, one of the main findings of the

of relationship, then the Gospel is presented to us as a true school of humanity, whose archetypal teacher-disciple relationship is re-edited every day in the educational encounter between children in search of meaning and adult references.

Thus, we point out that a fundamental perspective to approach the classroom experience from the Catholic sensibility implies rescuing, for our time, the meaning and depth of what the teacher-disciple relationship means. Tradition tells us that the institution of the figure of the teacher for Hebrews goes back to the time of the Babylonian exile. It turned out to be a necessary device that was gradually installed in the people to which Jewish families and communities had access in order to preserve the traditions of their culture, in a context of diversity. This practice was perpetuated until the time of the Gospel and we see it in people like John the Baptist with his followers or in Paul when he remembers his time in the school of Gamaliel. However, Jesus poses a wonderful originality when he tells his disciples “you did not choose me, I chose you” (Jn. 15:16), as if to imply a free gift of his wisdom “to those whom he wanted to stay with him” (Mk. 3:13). This gesture is very important for every educator called to relate as a teacher of others, because it is not only a matter of welcoming those who come, but also of making a choice of life, inclining the will and the heart so that the other knows he is someone preferred.

Jesus Master teaches, asks, challenges, accompanies, prays, serves. He is a reference point for his disciples and at the same time sends them out as a gesture of detachment and understanding necessary for the development of their own autonomy. The master-disciple relationship is a universally representative symbolic reality, since it has a different name in each culture and epoch, but the same meaning: the mutual learning of the keys needed to live a life in fullness. We ourselves with gratitude can recognize many people who have been teachers in our lives, formally or spontaneously, fleetingly or systematically. And at the same time, and with much humility, we can perhaps recognize that we have been teachers for others, which implies a lot of responsibility, since it is not only a matter of instructing or sharing knowledge, but of touching people’s souls, to bring out the best of ourselves from within and guide them along the path of the senses and happiness. That is what it also means to educate.

Now, it is necessary to warn that this figure of the master has also been scandalously distorted, generating much damage in its wake. Being a teacher is above all a service, and when this service is confused with power it blurs all its humanizing sense. This task and vocation is so delicate that it implies the development of a very fine capacity for discernment that helps to avoid falling into the temptation of messianic delirium, which is sustained in relationships of emotional dependence that end up violating the consciences of others. Jesus, the good teacher, based his mastery not so much on his divine condition, but on his solidarity with the human, his enormous capacity for service and on the fact that after each healing intervention he knew how to withdraw so that the miracle that took place would express all its beauty.

---

consultation made for the 10th Synod of Santiago is related to the “crisis of adult references”, which has moved us to a permanent reflection this year with directors, teachers and representatives on the educational value of intergenerational relations.

Hence, it is appropriate to have this image of the teacher-disciple relationship also as a key to reading the way in which Catholic education expresses what happens in the classroom, attending to different models that coexist in practice.

### **7.3 School Models for the Deployment of Catholic Education**

Recognizing the diversity of schools, we can point out that they are all similar in terms of the expectations that society places on them. It is also true that their difference is sustained by the statement of each educational project. What, then, is specific about Catholic education, and how is this specificity expressed in the classroom? This question is not easy to answer, but it is possible to identify in the Chilean and Latin American experience four models through which schools propose certain emphases to resolve this question.

#### ***7.3.1 Model Based on the Evangelization Curriculum***

For approximately three decades, Chile has been talking about an evangelizing curriculum. In this sense, interesting proposals have been developed in which two modalities converge: one based on the crossing of content and the other based on codes of conduct that determine school coexistence. The first modality supposes the desire to integrate the national curriculum (which presents content by cycle) with the evangelizing proposal of the Church (which is articulated transversally). Thus, with this framework, a matrix is configured, used by each teacher as a navigation chart so that the disciplinary contents can be developed with the stamp of the values of the Gospel of Jesus. Experience shows that the greatest challenge in this approach is related to the religious situation of the teachers and their level of commitment to the Catholic Church, especially because there is much faith content that must be shared in an explicit way.

The second modality is complemented by the previous one, in which everything that happens in the school culture is called curriculum. Thus, the institutional stories, the norms of coexistence, the practices and customs of the educational community that are expressed in the environment seek to be colored by the message of Jesus Christ. This message can be explicit or implicit, and each school weighs up the value of both paths in a different way. Thus, it is possible to note experiences that only validate the explicit contents of the faith, while another approach coexists where the implicit codes of the faith are observed in all the circumstances of daily life, situations that at some moments, especially in celebration, are made explicit.

Both evangelizing paths, explicit and implicit, form the territory that every teacher needs to understand in order to move forward in the relationship with the disciples.

In this way, evangelization is not defined from one way or the other, but from the relationship that the educator establishes with the student, distinguishing above all his relationship with the faith, to help him make the passage from life to a believing reading of life.

### ***7.3.2 Model Based on Management Excellence***

This approach is premised on the relationship between love towards one's neighbor and quality education. A Catholic school understands itself as "good" because it is centered on the individual that is the student and creates all the favorable conditions for his or her integral development. A Catholic school is above all a good school and knows how to guide all its processes towards this objective, offering at the same time a good environment and a good educational performance.

In this model, what is Catholic rests on the evidence left by good educational management, within which the "pastoral" or "religious" variable has great importance because it gives justification and meaning to the everyday educational task that is carried out in the different areas of the school. The Vicariate for Education of Santiago is committed to this path by promoting the implementation of the management model of the Catholic school. A model that is based on six characteristics that every school should seek and on the development of educational management in which various processes converge at different levels, united by the crossroads that exists between integral formation and school culture.<sup>4</sup>

This model contains, within its processes, an explicit pastoral nature that aims at having the students commit themselves to the faith, while trying to make this experience a meaningful support for all their school, family and social life. It is an ideal that pastoral action should radiate to all levels of the school and especially to the classroom, and for this it is key that educators, whether believers or not, position themselves from a witness of life according to the Gospel in the sense of the unfolding of a compassionate humanity, expressed by a love that is close to teaching and the person that is each student.

### ***7.3.3 Model Based on Pastoral Management***

This approach allows the school to communicate its Catholic identity through actions and itineraries that complement what happens in the classroom, in which Christian

---

<sup>4</sup>The characteristics are: (1) it intends experiences of encounter with Jesus Christ; (2) it participates in the evangelizing mission of the Church, sustained by testimony; (3) it is distinguished by excellence; (4) it is committed to an integral education from a Catholic worldview; (5) it builds communion and inclusive community; and (6) it is committed to solidarity and the transformation of the world. For more information on the model, see: [http://www.vicariaeducacion.cl/Escuela\\_Catolica\\_comp\\_letto.pdf](http://www.vicariaeducacion.cl/Escuela_Catolica_comp_letto.pdf).

formation is explicit. It is called pastoral because it refers to the guidelines of the pastor, making the school an ecclesial community and at the same time a missionary territory when it deals with reaching out to all families with the proclamation of the faith.

There is a special emphasis here to present a good pastoral proposal, materialized fundamentally in the development of an agenda of celebrations, formative or catechetical processes and missionary activities or service to the community.

Although it is similar to the previous model, this type of experience does not necessarily place pastoral animation within a general educational management. Many schools regret the fact that pastoral care is a space that is not articulated with the other processes that the school lives, which does not mean that it does not have its impact.<sup>5</sup>

Whichever the path, the pastoral offerings of Catholic schools must be under constant review, especially because of the changes that education has undergone in recent times, particularly on the cultural and normative levels. Changes at every level constantly challenge the Catholic identity of the establishments, and here pastoral care plays a key role in reinventing itself with a sense of opportunity and historical relevance. Thus, the assumption that since it is a Catholic school, the families that arrive are Catholic, is left behind. Both the students and the workers express a diversity that connects with the idea of educational inclusion, so that whoever manages the pastoral life of the school (and also each classroom teacher) must develop differentiated strategies, taking into account four types of reality in which the students find themselves, which is obviously expressed statistically in the classroom: (a) religious indifference, (b) awakening of religious identity, (c) cultivation of religious identity, and (d) deployment of religious identity.

### ***7.3.4 Model Based on Religion Classes***

The emphasis placed on the religion classes lives in the permanent tension between the delivery of doctrinal content, which brings it very close to the format of catechesis, and the deployment of a subject that seeks to take charge of the development of the religious dimension of the students. However, to the extent that it remains one more discipline (although different because it does not have graded assignments) it will allow better conditions for the students to integrate it with the other knowledge that circulates in the classroom.

There are schools that put much of their identity display into what happens with and from the religion class. Although there is a program designed by the Church and a norm that places it within the confessional and public educational offer, in practice

---

<sup>5</sup>In the consultations on the implementation of the Catholic School Model (MEC), the idea of moving from a school “with” pastoral care to a school “in” pastoral care is widely noted, a formula that many schools verbalize as a challenge to connect all their processes with the evangelizing mission.



this class follows different paths depending on the type of school. Some follow the programme of Catholic School Religious Education (EREC) almost literally, others use it as a reference applying many modifications according to the context. There are schools that require their teachers to teach values and others where the content is related to Christian culture or to comparative religions.<sup>6</sup> In any case, this is a subject that is very much challenged by the educational system and the reality of families.

From a qualitative reading of the reports of the consultation made in 2017 for the 10th Synod of Santiago, one can see that, far from what is usually thought, there is no crisis of spirituality among the students. What is in crisis are the institutional mediations, which is expressed with the idea of “believing without belonging” (Velasco 1999).<sup>7</sup> There is also a crisis in the “transmission of faith”, causing a significant number of young people to move between religious illiteracy and religious indifference. The consultation warns of a “failure of reference points” and the need to renew links that help to connect with the transcendent meaning of life.

The so-called crisis of religion does not have to do with its supposed disappearance or exhaustion, but with its transformation (Velasco 1999). The diversification of religious expressions confirms that religion is an intrinsic dimension of the human being. It is a latent reality, more or less explicit, syncretized, attached to an institution or “a la carte”. Regardless of how it is expressed, the religious experience (linked to the sacred or the transcendent) represents the place of the senses and of connection with the deepest values of the human being and his most heartfelt experiences.

The Catholic, as a cultural representation of the religious dimension of the person, can come into the classroom in four ways: as a catechesis that presupposes the Christian tradition of the students; as a sense of universality, that welcomes all cultural expressions; as a Christian tradition, that shapes the society that contains us; and as a proposal of humanization, anchored in the figure of Jesus. The great pedagogical challenge is to achieve a permanent connection between the knowledge contained in the creed and the knowledge of experience. A hermeneutic relationship that allows both kinds of knowledge to mutually enlighten each other.

In this sense, the religion teacher can re-edit the educational relationship between teacher and disciple by recognizing himself as a person who shapes others, whose pedagogical leadership helps students to discern the believing meaning of things in a context of information saturation and disjointed knowledge. His professionalism consists in the deployment of pedagogical skills for the emergence of religious knowledge with curricular relevance. For this it is fundamental to honour inter-generational relationships, assimilate daily tensions, empowering the teaching that they exercise, always proposing human dignity as a meeting point of the different world views.

---

<sup>6</sup>All of these were reflected on at the annual seminar of religion teachers of the archdiocese in January 2017. The idea was to understand the current state of the religion class in order to find the opportunities that each modality presents both for the development of the curriculum of the subject and for the process of renewal of the EREC 2018–2019.

<sup>7</sup>Theologian Juan Martín Velasco (1999) anticipates this analysis in his article “Metamorphosis of the sacred and the future of Christianity”, pointing out that “the institution is increasingly unable to prescribe to individuals a unified code of meaning or heteronomous rules deduced from that code. And the reason for this incapacity lies in the growing validity of the autonomy of conscience”.



**Fig. 7.1** Proposal of the place of the religion class in the current context (*Source* Own elaboration, based on the synthesis of the reflection carried out in the Archdiocesan Seminar for Teachers of Religion, January 2018)

Religious education is a key variable in the definitions that are circulating regarding quality education. We do not know if it will be suppressed, but it must change, positioning itself, just like God did, at the service of the human, so that all the good that Christianity has done for culture is shared in the classroom. The main thing in education is not knowledge but the students, and in this task spirituality represents an articulating axis of life. Without wishing to impose any tradition, faith becomes an experience capable of uniting knowledge and integrating visions of the world into a shared narrative. In this sense, the following scheme offers a perspective on the place that the religion class should occupy in the face of the current challenges of education (Fig. 7.1).

The religion class must respond to the new requirements of the Inclusion Act and adapt to the changes coming in the curriculum and cycles. That is why we believe that it is situated at the crossroads between what the Church proposes and what is set out in the General Education Law (LGE). Then, four criteria are deployed that make this subject a relevant and pertinent experience: pedagogical connection, thematic relevance, sense of humanization and contemplation/discernment.

