

**THE IMPACT OF PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION ON ROMAN CATHOLIC  
SCHOOLS IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF VANCOUVER: 1924 – 1960**

by

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## **Abstract**

Between the early 1920s and 1960, Catholic schools in the Vancouver Archdiocese grew considerably from an assortment of independently operated private and parochial schools to a centralized diocesan system with over three-dozen schools. In the same time period, public education underwent significant changes with the introduction of progressive education, first with the *Survey of the School System* (Putman Weir Report) (1925) and later with the provincial curriculum revisions of 1936 and 1937. In 1960, the provincial *Report of the Royal Commission on Education* signalled a change in direction toward a new discipline-based approach to education. Very few historical studies have examined Catholic schooling in British Columbia, nor its relation to broader educational trends. This study used archival research to examine the influence of progressive education on the curriculum, pedagogy, and philosophy in Vancouver's Catholic schools. Without government funding, Catholic educational leaders in this period were seeking to raise academic standards and demonstrate the legitimacy and necessity of Catholic schooling. The vast majority of Catholic schoolteachers were religious sisters who had devoted their lives to the spread of Catholic Christianity and the education of children. While they were willing to implement progressive methods and curriculum, Catholic schoolteachers and administrators were unwilling to compromise their philosophy of education, which was rooted in an understanding of the human person as both material and spiritual. Perhaps ironically, Catholic educators' embrace of progressive education was most evident in the archdiocesan religion course. The Catholic school community's relationship with progressive educational trends can be characterized as one of independence and experimentation.

## **Preface**

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Katie Gemmell.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

Sisters of St. Ann Archives - SSAA

Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver Archives – RCAVA

Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul of Halifax Archives – SCHA

Oblates of Mary Immaculate – OMI

British Columbia Catholic – BCC

New Westminster Museum and Archives – NWMA

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For Paul Clark

And when long years and seasons  
wheeling brought around that point of time  
ordained for him to make his passage homeward,  
trials and dangers, even so, attended him  
even in Ithaka, near those he loved.

~ *The Odyssey*, Homer

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Between the early 1920s and 1960, schools in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver grew considerably from an assortment of independently operated private and parochial schools to a centralized diocesan system with over three dozen schools. In this time period, Catholic schools were in the second half of their century-long fight for government funding, and Catholic teachers and educational leaders were engaged in various ways of raising academic standards and demonstrating the necessity and legitimacy of Catholic schooling. During this period of its formation, education in British Columbia encountered significant changes with the introduction of administrative and pedagogical progressivism via a provincial survey of the public school system, the *Survey of the School System* (Putman Weir Report) in 1925, and the provincial curriculum changes that followed.<sup>1</sup> While Catholic educators worked with the public curriculum, and were willing to implement aspects of progressivism, they were also committed to a distinctly Catholic vision for education that they believed made the provision of Catholic schooling necessary. Although by 1960, the province moved away from progressive methods to a more discipline-based approach, progressivism had left its mark on public and Catholic schools alike. This study seeks to examine the relationship between trends in education and Catholic schooling in British Columbia.

In addition to its contribution to historical debates about the nature and development of Catholic schooling in British Columbia and about the spread and implementation of progressive education in Canadian schools and Catholic schools, this research has contemporary significance. Firstly, Catholic independent schools have become a legitimate educational choice

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<sup>1</sup> J.H. Putman and G.M. Weir, *The Survey of the School System*, (Victoria: C.F. Banfield, 1925). See also “Putman Weir Survey,” *The Homeroom: British Columbia’s History of Education Web Site*, edited by Patrick A. Dunae, Vancouver Island University, Accessed November 18, 2012, <http://www.viu.ca/homeroom/content/topics/statutes/Pws.htm>.

for British Columbia's families. The government's partial funding of independent schools since 1978 "recognizes the contributions these schools have made to the education of children in our province," and increases "options for more parents to select schools of their choice."<sup>2</sup> In the 2011-2012 school year, over 10 percent of British Columbia's total K-12 population was enrolled in independent schools, which was an increase from the previous year. In spite of ongoing interest in Catholic independent schools, there has been little research on the history of Catholic education in British Columbia.

Secondly, this research is important because it provides historical context for contemporary discussion regarding the distinctiveness of independent schools and the catholicity of Catholic education.<sup>3</sup> Discussion around catholicity typically refers to the way in which education offered by Catholic institutions is founded on a Christian anthropology (understanding of the human person), and proposes a supernatural outlook.<sup>4</sup> This relates to the Catholic understanding of the purpose of education: both to create good citizens of this world, and to provide personal formation in light of the human person's transcendent destiny. Although the Catholic Church has set up schools and places of learning since ancient times, it was not until the nineteenth century, with countries or states claiming exclusive rights over schooling, that the Catholic Church began to define its educational philosophy and specifically give voice to its

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<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Education: Office of the Inspector of Independent Schools, *Overview of Independent Schools in British Columbia*, June 2011. Accessed online September 12, 2012, <http://www.fisabc.ca/sites/default/files/geninfo.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Jean Barman, "Deprivatizing Private Education: The British Columbia Experience," *Canadian Journal of Education/Revue canadienne de l'éducation*, 16, 1 (Winter, 1991): 12-31; Harro Van Brummelen, "The Effects of Government Funding on Private Schools: Appraising the Perceptions of Long-term Principals and Teachers in British Columbia's Christian Schools," *Canadian Journal of Education / Revue canadienne de l'éducation*, 18, 1 (Winter 1993): 14-28; Harro Van Brummelen, "Religiously Based Schooling in British Columbia: An Overview of the Research," *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society* 38 (1996): 101-22; *Integrating Faith into the Intermediate Curriculum* (Vancouver: Catholic Independent Schools of the Vancouver Archdiocese, 2004); Archbishop Michael J. Miller, "Challenges Facing Catholic Schools: A View from Rome," in *International Handbook of Catholic Education*, ed. Gerald Grace and Joseph O'Keefe, 1(3)(Netherlands: Springer, 2007): 449-80.

<sup>4</sup> Miller, "Challenges Facing Catholic Schools," 460-1.

“concern for the integral formation of the whole person.”<sup>5</sup> This research on Catholic education in British Columbia contributes to discussion regarding curriculum influences and the distinctiveness of Catholic education.

## **1.1 Historical Overview**

In the 1920s, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver was in its early years and lacked the means to create a diocesan school system. A papal edict had established the Archdiocese of Vancouver in 1908, which geographically included most of British Columbia. In the same papal proclamation, the Diocese of Victoria and the Yukon Diocese were made suffragan dioceses, independent of, but overseen by, the Archdiocese of Vancouver.<sup>6</sup> For the most part, religious congregations ran British Columbia’s Catholic schools, with some support from the laity.<sup>7</sup> These communities of women or men religious came primarily from eastern Canada, the United States, and France, seeking to promote their worldview among the Aboriginal people and non-Catholic settlers, in addition to supporting Catholic immigrants who had settled in the West. The religious congregations working in British Columbia in the nineteenth and early twentieth century were typically pontifical, meaning that their religious superiors reported to Rome, rather than the local bishop.<sup>8</sup> Though their priorities and strategies sometimes differed from the local bishop’s, their presence in British Columbia was typically the result of his invitation and their ultimate goal he shared: to educate the young about and through the Catholic faith.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 449.

<sup>6</sup> The Diocese of Victoria covered Vancouver Island; the Yukon Diocese included part of northern British Columbia. For a complete list of Roman Catholic diocese currently in British Columbia see Appendix B.

<sup>7</sup> Very few lay teachers were involved in teaching in this period. Exact numbers are not available.

<sup>8</sup> Jacqueline Gresko, *Traditions of Faith and Service*, (Vancouver: Archdiocese of Vancouver, 2008), 56.

In the early twentieth century, Catholics were a minority in British Columbia, representing just over 12 percent of the population.<sup>9</sup> Over a dozen groups of teaching religious played a hand in establishing and maintaining schools for Catholics. The Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI), the Sisters of Saint Ann, the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Toronto, the Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul of Halifax, and the Sisters of the Child Jesus were the most influential in the 1920s. Although male religious orders, such as the Oblates, sometimes played an administrative role (most often in schools for Aboriginal students), by far the majority of teachers were religious sisters.

There were three types of Catholic schools: (1) private schools with boarding facilities, often exclusively for either boys or girls, which were initiated by a religious congregation, overseen by its religious superior, and financed, sometimes with the help of the motherhouse of the given religious order, but for the most part through fundraising initiatives and tuition;<sup>10</sup> (2) parish, or parochial schools, also referred to as (arch)diocesan schools, overseen by the local parish priest and bishop, and run through the efforts of the Catholic laity and funded by tuition (which was kept low and did not generate a profit); and (3) residential and day schools for Aboriginal students, administered and funded through the partnership of various religious congregations and the federal government.<sup>11</sup> Because a given religious order taught in diocesan

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<sup>9</sup> Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2007), 433, Table 10.

<sup>10</sup> These schools helped religious congregations generate profit with which they could finance other service projects. Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial times to the Present*, (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 265.

<sup>11</sup> Deborah Rink, *Spirited Women: A History of Catholic Sisters in British Columbia*, (Vancouver: Sisters' Association Archdiocese of Vancouver, 2000), 131.

and non-diocesan schools, including schools for Aboriginal students, all three types of schools are included in this study.<sup>12</sup>

Catholic bishops had been outspoken about the need for government funding for Catholic schools ever since British Columbia joined Confederation in 1871.<sup>13</sup> By 1907, Catholic educators were using the public curriculum, in part to emphasize the legitimacy of Catholic education, as well as to ensure their graduates met requirements and pre-requisites for post-secondary education.<sup>14</sup> Catholics did not agree that they should have to pay taxes to support public schools, while at the same time paying tuition for Catholic schools. A further frustration was rooted in the requirement that Catholic schools pay municipal property taxes from which public schools were exempt.<sup>15</sup> The drive for publicly funded Catholic education, however, was not only a financial matter. It was essentially a drive for Christian education. The Catholic community was concerned about the limitations of the understanding of the human person found in public education, and so they sought to provide a viable alternative for Catholic families.

In 1875, at the request of several Catholic bishops in America, the Propaganda Fide (the missionary office of the Vatican responsible at that time for the Church in the United States and Canada) had provided a directive requiring Catholic parents to send their children to Catholic schools.<sup>16</sup> Bishops in British Columbia shared with their American counterparts a belief in the

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<sup>12</sup> Schools for Aboriginal students are only included in a limited way, however, as they were under the supervision and regular inspection of the Indian Department of the federal government (now the Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada), and reports regarding teachers' standings, abilities, and student course work were sent to Ottawa rather than the given religious community's motherhouse or archdiocesan superintendent's office.

<sup>13</sup> British Columbia was the only province where Catholic schools were not in some way protected historically. Some provinces opted to protect religious minorities through government support, while the B.C. government prior to 1977 preferred to fund only secular education. In the Maritime Provinces, such as Nova Scotia, Catholic schools were protected historically through a so-called "gentleman's agreement."

<sup>14</sup> Edith Down, *A Century of Service: A History of the Sisters of Saint Ann and their contribution to education in British Columbia, the Yukon and Alaska*, (Victoria: Morris Printing, BC: 1966), 135.

<sup>15</sup> Victoria Cunningham, *Justice Achieved*, (Vancouver: Federation of Independent Schools Association, 2002), 29.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

centrality of religion in education. Moreover, they recognized education was essential to maintaining Catholic Christianity in a predominantly Protestant culture.<sup>17</sup> The *Catholic Bulletin* newspaper in British Columbia regularly ran articles, for the most part written by American authors, reminding Catholic parents of the importance of educating their children in and through the Christian worldview. Discussion about the need for Catholic education was not limited to North America. From Rome, Pope Pius XI weighed in on the conversation with his 1929 encyclical to the Catholic Church worldwide, *On the Education of Youth*. Pius' points would run as a refrain through discourse about Catholic education throughout the twentieth century.

The efforts of Archbishop Timothy Casey of Vancouver (1912-1931) in the area of education were directed more towards soliciting educators and administrators to support Catholic schools than petitioning the government for funding. As is common for bishops, Casey invited religious communities of men and women to help build missions, parishes, and schools in the Archdiocese of Vancouver. The arrival of religious congregations committed to teaching, coupled with the growing population, brought about a dramatic increase in the number of Catholic schools in the 1920s. Vancouver alone saw the establishment of Saint Augustine's School in 1921, Saint Patrick's Elementary School and Vancouver College in 1922, Saint Helen's School in 1923, Saint Joseph's School in 1924, Our Lady of Sorrows School and Immaculate Conception School in 1926, Our Lady of Perpetual Help School and Little Flower Academy in 1927, and high school grades were added to Saint Patrick's in 1928.<sup>18</sup>

It was not until Archbishop William Mark Duke (1931-1964) took over leadership that the Vancouver Catholic school system began to take shape. Archbishop Duke set three goals for

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<sup>17</sup> Rink, *Spirited Women*, 130.

<sup>18</sup> See list of Catholic schools of the Vancouver Archdiocese for locations and religious orders responsible (Appendix A). Noteworthy growth in the number of Catholic schools in the Vancouver Archdiocese occurred again in the 1950s.

his episcopacy: the establishment of a seminary, a university, and an increase in parochial schools. In August of 1931 he re-established the Catholic newspaper, which had ceased to run in 1929, giving it a new name: the *British Columbia Catholic* (later the *B.C. Catholic*). As Casey had done in the 1920s, Duke continued to use the newspaper to convey Catholic moral teaching to a wider audience.<sup>19</sup> For Catholic schools, Duke's main interest was in obtaining legal and financial support from the provincial government and in putting an end to double taxation. He organized extensive fundraising campaigns and in the early 1930s worked to provide a Catholic school for every parish. In the postwar period, he advocated for regional co-educational high schools, such as Notre Dame (established in 1953). Looking to the Maritimes and Ontario as examples of Catholic education, he tried to work out a way to make Catholic schooling sustainable in British Columbia. Archbishop Duke relied on religious sisters to provide instruction and administration for schools. Though the Christian Brothers ran Vancouver College and would later open St. Thomas More Collegiate (1960), over twenty new congregations arrived during his episcopacy, the majority of whom were women and teachers.<sup>20</sup> While the Vancouver Catholic schools burgeoned, the foundations of significant curricular and pedagogical changes were being laid in public education.

In 1925, Dr. George M. Weir, Professor of Education at the University of British Columbia, and Dr. J. Harold Putman, Senior Inspector of the Ottawa public school system, published their survey of British Columbia's public school system.<sup>21</sup> The previous year, the government had commissioned Weir and Putman to conduct what was to become "the most

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<sup>19</sup> Including the Church's views on education. Gresko, *Faith and Service*, 73.

<sup>20</sup> Gresko, *Faith and Service*, 84.

<sup>21</sup> Putman and Weir, *Survey*.

searching and comprehensive educational survey ever undertaken in Canada.”<sup>22</sup> Their *Survey of the School System* reflected and endorsed the growing popularity in Canada of the American educational trend, progressive education. This trend would spread from west to east, starting with experimentation in the 1920s. By the 1930s, “the era of the first wholesale curriculum revision Canadian educators had ever undertaken” was underway.<sup>23</sup>

Progressive educational practices challenged traditional schooling, with its rote learning, classical curriculum, and highly disciplined academic approach. Neil Sutherland characterizes the traditional approach to schooling, or *formalism*, as follows: “advocates of this theory believed that education consisted of training such faculties of the mind as memory and reasoning because such training generalized itself. Through studying algebra and formal grammar, for example, one trained the reasoning faculty and came to be able to apply this talent to actual situations throughout life.”<sup>24</sup> By contrast, advocates of progressivism argued for a learning environment inspired by both the interests of the child and life in the community, which would prepare students for future employment and life in a democratic state. In British Columbia, under Weir, then Minister of Education, and H.B. King, Chief Inspector of Schools, the implementation of progressive education brought the creation of junior high schools for children ages twelve to fifteen, differentiated programs of study, courses such as social studies, and the revised *Programme of Studies* (curriculum) and educational philosophy of 1936 and 1937.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> “Putman Weir Survey,” *The Homeroom*, <http://www.viu.ca/homeroom/content/topics/statutes/Pws.htm>.

<sup>23</sup> George S. Tomkins, *A Common Countenance: Stability and Change in the Canadian Curriculum* (Vancouver, BC: Pacific Educational Press, 2008), 174.

<sup>24</sup> Neil Sutherland, “The Triumph of “Formalism”: Elementary Schooling in Vancouver from the 1920s to the 1960s,” *BC Studies* 69-70 (Spring-Summer, 1986): 175.

<sup>25</sup> Catherine Broom, “Social Efficiency and Public Schooling in British Columbia,” *British Columbia History* 40(3)(2007): 8-12. The term social studies, a direct product of pedagogical progressivism, came to use in 1927, but the reforms of 1936-37 brought the course to reflect more closely progressive education through the blending of history, geography, and civics. The language of progressive education is explicitly evident in the revised curriculum documents of 1936-1937. *Programme of Studies for*

People with varying educational interests and approaches used the term “progressive,” making it difficult to define.<sup>26</sup> United by the desire to transform from traditional schooling, progressive theorists typically advocated for a broader curriculum and schools that more closely reflected modern society. On the one hand there were “administrative progressives,” such as George M. Weir, who wanted, for the benefit of social efficiency and control, to centralize education under expert leadership. They drew upon the science of educational administration and the work of American curriculum theorists and psychologists, such as Franklin Bobbitt and Edward Thorndike, who emphasized a scientific approach to curriculum development as a means to social improvement.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, there were “pedagogical progressives,” inspired by American philosopher and educational theorist John Dewey’s ideas about social education. Pedagogical progressivism in the classroom often involved the project method of Dewey’s follower and colleague, W.H. Kilpatrick, and typically advocated for a child-centered approach, wherein the needs and interests of the child determine the subject matter. It promoted activity-oriented, cooperative learning opportunities, based on real life. Curriculum historian George Tomkins suggests Hubert Newland, Supervisor of Schools in Alberta best exemplifies pedagogical progressives in Canada.<sup>28</sup> In line with Dewey’s writings, Newland characterized progressivism as an approach that promoted the growth of the “whole” child – “physically,

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*Elementary Schools of British Columbia: Social Studies* (Victoria: Kings Printer, 1936): 9-17. See also: “Aims and Philosophy of Education in British Columbia,” *The Homeroom*, <http://www.viu.ca/homeroom/content/topics/programs/aims37.htm>.

<sup>26</sup> Authors are still exploring the definition and historical reality of progressive education. See, for example, Theodore Christou, *Progressive Education: Revisioning and Reframing Ontario’s Public Schools 1919-1942*, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2012); See also “Progressivism,” *The Homeroom*, <http://www.viu.ca/homeroom/content/topics/programs/progress.htm>, and Penney Clark, “The Historical Context of Social Studies in English Canada,” in *Challenges & Prospects for Canadian Social Studies*, eds. Alan Sears and Ian Wright (Vancouver, BC: Pacific Educational Press, 2004), 17-37.

<sup>27</sup> Tomkins, *Common Countenance*, 175-7; In the context of “scientific” curriculum making, *science* and *scientism* are terms used to express authority and expertise; See Thomas Fallace, “Tracing John Dewey’s Influence on Progressive Education, 1903 – 1951: Toward a Received Dewey,” *Teachers College Record* 113(3)(2011): 477.

<sup>28</sup> Tomkins, *Common Countenance*, 174.

emotionally and spiritually, as well as mentally.”<sup>29</sup> Scholars have questioned, however, the degree to which these curriculum prescriptions were implemented at the classroom level, and whether the reforms were not more a matter of social efficiency and control than pedagogical progressivism.<sup>30</sup>

## 1.2 Objective of Thesis

The main objective of this thesis is to examine the impact of progressive education on Catholic schools in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver between 1924 and 1960. The questions that directed this research are as follows:

- 1) Did the curriculum used in Catholic schools in the Vancouver Archdiocese between 1924 and 1960 reflect the values of progressive education?
- 2) What impact, if any, did progressive education have on Catholic school classrooms and student learning in this period?
- 3) Was progressive education at odds with Catholic educational philosophy?

This study is divided into three periods: (1) 1924 – 1936: the early years of Catholic schools in the Vancouver Archdiocese and of progressive education in British Columbia, beginning with the 1924 announcement that Putman and Weir would perform a survey of public education, and the establishment of the *Catholic Bulletin* newspaper, also in 1924;<sup>31</sup> (2) 1936 – 1945: the height of progressive education, marked by the 1936-1937 progressive-language laden revised British Columbia public school curriculum and the 1943 establishment of the Vancouver Catholic

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<sup>29</sup> H.C. Newland, “Report of the Supervisor of Schools,” in *Thirty-sixth Annual Report of the Department of Education of the Province of Alberta* (Edmonton: King’s Printer, 1941), 12. See also: John Dewey, *The Child and the Curriculum* (Chicago: The University Of Chicago Press, 1902/1956); John Dewey, *My Pedagogic Creed* (New York: E.L. Kellogg, 1897); John Dewey, “Democracy and Education” in *John Dewey and American Education*, ed. Spencer J. Maxcy, vol.2 of *Schools of Tomorrow* (Bristol: Thoemmes, 2002), 288.