Here it is necessary to make a conceptual precision to situate the relevance of the religion class. Regardless of who provides it, all education is public because it has a public meaning, as a social right, considering the contribution of all knowledge, including religious knowledge. At the same time, all education is particular because every school makes a contribution to the common good from a particularity consigned in its educational project.<sup>8</sup> Now, the development of the spiritual dimension set forth

<sup>8</sup>This has been a relevant issue in the process of adaptation of Catholic schools to the Law of Inclusion. The management teams understand the importance of improving the procedures for the

in the LGE (Art. 2) as part of integral education—which the State defines as quality education—does not in itself assure the justification of religious instruction in the public sphere, but it does take an important step in the idea of understanding the person as a spiritual being and the school as a place where this dimension should be developed. This key is important for the Church’s effort to achieve a curricular definition of the religion class.

## **7.4 Enlightening Criteria for the Development of Catholic Education in the Classroom**

In spite of the way these different emphases are expressed in the classroom, we propose some criteria that can illuminate the educational experience in the classroom, integrating the meaning of Catholic education with relevance in the educational context. Hence, it is important to visualize the actors in this educational relationship (teachers and students) in their interaction in the classroom, with all its challenges and opportunities.

### ***7.4.1 The Classroom as Sacred Territory***

The contributions of science have helped us to understand that every look at reality is always self-involved. This is an important fact when it comes to this exercise of observing the classroom from the perspective of Catholic education. Immediately, a mysterious and rich reality unfolds before our eyes, ready to be contemplated. To call this space sacred does not mean that it is something sublime, but rather that it is a very important daily experience, which requires the maximum teaching professionalism and ethics in order to interact with it. Therefore, beyond the relationship that each teacher has with faith, the contemplation of this reality demands some fundamental questions: what do we see in the classroom, who am I (as a teacher) in this educational relationship, and where do I invite those who are part of this sacred territory to walk?

As an example, let us anticipate some data that will help the exercise of a contemplative and situated pedagogy: in this territory there are 40 people, 40 consciences, 40 stories, 40 freedoms, 40 ways of learning, 40 knowledges, etc. Just thinking about them opens up a whole world of possibilities, imagining the rich combination of experiences of 40 legitimate learners. That is why the classroom is not only a

---

design and socialization of the Institutional Educational Projects (IEP), assuming the Catholic not only as a confession to which some adhere, but also as a pedagogical approach open to all, as a contribution to the common good.

cogwheel in all the processes that take place in the school, it is also a reality in itself, called to unravel the maximum potential that human encounter can offer.<sup>9</sup>

To consider the classroom as a sacred place is not only a rhetorical exercise, it is a premise that every educator must consider because, independently of his or her belief, the school where he or she works entails a belief from where he or she articulates and conducts all educational processes: God happens in personal and collective history (V General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops 2007: 264). That is to say, the biography of each student, as it is expressed, is a precious deposit of something tremendously marvelous, dynamic and mysterious. Not for nothing evidence has been raised about the co-educational effect, the benefits of existential narratives, resilience, popular education, in short, everything that from the sciences brings us the extraordinary potential of human life, especially when this potential is shared.

In this spirit, the teacher who stands up as a teacher and a professional in education must know how to problematize the so-called transmission of the faith and resolve whether the school provides the necessary conditions for this transmission. Unlike before, when Catholicism was constituted as a bastion of a kind of religious monoculture, transmission was given by tradition. Today, however, the advance of secularization and cultural changes make us realize that we do not adequately develop tools to manage this transmission. Even the concept itself is experiencing a crisis since it refers to the unidirectional relationship between an active and a passive subject. The relationships are not like that, they are dynamic. That is why Aparecida proposes a new coordinate by pointing out that evangelization consists in sharing with others the joy of the encounter with Jesus (V General Conference of Latin American and Caribbean Bishops 2007: 145, 364 and 548). To share and not to transmit. This seems to be the mode of the times, especially because of the power of the prayerful, fraternal and correct testimony of the professor who understands his teaching as an act of love.

#### ***7.4.2 Teaching as an Act of Love***

From the Catholic perspective, the teacher is called, above all, to be a good teacher. This statement is important to note especially because today many schools have teachers who do not necessarily identify themselves as Catholics. Therefore, it is key to explore new categories that will make it possible for a denominational school to be coherent, taking into account the balance that must be struck between explicit evangelization and implicit evangelization. Pope Benedict XVI refers to this theme

---

<sup>9</sup>Bishop Héctor Vargas, president of the Education Area of the CECh, reminded the Congress of Catholic Schools in 2015 that the starting point of every educational process is the life and reality of young people. He pointed out: “The path of evangelization in the school context begins with the valorization of the patrimony that every young person carries within him, and that a true educator knows how to discover with intelligence and patience. He will use his reason and his pastoral sensitivity to unearth the desire for God, which is sometimes buried, but not entirely dead in the hearts of young people”.

in other words: “The Christian knows when it is time to speak of God and when it is appropriate to be silent about Him, allowing love alone to speak” (Benedict XVI 2005: 31c). So this charity becomes an educational love, a display of professionalism that raises all possible conditions for the integral development of students. This criterion challenges the teacher in his or her vocation as a teacher. In this sense, the recent process of consultation of the X Synod of Santiago raises some interesting clues to guide the teaching work:

- **Recovering the ability to be a reference.** By definition, a teacher is a referent for those who follow him and one of the great findings of the reflection around the X Synod of Santiago is related to the evidence of a deep crisis of referents, which can be read as the sensation that young people have experienced a kind of orphanhood of teachers. This challenges us as educators in the sense of looking at ourselves in our testimony to know if we have really lost the capacity to be referents and what we must do to recover it. This is also the question as to what it means to be an adult in the twenty-first century, so that a meaningful relationship with the new generations can be re-established. This is complex today because we live in a time when the categories by which people were defined are collapsing. For example, it used to be clear that the adult defined himself because he was the one who knew and taught, while the child was the one who did not know and had to obey. In the past, the adult was the one who worked and the young person was the one who studied; instead, now both can work and/or study without their role as adult or young person being disfigured, respectively. Times have changed and we cannot stick to the same parameters as before to establish relationships. Here are some clues to this change:
  - The *legal approach* has led to a change in culture regarding children, recognizing them now as subjects of law and no longer as objects of protection, as they used to be. It is therefore important that children themselves are more aware of their rights.
  - Technological progress has allowed equal access to knowledge, even children and young people of this generation for the first time in history can say they “know” more than adults in their natural environment as digital natives.
  - The idea of the adult associated with a linear biographical life project is in crisis, which forces us to socially rethink what is characteristic of being an adult. This is very much due to the phenomenon of migration in the field of work, housing, interests, friendships, etc.
  - The educational culture has gradually accepted the shift in human relations from the logic of the “recipient” to that of the “interlocutor”, whose essential characteristic is the validation of the worlds of consciousness that participate in the relationship.
- **Consider the classroom not only as a space for knowledge but also for the encounter with wisdom.** It is often said that the school responds to an unnecessary and outdated model in that all knowledge, with its respective didactics, is available on the internet. But we are not so sure that this network provides the keys to look at

the world with wisdom. Wisdom alludes to the existence of the figure of the wise man, an archetypal resource also present in the soul of cultures, those enlightened beings whose function brings the grace of community cohesion. The wise man is a being who is available, neither absent nor a hoarder, and possesses a magnetism that can only be explained by the great and simple capacity to make us see reality from its deepest gears. He is not a know-it-all because his strength is mobilized by the recognition of that which he ignores.

- **To enable students to make a synthesis of the knowledge that circulates in the school.** Another thing that social networks and the Internet do not provide is the possibility of making syntheses. Although never before in history has a generation had such immediate access to knowledge, one of the criticisms we make of this information society is the vortex of disjointed content with different levels of verisimilitude that cannot be verified. In addition to the large number of stimuli, their dynamic and fleeting nature makes it difficult (if not impossible) to take the necessary pause for critical reflection in order to find new convictions.
- **To explore new forms of pedagogical exercise based on interdependence (near and far).**<sup>10</sup> This implies making a critical review of the formative models that coexist when it comes to educating in the faith. Such an exercise is very necessary because behind each model there is a type of understanding of the Church that supports it. The following Table 7.1 illustrates this idea.

## 7.5 Conclusion

Since faith is not forced but shared, Catholic education is played out in the daily pedagogical relationship. A style of relationship that has its school inside the Gospel of Jesus Christ, whose mastery was tremendously original and even disruptive to the codes of its time. This should be a call to attention about the methods and didactics brought to the classroom and also a criterion to advance towards what is technically called “pedagogical innovation”, since it is not a question of innovating for the sake of innovating or only because the present culture demands it. The Catholic school is challenged to broaden the repertoire of its methods especially because at the heart of education are the students, each and every one, with their stories, emotions, wounds, joys and learnings about life.

We are aware of the generalised burden that the exercise of teaching implies, which greatly determines daily relations and makes the sense of pedagogy as a vocation emerge more strongly. For this reason, Catholic and non-Catholic teachers who work

---

<sup>10</sup>The consultation made on the occasion of the 10th Synod puts in evidence a critical paradox that we must take care of as adult educators. Young people criticize adults for “being on top” of them, leaving them “without space to make their own decisions”. They feel overwhelmed and say that adults “stress them out with their demands”. But at the same time, they complain about the distance from adults that creates a great sense of loneliness. This gives us a clue to know how to situate ourselves as available adults, capable of discerning closeness to accompany (without overwhelming) and distance to shape people in autonomy (without abandoning).

**Table 7.1** Ways of being Church and educational styles

| Ways of being Church   | Educational styles  |
|--|---|
| A Church that fears cultural changes and in some way manifests itself against transformations that are read as conflicting with morality. In this way, a kind of spirituality of crusade for the defense of Christian values and Catholic doctrine is being reissued | <b>Dependency-based style.</b> To form students as reproducers of Catholic doctrine, offering all possible senses and meanings  |
| A Church that adapts to cultural changes, accepting with a certain passivity the changes in order to adapt to the circumstances, doing what is possible with the benefit that the current culture can give it  | <b>Style based on independence.</b> Letting students formulate their own religious syntheses alone, because it is understood that they are children of this time and can accommodate the cultural tensions that may affect them                       |
| A Church that appreciates and promotes cultural changes and assigns a great value to diversity because it favors coexistence. All this can be understood as the eloquence of the Spirit who always makes all things new  | <b>A style based on interdependence.</b> To trust that the students build their own convictions, starting from an accompaniment that favours the possibility of discerning life so that they can unfold their generational and historical originality |

*Source* Own elaboration

in Church contexts are called today to rethink and recompose our bonds so that we can also be witnesses and mediators of God's tenderness. And in spite of this critical and painful moment, we cannot understand the pedagogy far from the joy that the vital encounter with Jesus provokes. Joy is also an educational resource, since it makes teachers validate themselves by the passion of educating, so that the students also enjoy learning.

Finally, it is necessary to comment on the process of secularization of Chilean society and its impact on the teaching of the faith, not only because of an evident diagnosis but also because it has been an important key in the synodal reflection that we as Church have undertaken during this time. The way in which we can understand the place of the Catholic school and of religion involves leaning more towards hope than towards a sense of threat. Apart from the fact that we can perceive secularization as an attack on or indifference to religion, this process also involves that possibility and desire to understand the religious phenomenon. That is why it is important to be aware of this scenario that challenges us to move from habit to conviction, renewing the value of the permanent proclamation of faith as good news for the twenty-first century. The great problems of today's world are not solved with more politics, more technology or more growth, but with the rescue of the spiritual substratum of individuals and peoples. In that matter, schools have much to contribute.

## References

- Benedict XVI (2005) *Deus caritas est*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Available at: [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/es/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20051225\\_deus-caritas-est.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/es/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html)
- CELAM (2007) *Aparecida document: Conclusive document of the V general conference of Latin American and Caribbean Bishops*. São Paulo, Brazil: Paulus. Available at: <https://www.celam.org/aparecida/Espanol.pdf>
- Velasco JM (1999) *Metamorphosis of the sacred and the future of Christianity*. Cuadernos aqui y ahora 37
- Vicarage for Education (2014) *Towards a model of Catholic school*

**Pbro. Andrés Moro** Vicar for Education of the Archbishopric of Santiago. Diocesan priest, Bachelor of Theology from the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile and a graduate of the Licentiate in History program from the same university. Master's degree in Psycho-spiritual Accompaniment from the Alberto Hurtado University. Vicarage for Education (2014).

**Marcelo Neira** Degree in Social Communication from the Bolivarian University. Master's degree in Social Ethics and Human Development from the Universidad Alberto Hurtado. Director of the Public Advocacy and Knowledge Management Area of the Vicarage for Education of the Archbishopric of Santiago.