<sup>30</sup> Jean Mann, “G.M. Weir and H.B. King: Progressive Education or Education for the Progressive State?” In *Schooling and Society in Twentieth Century British Columbia*, eds. J. Donald Wilson and David C. Jones, (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1980); Broom, “Social Efficiency,” 8-12.

<sup>31</sup> In 1924, news of the upcoming survey and other articles on Catholic education appeared in the *Catholic Bulletin* newspaper.

School board,<sup>32</sup> and (3) 1945 – 1960: the post World War II period, characterized by widespread criticisms of schooling and progressive education in particular, and ending with the report of the Royal Commission on Education in 1960.<sup>33</sup> The report of the Royal Commission, known as the “Chant Commission” or “Chant Report” after the commission’s chairman, S.N.F. Chant, signalled a change in direction toward a new discipline-based approach to education.<sup>34</sup> With regard to Catholic schooling, the 1960s are beyond the scope of this study as they brought sweeping changes as a result of the Second Vatican Council (1962-5), and a dramatic decline of teaching congregations and laicization of Catholic school staff. The above periodization highlights changing ideas about education in society at large and changes to the organizational structure of Catholic schools. At the same time, it helps bring to light continuity in Catholic perspectives on education between 1924 and 1960.

In this thesis, I argue that pedagogically progressive practices were implemented in Catholic schools as long as they were compatible with Catholic educators’ beliefs about the child, education and the curriculum.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, evidence of administrative progressivism was more readily available than pedagogical progressivism in Vancouver’s Catholic school classrooms between 1924 and 1960.<sup>36</sup> In Chapter 2, I review the literature on the history of Catholic education in British Columbia and on Catholic education in relation to progressive

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<sup>32</sup> *Aims and Philosophy of Education in British Columbia* (Victoria: Kings Printer, 1936); *Programme of Studies for Elementary Schools of British Columbia* (Victoria: Kings Printer, 1936).

<sup>33</sup> *The Report of the Royal Commission on Education* (Province of British Columbia, 1960).

<sup>34</sup> Clark, “Historical Context,” 17-37.

<sup>35</sup> Larry Cuban, *How Teachers Taught: Constancy and Change in American Classrooms 1890-1980*, (New York: Longman, 1984), 10. Cuban proposes that one reason why classroom instruction changed in the twentieth century is because teachers teach what they believe, and so when their beliefs about children changed, their teaching was impacted.

<sup>36</sup> Ann Marie Ryan, “More than Measurable Human Products: Catholic Educators’ Responses to the Educational Measurement Movement in the First Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century,” *Catholic Education* (September 2009): 76-96. Ryan suggests the scientific techniques of the efficiency movement (evident in administrative progressivism) made a greater impact on Catholic schools in the United States than pedagogical progressivism. Jean Mann and Catherine Broom argue a similar line with regard to public schools in British Columbia; see Mann, “Progressive State,” 91-118; Broom, “Social Efficiency,” 8-12.

education. I also review the literature on progressive education, with particular attention to the definition of progressive education, debate around its implementation, and underlying philosophy. In Chapter 3, I argue that Catholic schools were relatively untouched by progressivism in the 1920s and early 1930s. Rather than a centralized school system, the Catholic schools were a network of schools that occasionally worked together, but generally received guidance from the religious superiors of their given order, rather than a common diocesan superintendent. In this section I examine some of the main religious congregations, the curriculum they offered, and aspects of the teachers' education. I also examine Catholic educational philosophy as it was represented in documents from religious congregations, archdiocesan correspondence, and the local Catholic newspaper, the *Catholic Bulletin* (after 1931 known as the *British Columbia Catholic*).

In Chapter 4 I argue that Catholic educators were employing pedagogical progressivism in two areas in the late-1930s and early-1940s. Progressive education was evident in the public school curriculum that Catholic schools also delivered. It was present as well in the religious education curriculum, which was specific to Catholic schools.<sup>37</sup> Catholic educators were instructed to execute the public curriculum with excellence (including the latest pedagogical practices) in part because this might inspire the government to fund Catholic schools. The other area of implementation was in religion classes, where modern pedagogical strategies were encouraged by school administrators in an attempt to make religious education relevant and effective. Religious education was seen as the most important component of Catholic schooling.

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<sup>37</sup> Down, *Century of Service*, 135.

This section also highlights the growing influence of administrative progressivism on the structure and administration of Catholic schools in the late-1930s and early-1940s.<sup>38</sup>

In Chapter 5 I argue that Catholics' criticism of progressive education in the 1950s coincided with a broader post-war trend, emerging from the United States, to criticize education.<sup>39</sup> I examine progressive methods implemented by teachers in Catholic schools, progressive curriculum that was rejected by Catholic teachers and administrators, and I evaluate the tension between the underlying philosophy of progressive educators and that of Catholic education. I conclude that (1) Catholics were open to its practices if progressivism could further their aims for educating the child, but that (2) Catholics struggled with the philosophy of progressivism. Because religious education was considered the purpose and aim of Catholic schooling, it is not surprising that the most explicit decision to replace traditional instruction with the newest methods of pedagogical progressivism was for religion class. While pedagogical progressivism and administrative progressivism were both evident in Catholic schools in the given period, Catholic educators' underlying commitment to the Christian worldview in education remained central in British Columbia's Catholic schools.

### **1.3 Method**

Schools in the Archdiocese of Vancouver grew from sparse and independently run to a centralized diocesan system between 1924 and 1960. As a result, archival material can be found in the region's archdiocesan archives, as well as the archives of various religious congregations. Historically, religious congregations have housed their own archival material (with varying degrees of formality), but with the decline in religious communities and of their members, this

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<sup>38</sup> Dolan, *American Catholic Experience*, 290.

<sup>39</sup> Herbert M. Kliebard. *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958*. (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 260.

material is increasingly being handed over to provincial and Catholic Church archives. In addition to the archives of the Archdiocese of Vancouver, I was able to access the archives of six teaching congregations: the Sisters of St. Ann, the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Halifax, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (Grandin Province), the Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto, the Congregation of Christian Brothers, Newfoundland, and the Benedictine archives at the Seminary of Christ the King. I also researched in the New Westminster Museum and Archives, which houses material on St. Peter's School and St. Ann's Academy, New Westminster, and the Royal British Columbia Museum and Archives, which contain a couple of individual student year books created by the students at a Catholic school in Lower Post.

A few comments about the challenges of researching in the archives of Catholic religious communities and dioceses are needed before discussing the types of materials examined. Religious community archives are private and the archivist (or manager) decides who will be permitted research access.<sup>40</sup> In my case, the archives of the Sisters of the Child Jesus and the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (St. Peter's Province of New Westminster) did not have material available for my study.<sup>41</sup> This is partly because these congregations administered and taught several schools for Aboriginal students. Aboriginal education has historically been under the supervision of the federal government, and so reports on the sisters' academic standings and abilities, as well as class work from students, were sent to Ottawa.<sup>42</sup> In addition, I was unsuccessful in obtaining archival material on Catholic schools from the Diocese of Victoria. In

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<sup>40</sup> Tom O'Donoghue and Anthony Potts, "Researching the lives of Catholic teachers who were members of religious orders: historiographical considerations," *History of Education*, 33(4), (July 2004): 469-481. See also E. Smyth, 'Teacher Education within the Congregation of the Sisters of St Joseph of Toronto, Canada, 1851-1920', *History of Education Review*, 23(3), (1994): 111.

<sup>41</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>42</sup> Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver Archives (RCVA), *Letter to the Superintendent of Catholic Schools from Sister Mary Amy, Superior of the Sisters of the Child Jesus*, 19 December 1936 (Chancery Office Fonds, 401-3). Material given to the federal government was not included in this study.

religious archives, digital finding aids are rare and access to some material is altogether restricted. The researcher cannot freely peruse material, and strict research policies are often upheld (for example, a restriction on camera use). Religious order archival research is further complicated by geography, as the motherhouses of communities who worked in the west are anywhere from Victoria, British Columbia to St. John's, Newfoundland.

One other aspect of my research topic needs to be identified: Research on teachers who were members of religious orders sometimes runs the risk of being too easily dismissed or simply falls victim to powerful modern stereotypes.<sup>43</sup> As Paul Kollman points out, the “suspicion of missionaries usually is reflexive and misinformed, based not on historical understandings of missionary activity but instead on caricatures derived from popular culture in which missionaries represent prototypical cultural bigots.”<sup>44</sup> As an alternative, I have elected to view these teachers as important historical actors. Operating in frontier conditions, they were exceptionally unique individuals, and I have attempted to understand them in historical context where I can better gain perspective on their work.

#### **1.4 Sources**

The primary sources I examined in Vancouver's archdiocesan archives include correspondence between school administrators, who were often superiors in religious congregations, and the superintendent of Catholic schools; letters between the archbishop and the Catholic schools' superintendent; school listings, enrolment records, and class sizes; minutes from the Catholic School Board meetings; the brief of the Catholic Public Schools of British Columbia to the Royal Commission on Education, 1960; and articles from the local Catholic

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<sup>43</sup> Paul Kollman, “The Promise of Mission History for U.S. Catholic History,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 24 (3), (Summer 2006): 1-18.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

newspaper, *The Bulletin* (1924-9), and the *British Columbia Catholic* (1931-1960). Additional sources include religion textbooks, documents and books published between 1920 and 1960 that addressed, and were influential in Catholic education – for example, the 1929 encyclical from Pope Pius XI on Christian education known as *Divini Illius Magistri*, and Jacques Maritain’s 1943 “Terry Lectures” at Yale University, published under the title *Education at the Crossroads*.<sup>45</sup>

I also gathered evidence from the Sisters of Saint Ann’s Archives at the British Columbia Archives in Victoria. In their archives I examined essays written by the sisters; material they had gathered from the Alberta Catholic Education Association; a large collection of teaching materials, lesson plans, assignments, student work, projects, and activities developed by Sister Hortentius, a teacher who taught a variety of subjects in over eight Catholic schools around British Columbia; a handbook in Christian pedagogy published in Lachine, Quebec at the Sisters of Saint Ann’s motherhouse;<sup>46</sup> *St. Ann’s Journal*, the monthly community newsletter; yearbooks created by students; notices about teachers’ summer schools, curriculum, and school inspector reports; history and religion textbooks; and public addresses given by community members and priests.

From the archives of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Halifax I examined correspondence between the Secretary General and the teaching sisters, as well as instructions for teachers about religious education from the archdiocesan Superintendent of Catholic Schools. In addition, I examined a handbook for teachers with their philosophy of education, guidelines

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<sup>45</sup> Pope Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri*, Encyclical on Christian Education (1929), accessed December 15, 2012, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/pius\\_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xi\\_enc\\_31121929\\_divini-illius-magistri\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_31121929_divini-illius-magistri_en.html). Jacques Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1943). Maritain was an influential twentieth century Catholic scholar in philosophy of education.

<sup>46</sup> *Rules of Christian Pedagogy for the Sisters of St. Ann: Part Three*, (Montreal: Lachine Convent, 1924).

for ordinary workings of school, duties of teachers and principals, and recommendations for teacher training. The archives of the Sisters of Charity also contain minutes from the “Vancouver Parochial School Council,” which met every two months between January of 1934 and February of 1943. In addition, the archives of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Grandin Province, at the Provincial Archives of Alberta yielded curriculum selections, pedagogical approaches and classroom learning developed for Catholic residential schools.<sup>47</sup> The archives of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto provided information about the daily life of their teaching sisters in British Columbia, who were educated in Ontario and, like the Sisters of St. Ann, brought with them influences from other provinces. Finally, the archives of the Christian Brothers in Newfoundland provided correspondence regarding summer school for Catholic teachers in Vancouver in the early 1930s.

In the above material, I looked for terms such as “whole child,” “learning by doing,” “child-centered,” “interest-based,” “democratic education,” “project/activity based learning,” “enterprise education,” and examples of student work or lesson plans that reflect project-based, hands-on education, all of which signify the presence of pedagogical progressivism. Perhaps the most disappointing aspect of my archival research was the limited availability of student work. The only archives with student work from Catholic schools were the Archives of the Sisters of St. Ann, the City of New Westminster Archives, and the British Columbia Archives. The absence of student work made it difficult to thoroughly explore the impact of pedagogical progressivism on Catholic school classrooms. In addition to pedagogical progressivism, I looked for the influence of administrative progressivism. Terms and characteristics associated with this

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<sup>47</sup> The Grandin Province Oblates religious were French speaking and worked in Maillardville, Coquitlam. The English speaking Oblates, who worked primarily as Catholic school administrators in British Columbia, were from St. Peter’s Province of New Westminster.

type of progressivism included “differentiated instruction,” (e.g. industrial, commercial, and academic courses of study), increased school administration and uniformity in record keeping procedures, and attempts to raise academic standards and improve teacher qualifications.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The question of the impact of progressivism on Catholic education intersects two distinct bodies of literature: literature on progressive education in North America in the first half of the twentieth century, and literature on Catholic education. Though there is no historical research that specifically addresses progressivism in Catholic schools in British Columbia, some studies on Catholic schools come closer than others. For example, three studies from the United States are useful: Gregory Holtz briefly outlines the religious and social influences, and context behind the establishment of a separate Catholic school system;<sup>1</sup> Paula Fass comments on the Catholic response to progressive education while writing about minority schooling;<sup>2</sup> and Ann Marie Ryan writes about Catholic educators' responses to the educational measurement movement in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> In addition, Nick Kach and Amy von Heyking include the Albertan Catholic response to progressive education in Canada in their research.<sup>4</sup>

In this review, I first examine Catholic schools, and how the politics of school funding, rather than the relationship between schooling and progressivism, has dominated historical research on Catholic education in British Columbia.<sup>5</sup> In addition, I consider Catholic school

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<sup>1</sup> Gregory M. Holtz, "Curriculum in Context: The Changing Catholic Schools," *Educational Leadership* (January 1976): 296-8.

<sup>2</sup> Paula S. Fass, "Imitation and Autonomy: Catholic Education in the Twentieth Century," in *Outside In: Minorities and the Transformation of American Education* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 189-228.

<sup>3</sup> Ryan, "More than Measurable," 76-96.

<sup>4</sup> Nick Kach, "Criticisms of Progressive Education," in *Essays on Canadian Education* eds. Nick Kach, Kas Mazurek, Robert S. Patterson, and Ivan DeFaveri (Calgary, AB: Detselig, 1986), 121-40; and Amy Von Heyking, *Creating Citizens: History & Identity in Alberta's Schools, 1905 to 1980* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2006), 97.

<sup>5</sup> Historical studies on Catholic education in British Columbia also look at residential schooling or religious congregations. This literature does not focus on curriculum, let alone the impact of progressive education. See, for example, the following: Jean Barman, "Schooling for Inequality: The Education of British Columbia Aboriginal Children," in *Children, Teachers and Schools in the History of British Columbia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., eds. Jean Barman and Mona Gleason (Calgary: Detselig, 2003), 55-79; Brian E. Titley, "Indian Industrial Schools in Western Canada," in *Schools in the West: Essays in Canadian Educational History*, eds. N. Sheehan, J. D. Wilson, and D. C. Jones (Calgary: Detselig, 1986), 133-153; Jacqueline Gresko, "White 'Rites' and Indian 'Rites': Indian Education and Native Responses in The West 1880-1910," in *Shaping the Schools of the Canadian West*, ed. David C. Jones, Nancy M. Sheehan, and Robert M. Stamp (Calgary: Detselig, 1979), 84-106; Edith Down, "The Sisters of Saint Ann: their contribution to education in the Pacific Northwest, 1858-1958" (MA thesis, UBC, 1962). For a nineteenth century history of Catholic Education see: Edith E. Down, S.S.A., "The History of Catholic Education in British Columbia, 1847-1900," Canadian Catholic Historical Association, *Study Sessions*, 50 (1983): 569-90.

curriculum in the United States. Secondly, I evaluate the literature on progressive education, with particular attention to the English Canadian experience and response. Through the analysis of these bodies of literature, I demonstrate the need for historical research on progressivism's influence on curriculum policy and practice in British Columbia's Catholic schools. This research is all the more important, given that independent schools today are no longer engaged in a fight for public funding and questions of their distinctiveness have arisen. In researching Catholic schools it became evident that the distinctiveness of Catholic education has always been rooted in its provision of religious education. It is ironic then that progressive education, which Catholics viewed as problematic precisely because its philosophical underpinnings failed to adequately acknowledge the spiritual/religious nature of the child, was arguably most influential historically in religion classes in British Columbia's Catholic schools.

## **2.1 British Columbia's Catholic Schools**

The literature on the history of Catholic schools in British Columbia typically includes them in the broader category of independent schools, and either centers upon or touches upon the story of how they came to receive government funding, which eventually became essential for the schools' survival. In his examination of the history of Catholic education in British Columbia, Vincent McNally outlines its establishment and the fight for funding as a key concern.<sup>6</sup> Though Bishop Demers of Victoria (1838 – 1847) had come to accept that the “entire Pacific Northwest was a highly secular, pluralistic, and liberal society, and likely to remain so,” Catholic schools sought funding from when they joined Confederation (1871) onward.<sup>7</sup> The

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<sup>6</sup> Vincent J. McNally, “Challenging the Status Quo: An Examination of the History of Catholic Education in British Columbia,” Canadian Catholic Historical Association, *Historical Studies* 65 (1999): 71-91. Accessed: September 18, 2013: [http://www.umanitoba.ca/colleges/st\\_pauls/ccha/Back\\_Issues/CCHA1999/McNally.pdf](http://www.umanitoba.ca/colleges/st_pauls/ccha/Back_Issues/CCHA1999/McNally.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

question was raised with more insistence after the Second World War. After the Maillardville (Coquitlam) strike of the early 1950s, wherein local French Canadian Catholics protested being taxed twice (for public and their own schools), Catholic schools were able to secure textbook subsidies, health care funding and property tax exemptions. These were later extended to private schools in the rest of the province. McNally makes an interesting point about British Columbia's early insistence on exclusively funding public education: the educational approach in British Columbia was perhaps as influenced by its American neighbours to the south, as it was by its Canadian neighbours to the east.

In a much more politically oriented study than McNally's, Laurence Downey names the fight for funding the "aid-to-independent schools movement." Downey is also interested in explaining how a province so adamant that only a "unitary non-denominational system" of education be supported would come to change its mind.<sup>8</sup> After Catholic schools had won health services, subsidized textbooks, permission to establish a Catholic College, and tax exemption for private school properties from municipal taxes, the Federation of Independent Schools Association (FISA) emerged.<sup>9</sup> This association enabled independent schools to work together in petitioning the government for funding. In 1977 they found success.<sup>10</sup> Downey suggests that the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) had acted as a competing lobbying group against FISA, which helped to strengthen the latter's position. Public and political figures' viewpoints varied on this matter, even within the New Democratic Party (NDP), where some party members were clients of Catholic or independent schools. In the end, Bill 33 (the *Independent Schools Act*

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<sup>8</sup> L.W. Downey, "The Aid-to-Independent Schools Movement in British Columbia," in *Schools in the West: Essays in Canadian Educational History*, ed. Nancy Sheehan, J. Donald Wilson and David C. Jones (Calgary: Detselig, 1986), 305-23.

<sup>9</sup> For a detailed history of FISA, see Cunningham, *Justice Achieved*.

<sup>10</sup> Downey explains there were issues that still needed to be developed or clarified, including constitutional concerns, teacher qualifications, and working conditions.

of 1977) passed because of the leadership and determination of Education Minister Patrick McGeer, the effectiveness of FISA's lobbying (and lack of effective lobbying on the part of the BCTF), the lack of a unified opinion on the part of the opposition (the NDP), and a shift in the "public mood."<sup>11</sup> This shift came as a result of increasing diversity in British Columbian society and a consequent embrace of pluralism, including that exemplified by denominational schooling.

The question of distinctiveness of the education provided by independent schools is addressed in studies undertaken by Harro van Brummelen and Jean Barman, which also look at the aid-to-independent schools movement.<sup>12</sup> Barman argues that private schools, which once operated completely independently of the government, are now in the public sphere because all institutions must be registered with the government, regardless of whether they are looking for financial assistance. In addition, they must meet a variety of other requirements, including the use of the public curriculum, to qualify for funding. Barman reasons that these schools are now under the oversight of public opinion and that this ultimately places limitations on choice. She demonstrates her argument by juxtaposing examples of incidents in independent schools that were scrutinized in the media with similar instances in public school settings that were largely overlooked. Barman also provides a history of private education, and the road to government funding. Her analysis looks at the three main groups, Catholics, Anglicans, and Dutch Reform Calvinists, their 1966 joint formation of FISA, and their grass roots petitioning that brought about the 1977 legislation. Barman provides an interesting analysis of the growth of non-public schools since the funding legislation was passed. She points out that enrolments in Catholic schools have increased the least, but they have benefitted the most from the funding. This is

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<sup>11</sup> Downey, *Aid-to-Independent*, 320.

<sup>12</sup> Barman, "Deprivatizing Private Education," 12-31; Van Brummelen, "Religiously Based Schooling," 101-22.

because historically Catholic schools relied on volunteer employees and cheap labour, such as religious brothers and sisters who were not working for personal profit. With the 1960s decline in religious communities committed to education, however, Catholic schools entered into a new phase in their existence. Government funding allowed Catholic schools to hire laypeople as paid teachers to replace the retiring religious brothers and sisters who had previously supported the schools.

Adding to her argument that private education has been de-privatized, Barman goes on to explain how official and unofficial oversight of non-public education has increased enrolment and the number of independent schools.<sup>13</sup> She suggests that attitudes have changed and independent schools are now viewed as an integral component of a provincial school system. Furthermore, there are two additional entities beyond FISA, overseeing private education: the Ministry of Education, and the “the court of public opinion.” The growth of oversight and family choice, Barman argues, have made non-public schools accountable, not only to the government, but to public opinion.<sup>14</sup> She suggests that religious rights have been moderated, or lessened, by children’s rights to “acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society.”<sup>15</sup>

Van Brummelen’s history of religiously based schooling in British Columbia pays particular attention to Roman Catholic, Mennonite, Calvinist, other evangelical Protestant Christian schools, and Jewish Schools. He challenges Barman’s argument that private schools are now under public scrutiny, subject to government policies, and have thus been de-privatized, and have therefore lost their educational distinctiveness as private institutions. Van Brummelen

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<sup>13</sup> Barman, “Deprivatizing Private Education,” 21.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 26. Here Barman is quoting the *School and Independent School Acts*.

counters that if schools have leadership with vision and a supporting community, and if funding authorities continue to view independent schools as true alternatives, educational distinctiveness can be maintained.<sup>16</sup>

The relationship between independent schools and the state and society at large also presented challenges for Catholic schools in America. Though in the early 1900s they were committed to resisting state involvement, by the 1920s Catholic schools had come to accept state supervision would be an unavoidable aspect in providing education.<sup>17</sup> In addition, Catholic school enrolment was increasing, bringing a wider range of student ability and interests. According to Ann Marie Ryan, all of these factors brought Catholic schools to seriously consider aspects of progressive educational reform. Ryan argues that it was not pedagogical progressivism that made the greatest mark on Catholic schools, however, but the educational measurement movement, with its institutional organization, and standardization through testing. Ryan examines Catholic education in the United States between 1920 and 1950 with regard to the measurement movement and explains that Catholic schools did more than select a few useful aspects of progressivism to implement in their schools. They actively debated the value of testing in schools, in light of Catholic educational philosophy and scientific validity, and widely implemented it for the purposes of guidance and placement of students.<sup>18</sup> Ryan emphasizes their commitment to the centrality of religion, and explains that Catholic educators “were not pedagogical or administrative progressives in the fullest sense, but they certainly made concerted efforts to reconcile their Catholic beliefs with progressive ideology, moving them well beyond

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<sup>16</sup> Van Brummelen develops this idea in this article: Van Brummelen, “Effects of Government Funding,” 14-28.

<sup>17</sup> Ryan, “More than Measurable,” 81. This was particularly true of secondary education.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 92; while some private Catholic schools (as opposed to diocesan schools) used testing for selective admission, Ryan found this was not the practice in the majority of Catholic schools.

simply selecting progressive methods to suit their own needs.”<sup>19</sup> Ryan’s research is an important reminder of the multi-faceted nature of progressive education and the overwhelming influence of the educational measurement movement.

Paula Fass also notes the tension in Catholic education between religious values and the broader social context in which they exist. She uses the twin themes of autonomy and imitation to characterize people running Catholic schools as a minority group in America in the twentieth century.<sup>20</sup> She makes an insightful distinction between philosophy and practice with regard to Catholics and progressivism, suggesting that Catholic education has always resisted the “implications” though not always the “forms” of progressive educational practice.<sup>21</sup> Though Catholics could agree that schooling was to provide training for living, they knew that their schools were distinct in that Christianity provided the foundation for living. Fass explains that Catholic ideals and progressive thought were both concerned with character education, or educating the “whole person.”<sup>22</sup> “Indeed, the education of the whole child, long articulated as an ideal of progressive education, was the fundamental purpose behind Catholic-school separatism.”<sup>23</sup> In Catholic schools, education of the whole child meant being attentive not only to the intellectual, but also to the social, behavioural, physical, and above all, spiritual, aspects of the student. Fass suggests that many progressive tenets were harmonized with Catholic principles, but that John Dewey posed particular difficulties. She writes that, according to Catholic scholar, Laurence J. O’Connell, Dewey denied the spiritual side of the human person,

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<sup>19</sup> Ryan points out, however, “the very diversity of Catholic schools and Catholic educators, although socially stratified, contributed significantly to their more critical and uneven acceptance of educational measurement in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.” *Ibid.*, 93-4.

<sup>20</sup> Fass, *Imitation and Autonomy*, 189-228.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>22</sup> In this part Fass draws from the *National Catholic Education Association* bulletin.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

people's capacity for sin, the teacher's role in shaping the child's mind and will, and the real aims of education.<sup>24</sup> Fass makes an important distinction in explaining that, from a Catholic perspective, although the philosophy of progressive education was viewed as unsound, the practices to which it gave rise were not necessarily viewed as such, and so these could be accepted while the philosophy could not. In a footnote, Fass explains that by the 1950s, Catholics in America had come to accept progressivism and even sometimes Dewey. On the whole, though the scope of Fass' chapter extends well beyond the discussion of Catholic schooling and progressive education, it provides a useful introduction.

Gregory Holtz' brief overview of changes in Catholic schools in the United States over the past two centuries provides insight into the context that shaped curriculum. As German, Irish, Italian, and Polish immigrants arrived in the early nineteenth century in the United States, Catholic schools developed to meet their needs. One of the driving forces in providing Catholic education was the widespread concern that public schools were too Protestant. The curriculum was thus primarily concerned with religious formation from a Catholic perspective. One hour a day, for five days a week, religious instruction was delivered through memorization and recitation. In addition, many Catholic schools were bilingual, with as much as half of the curriculum taught in the native tongue of the given community. Through religion and language, therefore, Catholic schools in the United States provided a cultural haven for minorities in a society perceived as hostile to their religion and culture.

Holtz suggests that Catholic schools were stricter, as they were based on a European educational tradition that saw the teacher as representing both parental authority and spiritual

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 211.

authority, “the hand of God.”<sup>25</sup> Minorities sought the European rote learning and respect for religious authority offered in Catholic schools, as a home away from home. By the post-World War II period, however, these immigrant groups had assimilated into the broader culture. Furthermore, this period was marked by a decline in the numbers of religious brothers and sisters who had traditionally staffed Catholic schools. Increasingly Catholic schools in the United States sought public support from the government, and with time, when public schools became less Protestant and Catholic immigrants became assimilated into the broader American culture, the two systems came to operate in a more similar fashion and share values.

In both British Columbia and the United States, two dominant themes are evident in literature on early twentieth century Catholic education: (1) that Catholics were committed to providing schooling that was uniquely Catholic and from their perspective different from secular education, and (2) Catholics were committed to demonstrating that Catholic education was of equal quality to secular education. In British Columbia that latter point was made with the hopes of receiving funding and attracting Catholic students, while in the United States it was primarily in the interests of enrolment. Research on the impact of progressive education on Catholic schools needs to be considered in light of these ongoing and defining characteristics.

## **2.2 The American Roots of Progressive Education**

Before examining the English Canadian experience of progressive education, I will first define progressive education by examining four seminal works on the history of progressive education in America. In the first, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education 1876-1957*, Lawrence A. Cremin outlines the defining ideas behind progressive

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<sup>25</sup> Holtz, “Curriculum in Context,” 297.

education, the diverse interests of early progressives, the rise and decline of the Progressive Education Association (P.E.A.), along with progressive education's shift from radical to mainstream. He provides valuable insight into the oft-misunderstood father of progressive education, John Dewey.<sup>26</sup> The second piece, *The One Best System* by David Tyack, highlights the work of administrative progressives, who promoted standardization, administrative and educational specialization, including the improvement of teacher qualifications, and curriculum differentiation (i.e. increased variety in courses of study).<sup>27</sup> In the third work, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958*, Herbert M. Kliebard argues that four main interest groups vied for control of education: humanists, and three types of reformers, developmentalists, social efficiency educators, and social meliorists, or reconstructionists.<sup>28</sup> Finally, *How Teachers Taught: Constancy and Change in American Classrooms 1890-1980*, Larry Cuban focuses on when, how and why progressive teaching practices were found in American schools. Cuban assesses teaching techniques, classroom space, and student autonomy and argues that there was more stability than change in American classrooms in the twentieth century. Together these authors provide context and one basis for the study of progressive education as it was taken up in Canada.

Cremin explains the origins of progressive education as follows:

[P]rogressive education began as part of a vast humanitarian effort to apply the promise of American life—the ideal of government by, of, and for the people—to the puzzling new urban-industrial civilization that came into being during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The word *progressive* provides the clue to what it really was: the educational phase of American Progressivism writ large. In effect, progressive education began as Progressivism in education: a many-sided

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<sup>26</sup> Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, (Toronto: Knopf, 1969).

<sup>27</sup> David B. Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 126-129, 177-98.

<sup>28</sup> Kliebard, *The Struggle*.

effort to use the schools to improve the lives of individuals.<sup>29</sup>

For progressives, this meant a number of things. Firstly, the curriculum in schools needed to be broadened to include contemporary concerns such as health education, vocational education, and support for ensuring the quality of family and community life. Schools also needed to implement pedagogical practices that were based on the latest scientific research in psychology and the social sciences. Progressivists recognized that if education were for all people, individualization in learning would be essential to keep children in school longer. Progressives saw education as the key to a successful democracy. “Progressivism implied the radical faith that culture could be democratized without being vulgarized, the faith that everyone could share not only in the benefits of the new sciences but in the pursuit of the arts as well,” a belief which Cremin argues “negates contemporary nonsense about the movement being narrowly practical and nothing else.”<sup>30</sup>

Cremin’s work provides insight into the most influential individuals in the history of progressive education, as well as the evolution of the Progressive Education Association (P.E.A.). In the mid-nineteenth century, education became compulsory and new challenges faced teachers. Educators such as Francis Parker were concerned about students who could not write, but knew the rules of grammar; who could read from familiar textbooks, but could not transfer this skill to other materials.<sup>31</sup> By the turn of the century, the influence of science, and social Darwinism in particular, was widespread. It was in this period that philosopher and psychologist William James sought to establish psychology as a scientific discipline, and Edward Thorndike,

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<sup>29</sup> Cremin, *Transformation*, vii-xi.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 130. Interestingly, John Dewey, generally considered the father of progressive education, referred to Francis Parker with this title.

inspired by James' work, sought to root education in a "comprehensive science of pedagogy."<sup>32</sup>

John Dewey was also inspired by James' work, more specifically by "the idea of an objective psychological theory firmly rooted in evolutionary biology."<sup>33</sup>

As Dewey's interest in education grew, he experimented using hypotheses to better understand education. He recognized that the curriculum could not just be a series of activities, but that it needed to come from a teacher with knowledge who allowed the activities to take place and provided learning opportunities for the child. Dewey thought the teacher's knowledge was central to guiding student learning so that the activities were not meaningless or without a goal.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, though he understood the aims of education to be social, he thought that education came about through changes in an individual student's behaviours, perceptions, and insights. Thus democracy was dependent on a school system that was capable of shaping the habits and values of each student. Cremin notes that, though Honorary President of the P.E.A. from 1926 to 1952, Dewey was critical of its work and was ultimately disappointed with the way progressive education had failed to replace teacher and textbook-centered schooling with something better planned, organized and designed.<sup>35</sup> The changing principles and ideological struggles of the P.E.A reveal that progressive education in the early twentieth century was multi-faceted and changing, not easily identifiable by one set of principles or limited to one individual, such as John Dewey's, theoretical framework.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 116. In *American Education: The Metropolitan Experience 1876-1980*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 174, Cremin explains some of the difficulties with Dewey: a variety of reformers could relate to Dewey (and considered themselves "Deweyans") because his work synthesized so many of the popular ideas of his day; and Dewey's writing style was not always clear, and over time he emphasized different concepts.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 258. Eventually, with membership waning, in the spring of 1944 the PEA changed its name to American Education Fellowship; this organization folded in 1955.

David Tyack's history of schooling in the United States highlights a specific group in progressive education, the administrative progressives, who represented a movement with identifiable actors and a common ideology and platform, and who made a significant impact on urban education in the twentieth century.<sup>37</sup> Administrative progressives believed that "the underlying principle of differentiating schooling [was] to meet the needs of different classes of pupils, as determined by the educational expert in the light of the presumed career of the student."<sup>38</sup> Drawing on the work of scientific curriculum developers such as Edward Thorndike and Franklin Bobbitt, administrative progressives impacted school organization, administration, and the differentiation of education. This resulted in an increase in junior schools, vocational schools, and junior colleges, curriculum revision, the use of testing to group students, record keeping on students, and the standardization of teacher training.<sup>39</sup> Like pedagogical progressives, such as John Dewey, administrative progressives were critical of traditional education, "the old one best system."<sup>40</sup> They rejected its lack of differentiation in structure, uniform curriculum, recitation methods, and low levels of teacher training. "They still wanted a one best system, but it was to be a more complex, differentiated organization adapted to new social and economic conditions."<sup>41</sup>

While it is evident in Cremin's work that several different interests were vying for dominance historically in education, and in Tyack's work that administrative progressives were making an impact, it is Kliebard who expounds on the four dominant interest groups and which aspects of its agenda each group succeeded in implementing. Kliebard also explains the role of

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<sup>37</sup> Tyack, *One Best System*, 188.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

Dewey in their midst. In the late nineteenth century, the curriculum status quo reflected the belief of mental disciplinarians that certain academic subjects taught in certain ways had the ability to strengthen a student's mental faculties, such as the memory, reasoning, will, imagination.<sup>42</sup> This approach, which Kliebard calls "mental discipline," struggled to find widespread success and declined with the rise of psychology.

Kliebard's first interest group, the humanists, remained committed to the idea that the primary purpose of the school was intellectual development, and they therefore prioritized the development of reason and the study of western cultural heritage. Humanists in the early twentieth century thought the mind could be developed through any subject, and thus favoured the elective system. They emphasized the development of the will through habit formation, and saw no need to distinguish between students preparing for college and those preparing for life in general.<sup>43</sup> Humanists opposed Rousseau's view of the child, namely that children are adversely impacted by society, and argued that children need to be trained to "gain control over their natural impulses, not to submit to them."<sup>44</sup> Even when humanists moved away from the use of drills and authoritarianism in schooling, they were still swimming against the tide of radical reform.<sup>45</sup>

The child study movement, the first of the three groups of educational reformers identified by Kliebard, came out of the developmentalists.<sup>46</sup> As its name suggests, the highest priority for the developmentalists was the so-called "natural development" of the child. This, they argued,

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<sup>42</sup> Kliebard, *The Struggle*, 5.

<sup>43</sup> This is evident in the report of the National Education Association's Committee of Ten, published in 1893.

<sup>44</sup> Kliebard, *The Struggle*, 37.

<sup>45</sup> For example, William Torrey Harris, who followed Charles Eliot in leading the humanist camp, and whom Kliebard names as the "last great humanist spokesman," was not an advocate of drills and authoritarianism, but nonetheless wanted to see the intellect developed and the will trained through habit formation.

<sup>46</sup> The Herbartians, who following the work of German, Johann Friedrich Herbart, and with whom Dewey was associated, also eventually blended with the developmentalists into the child-study movement. Kliebard, *The Struggle*, 34.

was the most scientifically defensible basis for determining what should be taught in school. The child study movement was on the one hand critical of measuring, and on the other viewed humanists as speculative, unscientific, and old fashioned.<sup>47</sup> They criticized the way schools fostered passivity and imposed civilization upon the child. Inspired by educators and philosophers such as Comenius, Froebel, Pestalozzi, and Rousseau, the child study educators idealized childhood and agreed that schools, as much as possible, should not interfere with the child's natural development. A leader in the child-study movement, G. Stanley Hall, speculated about a parallel between the stages of individual development and the history of the human race (leading to a fascination with culture-epochs), and was in favour of individualization. This meant streaming children according to their intellectual ability, as well as genetic characteristics such as gender, and even creating "separate schools for dullards in the elementary grades."<sup>48</sup>

John Dewey questioned the hereditary determinism supported by Hall, and Hall's reluctance to foster activity in children and adolescents. In fact, Kliebard notes, "Dewey was not as far removed from the humanists' emphasis on the development of the intellect as he sometimes imagined...he shared with both Eliot and Harris a basic optimism about the power of human intellectual capacities that ran contrary to Hall."<sup>49</sup> Dewey also questioned culture-epochs. He advocated for a curriculum sympathetic to children's interests and wanted schools to be miniature communities where students develop their own ideas, and history is studied as it relates or is appropriate to the child's development, rather than in a survey manner. While the three R's – reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic – should still be taught through basic activities, they should not be taught as an event in themselves. Dewey suggested the unity in the curriculum

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 58. See footnote 45 in this chapter for more information on Eliot and Harris.

come from “occupations,” a fundamental and pervasive group of activities, designed to “develop the kind of intelligence that would lead to a command of the conditions of one’s life and ultimately to social progress.”<sup>50</sup> And he “idealized scientific inquiry as a general model for reflective thinking.”<sup>51</sup> Dewey’s work, however, according to Kliebard, remained more in the realm of ideas than of practice. Like other educational scholars, Dewey anticipated the potential consequences of social change, and “saw the need to restore in a different setting certain valuable experiences,” while those in the social efficiency interest group saw “an opportunity to exercise a direct and desirable form of social control.”<sup>52</sup>

Those promoting the doctrine of social efficiency were confident that a scientifically developed curriculum could meet the needs of modern industrial society.<sup>53</sup> They hoped schools would do more than develop intelligence; they envisioned schools that would respond to the decline of church and family by preparing students for future adult activities. Movements in psychology, which replaced faculty psychology with the development of a psychological theory, and the mental measurement movement, which contributed the necessary technology to assess and predict, supported social efficiency.<sup>54</sup> Franklin Bobbitt, one of the most famous social efficiency advocates, proposed that students should not be taught what they will never use, but that future social and vocational roles should be anticipated and students educated accordingly.<sup>55</sup> Edward Thorndike’s work sought to discredit the mental disciplinarian concept of transfer and

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>55</sup> Kliebard explains that Bobbitt’s work, *The Curriculum* (1918), reflected the height of social efficiency as curriculum theory. It advocated for step-by-step curriculum planning that was simple and specific, which made it attractive and accessible for many people (116-7).

emphasized native intelligence through extensive work with intelligence testing.<sup>56</sup> Social efficiency educators recognized that curriculum based on human activity could not possibly cover everything. It must focus on what society determines is most important for children to learn. The importance of determining learning outcomes before educational activity is a lasting contribution of the scientific curriculum-makers. They also succeeded in establishing the junior high school and replacing elements of the traditional curriculum, such as social studies substituted in place of history.<sup>57</sup> Kliebard notes that Dewey objected to education as preparation, pointing out that “the prominence and persistence of the basic ideas of the scientific curriculum-makers indicates that someone like the relatively obscure Bobbitt may have been far more in touch with the true temper of his times than the world-renowned Dewey.”<sup>58</sup>

William Kilpatrick, a devout disciple of Dewey, published an article titled “The Project Method” in *Teachers College Record* in September of 1918. This became a popular alternative to scientific curriculum making for developmentalist reformers interested in a more relevant curriculum. Attacking what he liked to call the “cold storage” view of knowledge, in which,

facts and skills were stored up for future use, Kilpatrick proposed instead a curriculum that deemphasized the acquisition of knowledge in favour of a curriculum that was synonymous with purposeful activity. As Kilpatrick redefined it, the project was now not simply a way of reorganizing the teaching of, say, science; it became...a substitute for science.<sup>59</sup>

By the 1930s, the project method had grown into a general emphasis on experience or activity in

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 107. David Snedden was also an influential proponent of social efficiency, who agreed with Bobbitt’s work. Kliebard suggests Snedden “had a much grander and more explicit social vision” based on his view that school and curriculum was like a factory and the manufacturing process, Ibid., 112.

<sup>57</sup> Vocational education had emerged in the humanist curriculum in the late nineteenth century, along with the natural sciences. By the early twentieth century, it enjoyed widespread acceptance. Nicholas Murray Butler, president of New York College for the Training of Teachers and later head of Teachers College, Columbia University, explained that manual training could develop the hand and eye in the same way the study of history developed the memory and faculties of the mind. However, Dewey disagreed, arguing that this type of education had the potential to lead to “the feudal dogma of social pre-destination.” Ibid., 132, 148.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 166.

the curriculum. It found success in elementary schools in particular, which were more flexible in terms of organization. In spite of its success, “the developmentalist interest group, once a specific child-study movement rooted in genetic psychology but now a more broadly based group of child-centered educators with Kilpatrick at the helm,” was not unchallenged.<sup>60</sup>

While the scientific curriculum-makers were arguing in favour of “efficient participation in adult life through activity analysis,” and the child-centered curriculum-makers in favour of curriculum that derived from “the present needs and interests of children,” a third group of reformers emerged with Harold Rugg and George Counts at the helm.<sup>61</sup> Counts, who was critical of schools for maintaining the existing social order and for perpetuating social problems rather than addressing them, questioned the “efficiency” and machine culture evident in America. “Counts was one of the first among leaders in education to reflect that undercurrent of uneasiness about the American social structure and to direct that malaise to a critical examination of American schools.”<sup>62</sup> Social reconstructionists saw curriculum as a way to remedy the evils of capitalism and address issues of social injustice. While opposition between the social efficiency educators and social reconstructionists was well established by the 1930s, opposition between the latter and the (extreme) developmentalists emerged in the Progressive Education Association. Dewey, as honorary president, rejected schools that practiced measurement and reforms influenced by social efficiency educators, while at the same time speaking against the child-centered movement’s position that the curriculum should not be imposed on the child. He saw this as an overemphasis on the freedom and individuality of the child.<sup>63</sup> Counts agreed with

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 182-3.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 193.