# Chapter 8

## Catholic Education in Contemporary Brazil: A Story of Questions for Classroom Practice



José Ivo Follmann SJ 

**Abstract** This chapter deals with the challenges of Catholic school education in Brazil, in a context of profound changes and strong ideological debates. It is a historical approach to what happened from the 1960s to the present. The formation of sufficiently prepared teachers, openness to inter-religious dialogue and inclusion are posed as some of the key challenges for the Catholic school in Brazil.

### 8.1 Introduction

The starting point of this chapter is a personal experience, in a basic education classroom of an elite Catholic institution in 1970, when due to the use of certain didactic materials the author was the reason for a “parent-teacher meeting”, which generated an embarrassing and ideological dialogue.

The question that guides this section is: what are the challenges for Catholic education in Brazil and its practices in the classroom that incorporate the different changing contexts and strong ideological debates, mainly from the 1960s to today?

With initial attention to the context of changes in the second half of the twentieth century, the chapter points out, in sequence, three special focuses: the national organization of Catholic education in a context of strong market competition; Catholic education in a context of accelerated religious diversification combined with the ever greater affirmation of secularity in society; and, finally, a recent debate on the most appropriate forms of socio-educational inclusion practices of Catholic and similar educational entities. The text concludes by pointing out challenges for advancing the process of reflection on classroom practices in Catholic education.

---

J. I. Follmann SJ (✉)

School of Humanities, University of Vale do Rio dos Sinos (UNISINOS), Sao Leopoldo, Brazil  
e-mail: [jifmann@unisinobr](mailto:jifmann@unisinobr)

Catholic University of Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium

## 8.2 The Second Half of the Twentieth Century: A Context of Great Changes

I am going to start with the account of a personal event. In 1970 I was teaching in a Catholic Jesuit school, known as an elite school, in southern Brazil. The subject was “Religious Culture”. I was guided to use, in the classroom, a very fashionable didactic material, very appropriate to the new moment that the Catholic Church was living since the Second Vatican Council and the Christian social commitment in the challenging context that Brazil and all Latin America were living. The classes were very successful, with good adhesion and participation of the students in the seventh year of primary education. However, one day I was surprised when the school management called me to a meeting with a group of parents. The issue was the ideological orientation of the materials used in class.<sup>1</sup> In that material, there were aspects of the social and cultural reality in a fairly balanced way and within the scope of the age group of the students, and that in the opinion of the parents, were not appropriate. I was a young beginner, half way through my Jesuit formation, at that time a student of Social Sciences at the local Federal University. I had to explain to some of those parents that the logo of the *Sono-Viso of Brazil*,<sup>2</sup> which was an S and a V, had nothing to do with the hammer and sickle and that the star of Bethlehem (the guide of the Three Kings) which appeared in a picture had nothing to do with any stars on the flags of communist countries. I felt tremendously moved by these totally unexpected intimidations. It was certainly a great learning experience.

Without getting stuck on this anecdote, I believe that it is tremendously symbolic and reflects a whole context that was lived, mainly from the second half of the twentieth century onwards, more precisely the political, cultural and social transformations, from the 1960s onwards. It was a context that left deep marks both for society and for the Catholic Church and other different Christian churches and, consequently, for Catholic and Christian education. According to Danilo R. Streck and Aldino L. Segala: “*A new way of being Church implied the belief that another society was possible; the society where all people could have enough bread and the thirst for justice could be satisfied*” (2007: 165).<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>This was an innovative production in terms of catechesis. The so-called Catechetical Cards organized under the coordination of the specialist in the area, Brother Antonio Cechin (of the Marist Brothers’ Congregation). In one of his last interviews, Brother Antonio himself recalled how in 1969 the Minister of Education, brandishing these catechetical cards on television, shouted that they were highly subversive material destined to brainwash pre-adolescents for communism and pointed to Catholic schools as the main disseminators of these ideas.

<sup>2</sup>Entity hired by the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB), for the first printing of that material.

<sup>3</sup>The basic outline of the present text reproduces the same logic of another recent publication, with the title “*Brazil, Catholic religion and education: challenges and prospects*” (Follmann 2017), in which I had the opportunity to synthesize in the first part the contribution of Streck and Segala (2007), here quoted. I take up here some passages of the 2017 article, with the novelty, on the one hand, of the reflection on the impacts in the classroom and, on the other, of the addition of the recent debate on the most appropriate forms of socio-educational inclusion practices.

In the same article, there is a special mention of the important role played by the Second Vatican Council and its intense impact on the Catholic Church in Latin America. This last aspect appears as the central point in the great change that has occurred, in this context, in theological and pedagogical terms, which is the focus of the authors' text.

Paulo Freire proclaimed that the education promoted by the churches should be conceived and carried out with roots in the history and culture of the people. According to him, "*the educational role of the churches cannot be understood as alien to the conditions of the concrete reality in which they are present*" (Freire 1977: 105, quoted by Streck and Segala 2007: 165).

Some documents of the episcopate of that time were of great importance, especially the documents of the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM), of the meeting in Medellín, Colombia, in 1968 and of Puebla, Mexico, in 1979.<sup>4</sup>

The Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) and popular education are also points to be highlighted, in the text of Streck and Segala (2007). It was an extremely fertile period, particularly in terms of popular education activities outside the formal education system, largely led by the Church. At the same time, great debates were held within the formal system, as was seen in the great event in Buga, Colombia (1967), a year before the well-known content of the meeting of the bishops in Medellín (1968). The idea of liberation and liberating education, proclaimed and deepened in Buga, was taken up in the Medellín document. The main characteristics of this education were later taken up again in the Puebla document (1979), which synthesizes them in three points: creating space in the human being for the good Christian news; encouraging the exercise of the critical function inherent in true education; and promoting the learner as the subject of his own development and that of others. In short: education to humanize, education for justice and education for service.

Catholic education in Brazil had a great presence in secondary education. Oscar Beozzo (1993: 69) expresses that, at the end of the 1950s, in Brazil 80% of the students at this level were from Catholic educational institutions. Access was easier for the middle and upper classes, due to high fees. On the one hand, great internal ideological tensions were experienced, generating conflicts in the area of management and classroom practices. On the other hand, important debates were taking place on the democratization of education, including the importance of allocating public resources to private educational initiatives.

The management, however, was totally different. There was a large increase in the public education network and private schools were gradually excluded from access to public subsidies. In Catholic institutions, unable to take in students from the poorer sector, the ideological crisis that was already in place tended to grow. The new way of being a school, which came hand in hand with the new way of being Church, seemed to have become a distant discourse, in a picture where the survival of the schools and

---

<sup>4</sup>The document that today best expresses all the trajectory and advances lived in terms of the Church in Latin America in the last decades and its current situation is the document of Aparecida do Norte, Brazil, in 2007. In this sense, see Jaci de Fátima Candioto. *A Educação Cristã na atual Cultura a partir do Documento de Aparecida*. XI National Congress of Education (EDUCERE), 2013, PUC-PR.

their practices in the classroom needed to be adjusted to the consumption horizon of the dominant elites.

The ideological crisis in the schools was accompanied by two other crises. In the first place, the crisis of consecrated religious life itself, with a significant decrease in the number of vocations. In second place, the state policy of, on the one hand, investing more resources in public schools, and, on the other hand, facilitating the possibility of the emergence of a voracious market of private educational enterprises, guided by business and profit, weighed heavily.

These last two aspects implied an unprecedented worsening of the conditions of economic and financial sustainability of Catholic schools and other denominational and community schools. Paradoxically, these institutions are the ones most focused on public service. As an aggravating factor in this paradox, it is worth noting that the power of intimidation of the families who pay, in this context, becomes even more severe in relation to classroom practices.

### **8.3 Catholic Education in Brazil: National Organization and Competitiveness**

The twenty-first century began with a totally unfavorable scenario for the economic and financial sustainability of Catholic educational institutions and other similar educational initiatives. According to Manoel Alves (2006), this scenario also made visible the internal management weaknesses of most of these institutions. For the author, this was not something noticeable in favorable times and without competition, but radical changes occurred and the context became adverse, especially during the last two decades of the twentieth century. It seems that the institutions of Catholic education were very slow to adapt to the new moment experienced by humanity as the “knowledge society”.

To face these great challenges, Catholic education in Brazil took important steps in terms of national organization. Thus, in 2007, the process of officially establishing the National Association of Catholic Education (ANEC) was definitively established, overcoming the situation of evident disarticulation that existed previously.<sup>5</sup> This entity of unique national representation of Catholic education in Brazil is characterized by three main axes: political representation and defense of the interests of the associates, advice to the associates and support in the management of the institutions. ANEC is made up of 400 Catholic member supporters, about 2 thousand schools, 90 higher education institutions and 100 social works. ANEC is present in all

---

<sup>5</sup>El 30 de octubre de 2007 ocurrió la incorporación de la Asociación Brasileira de Escolas Superiores Católica (ABESC) y de la Asociación Nacional de Mantenedoras de Escolas Católica (ANAMEC) en la Asociación de Educación Católica (AEC), que pasó a denominarse a Asociación Nacional de Educación Católica do Brasil (ANEC), en funcionamiento con este nombre desde 2008.

**Table 8.1** Composition of the Brazilian population in percentages according to religious identification in the official 1940 And 2010 demographic censuses

| Religious identification | 1940 (%) | 2010 (%) |
|--------------------------|----------|----------|
| Catholics                | 95.2     | 64.6     |
| Evangelicals             | 2.6      | 22.2     |
| “Non-religious”          | 0.2      | 8.0      |
| Other religions          | 2.0      | 5.2      |
| Total                    | 100.0    | 100.0    |

*Source* Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics Foundation (IBGE). Census of 1940 and 2010

states of the Federation, representing 2.2 million students and 100 thousand teachers and officials.<sup>6</sup>

The crisis, constituted by the theological and pedagogical transformation undergone by the Catholic Church, added to the drastic reduction in the number of consecrated religious and the radical change in the context of spaces for Catholic education and other confessions, are not the only fundamental elements that must be observed. The challenge of articulating forces at the national level for the creation of common support and synergy and, within the frenetic race of technological and pedagogical innovation in the classrooms and educational spaces as a whole, not to succumb to the loss of the central values that move Catholic education, was also pointed out above. All of this must be taken into account within a context of accelerated religious diversification and the advance of the lay State.

#### **8.4 The Diversification of the Brazilian Religious Sphere and the Laicism of the State**

The Brazilian religious sphere has suffered, over the last decades, a very accelerated process of inflection in forces: from a predominantly Catholic Brazil, it is moving towards a Brazil where the strength of the evangelical Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal segment and religious diversification in general, tend to conquer ever greater spaces.

In terms of diversification in the religious sphere, the official data consolidated at the national level are provided by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics Foundation (IBGE), from 1940 to 2010. In this period, the statistical table reflects the significant numerical fall of those who declare themselves to be Catholic and the accelerated increase of those who declare themselves to be Evangelicals, as well as the great increase of those who declare themselves to be “non-religious,” including, in the latter group, non-believers or atheists. The multiplication of the number of religions added to the table of “other religions” is also noted, as shown in the Table 8.1.

<sup>6</sup>See: <http://www.curtanaeducacao.org.br/realizacao/anec/>.

Everything indicates that in 2020 the Catholic population in Brazil will be below 50%.<sup>7</sup> However, the explosion of religious diversity, which can be observed in contemporary Brazil, does not in itself generate a pluralistic spirit or democratic coexistence. On the contrary, on many occasions there are fundamentalist radicalizations. There is, then, a doubly contradictory movement generated by diversification: growth of the spirit of pluralist democratic coexistence, on the one hand, and an increase in fundamentalist radicalizations, on the other. In the same way, a double movement is perceptible at the level of the State: at the same time that there are verifiable movements for the maturing of laicism in the sense of guaranteeing the right to diversity and plurality of religious expressions, there are also movements in search of electoral advantages that have the support of this or that religious confession.

Knowledge plays an important role in the process of religious identity. Brazilian society needs to deepen its knowledge about the world of religions and different religiousnesses. This “world” has become very diversified in Brazil due, in part, to a more visible, although statistically very reduced, presence of Islamic, Jewish, Buddhist and other strong and millennia-old religious traditions. A fundamental component in the processes of religious identity is the healthy relationship with the other, with the different. Perhaps it can be said that inter-religious dialogue is the salvation table of a religious education that generates a healthy social life.

It is agreed that it is the task of the secular state to create the conditions for the education of religious consciences in their diversity and their mutual recognition. A mature secularity lived and administered by the State is a condition for the religious sphere to be able to exercise its role in the construction of a democratic society.

The installation of the secular State was mentioned within the same process of the proclamation of the Republic. It has been 130 years since the first Republican Constitution of 1891 and the secularity of the State is still far from mature. The history of the twentieth century and also of the first decade of the twenty-first century is full of examples that bring to light the “ghost” of Catholicism as the official religion. This was especially accentuated during the long period of the Vargas government, but to a certain extent it returned during the Lula government.<sup>8</sup> In Brazil, this historical period of State secularism witnessed two complementary phenomena: the strong burden of preconceptions and persecutions (repressions) of African-based religions and others that were commonly disqualified as religions, not accepted by Western

---

<sup>7</sup>The research of the Data-Folha Institute of July 2018, Sao Paulo, Brazil shows 51% Catholics and 33% Evangelicals. In addition to the visible explosion in the number of evangelicals, other aspects must be considered, since there are still controversies regarding research methodologies, and the diversity may be even greater due to the multiplication of the “double religious identity,” combining segments of African matrix and spiritualistic practices with an external Catholic “facade.”

<sup>8</sup>What always weighed most heavily on these “relapses” were the “considerable spaces in the areas of health, education, leisure and culture” that the Catholic Church continued and continues to occupy. A very recent event was particularly disturbing in the harmonious evolution of the relations of the lay State with the religious sphere in Brazil. This is the Agreement between the Brazilian State and the Holy See signed in 2008, a document that raised much controversy. In response to this agreement, the General Law on Religions, presented in 2009, was created in order to change the content of the agreement in question, extending it to other religious denominations. According to researcher Fischmann (2009), this is an “attempt to correct an incorrigible error”.

Christian rationality Monteiro (2006, 2009); the growing increase of Evangelical Pentecostal churches and, later, neo-Pentecostal ones, throughout the second half of the twentieth century, accompanied by strong political lobbying and opposition to Catholic influence.

The religious contamination of the secular state in Brazil is not very different from that of other countries, because, in fact, there are no known concrete examples of total exemption or neutrality of the state towards different religions (Mariano 2005). What must be kept very clear is that all of this has repercussions mainly in the sense of Catholic education, passing through the challenge of “doing education” as a public service, of the necessary participation in the culture of dialogue with other religions and the renewed effort to construct its own spaces for the cultivation of the processes of Catholic identity, while at the same time contributing to the preservation of the exercise of the lay function of the State.

## 8.5 Recent Dialogues on Socio-Educational Inclusion Practices

Historically, Brazilian legislation empowered the institutions contemplated by the Law of Philanthropy, the destination, for social practices, of 20% of the total volume of income corresponding to the exemption from official taxes. Many institutions offered scholarships to the economically vulnerable population. This legislation underwent constant innovation. From 2012, however, the legislation was tightened up, obliging educational institutions to offer one scholarship for every five paying students.<sup>9</sup> The Ministry of Education’s control over these practices was clearly tightened.

The novelty, in spite of containing a limiting factor in the autonomy of the institutions, gave the opportunity to generate an environment of sufficiently secure solutions, both for economic and financial sustainability and for the expansion of the effectiveness of the values of Catholic education and other similar entities. Since I had to deal with the discussion of philanthropic entities,<sup>10</sup> the new environment created mobilized me a lot and I began to outline an opinion survey among the administrative, pedagogical and social assistance heads of Catholic education institutions. The question of the survey aimed to determine the educational effectiveness

---

<sup>9</sup>Federal Law No. 12.101/2009, Certification of Social Assistance Charitable Entity (CEBAS), with the issuance of Regulatory Ordinance No. 15, published on August 14, 2009 legislates on the conditions required for the Certification in guideline. Obviously, the determination of a scholarship for every five paid students is not tout-court, since the Law allows for partial scholarships and material support for scholarship holders to be calculated within the total. This applies to basic education, but it also applies to higher education under the same scheme already practiced by PROUNI, Universidad para Todos, since 2005.

<sup>10</sup>Today, CEBAS certification is in force.

according to the values of the Catholic institutions of education, of the offer of scholarships required by law within the institutions themselves or in institutions created, in more vulnerable social contexts.<sup>11</sup>

It is known that, with the new movements of legislation, some institutions started to practice different modalities of offering scholarships in order to meet at the same time the legal requirements without losing the focus of their institutional values together with guaranteeing the economic and financial viability.

From a simple question about the advantages and limitations of the different modalities, some important contributions were collected, which help to make progress in the reflection.

Firstly, there is a strong convergence in the statement that “*it is not the administrative that should underpin pedagogical choices*”, since “*numbers can camouflage faces*”. Moreover, there are those who say that strictly speaking “*there are no economic-financial advantages in either of the two options*”. It must be an “*option designed as a pedagogical policy*”. There is, however, the perception that, in practice, in spite of the fact that the institutions pleaded fidelity to the mission as a central motivation, many times other arguments are implicitly considered, even linked to not causing damage to the comfort of the families who pay, preserving their presumed expectations.

The model of offering internal scholarships to the same institution that serves paid public seems not to be rejected whenever it is viable, even claiming that it would be the “*closest to the best*” model. In the opinion of some, it is one of the elements that contribute to the quality of education and to equity in education. This *would be “adding social and intellectual value*”, since “*we learn more with others, being together, than giving the opportunity for only one context to develop in isolation*”. There are those who remind us that we should avoid contributing to the “*confinement of the periphery*” and to foster the practice of exchange, since this is very important so that those who come from the periphery “*be perceived as intelligent beings and equal to all others*”. In addition, “*the coexistence of the paid public with the scholarship holders generates mutual growth and shows concretely for the community the social work that the school develops*”. There are those who oppose the “*authentic inclusion*” to the practice of the “*perverse ‘inclusion’*”.

Depriving public institutions of the presence of scholarship holders from more vulnerable social backgrounds would help to reinforce the “*lack and deficit of diversity*” that characterizes these schools in general. These “*running the risk of being institutions of ‘perfect’ students, that is, white students, (...) from the same economic class*”, when the ‘problematic’ students are “*already eliminated in the selection process*”. The “*richness of living together in diversity*” is “*an important element for integral education*”.

---

<sup>11</sup>The research was recently initiated and is in its exploratory phase for the construction of an interdisciplinary project on educational effectiveness according to the values of Catholic educational institutions, with the modalities in guideline.



The practice of allocating resources to external institutions,<sup>12</sup> and not using them within the institution itself, *“in the long term, favors the administrative dimension, but pedagogically segregates society by reaffirming what the system preaches”* with respect to the reproduction of special schools for the elite and schools that form servants of those who dominate. *“There are advantages of great social impact, but there are also dangers in segregating”*. There are opinions that are radically opposed to maintaining totally free units, *“since in fact the quality is not the same”*. However, there is also an important convergence of favourable opinions, highlighting especially their social impact on local communities. *“Making opportunities possible for needy populations”*, *“giving opportunities to populations in areas of socio-economic deprivation”*, *“strengthening the local community”*, are expressions associated with the importance of an *“intense pedagogical policy”*, (...) *“inserted in the community with a socio-political and educational proposal beyond its walls, working with families more closely”*.

Some also mention the financial argument, in the sense of having the opportunity to do more with less, since the costs of keeping scholarship holders in larger institutions are much higher than the costs in a smaller school and it becomes possible to benefit a larger public. Underlying this argument is also the idea that, in order to guarantee the maintenance of the institution’s evaluation indices, a very large investment would be necessary in the students who receive scholarships, which is difficult to achieve economically and financially.

The convergence that prevails among the managers heard is that both options are important. It is recognized that the option of awarding the scholarships at the paid public institution itself is the more complex option. It would be fundamental to maintain it, as long as it is viable, not excluding, however, the option of making scholarships available in institutions with the most vulnerable popular environments. *“Both proposals to offer scholarships are legitimate and contribute to the construction of a country with more social justice, guaranteeing access to quality education that integrally forms the subject”*.

The ideal would be for the paid public institution itself to be able to have an interaction with a deprived community in the neighborhood. Geographical distancing will easily be associated with the weakening of *“social ties, aggravating the process of elitization of the institution”* of paid public.

All these issues are on the agenda of a rich debate that demands further study and that incorporates, in particular, the question of teaching practices in the classroom for groups that are diversified, whether culturally or not. This is a tremendous challenge for institutions that have fraternity at the heart of their mission, that is, inclusion and equity.

---

<sup>12</sup>There are cases where this is a historical institutional practice of the congregation.

## 8.6 Non-conclusive Notes

In response to the guiding question in the introduction, some challenges are identified. It is necessary to indicate that one of the challenges of Catholic education institutions, and all those that are aligned to similar purposes, is to find and prepare teachers who have the effective conditions to achieve the creation of a classroom environment sufficiently adequate to the reigning technological innovations and the challenging demands of dealing with diversity or, at least, of provoking a radical rejection of the elitist and exclusive culture.

With regard to the denominationality of the institutions, it is necessary to underline the challenge of inter-religious dialogue. It is an important theme, cultivated in many institutions. This dialogue is a great school of learning. It is only possible if those who dialogue among themselves know how to sincerely cultivate their own processes of religious identity, cultivating also the recognition of the religious identity processes of others. This call and challenge presents a double facet: (1) to provide effective conditions for a real environment of education for harmonious inter-religious relations and mutual recognition; and (2) to provide effective conditions for a real environment that enables growth in the process of Catholic identity for all who seek this orientation.

Confessionality must also be seen in relation to the lay state. A good way is to take seriously the very expression “Catholic education”: education is the noun and Catholic is the adjective. Education is not a means of proselytizing religion, but it is a public service of preparing professionals and citizens for society. Education is Catholic, not because the Catholic name is used as a trademark printed in tradition, but because this public service is illuminated by Christian principles, values and practices professed by the Catholic Church.

Last but not least, there is the great challenge of compatibility between economic-financial sustainability and effective socio-educational inclusion work. This involves the search for a solid national support organization that provides common synergy in good management and technological innovations, as well as mutual learning from best practices in the classroom, in the technological field and from pedagogical advances in dealing with diversity and with the impacts of a perversely exclusive hegemonic culture.

## References

- Alves M (2006) Perspectives for Catholic education in Brazil. *Diálogo Educacional Magazine* 6:19
- Beozzo JO (1993) The Church in Brazil. In: Beozzo JO (ed) *The Latin American Church on the eve of the Council: history of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council*. São Paulo, Brazil, Paulinas
- CELAM (1968) *Christians and the University (Seminar of Experts and Episcopal Meeting, Buga, 1967)*. Voices, Petrópolis, Brazil
- CELAM (2007) *Aparecida document: concluding text of the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops*. Paulus, São Paulo, Brazil
- Fischmann R (2009) *Acordo contra a Cidadania*. Available at: <http://silncioerudoasatiraemdenisidierot.blogspot.com.br/2009/06/enviadao-por-roseli-fischmann.html>

- Follmann JI (2017) Brazil, Catholic religion and education: challenges and prospects. *International Studies in Catholic Education* 9(1):77–88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19422539.2017.1286912>
- Mafra MC (2002) In the possession of the word: religion, conversion and personal freedom in two national contexts. Social Sciences Press, Lisbon, Portugal
- Mariano R (2005) Neopentecostals: sociology of the new pentecostalism in Brazil, 2nd edn. Loyola Editions, São Paulo, Brazil
- Monteiro P (2006) Religion, pluralism and public sphere in Brazil. *Novos Estudos CEBRAP*, São Paulo, 74:47–65
- Monteiro P (2009) Secularization and public space: the reinvention of religious pluralism in Brazil. 13(1):7–16. *Revista Etnográfica*, São Paulo, Maio de
- Streck DR, Segala AL (2007) A theological-pedagogical turning point in Latin America: a new way of being school in Brazil. In: Grace GR, O'Keefe J (eds) *International handbook of Catholic education—Challenges for school systems in the 21st century*, vol 2. Springer, Dordrecht, The Netherlands

**José Ivo Follmann SJ** Jesuit priest. D. in Sociology from the Catholic University of Louvain - UCL Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium) and a Master's degree in Social Sciences from the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (Brazil). Secretary for Social and Environmental Justice of the Jesuit Province of Brazil, and Professor at the University of Vale do Rio dos Sinos—UNISINOS (Sao Leopoldo, Brazil).

# Chapter 9

## School Religious Education in the Classroom: A Reading from the Catholic and Colombian Context



**Jaime Laurence Bonilla Morales**

**Abstract** Using a qualitative methodology, this chapter reflects on ecclesial and educational practices in Colombia. The critical analysis of the general framework proposed by the Congregation for Catholic Education on the teaching of the religious dimension gives rise to a confrontation between identity and religious transformations in Colombian society. It also reflects on how religious teaching in the classroom dialogues with the plural reality of society.