Dewey, though his concern was motivated by concerns about the negative effects of capitalism. Counts was interested in curriculum that would address social and economic ills. Dewey, on the other hand, thought “the road to social progress was much more closely tied to the ability of schools to teach independent thinking and to the ability of students to analyze social problems than it was to an organized effort designed to redress specific social evils.”<sup>64</sup>

The success of the social reconstructionists is evident in the widespread popularity of social studies textbooks, written by Counts’ colleague at Teachers College, Harold Rugg. Kliebard points out, though, to a certain extent, all of the reform movements are evident in Rugg. Rugg believed in science, the activity method, and the social role of schools. He was anti-capitalist, distressed by the disparity between rich and poor, and sometimes even criticized as un-American.<sup>65</sup> *The Child-Centered School*, which Rugg wrote with Ann Shumaker in 1928, promoted the activity principles of Kilpatrick, while the speeches he was giving at the time called for social action. This was typical of the curriculum reforms of the 1930s, which Kliebard explains “represented not so much a victory of one position over the other as a hybridization of what were once distinct and easily recognizable curriculum positions.”<sup>66</sup> Eclecticism and social reconstructionism in curriculum development dominated curriculum interests.

As confusion grew over what qualified as progressive education, criticism of it increased. Some university academics who did not typically interfere with elementary and secondary schools, voiced a renewed interest in the humanist ideal of liberal education, while others called for the uniformity in schooling promoted by social efficiency reformers. The latter singled out the activity movement, which they saw as representative of progressive education, and by the

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 198.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 201.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 210.

late 1930s, “essentialism” had emerged as the opposite of progressive education. Essentialism called for a contemporary curriculum, but emphasized the need for students to gain mastery over it. Kliebard suggests “essentialism may have been a case where the established lines between traditional humanism and social efficiency became difficult to delineate.”<sup>67</sup>

At the same time, leaders in progressive education, John Dewey and Boyd Bode, published books voicing concerns about educational reform associated with progressive education.<sup>68</sup> The latter argued against absolutism, or the idea that education could be based on universal principles applicable and valid for all people at all times and in all places, and warned against progressivism becoming its own absolutism. Bode also criticized progressivists’ neglect of the traditional subjects and their aversion to organizing the curriculum. He argued, before his time, that the pupil must learn to think as a specialist. Dewey, on the other hand, argued “what was needed was not a rejection of organized subject matter but a reconstruction of it.”<sup>69</sup> Dewey thought all disciplines of knowledge had their origin in human activity. Therefore, the origins of knowledge must first be identified in experience, and secondly developed from what has been experienced to “a fuller and richer and also more organized form, a form that gradually approximates that in which subject-matter is presented to the skilled, mature person.” Both Bode and Dewey agreed that the curriculum should be moving in the direction wherein “the learner progressively approximates the intellectual processes exhibited by the mature scholar.”<sup>70</sup>

After the Second World War, life adjustment education emerged out of the social efficiency movement. The life adjustment curriculum was interested in “the real business of

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 233.

<sup>68</sup> In 1938, Boyd H. Bode published *Progressive Education at the Crossroads* and John Dewey, *Experience and Education*.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 236.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 237-8.

life,” as opposed to the “remote values of the academic curriculum.” With only twenty percent of students moving from high school to college and another twenty percent entering skilled occupations, roughly sixty percent of students failed to benefit from school.<sup>71</sup> Kliebard notes that the life adjustment curriculum appealed widely, including to some Catholic educators, who felt that, in addition to addressing concerns for students not served by the traditional curriculum, it addressed the decline in academic standards that had negatively impacted college education.<sup>72</sup> In the end, it was the replacement of traditional academic subjects with life adjustment education that caught the attention of scholars from a variety of fields, and drew their attention to the state of elementary and high school curriculum. Moreover, it was life adjustment education that sparked in the 1950s “a period of criticism of American education unequalled in modern times.”<sup>73</sup>

Kliebard’s study concludes that in the late 1950s, the outcome of the struggle for the American curriculum remained undecided. Curriculum had shifted from the hands of the professional education community to academics from major universities, and attempts to replace the academic subject as the basic building block of the curriculum were stopped. Localized curriculum reform diminished, while centralized curriculum revision and development grew. With the increased presence and funding of the federal government, the humanist group rapidly became the most influential, but the other groups did not disappear altogether, and their contributions remained: the developmentalists had managed to bring curriculum thinkers to consider the nature of the child, social efficiency educators had established that education should

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 252.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 260. This point provides insight into the critical debate about education that emerged in the Catholic newspaper in British Columbia in the 1950s.

have tangible rewards, and the social meliorists that schooling should be connected to social progress, such as civil rights.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, within each school subject elements of the various interest groups could be identified.

Though Cremin, Tyack, and Kliebard's contributions to American curriculum history defined progressive education, its proponents, critics, and influences, they do not explore how the individual teacher implemented the given curriculum. Larry Cuban enters the conversation on the classroom level, asking what is perhaps the most practical question with regard to curriculum reform: what did teaching and classrooms look like historically? Cuban acknowledges that there were administrative progressives, interested in scientific curriculum making for the purposes of social efficiency and organization, progressivist reformers seeking to use schooling to reconstruct society, and pedagogical progressives (such as William Kilpatrick) who were influenced largely by John Dewey and emphasized the centrality of the child in the school.<sup>75</sup> It is the latter group whose efforts Cuban examines.

To assess teaching in light of pedagogical progressivism, Cuban distinguishes between child-centered and teacher-centered instruction. To do this he examines the amount of class time given to instruction, the number of students receiving the instruction (individual, small group, or whole class), the ratio of teacher to student talk, the type of learning activities made available to students, the degree to which the teacher determines how students behave, use class time, and experience independence, and the arrangement of the classroom.<sup>76</sup> Together these indicate dominant forms of instruction. Cuban also identifies the way language can betray the researcher. "By 1940, the vocabulary of pedagogical progressives had rapidly turned into the conventional

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 268-9.

<sup>75</sup> Cuban, *How Teachers Taught*, 43.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 62.

educational [language] of the times as expressed by both teachers and administrators.” In spite of the language, syllabi and suggested activities made available to teachers, however, teacher-centered practices continued to dominate instruction.<sup>77</sup>

Cuban’s research on rural and urban schools found that progressivism was evident in teaching, though not in the majority of the schools. Moreover, its impact was felt more in elementary schools than in secondary schools. This is at least partly because at the elementary level skills are emphasized more than knowledge, and teachers spend hours with the same group each day. At the elementary level teachers also experience more direction and resources from the superintendent’s office and fewer outside pressures (from post-secondary institutions, for example). Even though Cuban found most classrooms remained teacher-centered in the twentieth century, he points out that strains and hybrid versions of pedagogical progressivism supported by progressive rhetoric were identifiable.

The underlying reasons for continuity and change in instructional practices are not easily identifiable. Cuban’s analysis of why teaching remained the same highlights limitations imposed on teachers by the organizational structure of the school and the broader societal purposes of schooling for socialization and sorting. With regard to change, he considers the power of the individual teacher’s belief about effective instructional practices and the degree to which progressive education was effectively implemented.<sup>78</sup> He concludes that no single explanation for continuity and change can adequately account for ongoing teacher-centered instruction, a greater amount of instructional changes at the elementary level than the high school level, and

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 38, 55.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 147.

the implementation of some progressive practices over others.<sup>79</sup> In the end, Cuban concurs with Dewey's 1952 observation that far more discussion about progressive pedagogy than actual change to classroom practice occurred.<sup>80</sup>

Together Cremin, Kliebard, Tyack, and Cuban reveal essential insights into progressive education. First of all, it was an organic movement influenced by time and place and not limited to one theorist or set of principles. Though John Dewey is frequently named as its representative, he was often misunderstood, a problem compounded by the fact that subsequent scholars aligned themselves with his work while freely promoting their own ideas. In fact, numerous interest groups existed, all seeking to use schools for the betterment of society. Often through scientific means and in light of modern psychology, the focus of these groups varied from social reconstruction, social efficiency, to child development. Finally, while discussion of progressive education is in abundance, evidence of its pedagogical impact remains in question.

### **2.3 Progressive Education in English Canada**

Robert Patterson, a leading Canadian scholar on the nature and impact of progressive education in English Canada, describes Putman and Weir's 1925 *Survey of the School System* in British Columbia as "the single most important event which indicated that Canadian educators were seriously studying and becoming a part of the progressive education phenomenon."<sup>81</sup> Patterson points out that Canada, on the whole, with its many private schools, preferred "social and educational conservatism" and that in educational reform there were few extremists. Putman and Weir, for their part, identified five different perspectives on the progressive education

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 153. Cuban suggests hybrid variations developed because of "the personal cost in time and energy and the lack of help to put complex ideas into practice."

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>81</sup> Robert S. Patterson, "The Canadian Response to Progressive Education," in *Essays on Canadian Education*, eds. Nick Kach, Kas Mazurek, Robert S. Patterson, Ivan DeFaveri (Calgary, AB: Detselig, 1986), 61-77.

movement: “reactionary and ultraconservative, conservative, moderate, progressivism, and radicalism” and advocated for the moderate position, which “favoured changes but did so within restricted limits.”<sup>82</sup> Support for the progressive school was considered the middle position between ultraconservatives or traditionalists, and ultra-progressives and reactionaries.<sup>83</sup> The cautious approach to progressive educational reform is sometimes considered the distinctive feature of progressive education in Canada, compared with its American counterpart.<sup>84</sup>

The language of progressive education typically emphasized the following concepts:<sup>85</sup> learning should be child-centered, based on the student’s own needs and interests, the “whole” child must be educated – often ambiguous, this typically meant that education was about generally developing the behaviours and habits of a student rather than isolating their intellect, will, or imagination for refinement – learning should involve activity-based teaching strategies and co-operative group learning.<sup>86</sup> In English Canada, not unlike in the United States, activity-oriented units or projects, also referred to as “enterprises,” a term taken from the British Hadow Report of 1926, were central to progressive education, and were intended to promote cooperation, communication, and democratic decision-making skills.<sup>87</sup> With progressive education, Western Canada saw the creation of junior high schools for students between twelve and fifteen years of age, and the blending of history, geography, and civics to create a new

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<sup>82</sup> Putman and Weir, *Survey*, 25-7 (quoted by Patterson, *Canadian Response*, 71). The conservative nature of the report is also described by Amy von Heyking, “Selling Progressive Education to Albertans, 1935-53,” *Historical Studies in Education* 10(1)(1998): 67-84.

<sup>83</sup> R. S. Patterson, “The Canadian Experience with Progressive Education,” in *Canadian Education: Historical Themes and Contemporary Issues* ed. Brian Titley (Calgary: Detselig, 1990), 98-9.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>85</sup> See Fallace, “Tracing John Dewey,” 477. These characteristics are evident from the beginning of progressive education in British Columbia and can be identified in the Putman Weir Report (1925).

<sup>86</sup> Patterson, “Canadian Experience,” 95-110. See also Clark, “Historical Context,” 17-37. The development of the various faculties such as imagination, will, and intellect, in isolation was the result of faculty psychology, which declined at the turn of the century with the rise of developmental psychology (see Sutherland and Kliebard’s discussion of this above).

<sup>87</sup> Alberta used the term “enterprise” exclusively, while British Columbia frequently used the terms “units” and “projects.”

course called social studies.<sup>88</sup>

Penney Clark explains that American thought was influential both directly and through interprovincial activity.<sup>89</sup> American progressivists and educational scientists such as David Snedden, Franklin Bobbitt, and George S. Counts were promoted by the British Columbia Minister of Education, G.M. Weir, and implemented through guides such as Harrap's *The Technique of Curriculum Making*. In social studies, progressive education came through Harold Rugg's widely used texts, *Man in a Changing Society*. In the 1940s, Donald Dickie's Canadian published, American influenced reference book on instruction, *The Enterprise in Theory and Practice*, became a principal source of instruction in progressive education and was used in teacher education programs at many institutions across the country.<sup>90</sup>

Amy von Heyking points out that American influence on Canadian education in the twentieth century has often been seen in a negative light, with American educational reforms deemed inappropriate for Canadian schools.<sup>91</sup> In reality, however, there were a number of similar social, political, and economic factors that influenced educational policy and practice in both nations. For example, globalization, immigration and industrialization were also at work in Canada. So while Canadian educators often received degrees from leading American universities and then returned home to implement curriculum revisions, they also were responding to the needs of Canadian education. American contacts through the Progressive Education Association

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<sup>88</sup> Putman and Weir, *Survey; Programme of Studies for British Columbia* (Victoria: Kings Printer, 1927). Though social studies and some middle schools have remained, several other curriculum movements have followed progressive education in the latter half of the twentieth century: structure of the disciplines, social issues and values education, Canada studies, citizenship education, and an increased emphasis on history education. See: Clark, *Historical Context*, 17-37.

<sup>89</sup> Clark, *Historical Context*, 18-19. For example, Alberta was particularly known for its embrace of progressive education. See Nick Kach, "Progressive Education in Alberta," in *Essays on Canadian Education* eds. Nick Kach, Kas Mazurek, Robert S. Patterson, and Ivan DeFaveri (Calgary, AB: Detselig, 1986), 79-96.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 22. Dickie's was the only Canadian published text on progressive education. Dickie's writings reflect her close relationship with pedagogical progressives, Von Heyking, "Selling Progressive Education," 68.

<sup>91</sup> Amy von Heyking, "Ties that Bind? American influence on Canadian Education," *Education Canada* 44, 4 (Fall 2004): 30-34.

were often invited to visit Canadian classrooms, to offer professional development and to provide support for project-based teaching and learning.<sup>92</sup> Robert S. Patterson also highlights the fact that progressive education in Canada was primarily a product of American influence.<sup>93</sup>

Some scholars have argued that the arrival of progressive education in British Columbia signified the development of a progressive state committed to administrative progressivism through scientific efficiency more than pedagogically progressive schooling. For example, Jean Mann points out that the Putman Weir Report does not quote John Dewey directly, but instead Franklin Bobbitt, David Snedden, and Edward Thorndike. These were educational leaders who emphasized the need for social efficiency and control through testing and measurement, and did not display any particular commitment to democracy.<sup>94</sup> A follower of Thorndike, G.M. Weir believed intelligence testing was a highly valuable means to ensuring that those with academic potential reached university (and those without did not).<sup>95</sup> Though the *Survey* recommended the establishment of junior high schools based on the principles of developmental psychology, and that teachers should focus on teaching the student rather than the subject, Mann argues that the interests of the child were not its primary concern. Junior high schools and tests provided by the Department of Education were valuable in reducing school dropouts and grade repetition, which among other things, was costly. Keeping children in school was part of a broader social and political agenda to meet the needs of industrialized society. Weir was interested in social reform, and this would be through socialization of the individual, not “in the Deweyan sense by the increased participation of all in common interests, so that by ‘freer interaction and mutual

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 30. According to Tomkins, reformers included Carleton Washburne, Boyd H. Bode, Harold Rugg, Hilda Taba, and Ralph Tyler. Tomkins, *Common Countenance*, 175-6.

<sup>93</sup> Patterson, “Canadian Response,” 61-77.

<sup>94</sup> Mann, “Progressive State,” 91-118.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 98-9.

adjustment’ a more ‘worthy, lovely and harmonious’ society should be built,” but by the “inculcation of the ‘right’ social values by means of the curriculum, teachers, principals, indeed by the whole social structure of the school.”<sup>96</sup>

Catherine Broom concurs with Mann that the efficiency of the school, “that is, of ensuring that the most benefit was achieved at the lowest price” was central to the Putman Weir Report.<sup>97</sup> Under Weir’s guidance, efficiency came through standardized testing, with conclusions and policies drawn from tables of data, an increase in home economics, manual training, physical exercise and hygiene classes, and ultimately “the setting up of a smoothly running, professionalized school system.”<sup>98</sup> Though the curriculum revision that followed the report used Deweyan and pedagogically progressive language, Bobbitt’s pragmatic approach to curriculum planning is evident throughout. Broom argues the “scientific and rationalistic understanding of curriculum illustrated the adoption of factory ideology” in British Columbia, which starts from desired “outputs” or objectives then decides how to accomplish these.<sup>99</sup> Broom and Mann provide an important reminder that progressive education differed in time and place according to the social, political and economic conditions. Furthermore, the influence of one interest group, such as the pedagogical progressives, cannot be examined in isolation.

In line with Cuban’s observation that pedagogical progressivism changed the language of education more than anything else, Patterson argues that educational policy was influenced far more than practice.<sup>100</sup> Progressivism has been characterized by expressions such as “educating the whole child,” “learning by doing,” “child-centeredness,” “interest-based learning” and

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 114-5.

<sup>97</sup> Broom, “Social Efficiency,” 8 – 12.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 9. (Hygiene was related to social efficiency because healthy individuals were essential to achieve maximum efficiency.)

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>100</sup> See Cuban, *How Teachers Taught*, 137, where he concludes that there was more talk than change as a result of progressive education, which he suggests was also Dewey’s observation in 1952.

“democratic education,” but Patterson suggests these terms were not coherently articulated, and as a result the movement lacked a common educational philosophy.<sup>101</sup> The new British Columbia curriculum of 1936-37 advocated for educators to significantly shift their thinking. Among other things, they were to promote cooperation over selfish competition and focus on the learner rather than on school subjects.<sup>102</sup> Patterson states that, all in all progressive education had an impact on standards of discipline, the integration of subjects, activity based curricula, and the language educators used. The impact, however, was felt more on the level of curriculum and policy rather than on the classroom level. He also notes that it was most influential in Alberta.

When writing specifically about the implementation of progressive education in Canada between 1930 and 1945, Patterson explains that it is easy to overstate the influence of progressive education because on the one hand, the language used in curriculum policy level documents reflected a progressive philosophy, and on the other, subsequent criticism of the movement implies that it was impactful (e.g. Hilda Neatby’s *So Little for the Mind*).<sup>103</sup> Patterson suggests that there has been an assumption that intellectual reform in favour of progressive education was felt on the classroom level. Although the language in education changed, and Neatby’s criticism suggested that learning did too, Patterson found in actuality, little evidence to support changes occurred. He argues that it was more impactful on the “official level” than the classroom level, at least in part because of teacher education (or lack of), setbacks due to the Depression and the Second World War, and the fact that it came from a group of specialists rather than through a teacher led grassroots movement. Furthermore, the type of progressive

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<sup>101</sup> Patterson, “Canadian Response,” 61.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>103</sup> Robert S. Patterson, “The Implementation of Progressive Education in Canada, 1930-1945,” in *Essays on Canadian Education*, ed., Nick Kach, Kas Mazurek, Robert S. Patterson, and Ivan DeFaveri (Calgary, AB: Detselig, 1986), 79-96.

education found in Canada was selective, or “homegrown” as Canadian educators intentionally borrowed rather than unconditionally adopting from the British and American progressivists.<sup>104</sup> Patterson asserts, “ambivalence, confusion and reluctance... typify the teacher’s experience with progressive education in Canada during the Depression and WWII.”<sup>105</sup> Patterson’s point here is important as it highlights some possible assumptions about progressive education in Canada, as well as pointing out the tenuousness of its influence.

Patterson’s work is corroborated by Neil Sutherland’s oral history (published the same year), which argues a similar thesis about progressive education in public schools in Vancouver.<sup>106</sup> Sutherland’s essay opens with a detailed description of the educational environment in a select group of Vancouver elementary school classrooms (1920s - 1960s). His description is drawn from interviews, personal stories and experiences that made up life at school. He gives particular attention to pedagogical practices, such as platooning (wherein students moved as a group from class to class), school routines, events, and cultural and societal norms. In the second part, he conveys the relationship between parents and students, four types of teachers (good, nice, mean, and incompetent) and the nature of class management and corporal punishment. In the third section, Sutherland concludes that formal education prevailed in this time period over the attempted pedagogically progressive recommendations and reforms of the 1920s and 1930s. According to Sutherland, progressivism failed to replace formalism because teachers were inadequately trained in progressive pedagogy and class sizes were too large.

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 86-87.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>106</sup> Sutherland, “Formalism,” 175-210.