### 9.1 Introduction

The classroom is the place where the application of pedagogical paradigms and approaches, national education public policies, the curricular projects of each institution, the multiform personal and socio-cultural reality experienced by students, the concern of parents, and the didactic actions of teachers converge. Bearing this in mind, this chapter addresses the question of the specific commitment of the Catholic Church to school-based religious education and the way in which institutional guidelines are applied to a particular contextual reality such as Colombia, through projections and proposals that directly affect the dynamics of the classroom.

For this reason, through qualitative research, which focuses on the investigation and careful critical analysis of selected texts, as well as a reflective exercise on ecclesial and educational practices limited to the Colombian context, the general framework proposed by the Congregation for Catholic Education on the teaching of

---

This text is a partial result of the research project “Religious Education and Education for Peace”, of the Devenir research group, of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences of the University of San Buenaventura, Bogotá (Colombia). The Catholic University of Pereira, the Catholic University of Oriente, the Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios and the Marian University of Pasto are also participating in this project, with the academic support of the International Federation of Catholic Universities (IFCU), and under the direction of the Observatory for Religious Diversity and Cultures in Latin America and the Caribbean (ODREC).

---

J. L. Bonilla Morales (✉)

Faculty of Humanities and Educational Sciences, San Buenaventura University, Bogotá, Colombia  
e-mail: [jbonilla@usbog.edu.co](mailto:jbonilla@usbog.edu.co)

the religious dimension will be made explicit initially, insofar as it is a fundamental reference. And, later, some elements of the specific Colombian context will be made explicit, such as its identity and religious transformations, as well as the proposal of the Colombian Episcopal Conference, which makes possible religious teaching in the classroom, in such a way that the Catholic evangelical message can assume the plural reality without renouncing its own believing identity.

## 9.2 Religious School Education in Catholic Education

The Declaration *Gravissimum Educationis* on Christian Education, as one of the results of the Second Vatican Council, reiterates the millennial commitment of the Catholic Church to the educational processes of all humanity, in relation to the contributions that she can make with the objective of fostering social progress and as a consequence of assuming education as an inalienable universal right. But among the different means of exercising the educational service, the “school” stands out as the privileged place of formation (Vatican Council II, 1995: 415). And while it is true that the Catholic school, like the non-Catholic school, provides a cultural and academic formation, “at the same time as it is open to the conditions of present-day progress, it educates its students to achieve effectively the good of the earthly city, and prepares them to serve the spread of the Kingdom of God, so that by the exercise of an exemplary and apostolic life they may be like the saving leaven of the human community” (Vatican Council II, 1995: 415).

Within the framework of this ecclesial purpose, “religious education in the school” is placed in an even more concrete way, which starts from the firm conviction that the educational work must attend to the formation of the religious dimension of children and young people, as a consequence of the project of a truly integral education (Bonilla Morales 2015), which takes into account all the human dimensions, and of the intention to form a synthesis between faith, culture and life. In this regard, the Congregation for Catholic Education has affirmed that religious education “must be imparted in the school in an explicit and systematic way, to avoid creating in the student an imbalance between profane culture and religious culture. Such a teaching differs fundamentally from any other because it does not aim at a simple intellectual adherence to religious truth, but at the personal connection of the whole being with the person of Christ” (1977).

The insistence that religious formation should be part of the curriculum of every Catholic educational institution within the school setting, and even of any school that consciously promotes integral formation, will be a cause for reflection, debate and questioning. Especially because the first declarations of the Congregation for Catholic Education considered that there should be a very profound relationship between religious teaching and formation in the faith from the point of view of catechesis, in such a way that the educational commitment was not simply academic or cultural but predominantly evangelizing.

But this position has become more nuanced with time, so that a clear differentiation was made, without losing the link, between religious education and catechesis, especially because the latter “presupposes above all the vital acceptance of the Christian message as a saving reality. Moreover, the specific place of catechesis is a community that lives the faith in a larger space and for a longer period than the school, that is, for the whole of its life” (Congregation for Catholic Education 1988). While the religious education offered in the school, besides responding to the stages of human life, “taking into consideration the very elements of the Christian message, seeks to make known what in fact constitutes the identity of Christianity and what Christians consistently strive to achieve in their lives” (Congregation for Catholic Education 1988).

In this way, the ecclesial documents reflect the tension between catechesis and religious school education, marked by complementarity and distinction, which will later be reflected in the classroom due to the option that the teachers have since, on the one hand, it is possible to use the contents and the dynamics proper to catechesis, especially the pre-sacramental one, where traditionally students who have previously embraced the Christian message of salvation, who usually come from a Catholic family or community, and are willing to deepen their life of faith and even to witness as believers, are instructed; and, on the other hand, the same ecclesial documents have proposed school religious education as a process of acquiring knowledge about Christianity which does not necessarily imply its adherence. Nevertheless, for the Congregation of Catholic Education, catechesis and religious education in schools are complementary in the measure that the Catholic school, besides teaching the Christian tradition, when it addresses a population of believers generates a valuable contribution to the life of faith, just as catechesis, besides strengthening communities, also provides relevant knowledge about Christianity.

Difficulties then arise when, within the area of a Catholic educational institution, those responsible for religious education find themselves faced with a panorama that is no longer what it used to be, that is to say, it is no longer homogeneous, the Catholic creed does not predominate, on the contrary, neither students nor parents are willing to accept a catechetical formation in the classroom or to demand adherence to a faith within a particular institution, since there is certainly full freedom in a world that is diverse or plural in matters of religious experience. As a matter of fact, the same Congregation for Catholic Education pronounced itself at the turn of the millennium on the panorama of socio-religious transformation: “the phenomena of multiculturalism, and of a society that is more and more multiracial, multiethnic and multireligious, bring along with them enrichment, but also new problems. In addition to this, in countries of ancient evangelization, a growing marginalization of the Christian faith as a reference and light for a true and convinced understanding of existence” (2000).

This scenario of tension is what Catholic educational institutions are experiencing, since there are more and more students who belong to non-Catholic religious and ecclesial communities, as well as others who declare themselves to be atheists or indifferent to religion, who on some occasions attend “forced” religion classes, deny this formation or resort to laws that give the possibility of not attending these classes,

such as access to non-specific religious formation from the history of religions, or formation on ethics and values, among other options. “There are cases, more and more frequent, in which they are not only indifferent or non-practicing, but lack the slightest religious or moral formation. Additionally, in many students and in families, a feeling of apathy for ethical and religious formation” (Congregation for Catholic Education 2000).

Faced with the plurality of experiences or responses to the religious dimension, in different countries some lay and secularist movements have opted for radically defend the fundamental right to freedom of conscience, rejecting all types of religious education in schools (Delgado 2011; Magendzo 2008), while the Catholic Church has turned to both the fundamental right to religious freedom and the right of parents to educate their children according to their preference, as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations General Assembly 1948), in order to defend religious education. In the same way, in the face of the pretension of some States to decide on Catholic religious education, the Church has defended these same fundamental rights, considering that it alone is responsible for establishing what would be the appropriate content for the teaching of the Catholic religion in the school environment, particularly under the guidance of the Episcopal Conferences. And, in the same way, it respects the religious freedom of those who are not Catholic and who attend Catholic educational institutions, avoiding any kind of coercion (Grocholewski 2009).

### **9.3 The Context in Which We Respond in the Classroom: Towards the Colombian Case**

The guidelines on school religious education that have come out of the Second Vatican Council and the Congregation for Catholic Education are a valuable guide for Catholic educational institutions around the world, as well as for teachers who take on religious education in the school and the challenges of this formation that are presented daily in the classroom. But since the contexts are not the same and it would be very difficult to describe them in their entirety, this study will now be limited to the Colombian context, to school religious education in Colombia, with the clear awareness that it shares several elements with other Latin American countries and also has its own particularities.

For this reason, it should be made explicit that this reflective proposal is limited to education and religion as complex and converging elements. In this way, it is important to remember that the religious experience in Latin America is very different from the European experience or from other regions, specifically insofar as Latin American religiosity has survived the predictions that established the end of religious experience, based on some of the postulates of secularization that range from privatization, to individualization, indifference and atheism.

Pluralization is found, but the privatization of the religious does not seem to work in the Latin American context; neither does individualization, and we can say that the religious transformation in Latin America questions the idea of the end of religion in modernity. It lets us understand that the paradigm of secularization, which European and American sociologists thought was universal, is in fact very regional, and that what is happening to the peripheries of the West is a completely unprecedented process which questions the paradigm and which therefore deserves to be examined very closely in order to rethink the development of religion in late modernity. (Bastián 2015: 323–324)

In Latin America and Colombia the religious transformation is particular, since there are considerable religious manifestations in public spaces, which are not limited to the private sphere, which contradict the logic of privatization of the religious. Likewise, there are processes of consolidation of large faith communities, in contrast to the individualization of other regions of the world. Similarly, here atheism or religious indifference do not predominate, which is standardized in Europe, although this thought and way of life is certainly on the rise. What can be identified is the minor presence of indigenous cultures and communities of African descent that have been discriminated against and excluded for centuries, as well as the presence of other religions that are gaining presence, although Christianity continues to be the predominant religion (Marzal 2002). But this majority of Christians does not represent a uniform block, nor does the Catholic Church exercise the same influence as it did in the previous two centuries (19th and 20th), since the religious panorama responds to a growing mutation that has generated many difficulties in understanding its complexity and carrying out an exercise in classification.

In this sense, Bastián considers that one way of explaining this phenomenon is from the globalization of religion in Latin America where “the religious is developing more and more, through configurations in networks, from needs and demands, on the part of groups or individuals in search of identity, cultural and social promotion, personal restructuring or alternative methods of health and well-being” (2015: 325), since finally these movements of the religious field respond to the logic of the diversification of the religious market (Berger 1971: 177). Moreover, for some sociologists it responds to the relationship between organizations that produce symbolic goods of salvation and those who consume them (Bourdieu 2000; Mallimaci 2001).

These would be the shaping elements of a religious expression that is dynamic, that is constantly transforming and giving rise to a truly pluralistic Christianity in Latin America. Consequently, in addition to the schism of the East and the schism of the West, with the divisions that they generated in world Christianity in the eleventh and sixteenth centuries, there has now been a new exponential division between different forms of Protestantism and especially Pentecostalism, with the reconfiguration of Christian churches that hardly even themselves find room among the traditional standards.

However, it is necessary to mention that in Colombia Catholicism assumed a fundamental role in the process of articulating the nation, so much so that in the middle of the twentieth century 99% of the population considered itself Catholic, until in the 1960s a transformation took place due to the evangelical conferences that arrived in the country considering it a land of mission, to the idea of freedom of



conscience and worship present even in the Second Vatican Council, to the external socio-political landscape (World War II, Cold War, communism, liberation theology, industrialization and urbanization), internal rural-urban migration due to violence, especially in the period from 1948 to 1953, urban transformation, the relationship between the Catholic Church and the National Front that divided power between liberals and conservatives, as well as the violent persecution of Protestants (Bidegaín 2005). It should even be mentioned that the changes in the religious panorama in recent decades are also due to bad examples and problems caused by the lack of effective pastoral projects.

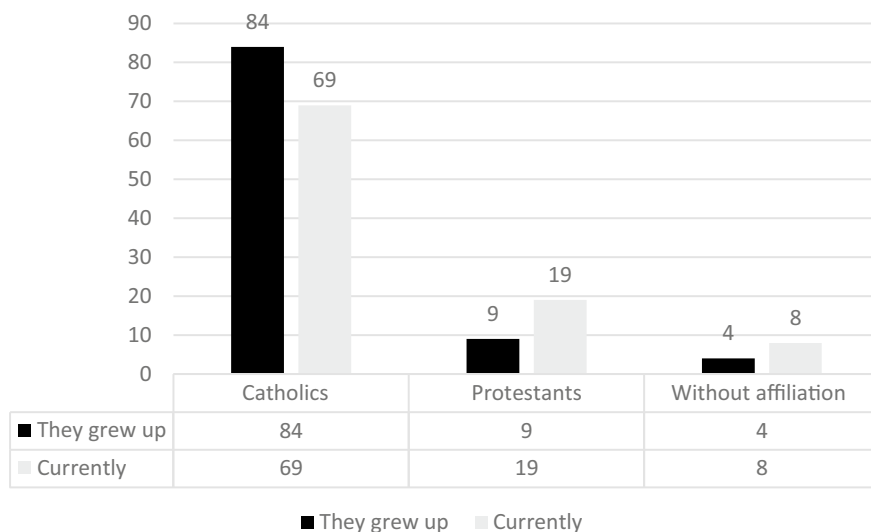
In this scenario, the Protestant community numbered between nine thousand members in 1930. By the 1990s it was approximately four million, in exponential growth according to the current mutation of the Pentecostal churches and movements. Likewise, there has been a process of recognition and recovery of some Amerindian communities. Something similar occurs with the rituals that come from communities of African descent, while Eastern rites are gaining followers from different social classes and even Jewish and Muslim communities are gradually growing. In addition to this gradual religious development, there was a progressive de-institutionalization of religion, until the official rupture of the State with the Catholic Church through the Political Constitution of 1991 and the space gained by political movements of Christian inspiration that facilitated the free and constant creation of churches (Bidegaín 2005).