Patrice Milewski also provides an oral history of curricular change in the 1930s, with particular attention to the nature of teaching in rural communities, in an attempt to evaluate the progressive reforms introduced in Ontario.<sup>107</sup> He aligns his work with Patterson, explaining “the policy level commitment to implementing ‘progressive’ education across Canada was only partial with the result that reforms were never given a fair or extensive trial.”<sup>108</sup> Amy von Heyking recently challenged Milewski, Patterson and Sutherland’s conclusions, arguing that progressive education did take root in Alberta.<sup>109</sup> She points out that Patterson’s negative assessment of the implementation of progressive education is inaccurate, in particular because he fails to account for the permanent replacement of history courses with social studies, and the ongoing use of the “enterprise” method, even in rural schools. Through the work of H.C. Newland and Donald Dickie, “an extraordinarily radical curriculum revision” took place in Alberta.<sup>110</sup> Von Heyking describes their work as a “systematic attempt to sell their revision,” which they recognized depended on support from teachers, trustees, parents and the general public.<sup>111</sup> Though the instructional reform was perhaps not implemented as its creators may have hoped, von Heyking uses Department of Education correspondence, newspaper accounts, and teacher memoirs to provide evidence of the lasting and effective presence of progressive education in rural and urban Albertan schools.

It should be noted that, like von Heyking, there are other scholars who challenge the conclusion that progressivism failed to take root, or that traditionalism prevailed. Paul Axelrod

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<sup>107</sup> Patrice Milewski, “I Paid No Attention to It”: An Oral History of Curricular Change in the 1930s,” *Historical Studies in Education* 24, 1 (2012): 112-129.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>109</sup> Amy von Heyking, “Implementing Progressive Education in Alberta’s Rural Schools,” *Historical Studies in Education* 24, 1 (2012): 93-111.

<sup>110</sup> Von Heyking, “Selling Progressive Education,” 68.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

explains that the historiographical debate between traditionalism and progressivism has been oversimplified.<sup>112</sup> Writing about Toronto schools in the 1950s, Axelrod recalls the confusion he felt when he first read Hilda Neatby's description of Canadian education (lacking rigour, traditional authority, and structure). His own experience attested to the opposite. Rather than concluding along with Patterson, Sutherland and others, that traditionalism won, however, Axelrod's research highlights the many instances of progressivism that historians have overlooked. He suggests that the educators of the 1950s were pragmatic, not inclined to the philosophical, and that the system still retained much of its order, discipline and hierarchy.<sup>113</sup> Educators used new practices as they saw fit, but were always working within the political culture and dominant values of their times. Axelrod's contextualization of this discussion proposes the possibility that a hybrid form of progressivism, like that observed by Larry Cuban, may have been what took place in British Columbia's Catholic schools.

Similarly, Robert Stamp provides a multifaceted description of his experience as an elementary student in the 1940s and a high school student in the 1950s in Ontario.<sup>114</sup> He suggests that by the 1940s, elementary schools were already beginning to reject progressivism, which had made its mark on the 1937 Ontario curriculum reforms. With regard to high schools, he describes English classes that were run from a traditionalist model, but explains that science classes provided the clearest evidence of the impact of progressive education, because in science students came the closest to "constructing [their] own reality" through student-centered, hands-

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<sup>112</sup> Paul Axelrod, "Beyond the Progressive Education Debate: A Profile of Toronto Schooling in the 1950s," *Historical Studies in Education / Revue d'histoire de l'éducation* 17, 2 (2005): 227-41. Accessed March 3, 2013: [http://historicalstudiesineducation.ca/index.php/edu\\_hse-rhe/article/view/77](http://historicalstudiesineducation.ca/index.php/edu_hse-rhe/article/view/77).

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>114</sup> Robert M. Stamp, "Growing Up Progressive? Part I: Going to Elementary School in 1940s Ontario," *Historical Studies in Education / Revue d'histoire de l'éducation* 17,1 (2005): 187-98; and Robert M. Stamp, "Growing Up Progressive? Part II: Going to High School in 1950s Ontario," *Historical Studies in Education / Revue d'histoire de l'éducation* 17, 2 (2005): 321-31.

on experimentation and discovery.<sup>115</sup> Stamp highlights progressivist attempts to educate the whole child, such as public speaking, which were interwoven with traditional academic teaching strategies and environments.<sup>116</sup> Referencing the actions of the Ontario Minister of Education, William Dunlop and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Stamp concludes that by the 1950s, the tides had fully turned; schools were determined, more than ever, to reflect traditional education and were emphatic in their rejection of progressive education.<sup>117</sup>

Patterson, Sutherland, Milewski, von Heyking, Axelrod and Stamp's work provide reference points for my research because of their conclusions. Questions that they answer in their articles could also be asked of Catholic schools: Did progressivism or formalism prevail (in spite of curriculum reforms)? Did progressivism affect policy more than practice? Did social studies become part of the curriculum and was project-based education practiced? Did the training of teachers (or lack of it) and class size interfere with progressive advances?

Nick Kach's piece on criticisms of progressive education in Canada outlines four perspectives: the humanistic critique, neo-Thomistic (including Catholic) criticisms, the traditionalist condemnation, the progressivist critique, as well as the general Canadian reaction to progressive education.<sup>118</sup> Kach explains that, although Catholics were willing to implement progressivist techniques in parochial schools, they were concerned with progressive education's attempt to "draw out" human nature. This was problematic because it took the focus from God, and from preparing students for eternal life with God. Kach cites the papal encyclical, *On the Christian Education of Youth* (1929) to explain the roles of the family, parents, and Church in the

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<sup>115</sup> Stamp, "Growing Up Progressive Part II," 326.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 329.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 330.

<sup>118</sup> Kach, "Criticisms of Progressive Education," 121-40.

education of youth. He suggests that the Pope disagreed with an education that rejected the concept of original sin, and instead focussed on child freedom and self-government, and “the encouragement of activity that had no connection with divine law.”<sup>119</sup> He goes on to highlight some Catholics’ concern over abandoning the principle of authority and replacing it with being attentive to the wishes of the students. They condemned this as Rousseauian naturalism.<sup>120</sup> Other Catholic scholars were simply concerned at the break with tradition, and the move from absolute and permanent goals to relativism and an emphasis on process.<sup>121</sup>

Kach suggests that the toughest critics were arguably the progressivists themselves. For example, Margaret Naumberg, who saw in the movement an overemphasis on group learning, or Joseph K. Hart, who was concerned that students disregarded others and were becoming impertinent in the absence of significant subjects that develop intellectual control. Others, such as Henry Harap and John Dewey, were concerned that progressivism had the potential to lead to intellectual and academic weakness. They also recognized themselves that they had failed to put forward a clear and constructive educational or social reform policy. When discussing the widespread Canadian reaction to progressivism, Kach again mentions Catholic educators, revealing that, due to progressivist educational reforms in 1936, the Alberta Catholic Education Association was established to promote its own interests. The association published a bulletin and from this Kach draws a number of excerpts to argue that the Catholic community in Alberta was, for the most part, not in support of progressive education.<sup>122</sup> Kach concludes by

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>120</sup> Rousseau saw children as naturally good and innocent – it is society that corrupts children – and believed that they should be in control of their own development. In contrast, Catholics saw children as naturally good, but with the capacity to sin (i.e. corrupted by original sin), and believed children are in need of an education that will help them avoid the tendency to sin.

<sup>121</sup> Kach, “Criticisms of Progressive Education,” 126.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 132-133. See also: Von Heyking, *Creating Citizens* and “Implementing Progressive Education,” 93-111. In reality this opposition was likely not as united as it appears.

generalizing the discussion and, not unlike Sutherland, pointing to two philosophies at odds: traditionalists and progressivists.<sup>123</sup>

Finally, Theodore Christou's recent work on progressive education emphasizes the lasting impact of progressive education on the rhetoric and structure of public schooling in Ontario.<sup>124</sup> Drawing upon educational journals published in the interwar period, Christou examines articles related to three core characteristics of progressive education: active learning, individualized instruction, and the linkage of schools with contemporary society. He divides the discussion according to Kliebard's three interest groups that motivated the implementation of progressive education: an interest in child study and developmental psychology, social efficiency, and social meliorism.<sup>125</sup> All three orientations are in their own right "progressive," as they reflect the social, political and economic climate of change in the interwar period. They all advocate for active, individualized and relevant learning, and depart from the language and values of traditional schooling. Christou suggests changes rooted in child study and social meliorism influenced the rhetoric more than social efficiency.<sup>126</sup> This work is particularly useful for gaining insight into the influence and of the three main types of progressivists. Moreover, in his analysis of the Ontario curriculum, Christou demonstrates the hybridization that commonly occurred in progressive reforms.<sup>127</sup> The emphasis in Christou's study lies elsewhere than on the

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<sup>123</sup> The former being Canadians in general who resisted progressive education (such as Hilda Neatby), concerned that the teaching of reading and writing was being overlooked because schools were attempting to teach too many other skills, Kach, "Criticisms of Progressive Education," 136. Kach includes former Assistant Superintendent of Edmonton's Catholic Schools, Francis O'Hara's point that there were two main schools of traditionalists that opposed progressivism: the perennialists and the essentialists.

<sup>124</sup> Theodore Christou, *Progressive Education: Revisioning and Reframing Ontario's Public Schools 1919-1942* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2012).

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 46-7. Christou's three orientations are drawn from the work of Herbert Kliebard. See Kliebard, *The Struggle*.

<sup>126</sup> Christou, *Progressive Education*, 130; this is with regard to Ontario's 1937 *Programme of Studies*.

<sup>127</sup> See Kliebard, *The Struggle*, 210, on the hybridization of curriculum reforms in the 1930s.

classroom. He acknowledges that classroom instruction may have stayed the same, even though the rhetoric made a significant break with traditional educational rhetoric.<sup>128</sup>

## 2.4 Conclusion

Having reviewed the literature on the impact of progressive educational philosophy on schooling in Canada, a few key questions remain unanswered. No studies have offered a substantial analysis of the curriculum used in Catholic schools in British Columbia. Furthermore, no research has examined the relationship between progressive education and Catholic schools in British Columbia in the first half of the twentieth century, let alone if or how progressive education was experienced in the classroom. What is known about Catholic schools emerges from studies that focus on their struggle for government funding, the possible effects of public funding, and the Catholic school's role and experience as an "independent school."<sup>129</sup> The research on progressive education, on the other hand, demonstrates that with no formal underlying philosophy and an evolving definition, progressive education makes for a slippery concept to grasp. Aspects of progressive education cannot be studied in isolation. Nor can progressive education be studied without attention to its roots, or to the given social, political, and economic context in which it emerged. It also must be examined in light of the interest groups competing for control over curriculum in the early twentieth century, and of the relationship between educational philosophy, educators' assumptions and values, and how these relate to pedagogical practices. In the Catholic context, social efficiency, social reconstruction, and child-centered pedagogy, as well as Dewey's roots in pragmatic philosophy, each takes on a

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 124, referencing the work of Patrice Milewski and Robert Stamp to explain the way the language of the new curriculum was the result of social and political change, and a shift in values.

<sup>129</sup> These studies are typically about independent schools in general, of which Catholic school students are the largest demographic.

unique import when contrasted with the Catholic vision for education.

### **Chapter 3: Catholic Schools between 1924 and 1935: The Teaching Sisters and their Educational Philosophy**

In the 1924 to 1935 period, when progressive education was beginning to impact public education through junior high schools, social studies, and differentiated learning tracks, the Vancouver Catholic schools were still in the process of being established. The Department of Education's "New Programme of Studies for the High and Technical Schools of British Columbia" in 1930 describes an attempt to provide a modern curriculum by differentiating learning with five course tracks – matriculation, normal entrance, general, commercial and technical – alongside a core of common subjects.<sup>1</sup> The differentiation of learning through course tracks was also evident in some Catholic schools. However, many Catholic schools were still in the process of being established in the 1920s and early 1930s, and their resources were limited. The foundations were being laid for a Catholic school system, which was supported by rapidly growing communities of Catholic sisters who established and taught in schools. The local Catholic newspaper discussed education extensively, often in contrast to secular education, but never specifically progressive education. Rather, discussion focused on the unique aims of Catholic schooling and the importance of receiving a Catholic education. In the first section of this chapter I outline the main teaching congregations that contributed to Catholic schools in Vancouver, with particular attention to the teachers' education and the curriculum they offered. In the next section I examine Catholic educational philosophy. Together these sections provide a foundation for understanding the Catholic response to progressive education that emerged in the following time period: 1936 to 1945.

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<sup>1</sup> *Department of Education, "New Programme of Studies for the High and Technical Schools of British Columbia,"* (Victoria: Kings Printer, 1930).

### 3.1 Teaching Sisters in the Vancouver Archdiocese

The study of schools and instruction in the Archdiocese of Vancouver in the first half of the twentieth century is at the same time a study of the Catholic religious congregations that ran the schools. A basic understanding of these communities is necessary in order to understand the schools. The Catholic women who opened and staffed schools in the Vancouver archdiocese in the 1920s were a historically unique group. They were a part of a broader trend in North America that saw a dramatic increase in the number of female teaching congregations between 1850 and 1950.<sup>2</sup> Across the continent, these women made Catholic education widely available because of their willingness to staff schools and work long hours for low wages.<sup>3</sup> The women religious who arrived in British Columbia prior to 1908 were pioneers and missionaries, familiar with poverty and the rugged life on the western frontier. By the time the Archdiocese of Vancouver was established in 1908, the sisters still experienced poverty, but the severity of their living conditions often depended on the location of their school (with those teaching in remote locations more likely to encounter a pioneer lifestyle), and the degree to which their religious congregation had already established itself in British Columbia. Their primary vocation was to be “brides of Christ” and in this relationship they typically made three lifelong vows: the vow of poverty, wherein they renounced the right to individual ownership; the vow of chastity, wherein they promised to abstain from sexual relations and to strive for sexual purity; and the vow of obedience to the will of God, and its manifestations in their superiors. Secondly, they were drawn to their life’s work by a desire to serve and help those in need, and to educate (and to be educated). In her history of Catholic sisters in British Columbia, Deborah Rink points out that

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<sup>2</sup> Rink, *Spirited Women*, 129.

<sup>3</sup> Dolan, *American Catholic Experience*, 277.

the religious sisters in the nineteenth and early twentieth century “found themselves in positions of [leadership in society] from which laywomen of their day were regularly excluded.”<sup>4</sup> Thus, they were an exceptional, though easily misunderstood, group of women.

The Sisters of St. Ann were integral to the establishment of the Catholic school system in British Columbia and were arguably the most influential religious congregation in the province. Arriving in 1858 from Montreal, these sisters established some of British Columbia’s first schools. The sisters ran over 20 private, residential, and parochial schools between the mid-nineteenth century and the end of the 1900s.<sup>5</sup> Some of their longest running schools included St. Augustine’s Elementary and Immaculate Conception Elementary, and St. Ann’s Academies (for girls) in New Westminster, Kamloops, and Victoria.<sup>6</sup> The sisters taught Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children in a variety of locations across the province. They had a reputation and passion for academic excellence. Their summers were spent furthering academic credentials, as their own ongoing education was important to them. When the Sisters of St. Ann were asked by then Coadjutor Archbishop of Vancouver, William Duke, for information about their congregation, Sister Mary Gabriel, Provincial Superior, replied from Victoria in 1928 with the following: there were seven houses in British Columbia: New Westminster (21 sisters), Holy Rosary Vancouver (14 sisters), St. Augustine’s (8 sisters), Little Flower Academy Vancouver (7 sisters), Mission City Industrial School (7 sisters), Kamloops Academy (14 sisters), and

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<sup>4</sup> Rink, *Spirited Women*, 128.

<sup>5</sup> By the 1957-8 school year 118 sisters were running 23 schools with the help of 66 lay teachers, nearly 6000 students. Down, *Century of Service*, 172. In addition to establishing schools, the sisters were also leaders in establishing local health care facilities.

<sup>6</sup> St. Ann’s Academy of Victoria was made a National Historic Site in 1989. The Religious of the Sacred Heart originally ran Immaculate Conception. The Sisters of Saint Ann started there in 1954 and continued until 1980. See Appendix A.

Kamloops Indian School (7 sisters). In total, there were 78 sisters of St. Ann, the majority of whom were teaching in the Catholic schools of the Vancouver Archdiocese.<sup>7</sup>

In 1894, the Sisters of St. Ann created the local position of Prefect of Studies to oversee schools in St. Joseph's Province.<sup>8</sup> Similar to a district superintendent in the public school system, this sister was responsible for ensuring that the schedule of studies adopted by the community was carried out, for instructing teachers in pedagogy, and for seeing that individual teachers did not introduce new texts or change those already introduced without permission. The Prefect of Studies reported on her visitations to the local houses, and consulted with the Prefect General of Studies in Quebec. The sisters' decisions in the early twentieth century reflect their awareness of changes in the public school system and their desire to keep abreast of developments. The establishment of the first normal school in British Columbia in 1901, for example, brought the sisters to reexamine their own teacher training.<sup>9</sup> In 1907 the sisters changed the curriculum offered in their schools from one that was based on the Ontario educational system and developed by the General Council at their motherhouse in Lachine, Quebec, to the curriculum prescribed by British Columbia's Department of Education.<sup>10</sup> It was important to the sisters that their graduates be able to attend university or teacher training programs in British Columbia. Many graduates who did returned to teach in Sisters of St. Ann's schools.

Sister Mary Mildred Welsh (Prefect of Studies 1911-7, 1923-5) brought about changes to raise standards for teachers and students. Determined to maintain a high quality of education that responded to the needs of the times, Welsh instated examinations for teacher improvement and

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<sup>7</sup> RCAVA, Correspondence, Archbishop Duke and Sister Mary Gabriel, Provincial Superior, S.S.A. 22 May 1928 (281-20).

<sup>8</sup> This region included the western provinces of Canada, the Yukon Territory, Alaska, and Washington State. Down, *Century of Service*, 134.

<sup>9</sup> Margaret Milne Martens and Graeme Chalmers, "Education the Eye, Hand, and Heart at St. Ann's Academy: A Case Study of Art Education for Girls in Nineteenth-Century Victoria," *BC Studies* 144 (Winter 2004/5), 53.

<sup>10</sup> Edith Down, "Sisters of St. Ann," 151.

advancement. Up until this point, the sisters participated in annual scholastic retreats where they developed their instructional skills in each subject.<sup>11</sup> In the 1920s, the majority of St. Ann teachers with teacher training had completed it in Eastern Canada.<sup>12</sup> Many teachers working in classrooms had only normal school level training, as World War I and limited financial resources kept them from pursuing further studies. Welsh made correspondence courses from Loyola and Montreal Universities available for teachers. For students, she compiled exams based on the provincial program of studies for Grades 3 to 8, which she sent out to schools each June. Students who failed these exams were required to repeat the grade level.<sup>13</sup>

Subsequent Prefects of Studies in the 1920s and 1930s continued to provide opportunities for as many teachers as possible to improve their qualifications, contributing to what Edith Down refers to as “the great study movement.”<sup>14</sup> For example, in 1928 four Sisters of St. Ann who had returned from Spokane were among the first in British Columbia to receive Gonzaga Bachelor of Arts degrees.<sup>15</sup> In addition to attending university, increasing numbers of sisters attended summer refresher courses for teachers at the annual public Summer School of Education in Victoria.<sup>16</sup> Summer school specifically for Catholic educators was also available. For example, in July of 1933, high school teachers took courses taught by the Irish Christian Brothers and held at Little Flower Academy in Vancouver. In addition to members of the Sisters of St. Ann,

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<sup>11</sup> Martens and Chalmers, “Education the Eye,” 54.

<sup>12</sup> Down, “Sisters of St. Ann,” 136.

<sup>13</sup> Evidence suggests that while Catholic school students wrote certain levels of qualifying exams such as those for junior and senior matriculation, schoolteachers continued to compile their own subject based examinations using the provincial program of studies throughout the 1924-1960 time period. In 1958/9, the B.C. Catholic Teachers’ Association sent a letter to the Department of Education in Victoria, requesting that students from Catholic schools be permitted to participate in the Grade 9 examinations for public school students. The reply was negative. See Private collection of Jacqueline Gresko, B.C. Catholic Teacher Association News Bulletin, February 1959.

<sup>14</sup> For example, Sister Mary Ethelind Carrol (1930-4). Ibid., 136.

<sup>15</sup> SSAA, Victoria Convent Historical Eye-View and Nominations 1858-1940, (S24-3).

<sup>16</sup> There is evidence that in 1926 some of the Sisters of St. Ann attended teachers’ summer school courses for public school teachers in Victoria. The number of teaching sisters who attended and whether they attended the provincial summer school for public school teachers annually are not known, (S24-3).

teachers from the Sisters of Charity of Halifax, the Providence nuns, and Religious of the Sacred Heart also attended.<sup>17</sup> This summer school is discussed in more detail below.

One of the defining characteristics of the Sisters of St. Ann was their passion for art education. “It was the art department that gave the Sisters of St. Ann a measure of institutional autonomy, self-sufficiency, and identity within the vast religious superstructure of the late nineteenth century Roman Catholicism in Canada.”<sup>18</sup> Reaching its height in the early 1900s, art education was seen as having the potential to benefit one’s spiritual life and be a positive influence on one’s personal conduct.<sup>19</sup> With increasing access for women to commercial fields, however, such as stenography, art education received less attention. This is not to suggest that art was valued less. The sisters’ belief in art education might have helped them embrace the creativity called for in progressive education. The sisters already thought it worthwhile to develop a skill, to be artistically creative, and they were already using an interdisciplinary approach, all values promoted by progressive education. Evidence from their 1930s classrooms reveals the use of mathematics in art education, as well as the use of art to recreate the narratives in English literature and history.<sup>20</sup>

When *St. Ann’s Journal*, the monthly newsletter circulated throughout the community, announced upcoming jubilee celebrations marking their community’s 75<sup>th</sup> year in British Columbia, to be held in the summer of 1933, guidelines for preparing student work for the exhibition specified that it must not “exceed the requirements demanded by the Course of

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<sup>17</sup> Sisters of St. Ann Archives (SSAA), *St. Ann’s Journal*, August-September, 1933 (S26-02-3).

<sup>18</sup> Martens and Chalmers, “Education the Eye,” 56-7.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 56-7.

<sup>20</sup> SSAA, *Sister Mary Hortensius Collection*, (S24-6-1-4-1-1).

Studies in the Class.”<sup>21</sup> Students prepared booklet work, projects, drawings and poster work, printing, religion, and even spelling for the exhibit. In this context, “projects” included research papers, compositions, poems, post cards, drawings/paintings and other illustrations, and graphs.

After the celebrations, Sister Mary Theodore reflected on the exhibits:

Whether the trend in the present day school work is colorful illustrations I cannot say, but the difference between this Diamond Jubilee School Exhibit and those we saw in the Portland Lewis-Clark Exhibition, 1906, and the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition in Seattle, 1909, is the unadorned matter in those, and the brush work and profuse illustrations in that of today. Nor is this picturesque presentation of school work in all the classes from primary to senior detrimental to solid results. Just to give one proof; the booklets for spelling...class averages ranging from 85-100%. Neither did the tests in Geography, Hygiene, Language, Nature Study, History, etc., lose in substance and pith because of the time given to attractive dress. Originality and good taste marked every item.<sup>22</sup>

Sister Mary Theodore’s comments reflect the sisters’ dual values of excellence and creativity.

They also point to the standard use of testing in their schools, and the presence of courses sometimes associated with progressivism, such as Hygiene and Nature Study.

The music department was also a source of pride and contributed to a well-rounded education.<sup>23</sup> By 1929, St. Ann’s Academy in downtown Vancouver (the cathedral school that was once Sacred Heart Academy), offered three years of high school, along with Commercial and Music Departments. St. Ann’s Academy in New Westminster in 1932 offered four years of high school (leading to university and to normal school), as well as special courses in music, elocution, physical culture and domestic science.<sup>24</sup> The sisters also offered a commercial

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<sup>21</sup> SSAA, *St. Ann’s Journal*, 2 January 1933 (S26-02-3). By 1933, the Sisters of St. Ann had been in British Columbia for 75 years (since 1858).

<sup>22</sup> SSAA, Sr. Mary Theodore, *St. Ann’s Journal*, August-September 1933 (S26-02-3).

<sup>23</sup> Students obtained degrees from the Royal School of Music, Trinity College in London, England, the McGill College of Music, and later the Toronto Conservatory of Music and the British Columbia Department of Education. See Down, “Sisters of St. Ann,” 141.

<sup>24</sup> New Westminster Museum and Archives (NWMA), Reading Room Subject Files, “Schools – St. Ann’s” Booklet: *St. Ann’s Journal 1932*. Also available in “New Westminster Church Histories file box in the New Westminster Archives library.

department, with courses in shorthand; touch typewriting; bookkeeping and accounting; commercial law; and business letter writing and office routine.<sup>25</sup> Students applying to the commercial department were required to have completed two years' work in a recognized high school, and upon completion would receive a diploma. Likewise Little Flower Academy offered a music department, an art department, and with its school annex in 1931, a science laboratory. The sisters also taught in St. Augustine's parochial school in Kitsilano, where Grades 1 to 8 were offered. The full Junior Matriculation courses would not be offered at St. Augustine's until 1940.<sup>26</sup>

The Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul of Halifax were also instrumental in establishing Catholic schools in Vancouver. As was their custom, they worked closely with parishes, living in parish-owned residences, teaching in parochial schools, and providing extracurricular activities such as children's choirs, helping with ladies sodalities (associations), and teaching catechism classes for students not attending Catholic schools.<sup>27</sup> Nine Sisters of Charity travelled west to Vancouver from Halifax in 1923. By the early 1930s, with growing numbers and the support of a new bishop, Archbishop William Duke (1931-1964), they had opened five schools in British Columbia, Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Ladysmith, and four schools in Vancouver: St. Helen's (1923), St. Joseph's (1924), Our Lady of Sorrows (1926), and Our Lady of Perpetual Help (1927).<sup>28</sup> In 1930 the sisters purchased a large home in Burnaby that would allow them to open a boarding and day school, as well as a residence for ten of their

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<sup>25</sup> NWMA, Reading Room Subject Files, "Schools – St. Ann's" Booklet: *St. Ann's Journal 1932*.

<sup>26</sup> Down, "Sisters of St. Ann," 149. Junior Matriculation was Grade 9 level courses. Senior Matriculation was Grade 12. See Regulations and Courses of Study for Provincial Normal Schools 1928-1929, accessed 28 July 2014: <http://www2.viu.ca/homeroom/content/topics/programs/Curriclm/nschool.htm>.

<sup>27</sup> Rink, *Spirited Women*, 145-6.

<sup>28</sup> Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul of Halifax Archives (SCHA), Sister Marilla Silver, "Ministry in the Western Province: 1923-1978," (paper prepared for Congregational Ministry Weekend, Long Island, New York, October, 1978), 1. The Sisters of Charity played a key role in facilitating the archbishop's goal of establishing a diocesan school system.

community members. Like the Sisters of St. Ann, the Sisters of Charity would find some financial stability (particularly needed in the 1930s) through running a private boarding school. It was known as Seton Academy, after their foundress, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton.<sup>29</sup>

Also like the Sisters of St. Ann, the Sisters of Charity offered the public curriculum in their schools. At the suggestion of their Reverend Mother General during her visit to the western missions in the fall of 1933, the sisters established the Vancouver Parochial School Council.<sup>30</sup> Commencing on January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1934, the council met several times a year until the Vancouver Catholic School Board was established in the spring of 1943. The council's objective was to "secure uniformity in method and discipline in [the] parochial schools of Vancouver." The council consisted of local superiors of schools, teachers of Grades 7 and 8, and a representative of high school and commercial classes. It is not clear whether teachers from other religious orders participated. Meeting minutes were kept and sent to each Sister Superior. The council meetings focused on anything related to the goal of uniformity, whether in teaching, discipline, time allotments, or progress in examination results.

Though the parochial school teachers clearly worked with the public curriculum and its supporting resources for teachers, no pedagogically progressive language emerged in their council meeting minutes before the revised provincial curriculum was introduced in 1936-7. For the most part, their approach was traditional.<sup>31</sup> The council had lengthy discussions about drawing and printing, and recommended resources such as "the Art Manual prescribed for the Public Schools," with which all teachers should be familiar, or the "Canadian Teacher," a

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<sup>29</sup> Rink, *Spirited Women*, 143.

<sup>30</sup> SCHA, Notes from the Vancouver Parochial School Council, *Western Province – School Information Book* 1-19, 20 January 1934.

<sup>31</sup> Refer to introduction of this thesis for Sutherland's description of formalism (traditional education).

magazine for public school teachers published in Toronto, which the Sisters of St. Ann also found useful.<sup>32</sup> For writing, they settled on the McLean's method.<sup>33</sup> Dictation was to be taken daily (a point which teachers were reminded on several occasions, suggesting that it was not common practice), and spelling tests were standard. In addition, the council agreed that "memory work must be insisted on. Selections from standard authors are to be found in Readers. From Grade 2 up through the middle grades the children should memorize freely. Teachers must explain proper methods of memorizing."<sup>34</sup>

Changes in the subject of history were in the early stages still, with no mention of social studies in 1934. The council instructed teachers to include map work in the study of history and geography.<sup>35</sup> An overview of history course content by grade, included in the minutes, shows that civics was taught in the history course in Grades 6 and 7.<sup>36</sup> Teachers of history using the new public curriculum in Grades 4 through 7, were asked to hand in an account of the content they had covered. In addition, teachers of all courses were asked to keep a monthly record of the content they had covered, with the hopes that this would provide the foundation for dividing the work into quarters in 1935.<sup>37</sup>

The Council also decided where the teachers' summer school would be held, and what they would study. As mentioned above, in July of 1933 the sisters joined some of the Sisters of St. Ann and other teaching sisters in attending a four week summer school held by the Irish

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<sup>32</sup> Sister Hortensius refers to the "Canadian Teacher" as a "gold mine for teachers," and her collection contains numerous clipped and saved pages. SSAA, *Sister Mary Hortensius Collection*, (S24-3-1-3).

<sup>33</sup> This method originated in British Columbia and gained widespread popularity in the mid-twentieth century. See Tom Hawthorne, "Millions of Canadians Followed B.C.'s Principal's Script," *Globe and Mail*, 4 May 2010, Accessed 17 June 2014: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/millions-of-canadians-followed-bc-principals-script/article4352963/>

<sup>34</sup> SCHA, Notes from the Vancouver Parochial School Council, *Western Province – School Information Book* 1-19, 15 September (no year given, but likely prior to 1937).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 12 February 1934.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

Christian Brothers at Little Flower Academy. The brothers had been asked by Archbishop Duke to teach according to a plan drawn up by Brother Lannon, Superior/Principal at Vancouver College. The bishop appointed Father Cronin, the chaplain at Vancouver College, as Superintendent of the Summer School Program. The course selection included the Senior and Junior Matriculation subjects: Science, Mathematics, English, and History, and was designed for the sisters to take the B.C. Public Examinations, held in August of each year. Brother Lannon explains in a letter to his superior that “the sisters [were] not interested in credits or affiliation but in pure, down-right passing of Public Exams.”<sup>38</sup> It is unclear which individual sisters attended summer school and the level of education they held from other provinces.

In the summer of 1934, summer school was held at Seton Academy, and the attending teachers used a McMillan publication, Bradley’s *The Making of English*, to learn about the history of and influences in modern English. They also made a general study of the essay, and read Pauline Johnson’s *Legends of Vancouver*.<sup>39</sup> No mention of progressive methods is evident. The desire to develop art education re-emerged in the summer of 1934, this time with regard to teacher training. It was agreed that teachers would spend part of their summer preparing sample booklets of their work according to the prescriptions contained in the (public school) Art Manual.<sup>40</sup>

Four other religious orders supplied teachers in British Columbia in the 1920s and 1930s: the Sisters of the Child Jesus, the Sisters of St. Joseph, Toronto, the Sisters of Charity of the

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<sup>38</sup> Archives of the Christian Brothers, St. John’s, Newfoundland, “Letters from Brother W. M. Lannon to Brother Patrick Culhane (Provincial Superior) regarding 1933 Summer School for Sisters at Little Flower Academy, Vancouver,” 12 April 1933 and 20 April 1933.

<sup>39</sup> SCHA, Notes from the Vancouver Parochial School Council, *Western Province – School Information Book* 1-19, 10 May 1934.

<sup>40</sup> Yesman Post explains the public art curriculum was slow to pick up progressive educational approaches because British Columbia’s program was directed by British art masters who were reluctant to move from their traditional training: Yesman Post, “A History of Art Education in British Columbia: 1872-1939,” (Masters thesis, UVIC, 2005), ii.

Immaculate Conception of St. John, New Brunswick, and the Religious of the Sacred Heart. Apart from the Sisters of the Child Jesus, these sisters played a lesser role in the establishing and teaching in schools in the Vancouver Archdiocese. The Sisters of the Child Jesus arrived from France in British Columbia in May of 1896 at the request of Bishop Paul Durieu, OMI. They worked in a number of schools throughout the province alongside Oblate administrators in what were often frontier conditions, serving settlers' children and Aboriginal students. Schools included St. Joseph's Mission, in Williams Lake (1886), St. Augustine's school in Sechelt (1912), and St. Paul's (1889) and St. Edmond's (1911) schools in North Vancouver, as well as French parish schools in Maillardville: Our Lady of Lourdes (1910), St. John's (ca.1910), and in the 1940s, Our Lady of Fatima. In the 1930s, the sisters taught at St. Mary's parochial school in East Vancouver. The Sisters of the Child Jesus followed the public provincial curriculum in their parish schools, the federal curriculum when teaching Aboriginal students, and, like the other teaching sisters, they followed the archdiocesan guidelines for religious education. The latter is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 on the 1936-1945 period.<sup>41</sup>

The Sisters of St. Joseph, Toronto, were also a religious congregation of French origin. Originally founded in 1650 in France, the order was re-founded in the early-nineteenth century. By 1837 the first American foundation had been made in the Diocese of St. Louis, Missouri. In 1851, the Sisters of St. Joseph made their way to Toronto, and in 1912 they arrived on the west coast, where they would devote their efforts to the improvement of healthcare and education. They first opened a hospital in Comox, and then in 1916 a school in Prince Rupert. By 1922 they were invited to work in St. Patrick's parochial school at Main Street and 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue in

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<sup>41</sup> RCAVA, *Letter to the Superintendent of Catholic Schools from Sister Mary Amy, Superior of the Sisters of the Child Jesus*, 19 December 1936 (401-3).

Vancouver where they would remain until 1939. The separate high school was built later on 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue.<sup>42</sup> In the 1920s St. Patrick's offered Grades 1 through 10, including a science room and commercial department. The sisters also taught at two parochial schools: St. Francis de Sales' School and St. Augustine's School.

Similar to the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Halifax, the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception of St. John, New Brunswick were inspired by the work of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton of New York. They arrived in Vancouver in 1929 and worked primarily in care homes and hospitals. They also contributed their efforts to parochial education, opening Sacred Heart School, and Guardian Angel School in 1941, as well as teaching in St. Anthony's School (1940), and St. Francis of Assisi School (1946). The Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception, as well as the Sisters of St. Joseph, taught only in parochial schools in the Vancouver archdiocese, all of which used the public curriculum.<sup>43</sup>

Finally, the Religious of the Sacred Heart (also commonly referred to in English by the acronym, R.S.C.J. from the congregation's French name), ran two schools in Vancouver: the Convent of the Sacred Heart, a private boarding and day school for girls, and a parish elementary school, Immaculate Conception (Dunbar). Founded in France in 1800, the Society of the Sacred Heart established itself in Montreal (1842) and Halifax (1847), before coming to Vancouver in the early 1900s. By the 1930s, the Society had members in North and South America, Europe, Africa and Australia, and they boasted an international community of schools, houses of study for religious and lay students, and colleges and training schools for teachers.<sup>44</sup> The stated object

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<sup>42</sup> From personal correspondence with archivist, Linda Wicks, Archives of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto, 5 April 2013.

<sup>43</sup> RCAVA, *Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception* (GR3S3/14).

<sup>44</sup> RCAVA, *Convent of the Sacred Heart Point Grey, Prospectus*, ca. 1936, (418-12).

of the Religious of the Sacred Heart was “to develop not only the minds but the hearts of their students; formation of character [was of] paramount importance.”<sup>45</sup>

Their curriculum was unique to their schools and for the most part did not rely on the public curriculum, though they did seek to incorporate local needs in their schools. The education they offered was divided into junior (for children under twelve) and senior schools. The R.S.C.J. prospectus (flyer advertising the school) from the Convent of the Sacred Heart in the late 1930s explains that the junior school’s timetable allowed for more time for sleep and recreation because of the needs of younger students. In addition, courses of study were organized by classes, a Christian doctrine lesson was given daily, and high school classes received a course in Apologetics and a four year course in Philosophy, including logic, psychology, ethics, and metaphysics. Students of all levels studied sacred and general history, and emphasis was placed on the study of the English language and literature. The only courses that followed the public curriculum were Latin and mathematics. Students were encouraged to take the provincial high school examinations and were prepared for Junior Matriculation. In addition, students studied nature, drawing, drama and music, and were provided with extensive opportunities to be physically active. Game scores, conduct results, and test marks were announced at weekly school assemblies. As was common with teaching sisters across the continent, the R.S.C.J. generated additional funds by providing private art and music lessons.

### **3.2 The Foundations of Catholic Education in the Vancouver Archdiocese**

As some scholars of progressive education in English Canada have concluded, the historiographical debate between traditionalism and progressivism in education has been over

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

simplified.<sup>46</sup> This conclusion applies to Catholic schools in British Columbia in this period, which cannot be simply written off as traditional. The teaching sisters' interest in respecting and honouring the individual child was in many ways sympathetic to progressive educators' interest in being attentive to the child's development. While the chapters that follow will reveal that pedagogical practices in Catholic schools eventually expanded to include some progressive methods, Catholics did not abandon their philosophy of education in favour of the educational philosophy of progressive education. In other words, the underlying philosophy of Catholic education remained constant between 1924 and 1960. This section examines the philosophy of education underlying Catholic school education in the Vancouver Archdiocese as it was represented in the 1920s and 1930s.

### **3.2.1 *Catholic Bulletin*: Striving to Make Known a Catholic Philosophy of Education**

Articles in the *Catholic Bulletin* (known from the 1930s on as the *B.C. Catholic*) in the 1924-1935 period suggest that leaders and educators in the Catholic community in British Columbia were deeply concerned with promoting, and educating readers about, the need for Catholic education.<sup>47</sup> On the surface the promotion of Catholic education can be seen as a pitch for funding. However, deeper motives were at work. Catholics agreed with social efficiency educators that society was changing, even acknowledging that, as American curriculum historian Herbert Kliebard suggests, the church and family were in "dangerous decline." But they did not see schools alone as the sole solution to this problem.<sup>48</sup> Nor did they agree that the needs of

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<sup>46</sup> Axelrod, "Beyond the Progressive Education Debate," 227-41.

<sup>47</sup> The *Catholic Bulletin* was the official newspaper of the Vancouver Archdiocese until 1929. In 1931, it resumed circulation as the *British Columbia Catholic*.

<sup>48</sup> RCAVA, *Catholic Bulletin* 13 February 1924, Vol.1(36), 3. The description of social efficiency educators here comes from Kliebard, *The Struggle*, 89.

industrial society should take priority in the curriculum.<sup>49</sup> Progressive educators argued in favour of both of these things. Catholics understood the rapid social change of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to be at least in part the result of secularization, and this fuelled their drive to provide religious education, while at the same time seeking to protect and support the roles and responsibilities of the family and the church in society.

When Putman and Weir's survey was announced in early June of 1924, Brother Lannon, a teacher at Vancouver College, welcomed it, but made no comment on its significance for Catholic schools. He anticipated its benefits for British Columbians, implicitly including those in Catholic schools, which used the public curriculum. Lannon explained: "at best a survey of education is no more nor less than the auditing of the business of education in terms of results obtained, or opportunities at hand, of loss sustained by misapplication of educational forces, and finally of the direction of educational influences."<sup>50</sup> Though Lannon's comments ring with the logic of administrative progressives, social efficiency educators' utilitarian emphasis on educational goals and the techniques for measuring goals was accepted only in as much as it resulted in good pedagogy. For example, Catholics understood intelligence testing to be a legitimate means to provide "individual direction, promotion and acceleration," but cautioned against intelligence tests as a final statement about a student's potential. This was because "social competency and educational possibilities both depend largely upon non-intellectual mental traits."<sup>51</sup> Perhaps more importantly, it was because Catholic educators and leaders saw

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>50</sup> RCAVA, *Catholic Bulletin*, 13 June 1924, Vol. 1(1), 1.

<sup>51</sup> RCAVA, *Catholic Bulletin*, 13 July 1928, Vol.5 (5), 5. See also Ann Marie Ryan and Alan Stoskopf, "Public and Catholic School Responses to IQ Testing in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century," *Teachers College Record* 110 (4), April 2008, 894-922. Ryan and Stoskopf argue that Catholic educators questioned the purposes of IQ testing more and for a longer period of time than public school educators.

value in universal education, and they understood education to be concerned with more than just the intellect.

*Catholic Bulletin* articles in the 1920s speak repeatedly about the philosophy of Catholic education, at times in contrast to the “bankruptcy” of public education, but more often to make clear its unique and irreplaceable goals, emphasizing the need for Catholic parents to send their children to Catholic schools. Frequent articles extoll Catholic schools for their ability to produce men and women of intelligence, virtue and character who “achieve greater things, because [they] have been trained to habits of thought, find intellectual interest in difficult problems, and see faster the why and wherefore for things that happen.”<sup>52</sup> Catholics are warned about the dangers of seeing education simply as the “ability to read, a knowledge of mathematics, physical science, etc.,” where religion, and therefore morality, are set aside rather than upheld as centrally important. One author points out that if the definition of education is the skills and knowledge described above, the Prussians were the most educated people on earth in 1914.<sup>53</sup>

The newspaper often highlighted American educational scholars and events to expound the Catholic philosophy of education and identify the growing divide between Catholic and secular society. While these articles are not necessarily representative of the work of Catholic educators in British Columbia, they nonetheless reflect ideas promoted and considered by the Catholic community. In the winter of 1925, for example, in a lecture on Education presented at the annual meeting of the United States Catholic bishops, American Jesuit and former president of St. Louis University, William Robison explains that “true education means the development

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<sup>52</sup> RCAVA, *Catholic Bulletin*, 22 August 1924, Vol. 1 (10), 6.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

of the whole and entire nature of man – body, mind, and heart,” but that this is hindered by a number of issues in education today, namely the growing utilitarianism,

which calculates an education according to its immediate and tangible results and according to the norm suggested in the question “What is in it for me?” How much will it produce in the coin of the land.’ In subversion to the true dignity of humankind it tries to substitute the watchword “What will this do for dollars and cents?” for “What will this do for true manhood and womanhood? What will this do for eternity?”<sup>54</sup>

Furthermore, Robison warns of the “spirit of materialism” that “denies or ignores any spiritual excellence and searches for nothing more satisfying than material comforts” and “cares nothing at all about whether we are better and truer and nobler men and women.” Equally concerning is the influence of rationalism, which

boastfully proclaims that it will admit nothing that it does not understand: it laughs at the possibility of anything that transcends the complete mystery of the human mind. Thus it ignores the fact of the existence of many ‘mysterious’ things in the realm of nature; whilst exaggerating the power of the intellect it violates reason’s clearest canons, and thus it degrades reason, instead of ennobling it.<sup>55</sup>

Robison suggests there is a difference between education and instruction: the former takes into account the formation of a soul, while the latter only informs the mind.