Some elements of this mutation can be seen in the percentage presented by research that has been able to determine the number of believers who were born or raised within the Catholic, Protestant or unaffiliated sphere, but who subsequently changed their way of thinking and living the religion. Thus, in Graph 1 it can be seen that there is a decrease in the percentage of Catholics (adults who grew up in this faith), since many of them abandon their affiliation to this Church, while the percentage of Protestants and people without affiliation is increasing (Fig. 9.1).

Similarly, it is striking for the Colombian context that the research *Religion in Latin America: Widespread Change in a Historically Catholic Region*, carried out by the Pew Research Center, presents the result that this country has the highest percentage of Protestants coming from the Catholic tradition (Fig. 9.2).

#### **9.4 Religious Education in the Classroom: Perspective from Colombia**

This undeniable reality of pluralism and religious mutation in Colombia, beyond the concepts, classifications and reflections that can be made, is transferred in a parallel way to the experience within the classroom, where the Catholic school perseveres with its mission to educate in the religious dimension. This implies a great challenge insofar as the religious education teacher cannot carry out a homogeneous process, nor can he or she take it for granted that everyone is Catholic, but must have a high



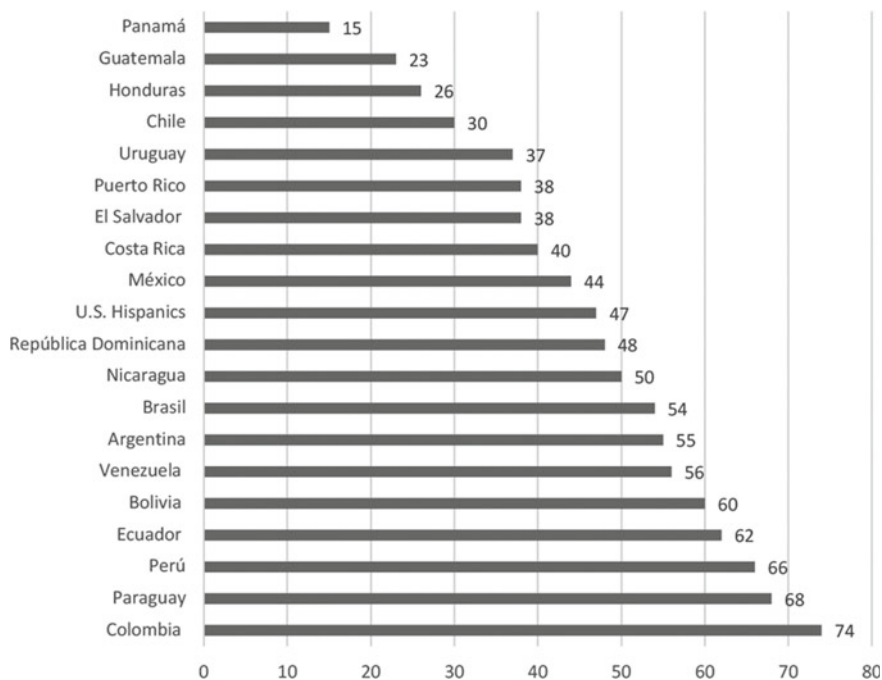
**Fig. 9.1** The change in religious identity in Latin America (*Source* Pew Research Center [2014]. This same study aims to project what religious behavior will be like around the world in the next four decades. For the particular case, they consider that the Christian majority that Colombia had in 2010, with 92.5%, in 2060 will not have greater variation, going to 91.8%, which includes the group of Catholics, along with other types of Christianity [Pew Research Center 2015])

probability of having a heterogeneous group in their religious experience, since the classroom clearly reflects the religious experience of society.

Therefore, in the context of the plurality of religious experiences, there is the “demand for a religious education that responds to the confessional diversity of the students; at the same time, there is a growing concern to give a religious formation that allows for the understanding of diversity and the affirmation of tolerance” (Bidegáin 2005: 21). The acceptance of this contextual challenge and the way it is put into practice in the classroom are the elements that differ according to the religious, theological and pedagogical presuppositions, as well as by official provisions or textbooks that mark out guidelines of formation with diverse nuances.

From this perspective, it is worth highlighting the work of the Congregation for Catholic Education, which has insisted on several occasions on the need to be more and more aware of the plurality of cultures and to identify the tension generated by religions, not to simply accuse religions of being the cause of the various territorial forms of violence, insofar as the causes are diverse and generally go beyond the single individual or institutional religious experience, but to prevent the religion or experience of faith within a culture from being manipulated since, through widespread intercultural education, the relations between different religions and cultures can provide greater social stability and personal maturity (2013).

Likewise, an intercultural dialogue implies the recognition that living out of faith cannot be limited to the private sphere, but is open to the integrity of life, both in



**Fig. 9.2** Protestants who grew up in Catholic circles (**Fuente:** Pew Research Center 2014)

the private and public spheres. Only in this way the true encounter with difference is possible, whether it is with atheists or with people who live other religious forms or belong to other Christian communities that can carry out different forms of dialogue: “there is a dialogue of life, sharing joys and sorrows; there is a dialogue of works, collaborating in the promotion of the development of men and women; there is a theological dialogue, when possible, with the study of the respective religious heritage; there is a dialogue of religious experience” (Congregation for Catholic Education 2013). All these forms of dialogue, fortunately, can also be transferred to the formative experience within the classroom, promoting the dialogue of differences.

In this way, Catholic educational centers have the possibility of making a reality of the project of achieving a synthesis between faith, culture and life, without dogmatic or closed attitudes that would deny the evident religious plurality present in public and private, denominational and non-denominational schools, since the reality that children and young people will face is equally plural. And the best training they can receive in the religious sphere is that which prepares them, from school and the classroom, to strengthen their identity, while at the same time recognising the difference they will find in their families, in their neighbourhood, in their city.

Therefore, the challenge for religious school education in the classroom consists in responding to this type of pluralistic education, in proposing a Catholic religious education that presents with clarity and relevance one’s own tradition, but respecting

the legal context of freedom of conscience and religious freedom, while at the same time educating in intercultural, interreligious and interecclesial (ecumenical) dialogue, since in this way religious education will coherently provide preparation for life, for living with those who are different.

The manner in which this is done may vary, but in consequence of what has been stated here, any area plan or curriculum on school religious education cannot be set aside for the specific educational context experienced by each student present in the classroom. Moreover, the pattern will be marked precisely by the experience of the group of students, by the different ways in which the students live their religious experience and create a relationship.

In the context of this country, the Episcopal Conference of Colombia has proposed the “Standards for School Religious Education”, assuming in a consistent manner its ecclesial task. It is a guide or a booklet that in its last edition includes precisely the document *Educating for intercultural dialogue in the Catholic school of the Congregation for Catholic Education*. In addition to reminding religion teachers of the legal framework in force in the country in religious and educational matters, it presents a curricular proposal structured around an axis for each grade (from pre-school to eleventh grade), four approaches developed in each grade according to a systematic vision (anthropological, biblical, biblical-christological and ecclesiological), questions on problems, themes or content associated with these questions, as well as measurable learning standards (learning to know, learning to do and learning to live in community) (2017).

In particular, it can be highlighted in this document of the Colombian Bishops’ Conference that “just as the first approach allows the perspective of non-Christian religions to be presented, the fourth approach opens up the space to present the ecumenical perspective, that is, the convictions of the churches, which recognize each other as Christians” (2017: 20). Similarly, in the problematic questions, themes and approaches there are also some explicit references to this same intention to form in knowledge and dialogue with difference.

Likewise, as a specific tool for the classroom in the area of school religious education, these Standards propose as a methodology for each class to carry out an “investigative” process, assuming research as “a method that is connatural to school education and to the challenges and demands that are made on education today, among which is teaching children, adolescents and young people to learn and teaching them to use what they have learned in the construction of their identity and in their daily lives” (Bishops’ Conference of Colombia 2017: 25).

In order to carry out this research dynamic, it is proposed to begin with an invitation addressed to the students, so that they can analyze a problematic situation that may come from Sacred Scripture, the life of the Church, the social-religious context, personal life and even an event related to other areas or disciplines. The analysis of the situation leads the students, in the classroom, to formulate the problem and to pose questions that specify the research route, delimiting the problem they are going to work on. And since religious education does not consist of a process of indoctrination, among all the students they pose hypotheses that attempt to solve the problem question, through a process of critical dialogue, debate and consensus.

The hypotheses are then grounded through a consultation of documents from the Magisterium of the Catholic Church, from other fields and even through testimonies. And, later, one of the hypotheses is accepted as the most pertinent and is formulated in a conclusive manner, although the formulation of this response can be presented through other didactic means (Bishops' Conference of Colombia 2017: 26–29).

## 9.5 Conclusions

Certainly, the Catholic Church reaffirms its mission to facilitate and promote educational institutions through which it renders a valuable service to society and, at the same time, carries out processes of evangelization, but with the clear conviction that the space for catechesis is not the same as that of the school, since in school spaces no type of proselytism or religious coercion should be carried out. But since an integral anthropological vision of education considers the formation of the religious dimension to be fundamental, the Catholic Church sees the need to carry out a process of religious education from the classroom, since it is a fundamental area that requires formation through a face-to-face subject.

In this sense, the main purpose of the Catholic educational project is to fulfill its ecclesial mission and thus be a ferment in society, transforming school communities towards processes of humanization that begin in the classroom and then expand to all the scenarios where it can be present. However, in the face of religious diversity that is being transformed in an exponential manner, as can be seen from the example of the Colombian context, this task requires a much broader dialogical view, which motivates students to strengthen their own religious experience, as well as the capacity to enter into a constructive dialogue with those who believe differently.

Of course, the recognition of religious diversity in Catholic schools and from the classroom does not mean giving up one's own experience. Thus, if a parent is interested in educating his or her children in the Catholic faith, he or she will certainly seek to ensure that religious education is preferably in line with his or her religious ideal. But this necessary formation offered in schools or colleges must seek a healthy balance in presenting Christianity in depth, with all its particularities, while at the same time making known other non-Catholic Christian realities, other religions and religious movements proper to their context, so that both prejudices, which are almost always unfounded, and fears of those who think, believe and celebrate differently are dissipated.

Finally, the proposal of the Colombian Episcopal Conference, through the "Standards for School Religious Education", is a valuable attempt to facilitate religious formation in the classroom and the constant renewal of this work material, which is welcomed in most of the Colombian territory. It allows us to recognize our shortcomings, to strengthen our most valuable elements and to make progress in this ecclesial challenge, accepting the purpose of making coexistence possible in the midst of diversity, promoting dialogue as a permanent way of recognizing others and differences without losing our own identity as Christians and Catholics.