Perhaps to corroborate concerns over secular education, the article on Robison’s talk was run alongside an article from the *Vancouver Sun* highlighting the criticisms of Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, president of Columbia University, about educational methods in the United States. Butler’s appraisal of American schooling relates to a number of key areas of interest for Catholics. He expresses concern over the modern curriculum, which fails to provide students with knowledge of classical texts and references previously commonplace among the educated. Furthermore, while vocational training in itself is not problematic, life is about more than

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<sup>54</sup> RCAVA, *Catholic Bulletin* 13 Feb. 1925, Vol.1(36), 7.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

employment, and education must provide students with a sense of how to spend leisure time as well. Butler questions progressive education's emphasis on child-development, explaining: "to leave a child to its own self-development is to deny it a child's right to the soil and the air of the world's culture and to guidance in the enjoyment of them."<sup>56</sup> In addition, Butler emphasizes the secondary role of the state with regard to education, highlighting the parents' primary role, and arguing that the state should not have complete control over schools. Though state schools are necessary for democracy and for parents who cannot provide education for their children, "a state monopoly of schools... may come to mean compulsory paganism... to suppress any school that admits the Bible when the parents wish it is sheer tyranny."<sup>57</sup> This is a point with which Catholics were in hearty agreement. Emerging from nineteenth century papal social teaching, the principle of subsidiarity suggests that centralized authority should not take control of tasks that can be performed by a more local level, thus schools should never take responsibility for aspects of life that are in the domain of the family; parents are the primary educators. This argument runs as an underlying refrain in twentieth century Catholic education and would emerge again in the discussion about sex education in school in the 1940s.<sup>58</sup>

When the archdiocesan newspaper reported the results of the Putman Weir *Survey of the School System* in July of 1925, it criticized the survey for failing to note the importance of religious education: "It reminds one of the farmer who was strong on improved labor-saving devices, self-binders, tractors, etc., but could not afford the motive power, horse or gasoline, to make them worth while."<sup>59</sup> The author's closing comment points to the seeds of bitterness that

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Pius XI, *On the Christian Education of Youth*.

<sup>59</sup> RCAVA, *Catholic Bulletin*, 10 July 1925, Vol. 2(5), 4.

would become a public battle in the following decades: “In the meanwhile the Catholics will have to pay their share of the proposed increase of taxes for these experiments and at the same time support their own schools for conscience sake.” Catholics were apparently aware that classrooms looking beyond the material, laboring on “the unreal and the unnecessary,” were seen by secular society to be a waste of time, but they countered that emphasis on the material and secular suggests that “the physical world is solely worth the seeking; that success in gathering up self and pleasure is the real goal to be coveted.”<sup>60</sup>

In preparation for the opening of schools in the fall of 1925, the *Catholic Bulletin* offered the thoughts of Cardinal O’Connell of Boston on Catholic education as inspiration. O’Connell explains that if education is a preparation for life, then one must consider what “life” is. “If the conception of life be utilitarian, the schools will turn out money-machines.”<sup>61</sup> But if life is about knowing, loving, and serving God, “whatever our position, wherever we are, whatever we do,” then this must be reflected in education. This definition, derived from the teachings of Jesus found in the Bible, is foundational to the Catholic worldview and to understanding the values and interests of Catholic educators.<sup>62</sup> O’Connell recommends educators “accept the best only of that which is new” and to provide “a more serious, more interesting, and more solid course of instruction.” Attempts to implement O’Connell’s advice, specifically in the area of religious education, will be evident in the Vancouver Archdiocese in the late 1930s, as described in Chapter 4.

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<sup>60</sup> RCAVA, *Catholic Bulletin*, 26 June 1925, Vol.2 (3), 7.

<sup>61</sup> RCAVA, *Catholic Bulletin*, 14 Aug. 1925, Vol.2 (10), 5.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Matthew 22:36-40: “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.” (New American Bible translation, US Conference of Catholic Bishops website, accessed May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2014: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/matthew/22>).

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 1929, from St. Peter's, Rome, Pope Pius XI made his formal contribution to the primarily European and North American conversation about education. While it is difficult to determine how individual teachers and Catholic school communities received his teaching, the themes that he addressed reflected those already evident in the above discussion and those that would be voiced by Catholic educators in the Vancouver Archdiocese in the following three decades. His encyclical, *On the Christian Education of Youth*, emphasizes the need for a distinction and cooperation between family, State, and Church; the subordinate role of the social institution, the school, to the Church and family; the absolute necessity of religious education; the compatible and essential relationship between faith and reason; and even the delicate nature of sex education, which should be individually taught and thus not delivered in schools. With regard to pedagogical approaches, he explains:

every form of pedagogic naturalism which in any way excludes or weakens supernatural Christian formation in the teaching of youth, is false. Every method of education founded wholly or in part, on the denial or forgetfulness of original sin and of grace, and relying on the sole powers of human nature, is unsound. Such, generally speaking, are those modern systems bearing various names which appeal to a pretended self-government and unrestrained freedom on the part of the child, and which diminish or even suppress the teacher's authority and action attributing to the child an exclusive primacy of initiative, and an activity independent of any high law, natural or divine, in the work of his education.<sup>63</sup>

Like William Torrey Harris, U.S. Commissioner of Education (1889-1906) – who according to Kliebard was “the preeminent figure in the world of education during the last quarter of the nineteenth century” and last great spokesman for the humanist camp – Pius XI thought the school ought to “train children to gain control over their natural impulses, not to submit to

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<sup>63</sup> Pius XI, *On the Christian Education of Youth*, 60.

them.”<sup>64</sup> Pius agreed that Rousseau’s doctrine of a return to nature, often associated with progressive education, was massively problematic.

### **3.2.2 Teaching Sisters’ Educational Philosophies with Regard to Roles of Teachers and Students and the Aims of Education**

In contrast to their secular counterparts, Catholic teachers held a distinctive understanding of both the teacher and the student. As discussed in Chapter 2, Gregory Holtz suggests North American Catholic schools in the first half of the twentieth century were stricter, as they were based on a European educational tradition that saw the teacher as representing both parental authority and spiritual authority -- “the hand of God.”<sup>65</sup> While the bearer of this type of authority was understood to have greater knowledge about the good and truth, with which she must guide and educate the child, she was also expected to acknowledge the inherent worth and dignity of the human person present in the given student.<sup>66</sup>

A *Catholic Bulletin* article, published in June of 1924, spells out two fundamental and foundational rules of Catholic education: authority of the teacher and respect of the child. “To educate is to cultivate, to train, to develop, to strengthen and polish all the physical, intellectual, moral and religious faculties which enter into child nature.”<sup>67</sup> The teacher is understood to have immense influence in shaping students, which the author explains is often a re-shaping, as children have already encountered negative influences in society at large, and sometimes even in their own homes. Education is to elevate the child, in soul, mind, sentiments, and thoughts, which it cannot do “where disobedience exists and where the teacher holds his pupils in horror

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<sup>64</sup> Kliebard, *The Struggle*, 37.

<sup>65</sup> Holtz, “Curriculum in Context,” 296-8.

<sup>66</sup> This section’s discussion about Catholic teaching sisters’ philosophies of education reflects their educational theory and is not a description of their actual practices.

<sup>67</sup> RCAVA, *Catholic Bulletin*, 27 June 1924, Vol. 1(3), 3.

and dread.” The teacher’s influence for the good and the child’s willingness to be educated depend upon this reciprocal recognition of authority and respect.

The educational philosophy of the Sisters of Charity of Halifax taught them that the “ideal primary teacher” does not feel affectionately towards children like a little girl loves her doll, but instead offers “the love that takes [children] seriously, and admits them to a noble partnership. We often speak of getting down to the child. It might be true to say that we should get up to him. The ideal primary teacher respects the child.”<sup>68</sup> When their Mother General heard that some sisters were using frequent and severe corporal punishment, she rebuked them strongly and reminded them of their community’s constitution, explaining, “successful training of young souls for God’s Kingdom calls for the practice of virtue; patience [and] self-control are absolutely indispensable [sic].”<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, sisters were warned that a sharp, uncontrolled tongue is “a weapon that often leaves a wound most severe and incurable.” Every case of corporal punishment, in any form, was to be reported immediately to the Mother General.

Likewise the Sisters of St. Ann were forbidden the use of corporal punishment. (Though the Superior was given permission to use it if necessary, and only with love.) Their handbook specified that punishments should not be ridiculous; “Under all circumstances, the Sisters of St. Ann should make such judicious use of their system of punishment as always to preserve their own self-respect and that of the pupils.”<sup>70</sup> Like the Sisters of Charity, Halifax, the Sisters of St. Ann’s disposition towards their students was supposed to be one of “mother-love,” through which the teacher could develop the faculties of the student’s mind, heart and imagination. The

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<sup>68</sup> SCHA, Notes from the Vancouver Parochial School Council, *Western Province – School Information Book* 1-19, 1930s – 1940s.

<sup>69</sup> SCHA, Letter from Sister M. de Chantal, Secretary General (in the Mother House, Halifax, NS), 2 September 1935.

<sup>70</sup> SSAA, *Rules of Christian Pedagogy*, 147.

sisters aimed to provide an education that combined physical, intellectual, moral, and religious training, to educate the whole child. While progressive educators also argued for the development of the whole child, the spiritual nature of the child was not discussed in Christian terms. By contrast, the sisters of St. Ann hoped to see the growth of the whole child, and above all, to cultivate a “sense of duty and love of virtue.”<sup>71</sup> It was the spiritual growth of the child, directed toward the end of eternal unity with God, which was held as the highest good. Agreeing with their progressive counterparts that the students’ developmental stages must be acknowledged, the sisters’ philosophy explains that “to command without taking into consideration the moral, physical, and intellectual possibilities of the child, is to not know how to draw out the good for which one is striving. It is to fail...”<sup>72</sup>

The Sisters of St. Ann’s philosophy culminates in a pedagogy that is similar to the active, engaged, and developmentally attentive progressive pedagogy:

The best teacher is the one who rouses the faculty of thinking in pupils. Genuine teaching is wholly directed to that end; hence, child judgment should be trained to account mentally or orally for everything it studies. A pupil should not be passive in class; its active cooperation in the teaching is not time lost, but action quickened. By this reciprocity, the pupil’s intellectual faculties are turned to account and sharpened. The exertion made by mind and will to advance, strengthens self-reliance. These are considerations which no intelligent teacher can or should disregard... The passiveness of pupils may please or win unobservant teachers, but what follows? A semblance of life and movement, which ends in a semblance of learning. The pupil learns by heart and repeats by rote, but has not really studied.<sup>73</sup>

### 3.3 Conclusion

The early progressive reforms that emerged from the Putman Weir Report in the late 1920s, such as junior high schools, the amalgamation of history, geography and civics to form

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 30-1.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 65-6.

social studies, and differentiated learning tracks, for the most part do not appear in Catholic schooling in the Vancouver Archdiocese before 1936. Nor are progressive methods acknowledged, let alone discussed in the Catholic community. Only the latter reform, differentiated streams of learning, was offered in Catholic schools, and only to the extent to which they were established enough to offer it. With the exception of the Religious of the Sacred Heart, the teaching sisters in parochial and private Catholic schools taught the public curriculum. With the passage of time, senior grade levels and more course options were provided, first in private schools and later in diocesan schools. The philosophy of education in Catholic schools, while at times sympathetic to the values of progressive education, (e.g. active learning and citizenship education), was rooted in a distinctive vision of the human person. Throughout this period, the Catholic philosophy of education was discussed and reinforced, at times in contrast to the philosophy of public education, though not yet specifically in contrast to progressive education.

## Chapter 4: Catholic Schools between 1936 and 1945: The Public Curriculum, the Catechetical Curriculum, and the Diocesan System

Catholic schools in British Columbia observed the 1936 and 1937 provincial curriculum changes closely.<sup>1</sup> Community prefects or superiors guided the teaching sisters, notifying them about changes and recommending resources and strategies for adjusting to the new programs of studies. For the most part, the new curriculum was positively received. However, teachers were clear that it was the content and methods, not the underlying philosophy, which they were embracing, and when the course content failed to support their worldview, supplementary materials were prepared. In addition to the revised public curriculum, the Archdiocese of Vancouver introduced a new religious instruction program in 1936. Decidedly pedagogically progressive, this program required teachers to facilitate child-centered learning, including projects. Underlying pedagogical trends in this period was a move towards expanded school administration and the bureaucratization of education. This was strongly felt in the Vancouver Archdiocese as it moved from a collection of private and parochial schools run by various religious orders to a diocesan system of nearly 30 schools and well over 4000 students under the oversight of a superintendent, a board of trustees, and a school board headed by the Archbishop, composed of parish priests and a representative from each parish.

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<sup>1</sup> Teachers in Vancouver's Catholic schools do not name the new/revised curriculum by name, but the following curricula (typically referred to as bulletins) were released by the Department of Education in 1936 and 1937: In 1936, the elementary programme bulletins began with the *Aims and Philosophy of Education in British Columbia* (Victoria: Kings Printer, 1936): *Programme of Studies for the Elementary Schools of British Columbia: Bulletin I, Health and Physical education, Language arts; Bulletin II, Social studies; Bulletin III, Arithmetic, Music, Graphic Arts, Practical Arts; Programme of Studies for the Junior High Schools of British Columbia, Grades VII, VIII, IX.* 1937: *Programme of Studies for the Senior High Schools of British Columbia: Bulletin I; Health and Physical Education for the Senior High Schools of British Columbia: Bulletin II; Home Economics for the Junior and Senior High Schools of British Columbia: Bulletin III; Technical Courses for the Senior High Schools of British Columbia: Bulletin IV, Commercial Studies for the Senior High Schools of British Columbia: Bulletin V; Time-table Construction for the Senior High Schools of British Columbia: Bulletin VI; Programme of Studies for the High Schools of British Columbia: Bulletin VII: Parents' Bulletin* (Victoria: Kings Printer, 1937).

#### **4.1 Catholic Schools and the Revised Provincial Curriculum**

The majority of the evidence regarding the response of teachers in Catholic schools to the 1936 revised provincial curriculum comes from newsletters and correspondence of the Sisters of St. Ann, meeting minutes from the Vancouver Parochial School Council, and correspondence and reports from Archdiocesan archives. The Sisters of St. Ann approached the modern teaching methods espoused in the revised curriculum with openness, but without naivety. They were an experienced community of teachers and understood the curriculum to be both tentative and quite possibly in need of revision, while at the same time offering valuable unit plans and resources that could better their teaching. Curriculum content was carefully observed and received, with the parts supporting religious ideals affirmed, and the parts diverging from the sisters' worldview revised. The Sisters of Charity, Halifax, also actively implemented the new curriculum. Their council meetings emphasized uniformity among schools and standardization of work by grade level, rather than providing an analysis or evaluation of the revised program of studies. Archdiocesan records reflect a positive reception of modern teaching methods as well, with pedagogically progressive catechetical (religious education) material introduced by the superintendent of Catholic schools in 1936. In general, Catholics were willing to consider the idea that these new methods might be more effective than previous methods. It was the content and underlying principles, not the methods, which posed problems. Thus modern pedagogical techniques were able to make their way into the teaching of religion and other courses without objection.

In the summer of 1936, at the suggestion of the assistant director of the provincial summer school in Victoria, which some of the Catholic school teachers had attended, Major H.B. King came to speak with the Sisters of Saint Ann about changes in the new program. King was a

central figure in the Department of Education behind curricular reform in the 1920s and 1930s, was the main author of the 1936 *Aims and Philosophy* guiding the new curriculum, and in 1937 was appointed provincial Inspector of Schools.<sup>2</sup> Though their provincial prefect of studies, Sister Mary Dorothea, acknowledged it would take time to tell whether the changes were in the right direction, she was clear about two things: 1) no principles underlying the teaching that were at variance with those of Christian teachers could be accepted, and 2) “there [was] much to be gained in studying the new methods for the presentation of the different subjects – Arithmetic for instance – and in applying them carefully.”<sup>3</sup> In a letter the following autumn about the unit method in the new program of studies, Mary Dorothea encouraged the sisters to “make every effort to follow the unit system as directed in the programme... the unit system is not really a new method and should not present difficulty. However, if it seems puzzling to some they are not bound to follow it. We have all been teaching long before [the curriculum bulletin] came into existence.”<sup>4</sup> In addition to encouraging the teaching sisters to draw strength from their experience as educators, the prefect consoled the sisters by pointing out that the public school teachers were also “floundering.”<sup>5</sup> Moreover, she reminded them of the practical value of the public curricular goals:

In our teaching we may be hampered at times by being obliged to follow a system which frequently stresses the unimportant and omits much of vital importance. Be this as it may, we are obliged to meet these handicaps and moreover prepare pupils for Provincial examinations. These examinations can never, of course, be the final end of our teaching, nevertheless it is necessary that we have some of our

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<sup>2</sup> *Aims and Philosophy of Education in British Columbia* (Victoria: Kings Printer, 1936).

<sup>3</sup> SSAA, “*The New Programme of Studies*,” 1936 (S26-03-1).

<sup>4</sup> SSAA, *Letter from the Provincial Prefect of Studies to Sister Superior and Sisters*, 21 September 1936 (S19-03-3).

<sup>5</sup> SSAA, *School Notes*, August, 1936 (S26-03-1).

students preparing for professional careers, else our education will not have given its share to the development of civilization.<sup>6</sup>

When content in the new curriculum departed from their worldview, the point of divergence was identified and alternative materials developed. For example, under the heading “History” the prefect’s letter reads: “throughout the Social Studies programme the tendency of the curriculum and texts is to develop the false ideas flooding philosophical fields. In Grade 5 the study of the Prehistoric Man as outlined should not be followed. There have been Cave men and prehistoric men, no doubt, but not as outlined.”<sup>7</sup> The prefect concludes with the suggestion that a unit be prepared to replace this one in the programme. By the summer of 1938, a special sheet for insertion in every copy of the curricular bulletin dealing with Social Studies was prepared and sent to the Sisters of St. Ann’s schools. Notes on a Catholic perspective on the Renaissance and the Reformation were also prepared and distributed.<sup>8</sup> The sisters struggled to find suitable history textbooks to cover Grades 5 and 6 of the new programme, and a textbook named *The Modern World* by Betten and Kaufmann was used as a Catholic supplement to High School history texts prescribed for Grades 11 and 12.<sup>9</sup>

When content in the new curriculum fell short of the Sisters of St. Ann’s ideals, “School Notes” in *St. Ann’s Journal*, the community newsletter, emphasized points of agreement between their approach and the public curriculum, rather than dwelling on what was lacking. For example, though character education failed to include moral sanctions, such as the Ten Commandments, the new curriculum was commended for highlighting the value of the natural

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<sup>6</sup> SSAA, “*Our Summer School*” Summer 1936 (S26-03-1).

<sup>7</sup> SSAA, *Letter from the Provincial Prefect of Studies to Sister Superior and Sisters*, 21 September 1936 (S19-03-3). The objectionable texts are not listed by name.

<sup>8</sup> SSAA, “*Social Studies*,” 1938, (S26-03-2).

<sup>9</sup> SSAA, “Special Report” 31 May 1937, p.5 (S19-2-8). See: Francis S. Betten and Alfred Kaufmann, *The Modern World: From Charlemagne to the Present Time with a Preliminary Survey of Ancient Times*, (New York: Norwood Press, 1919).

virtues (e.g. justice, prudence, temperance, fortitude) and the sisters were encouraged to carefully study and allow their teaching to benefit from the section of the programme on character training.<sup>10</sup> The sisters were also encouraged to use aspects of the new curriculum to explore Catholic thought. For example, their prefect wrote: “Sect. C Modern Problems (Bulletin p.251) gives the opportunity for a Catholic study of the world interests of the day. *America, Commonweal, The Sign, B.C. Catholic, Catholic Digest* and other Catholic newspapers and periodicals are the sources for your information.”<sup>11</sup>

The prefect also highlighted in the community newsletter changes with regard to examinations and junior high schools. Mary Dorothea explained that “it is felt [by the Ministry of Education] that much pupil interest and enjoyment in school learning is lost by overdue emphasis on final examinations and by the cramming and drilling that seemed necessary in order to get a year’s work recalled and reviewed in preparation for examination,” especially in Health, Science, Social Studies and Literature.<sup>12</sup> As a result, the prefect instructed the sisters to teach each unit as it appeared in the program of studies, and to leave tests to be discussed later in the year. In addition, the prefect pointed out that although they were attempting to introduce junior high courses in some schools, they did not think it wise or necessary to change the names of

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<sup>10</sup> SSAA, *Letter from the Provincial Prefect of Studies to Sister Superior and Sisters*, August, 1936 (S19-03-3). Beyond the revised programme of studies, the Sisters of St. Ann were encountering progressivism in their ongoing study of education. Suggested readings on psychology of education and character formation, included books by Jesuit authors such as Raphael McCarthy’s *Training the Adolescent, Safeguarding Mental Health*, or Ernest Hull’s *Formation of Character*. William Kelly’s *Educational Psychology*, written primarily for a Catholic audience, was also recommended; SSAA, *St. Ann’s Journal*: “*Psychology of Education*,” 27 August 1938.