## References

- Bastián JP (2015) Latin American pentecostalism: market logics and religious transnationalization. In: Bidegáin AM and Demera Vargas JD (comp.) *Globalización y diversidad religiosa*. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia
- Berger P (1971) *The sacred canopy: elements for a sociology of religion*. Amorrortu, Buenos Aires
- Bishops' Conference of Colombia (2017) *Standards for School Religious Education (ERE) of the Episcopal Conference of Colombia*. Bogotá: Episcopal Conference of Colombia
- Bonilla Morales JL (2015) *Educación religiosa escolar en perspectiva de complejidad*. Editorial Bonaventuriana, Bogotá
- Bourdieu P (2000) *Sociological issues*. Istmo, Madrid
- Congregation for Catholic Education (1977) *The Catholic School*. Available at: [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccatheduc\\_doc\\_19770319\\_catholic-school\\_sp.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19770319_catholic-school_sp.html)
- Congregation for Catholic Education (1988) *Religious Dimension of Education in the Catholic School*. Available at: [http://www.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccatheduc\\_doc\\_19880407\\_catholic-school\\_en.html](http://www.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19880407_catholic-school_en.html)
- Congregation for Catholic Education (2000) *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*. Available at: [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccatheduc\\_doc\\_27041998\\_school2000\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_27041998_school2000_en.html)
- Congregation for Catholic Education (2013) *Educating for intercultural dialogue in the Catholic school. Living together for a civilization of love*. Available at: [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccatheduc\\_doc\\_20131028\\_dialogo-interculturale\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20131028_dialogo-interculturale_en.html)
- Delgado F (2011) *Lay education for coexistence*. In AA.VV., *Learning without dogmas*. Santander: Milrazones
- Gravissimum Educationis Declaration, 1965 (1995) In *Vatican Council II, Complete Documents*. Bogotá: St. Paul
- Grochowski, Z. Card. Circular Letter N. 520/2009 to the Most Eminent and Excellent Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences on the teaching of religion in schools. Available at: [http://www.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccatheduc\\_doc\\_20090505\\_circ-insegn-relig\\_en.html](http://www.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20090505_circ-insegn-relig_en.html)
- Magendzo A (ed) (2008) *Towards a pluralistic religious education. Estudio Diagnóstico de la Educación Religiosa en Chile y Colombia*. ICER and Universidad Academia de Humanismo Cristiano, Bogotá and Santiago de Chile
- Mallimaci F (2001) *Beliefs and religions in greater Buenos Aires*. Universidad Nacional de Quilmas, Buenos Aires
- Marzal M (2002) *Enchanted land. Tratado de antropología religiosa en América Latina*. Trotta, Madrid
- Pew Research Center (2014) *Religion in Latin America: Widespread change in a Historically Catholic Region*. Disponible en: <http://www.pewforum.org/2014/11/13/religion-in-latin-america/>
- Pew Research Center (2015) *The future of world religions: population growth projections, 2010–2050*. Disponible en: [https://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2015/03/PF\\_15.04.02\\_ProjectionsFullReport.pdf](https://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2015/03/PF_15.04.02_ProjectionsFullReport.pdf)
- United Nations General Assembly (1948) *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Available at: <http://www.un.org/es/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

**Jaime Laurence Bonilla Morales** Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Educational Sciences of the University of San Buenaventura in Bogotá (Colombia). Doctor in Arts and Humanities:

Theology from the University of Murcia. His areas of research are theology, philosophy and educational sciences.

**Part V**  
**A Look at the Person**



# Chapter 10

## Person and Communion in a Catholic University



Aldo Giacchetti

**Abstract** The chapter reflects on the communal reality of university life, as well as on some of its pedagogical implications. The author proposes an accentuation, not only theoretical but also vital, of the circularity between person and communion, in order to face a post-modern context that is predominantly functional and not very capable of perceiving that which unites people, and to create a generative dynamism that allows for the overcoming of intellectualism and the awakening of a new fruitfulness of life and thought in Catholic universities.

### 10.1 Introduction

What is it that makes the growth of life and thought in a university possible? Not the growth of vitality on the one hand and of thought on the other, but that which makes possible the fruitfulness of both, in relation to each other. One aspect of the answer to this complex question may be the following: participation in a *communio*. This chapter will try to contribute, in a synthetic way, to that direction. The argument that is proposed seeks to deepen the person-communion nexus that emerges from the reflection on the Mystery of the One and Triune God. In fact, God has revealed himself to us as a Mystery of Communion of Persons, in which each Person can only be conceived in relation to the others, without losing his uniqueness (Zizioulas, 2009), and he has participated in that communion. Therefore, the educational process in a university does not only imply a communicative reciprocity, where the professor gives and the student receives, and vice versa, but rather that which is common to both grows,<sup>1</sup> that is, the communion of which God himself makes us a part.

In a similar line, an important document of the Argentinean Episcopal Conference, said some time ago that “the task of education, as a commitment to help man achieve

---

<sup>1</sup>According to St. Thomas Aquinas, people can communicate with each other because there is already a common reality among them, and that which is most common is God himself (Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Super 2Ts*, I, 32 quoted in Serretti, 2017, p. 194).

---

A. Giacchetti (✉)  
San Pablo Catholic University, Arequipa, Perú

his fullness, must begin with an adequate conception of the human being as a person in a community of persons” (Argentinean Episcopal Conference, 1985: 10). And, specifically in the university environment, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* said that “the Catholic University pursues its own objectives also through the effort to form an authentically human community, animated by the spirit of Christ” (John Paul II, 1990: 21).

In fact, before being an objective to build the community, it is a reality given initially, since every person is part of the human family (Benedict XVI, 2009), to which is added, in the case of the baptized, the participation of the community that is the Church. By virtue of this double participation, the person is inserted in a community dynamism even before it is proposed. This community dynamism has deep causes, ontological and anthropological, which are manifested in the nexus that exists between the person and the community (and, as we will see later, more constitutively, between the person and the communion).

The above-mentioned part of the *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* expresses this link with a circularity: “(The University Community) helps all its members to reach their fullness as human persons. Each member of the Community, in turn, helps to promote unity and contributes, according to his or her own responsibility and capacity, to the decisions that concern the Community itself, as well as to maintaining and strengthening the Catholic character of the institution” (John Paul II, 1990: 21). That is to say, on the one hand, the community helps the person and, on the other, the person helps the community. This approach would exclude from its roots both individualism and communitarianism.

The following sections will try to show briefly the communal reality mentioned, as well as some of its pedagogical implications. Starting from the developments of relational sociology, we will then try to offer some philosophical and theological elements that will shed light on the question, to come back at the end to other sociological aspects from the Latin American situation.

## 10.2 The Sociological Matrix of Society

A relational perspective, like the one just mentioned, has been proposed in the sociological field by Pierpaolo Donati. For the Italian sociologist, every society, in every historical period, asks itself the question “where is God”, and the way of responding to it constitutes its theological matrix. His thesis is that the theological matrix of post-modern society is that “God is in the relationship because he is relationship” (Donati, 2010: 58). A phenomenon that would make it clear is that, on the one hand, today’s culture places increasing emphasis on personal and social relationships and, on the other hand, theology is rediscovering the importance of the category of relationship (Donati, 2010: 21).

There is a set of metaphysical assumptions in his proposal that are condensed in the expression “in the beginning there is a relationship” (Donati, 1991: 25). As proposed by Giulio Máspero (2012), this fundamental statement contains three metaphysical elements that can be explained as follows:

- a) The relational perspective presents two elements that are relationships, which are united by a third element that is, in turn, relationship. This union is carried out without confusing the first two which remain distinct, and without denying or eliminating them, but rather leading them to unity. The consequence is total reciprocity.<sup>2</sup>
- b) A relational vision of the nexus between transcendence and immanence, where the former is not understood as a being *beyond* the world, detached from it, but as a *descent among*, as a becoming present in the world.
- c) A relational conception of identity by which the subject is himself in the relationship with those who are different from him.

These three metaphysical elements make it possible to understand that, when authentically human relationships exist among people, a communion that was already present emerges among them and becomes greater by virtue of that encounter. This is what Donati calls “reciprocally generative relationship” (Donati, 2010: 20). It is about a “plus” of reality that unites people even more. The union is generated by a transcendent reality that becomes present among people. And, consequently, the identity of the person is clarified in that relationship with others, in particular, in the Presence of God.

According to Donati it is the relational perspective expressed in these metaphysical elements, which allows to overcome the crisis that manifests the post-modern society<sup>3</sup> (Donati, 2010: 20), which exalts the difference, but is not able to find some reality among them, that is to say, “there is nothing that connects them and puts them in relation” (Máspero, 2012: 122). Consequently, the way out of the crisis goes through rediscovering the ontological density of relationships, which is precisely because in them God is present: “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt 18: 15).

In the contemporary educational field, the constructivist paradigm is still in force. For this, at least in the most radical positions,<sup>4</sup> “the undisputed protagonists are the internal processes to the subject” (Terenzi, 2016: 320), that is, the nexus between the subject and his mental representations, as well as the structures that make possible his construction of the “world”. From the relational paradigm this approach is reductive because these internal processes must be understood within the widest and most comprehensive framework of the relationship between the student and reality, in particular, between the person who studies and other people who communicate a certain content (and not only a process). In addition to the aforementioned reduction, the sharpening of the fragmentation of reality and knowledge is added, because for

---

<sup>2</sup>The example proposed by Donati is that of the family, which is neither an idea nor a cultural pattern but a relationship between people who generate each other as relatives.

<sup>3</sup>For the Italian sociologist, the difficulty in thinking about the relationship today derives from the individualistic conception of the Lutheran revolt (Cfr. Donati, 2010: 50–51).

<sup>4</sup>There is a less radical constructivism such as that presented by Gordon Wells in his work “Dialogical Inquiry”, supported by some aspects of the thought of Lev Vigotsky and Michael Halliday, in which he highlights the importance of dialogue in a collaborative community between teachers and students in the construction of knowledge. However, this dialogical character does not reach the ontological level of communion proposed in this article (Cfr. Gordon Wells, 2001).

the constructivist perspective, according to Terenzi, “nothing has meaning, nothing has a history, nothing has relations, everything is in itself” and, consequently, “once reality is reduced to a series of fragments it will be impossible to place them together again” (Terenzi, 2016: 320).

### 10.3 The Link Between Person and Communion

In summary, this link could be expressed in a circular fashion as follows: “The community is for the person. The person is for the *communio* (which is embodied in a community)”. This is a mutual reference because they are organized reciprocally towards each other.<sup>5</sup>

The phrase implies, above all, that the definition of the person is *communional*, since the person is for the *communio* insofar as he or she comes from it (God, communion of persons) and is defined from it. In fact, Massimo Serretti defines the human person in the following way: “It is the communion that God himself, as a communion of Persons, establishes with his peculiar creature, making it a participant in that which He himself is (*imago et similitudo trinitatis*)” (Serretti, 2008: 53), a communion that constitutes him as a person, by making him a participant in his being and in his communion of people and giving him, in it, a consistency of his own (*naturae rationalis subsistentia*). In this way, the human being is not defined from himself but from the one who gives him the beginning as a person. The origin of this reality is found in the Trinity of whom the human being is an image and by whom the communion dynamics are constitutive. As Joseph Ratzinger (2005) pointed out: “The real God is, by his essence, a total ‘Being-for’ (the Father), ‘Being-from’ (the Son) and ‘Being-with-’ (the Holy Spirit). Now, man is precisely the image and likeness of God because the ‘from’, ‘with’ and ‘for’ constitute the fundamental anthropological figure”.

The distinction between *communio* and community is also involved. The latter is more or less evident to the former, but they are not identical. Insertion into the mystery of divine communion, which through baptism is realized in all believers, is the reality that precedes any form of community life. The Church is a sign and instrument of that communion, as *Lumen Gentium in Vatican Council II* (1964) points out: “The Church is in Christ like a sacrament, that is, a sign and instrument of intimate union with God and of the unity of the whole human race”. Consequently, she is not only an institutional reality but a mystery of communion rooted, through Christ, with Christ and in Christ, in the Trinitarian communion. Every concrete Catholic community -as is the case of a Catholic university-, as part of the Church, can manifest to a greater or lesser extent the mystery of communion that the Church signifies and realizes. The community is therefore a real, albeit limited, expression of *communio*, by virtue of its sacramental nature.

---

<sup>5</sup>A broad development of this reciprocity in Joseph Ratzinger’s thinking can be found in (Claudio Bertero, 2014: 515–574).

Let us consider the interrelationship between the two realities (person and *communio*) and its consequences for education.

Given the communal nature of the human person, being more of a person implies in concrete terms learning to transcend oneself, and the community - in this case, the university community - is one of the spheres of experience in which one can grow in the transcendence of oneself and open oneself to one's own truth, according to the fundamental anthropological principle taught by the Council: "This similarity shows that man, the only earthly creature that God has loved for himself, cannot find his own fullness except in the sincere gift of himself to others" (*Gaudium et Spes in Vatican Council II*, 24). This transcendence towards other people and towards the community as a whole (orientation of the person towards the community) has its counterpart in that the community favours the growth of the person when it recognises and values his or her own unique characteristics and, in a deeper sense, his or her personal mission (orientation of the community towards the person). Moreover, it can be said that the "proof" of the authenticity of the *communio* is its ability to foster the configuration of defined personalities that unequivocally express its uniqueness as a person, its own face.

The authenticity of the *communio* presupposes the recognition that the person, because of the dignity he possesses-whose deepest root is divine-is unavailable as such, and therefore cannot be instrumentalized or exploited for any cause (*Dignitatis Humanae in Vatican Council II*, 2) and, at the same time, the awareness that each person has a unique calling and task to perform (Balthasar, 1993).

What has been said corresponds to every community as a community of people. Certainly, any application to the university environment supposes considering its specificity as it is presented, for example, in *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* and the forms in which, throughout history, it has developed as an institution, but its community character and its relational dimension cannot be denied. In fact, Cardinal Newman in his work *Rise and Progress of Universities* (1856) said that "in its essence, a university seems to be a place for communication and the dissemination of thought through personal relationships". The communitarian dimension is inherent in the *universitas magistrorum et scholarium* (corporation of teachers and students), although it should be noted that, as both Paul Ricoeur and Julian Marias emphasize, not all relationships in an institution are strictly personal in nature, even if, because of its ontological character, communion remains the basis and horizon. For Ricoeur (1991: 65–86), links at the institutional level must be characterized by relationships of justice, rather than by those of friendship. For Marias, living together can be considered at different levels, the social, the psychic and the personal, and this last one is constituted when we consider in our neighbour "what is unique about them" (Marias, 1993: 57). However, a perspective that not only distinguishes the levels and types of relationship, but that integrates them is necessary. As Paolo Carlotti correctly indicates (2012), both in the friendship relations that can be considered primary, and in the institutional ones that can be seen as secondary, the same relationality is present, the one that is established between people, although it is about relations effectively diverse, the first ones are more immediate and direct, the second ones are given through certain structures that open possibilities, but at the same time generate conditionings. The classic

category of common good, making its relational dimension transparent, can help in the integration because it is an “eminently relational good that expresses a mutual relation of people that corresponds to their dignity” (Carlotti, 2012: 300), whether it is about someone who is known and esteemed by the personal treatment as of who is known only through an institutional structure.

Taking a step further, and returning to the initial question: what makes the growth of life and thought possible in a university? from the communal perspective one could answer: “the relationship of generation”. In other words, a relationship between teachers and students is fruitful, intellectually, when it is generative. The category “generation” is relevant because it refers back to the very precise and adequate use that the Cappadocian Fathers<sup>6</sup> made, for example, to express the relationship of the Person of the Father to the Person of the Son in Trinitarian theology. For Massimo Serretti, it is a matter of the relationship in which communion is particularly evident and it is the “mother” of relationships, because it is at the basis of all of them and because, in a certain sense, it is within them. Consequently, it can be said that: (1) each authentic human relation bears within itself the generation, (2) the human relation is more generative in the extent that the donation of the person is greater, and (3) the relation of generation is the model of all other relations (Serretti, 1999: 123).

## 10.4 The Relational Identity of the Person

The above-mentioned circularity is also carried out in relation to identity. The greater the communion, the greater the identity, and the greater the identity, the greater the communion.

Identity is however somewhat problematic today.<sup>7</sup> Paul Ricoeur distinguished two important meanings of identity, as understood as equivalent to the Latin terms *idem* (the same) or *ipse* (oneself). According to the French philosopher, character is an example of the first, and promise, of the second. The first is something given and received, the second is freely chosen. Identity will always involve this double dimension of something received and something chosen. Although neither of the two senses implies an immobility, as it could happen in a certain interpretation of the aristotelian substance, Ricoeur sees, as a common element of both, the permanence in the middle of changes and of time (Ricoeur, 1996: 109ss).

On his part, Heinrich Rombart, from the perspective of so-called “structural anthropology” seeks to dissolve all kinds of permanence by proposing that “in very different spheres of life we adopt different identities and since we do not always manage to create a unity out of these different identities” (Rombart, 2004: 239) she

---

<sup>6</sup>Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa.

<sup>7</sup>The consideration made here is of a philosophical nature and not of a sociological one, although at this level too it has become very problematic, due to the mobility and interaction between cultures, in the midst of which it is not always so simple to identify even with a nationality, as for example the Polish sociologist has shown (Cfr. Bauman, 2005).

“demands that man constructs again his identity in different periods with a new principle and in a creative way and without anticipating, but she demands that man begins again with everything he does” (Rombart, 2004: 242). Experience shows that what Rombart says is not possible in absolute terms. It seems more reasonable to think the identity maintaining the polarity between the given and the chosen, without one cancelling the other.

But the polarity between the given and the chosen presupposes the person and the communion of persons. From this perspective, identity only becomes clear in the relationship, in particular, in the Presence of God. It is defined by the answer to the question: who am I for God? (Bertero, 2014: 537), since his deepest identity is given to him by God. It is, above all, a matter of a filial identity: “in the being-sons the authentic reality of the being-men is realized to such an extent that we must consider lost the one who has made the fundamental features of his childhood disappear”, says Joseph Ratzinger (1978: 54). In short, for the German theologian, later Benedict XVI, the identity of the person is clarified in the recognition of the condition of son of the Father in the Son by the Holy Spirit. The person has, consequently, a filial-identity.

## 10.5 From Functionalization to Recognition of the Person as a Person

In Latin America, it has been Professor Pedro Morandé who has deepened, from the perspective of the person and communion, in various fields. As a member at the time, of both the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences and the Pontifical Council for Culture, Morandé gave a faithful and creative reception to<sup>8</sup> the Pontifical Magisterium, in particular to the anthropological-cultural perspective of John Paul II.<sup>9</sup> The Chilean sociologist believes that both the person and the communion of people are foundational realities, that is, they are at the base of the diverse manifestations of culture.

Thus, for example, even though certain economic, political and educational functions have been transferred from the sphere of the family *communio* to that of the functional organization of society, this has not altered founding realities such as parenthood and filiation, and the male–female communion in which they emerge. The personal and communal principle evident in the fact that one child cannot be replaced by another is opposed to that of the functional organization in force today: “the principle by which a person comes into the world is exactly the opposite of the principle of the functional organization of human relations”, in such a way that “the only possible way to value the existence of someone who is irreplaceable is by the value of his or her sole presence, of his or her condition as a person, knowing that he

---

<sup>8</sup>The French philosopher Gabriel Marcel developed an interesting reflection on the binomial fidelity-creativity (Cf. Gabriel Marcel, 1939: 90–115).

<sup>9</sup>The Pontifical Catholic University of Chile has published a volume on this subject (Pedro Morandé, 2017b).

or she cannot be defined as a means to something else but only as an end in himself or herself” (Morandé, 2017a: 247). The identity of the person is not detached from this relational fact, since the sense of belonging that being a “child of” generates is prior to any consideration of a functional nature.

About Pedro Morandé, Josefina Araos says that “one of her constant concerns was to teach that our first experience of the world always has the form of the gift. An experience that implies that the person understands himself, first of all, as a participant and as an heir of a family, of a tradition, of a culture” (Araos, 2017: 40). In effect, for Morandé the first thing is the gift that is received and welcomed, through which, in his opinion, the concept of society is preceded by that of community because “while the second describes a relationship of belonging that is not chosen, but is given to the person and includes him in the totality of his existence, the first describes a form of free and functional association with previously delimited responsibilities” (Morandé, 2017a: 238).

From this follows his understanding of the true origin of postmodernity, which is not, in his opinion, within certain philosophical perspectives: “This is, in my opinion, the founding fact, the true origin of so-called ‘postmodernity’ (...). It is the demonstration of technology in its capacity to determine the nature of the objects and processes that make use of it (...) (the demonstration) as a determining functional criterion of the organization of society itself, whatever its field of operation” (Morandé, 2017a: 241–242). The consequence of this, according to him, is that it becomes indifferent to choose between one thing or another, and everything tends to become substitutable.

The risk of the predominance of the functional perspective over the personal and communal one is also observed with respect to the reality of the university. For Morandé, the university is defined from the service to the truth and not from the functions of an educational and cultural industry, even when these have a place. Morandé’s constant call to revalue the sapiential dimension and to integrate into it functionality has its reason for being in the reality that we have not constructed and organized, but that we have received as a gift, that is, in the “vocation to communion in truth and in charity with which the Creator has called us to existence, a communion that is itself a principle of wisdom that illuminates the meaning of all human reality” (Morandé, 2017a: 188).

The harmonization of the two perspectives (the functional and the personal-communal) implies, in his opinion, the deepening of the dialogue between reason and faith, as well as the effort of integration of knowledge highlighted by *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. Even considering the evolution of the historical and cultural context in relation to these two matters, the Chilean sociologist thinks that it is the individual as such who can integrate knowledge by distinguishing the levels of reality, but understanding it in its totality from the founding reality which is God (Benedict XVI, 2009), with which he returns the primacy to the person, in his dialogue with others, over the possible procedures to be employed. Its perspective is, as has been mentioned, that of a recovery of the sapiential reason “that values above all the very experience of the community of teachers and disciples that is based on the dignity of each one”, for which, “no functional relationship is capable of developing the



fruitfulness and creativity of this experience” (Morandé, 2012: 17). The generative, fruitful and creative relationship, therefore, presupposes an authentic *communio* of teachers and students, which cannot be replaced by any procedure.

## 10.6 Conclusions

An accentuation, not only theoretical but vital of the circularity between person and communion, seems to be necessary to face a post-modern context that is predominantly functional and not very capable of perceiving that which unites people, and also to create a generative dynamism that allows for the overcoming of intellectualism and the awakening of a new fruitfulness of life and thought in Catholic universities.

Such a generative dynamism is possible to the extent that there is a personal gift in the personal communication that involves the teacher-student relationship, which makes the communion in which we are already inserted grow, which implies that university education is given not only by the communication from one person to another but also by the irradiation of the communion of persons.

This seems to be part of the perspective promoted by Pope Francis in the *Veritatis Gaudium*, who, contextualizing the reflection on the mission of the Universities and Ecclesiastical Faculties, made Pope Benedict XVI’s words his own, inviting us to live “in terms of relationship, communion and participation” (Benedict XVI, 2009: 42), since “God wishes to associate humanity with that ineffable mystery of communion which is the Holy Trinity, of which the Church is, in Jesus Christ, sign and instrument” (Francis, 2017: 2).

## References

- Araos J (2017) Preliminary study. In: Morandé P (ed) *Culture and modernization in Latin America*. Santiago de Chile: Instituto de Estudios de la Sociedad
- Argentinean Episcopal Conference (1985) *Education and life project*. Consudec, Buenos Aires
- Balthasar HU (1993) *Theodramatic 3. The people of the drama: man in Christ*. Encuentro, Madrid
- Bauman Z (2005) *Identity*. Losada, Madrid
- Benedict XVI (2009) *Caritas in Veritate*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Rome
- Bertero C (2014) *Person and communion, the perspective of Joseph Ratzinger*. Lateran University Press, Rome
- Carlotti P (2012) *La trasparenza relazionale della categoria del bene comune, en Relazione?, una categoria che interpella*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City
- Donati P (1991) *Relational theory of society*. Francoangeli, Milan
- Donati P (2010) *The theological matrix of society*. Rubbetino, Catanzaro
- Francis I (2017) *Veritatis Gaudium*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Rome
- John Paul II (1990) *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Rome
- Marcel G (1939) Creative fidelity. *Revue Internationale de Philosophie, Second year* (5), 90–115
- Márías J (1993) *Map of the personal world*. Alianza Editorial, Madrid
- Máspero G (2012) *Trinitarian ontology and relational sociology: two Worlds in comparison, en Relazione?, a category that questions*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City

- Morandé P (2012) The university's vocation of service to people and society. XX years of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. *Magazine Persona y Cultura* 10
- Morandé P (2017a) The image of the father in the culture of post-modernity. In: Morandé P (ed) *Selected sociological texts*. Ediciones UC, Santiago de Chile
- Morandé P (2017b) *Selected texts from Christian anthropology*. Ediciones UC, Santiago de Chile
- Newman JH (2008) Writings about the university. Bompiani, Milan
- Paul VI. Vatican Council II (1964) *Lumen Gentium*. Rome
- Ratzinger J (1978) *The God of Jesus Christ: Meditations on the One and Triune God*. Querianiana, Brescia
- Ratzinger J (2005) *Faith, truth and tolerance*. Follow me, Salamanca
- Ricoeur P (1991) The ethical tripod of the person. In: Danish A (ed) *Person and development*. Dehonian, Rome, pp 65–86
- Ricoeur P (1996) *Self with another*. Siglo XXI Editores, Mexico City
- Rombart H (2004) *Humanized man, structural anthropology*. Herder, Barcelona
- Serretti M (1999) *Nature of communion, essay on the relationship*. Rubbentino, Catanzaro
- Serretti M (2008) *Man is person*. Pontifical Lateran University, Rome
- Serretti M (2017) The realism of the human experience. En *Hermenéutica*. Editrice Morcelliana, Brescia
- Terenzi P (2016) The relational paradigm and education en life as relationship, a dialogue between theology, philosophy and social sciences. EDUSC, Rome
- Wells G (2001) *Dialogical inquiry. towards a socio-cultural theory and practice of education*. Paidós, Barcelona
- Zizioulas I (2009) *Communion and otherness*. Sígueme, Salamanca

**Aldo Giacchetti** PhD in Philosophy from the Pontificia Universidad Católica Argentina. He has been rector of the Universidad Gabriela Mistral (Santiago de Chile). Visiting Professor at the San Pablo Catholic University (Arequipa, Peru). He has been visiting scholar and is currently Incaricate Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Pontifical Gregorian University (Rome).