<sup>11</sup> SSAA, *St. Ann’s Journal*: “*Special Notes – Grade IX*,” 27 August 1938.

<sup>12</sup> SSAA, *Letter from the Provincial Prefect of Studies to Sister Superior and Sisters*, Mid-August - September, 1937 (S26-03-1). See also: *Programme of Studies for the Elementary Schools of British Columbia: Bulletin I, Health and Physical education, Language arts; Bulletin II, Social studies; Bulletin III, Arithmetic, Music, Graphic Arts, Practical Arts; Programme of Studies for the Junior High Schools of British Columbia, Grades VII, VIII, IX* (Victoria: Kings Printer, 1936); and *Programme of Studies for the Senior High Schools of British Columbia: Bulletin I; Health and Physical Education for the Senior High Schools of British Columbia: Bulletin II* (Victoria: Kings Printer, 1937).

schools in their system to include the designation “junior high,” as they were enjoying high enrollment in every school.<sup>13</sup>

Mary Dorothea noted the progress made by music teachers after a year with the new curriculum, and directed any worried teacher to Sister Mary Noreen for help.<sup>14</sup> It was expected that every class teacher teach music, with the assistance of the music teacher in planning the lesson. The prefect also reminded sisters of the importance of the health and physical education component in the new bulletin, directing them to the useful suggestions contained in the bulletin.<sup>15</sup> She noted, however, that the health bulletin, while helpful, contained more than a teacher could cover. On the whole, Mary Dorothea appeared positive about the resources contained in the provincial curricular bulletins and encouraged teachers to make use of them, in spite of the fact that they were sometimes difficult for Catholic schools to obtain: “The Department [of Education] does not seem to be very free in sending out these bulletins...each school is surely entitled to one set.”<sup>16</sup> Evidence from the Seminary of Christ the King, the archdiocesan seminary, suggests that by 1949 the government was offering to send private schools curricular materials.<sup>17</sup>

By 1945, the Sisters of St. Ann had students engaged in extensive, inter-disciplinary, multi-grade projects. A high school student from the Kamloops Indian School described in the monthly school paper “Our Home Project”:

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<sup>13</sup> SSAA, *Letter from the Provincial Prefect of Studies to Sister Superior and Sisters*, Mid-August -September, 1937 (S26-03-1).

<sup>14</sup> *Programme of Studies for the Elementary Schools of British Columbia: Bulletin III, Arithmetic, Music, Graphic Arts, Practical Arts* (Victoria: Kings Printer, 1937)

<sup>15</sup> *Programme of Studies for the Elementary Schools of British Columbia: Bulletin I, Health and Physical education, Language arts* (Victoria: Kings Printer, 1936).

<sup>16</sup> SSAA, *Letter from the Provincial Prefect of Studies to Sister Superior and Sisters*, Mid-August - September, 1937 (S26-03-1).

<sup>17</sup> “Curriculum Circulars containing announcements, changes, directives and rulings dealing with the Programmes of Studies” – Westminster Abbey Archives, “Memorandum to Private Schools” 6 Sept 1949, *Department of Education Correspondence and Notices*.

We, the girls of the Senior Class are making a most interesting project on the Home. In working out this project we correlated Religion, Art, Health, Social Studies and Home Economics. The House is made of pulp-board. The painting was done by the girls in Grade IX. The linoleum and the furniture were made by Grades VI, VII, and VIII. We have lovely curtains for the windows. Our home really does look beautiful. In connection with this project, each girl has made a book, in which she has all the information necessary for the planning and arranging of a real Catholic home. Some of our books are very artistic and they may be sent to Vancouver for the Exhibition.<sup>18</sup>

The expressive, social, integrated and day-to-day life components of progressive education are all evident in this project.<sup>19</sup>

The Vancouver Parochial School Council and the teaching Sisters of Charity, Halifax, were also familiar with the provincial curricular changes, and teachers in their schools were incorporating new teaching methods and resources. By the spring of 1937, for example, they had decided to use Donalda Dickie's pedagogically progressive, narrative based, textbook *Pages from Canada's Story* in Grade 6, which the council notes could be accompanied by the Rainbow Series (presumably another history textbook series) for dates.<sup>20</sup> The following year, teachers were given the responsibility of developing their own social studies examinations for Grades 4, 5, and 6.<sup>21</sup> Not only were they using the public social studies curriculum (a sign of pedagogical progressivism in itself), they were participating in the educational trend towards to de-emphasizing examinations, mentioned above. Moreover, the Sisters of Charity's pedagogy included the use of techniques to help the students become more active and inspired. For

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<sup>18</sup> SSAA, *St. Ann's Journal*, April 1945, p.17 (S26-03-8).

<sup>19</sup> Some of the examples of progressivism included in this study are in classrooms with Aboriginal students. This adds a layer of complexity as the colonial context cannot be overlooked or ignored. See Barman, "Schooled for Inequality," 55-79 and Sarah de Leeuw, " 'If anything is to be done with the Indian, we must catch him very young': Colonial Constructions of Aboriginal Children and the Geographies of Indian Residential Schooling in British Columbia, Canada," *Children's Geographies* 7(2) (2009): 123-140.

<sup>20</sup> SCHA, *Vancouver Parochial School Council Meeting Minutes*, April 1937. Donalda J. Dickie and Helen Palk, *Pages from Canada's Story* (Toronto: J. M. Dent, 1928).

<sup>21</sup> SCHA, *Vancouver Parochial School Council Meeting Minutes*, 2 April 1938.

example, they used questioning to support students who struggled to interpret what they had read, and they sought to introduce parliamentary procedure and debates into classes, even in the lower grades. They also decided not to give zeroes, so as to avoid discouraging their students, and teachers were encouraged to hand back marked work so that students could learn from their mistakes.<sup>22</sup>

In the fall of 1937, the sisters had “unfavourable comments” about “King’s History for Grade 8,” and decided to take the matter to Catholic school superintendent; no evidence remains regarding their specific complains, nor how he addressed them.<sup>23</sup> On the whole, however, discussions at the council meetings were focused on the sisters’ goal of achieving greater uniformity among Catholic schools, rather than implementing the new curriculum, or debating its underlying principles. Extensive discussions sought to establish protocols and standards – achievement goals for spelling tests, where it was decided that “more firmness [was] necessary in the lower grades,”<sup>24</sup> and for final examinations, how and when to take attendance, how students should set up their pages, and so forth. Teaching methods and procedures for spelling, writing, drawing, grammar, Latin, and mathematics, along with formalities around saluting the flag, frequently appear in the meeting minutes. The council drew up standardized documents to distribute to all schools. For example, 42 points of “Arithmetic Definitions,” ten pages of “Grammar Definitions,” and “Points to be Read Before Reading Class.”<sup>25</sup> In the latter document,

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<sup>22</sup> SCHA, *Vancouver Parochial School Council Meeting Minutes*, 17 April 1937, 17 September 1938 and 15 February 1941.

<sup>23</sup> The Catholic school superintendent at that time was Rev. L.O. Bourrie. “King’s” refers to H.B. King who authored much of the new curriculum and wrote *A History of Great Britain*. See Penney Clark, “‘Take it Away, Youth!’ Visions of Canadian Identity in British Columbia Social Studies Textbooks, 1925-1989” (thesis, UBC, 1996), 113. Clark points out that there was widespread dissatisfaction among public school teachers with King’s textbook, which was originally rejected by the Junior High Social Studies Committee, but later prescribed by the Department of Education. See also Elisabeth Dawson, “The Introduction and Historical Development of Social Studies in the Curriculum of the Public Schools of British Columbia” (Masters thesis, UBC, 1982), 28.

<sup>24</sup> SCHA, *Vancouver Parochial School Council Meeting Minutes*, 28 November 1937.

<sup>25</sup> SCHA, *Western Province – School Information book 1-19*.

the importance of repetition (rather than memorization) is emphasized: “Good English is a habit. It must be mastered by practice and not by rule.”<sup>26</sup>

Pedagogically, these documents and other directives that came from the Parochial Council were a combination of traditional and progressive, reflecting an interest in uniformity rather than promoting a particular method. That these teaching sisters were considerably influenced by trends in administrative progressivism is perhaps because the majority of their schools were parochial schools, which brought them to work closely with archdiocesan administrators whose primary goal was to establish a unified network of schools. An example of the superintendent’s influence is found in their rule: “plan books to be in plain view on desk, daily program not to be changed without permission.”<sup>27</sup> This is was also among the superintendent’s instructions for religion teachers.<sup>28</sup>

Like the Sisters of St. Ann, the Sisters of Charity, Halifax, were encouraged by their superiors to make use of the ideas and resources contained in the new curriculum. These included, for example, mental hygiene ideas, physical education work, or safety rules.<sup>29</sup> In the spring of 1939, the Sisters of Charity agreed that by autumn, sewing should be included in the program for all girls in their schools.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, they embraced courses such as music, drawing, science, health, and physical education, though they sometimes struggled to find time to accommodate them in their program of studies.<sup>31</sup> They lamented the lack of Canadian history in the curriculum, and after much discussion, their Grade 8 teachers devised a plan that

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> SCHA, *Vancouver Parochial School Council Meeting Minutes*, September 1937.

<sup>28</sup> SCHA, *Instructions to Teachers of Catechism from the Superintendent of Catholic Schools, Vancouver. B.C. ca.1936*, Western Province – School Information book 1-19.

<sup>29</sup> SCHA, *Vancouver Parochial School Council Meeting Minutes*, 15 February 1941 and September 1942.

<sup>30</sup> SCHA, *Vancouver Parochial School Council Meeting Minutes*, 5 April 1939.

<sup>31</sup> SCHA, *Vancouver Parochial School Council Meeting Minutes*, 15 February 1941.

correlated British and Canadian history, including constitutional history.<sup>32</sup> Like the Sisters of St. Ann, the Sisters of Charity were not afraid to adapt the new curriculum to suit their educational vision.

An advertisement for the all-boys school, Vancouver College, found in the *B.C. Catholic* newspaper, indicates that the Irish Christian Brothers were also embracing progressive education in the new curriculum.<sup>33</sup> The brothers sought to educate the whole person – the student’s physical, mental, moral and aesthetic powers – a goal shared by progressives and Catholics. With regard to mental development the advertisement explains that “the school library is organized to meet the demands of progressive education, and the laboratories for chemistry and physics are equipped to keep pace with the demands of the new syllabus.”<sup>34</sup> Like many of the teaching sisters, the Christian Brothers were intent upon offering the best and most current education that they could afford, and found no conflict in drawing from the current educational trends.

In addition to guidance from within their communities, Catholic religious teachers received pedagogical training from a variety of outside sources. The Sisters of St. Ann’s newsletter and the Vancouver Parochial School Council’s meeting minutes often include accounts or references to accounts by teachers who attended summer school and university abroad. *St. Ann’s Journal* notes in 1936 that several of the sisters had the opportunity to take pedagogy courses and obtain a Bachelor of Education through a 3-year program at the University of Montreal.<sup>35</sup> Sisters researched topics such as the place of art in the curriculum, the value of silent reading, examinations as a means to assess intellectual ability and factual knowledge, and

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<sup>32</sup> SCHA, *Vancouver Parochial School Council Meeting Minutes*, 13 February 1943.

<sup>33</sup> RCAVA, *B.C. Catholic*, “Development of the Whole Man,” 12 August 1939, Vol. 8 (37), 4.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> SSAA, *St. Ann’s Journal*, 1936 (S26-03-1).

the central importance of geography in the curriculum. Other sisters attended Seattle College or Holy Names College at Gonzaga University for M.A. and B.A. work.<sup>36</sup> Attending institutions ranging from the British Columbia teachers' summer school in Victoria, to the Boston Institute for Teachers, it was standard for the sisters to use their summer holidays as a time for study. Modern teaching methods were picked up and implemented upon their return home. For example, in September of 1938, the sister superior from Seton Academy notified the archdiocesan superintendent that the students would be performing a short skit on September 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, which was taken from the "Summer School of Catholic Action" some of the sisters had attended in August in Boston.<sup>37</sup>

As the diocesan school system became more established, however, the sisters sometimes ran into conflict with their summer study plans and the superintendent or bishop's desire for uniformity among Catholic schools. This was the case when the Sisters of St. Ann's provincial prefect, Mary Dorothea, wrote the new superintendent of Catholic schools, Reverend Father Maurice Hanley in May of 1939, requesting permission from the archbishop for several high school teachers to finish teaching ten days early. These sisters were hoping to attend summer school courses at Seattle College and elsewhere, which started before the closing date of public school classes in British Columbia. The sisters had been granted permission the previous year, but this year were informed that they needed to contact the professors and make arrangements to come late, as it was important "the teachers rather than the pupils suffer any loss of time which would be occurred by attending Summer School."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> SSAA, "Summer School" *St. Ann's Journal*, 1938 (S26-03-3).

<sup>37</sup> RCAVA, *Correspondence between Sister Agnes Camilla and Reverend L.O. Bourrie 12 September 1938* (401-3).

<sup>38</sup> RCAVA, *Correspondence between Sister Mary Dorothea, S.S.A. and Reverend Father Maurice Hanley 22 May and 1 June 1939*, (401-3).

Regardless of where they were educated, teachers were apparently capable of displaying their use of modern teaching methods and curriculum. This is evident during Education Week February 6-11, 1938, when the schools around the diocese opened their doors for demonstration days to “exemplify new principles of our education system” and show “the need and use of visual and project aids.”<sup>39</sup> On Tuesday, St. Patrick’s School, St. Joseph’s School and St. Mary’s School hosted; On Wednesday, it was St. Augustine’s, Vancouver College, Little Flower Academy and St. Anthony’s College; On Thursday, St. Ann’s Academy (Dunsmuir St.), St. Helen’s School, Our Lady of Sorrow’s School, and Seton Academy opened their doors, and on Friday, Our Lady’s School, Sacred Heart Convent, and Immaculate Conception (Point Grey). Schoolwork was displayed and demonstrative hygiene and art classes, musical performances, and “physical culture classes with dramatized games and folk dancing” were held.<sup>40</sup> The day’s program from St. Ann’s Academy, Dunsmuir Street, reveals that the staff and students at St. Ann’s Academy, Vancouver welcomed Archbishop William Duke and the Superintendent of Catholic Schools, L. O. Bourrie, as well as parents and interested friends to wander the school and visit classes at any hour of the school day.<sup>41</sup> The morning session consisted of all students attending their Religion class, followed by their regular classes. In the afternoon session, students presented the pedagogically progressive demonstration program featuring the following for each grade level:

*Primary Classes:* music, reading and dramatization, health; an exhibit: manual arts, color work, and health project

*Grades III & IV:* reading and dramatization, vocabulary drill, music, an exhibit: drawing and project work

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<sup>39</sup> RCAVA, *B.C. Catholic*, “Education Week: February 6-11,” 5 February 1938, Vol.7 (11), 3.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> RCAVA, “Education Week,” 10 February 1938 (401-3).

*Grade V:* concert recitation, a health play: “Accident Prevention,” a social study [sic] project, and a spelling match

*Grade VI:* class recitation, a spelling match, music, project explanation

*Grades VII & VIII:* music, spelling (science terminology), literature (a dramatization), a project: Romance of Scotland, The Chemistry of the Air

*Grades IX & X:* Latin vocabulary match, St. Catherine’s literary circle, religion: baseball match; work book exhibits

*Commercial:* students’ discussion on “Essential in Business Proficiency,” dictation (business letters), shorthand vocabulary drill, and typing (technical drill)<sup>42</sup>

## **4.2 Pedagogical Progressivism in Catechesis**

In the same year that the provincial government introduced the revised program of studies, Catholic schools in British Columbia entered into a new phase of development and uniformity, reflecting the influence of administrative progressivism. Archbishop Duke appointed Reverend Father L. O. Bourrie as Superintendent of Catholic Schools and Director of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine.<sup>43</sup> Bourrie began his new position in 1936 by visiting every Catholic school in the Vancouver Archdiocese and observing standards and practices. Initially he focused on the program, examinations, and teaching of Religion, for which he had prepared a new program outline. For the 1937-8 school year, Bourrie put forward a calendar for the parochial and private schools that aligned the Catholic system’s holidays and days in session with those of the public system (and specified that exceptions could only be made with his permission).<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (more often referred to as C.C.D.) was the diocesan department that oversaw religious education for children attending public schools.

<sup>44</sup> RCAVA, *Proposed School Calendar 1937-1938*, (401-3).

Bourrie was familiar with progressivism and encouraged teachers to embrace modern teaching methods while maintaining their Catholic philosophy of education. In the fall of 1936, when the revised public school curriculum was introduced, Bourrie wrote an article for the *B.C. Catholic* about the aims of Catholic education in comparison to progressive education.<sup>45</sup> Bourrie explained that Catholic schools were to provide knowledge and to secure the development of the students' powers to fit them for citizenship. Though pedagogical progressives were moving away from an emphasis on knowledge and skills to the development of individual talent and dispositions, they were nonetheless passionate about creating citizens who could support a democracy.<sup>46</sup> Catholic educators could agree with the latter goal, as it was one they already understood themselves to be accomplishing, but they sought to impart knowledge *as well as* develop habits and dispositions. Moreover, the type of knowledge in which they sought to educate students was far broader than the knowledge taught in public schools. Bourrie explained that one of the chief aims of Catholic education was to develop the powers of the natural intellect and inform it with the great supernatural truths, to develop and strengthen the natural will and bring it under the influence of grace (needed because of the human capacity for sinfulness).<sup>47</sup> These concepts, absent in progressive education, spoke to the Christian understanding of the human person.<sup>48</sup> Variance between progressive and Catholic philosophies of education would be articulated in greater detail in the postwar period.

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<sup>45</sup> Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver Archives, "Our Aims of Education" by Superintendent of Catholic Schools, Vancouver, B.C. L.O. Bourrie, 24 October 1936.

<sup>46</sup> Donalda Dickie, *The Enterprise in Theory and Practice*, (Toronto: Gage, 1940), 82.

<sup>47</sup> Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver Archives, "Our Aims of Education" by Superintendent of Catholic Schools, Vancouver, B.C. L.O. Bourrie, Oct 24, 1936.

<sup>48</sup> Both Pope Pius XI and Jacques Maritain identified the Christian conception of the human person as the defining characteristic of Catholic education. Pius XI, *Christian Education*, and Maritain, *Education at the Cross Roads*.

Bourrie's instructions for catechism teachers in 1936 gave the superior or prefect of studies for each school the responsibility of guiding the teachers in the proper methods of teaching.<sup>49</sup> He emphasized the importance of preparing catechism lessons in advance, suggesting it was a matter of conscience to teach the religion well. All schools in the archdiocese were expected to adhere to the new catechetical program, and each teacher was required to have the given day's lesson plan on their desk when the superintendent came for inspection. Teachers were also required to have project books and notebooks available for inspection. More specific requirements included the mandatory use of project workbooks for teaching liturgy, pencil use for drawing in project books, and the use of ink for all work other than drawing after Grade 3. In addition, notebooks were required for teaching Church history, which included notes explaining vocabulary from the Catechism, as well as illustrations on doctrinal matters.<sup>50</sup>

The catechetical approach put forward by the archdiocese was based on a pedagogically progressive method, known as the "Munich Method" after the group of catechists from Munich who formulated it at the turn of the century.<sup>51</sup> The system formed units of study from groups of related questions in catechism, which were taught in a series of steps corresponding to the learning process. The three fundamental steps – presentation (often a story), explanation, and application (examples from daily life) – were based on the child's learning stages of apprehension, understanding and practice. The Munich Method was coupled with the English

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<sup>49</sup> SCHA, *Instructions to Teachers of Catechism from the Superintendent of Catholic Schools, Vancouver. B.C.*, Western Province – School Information book 1-19.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Joseph H. Ostdiek, *Simple Methods in Religious Instruction*, (New York: Bruce Publishing), 1935, 44-51. See also: SSAA, "Methods and Procedures in the Teaching of Catechism" in *School Notes*, September, 1936 (S19-03-3). Writing in the community newsletter, Sr. Mary Dorothea describes the approach of the new religion curriculum for the archdiocese. Her notes are taken largely from Ostdiek's catechetical reference text approved for use in the Archdiocese of Vancouver. Another pedagogically progressive approved reference text: John K. Sharp, *Aims and Methods in Teaching Religion* (New York: Benziger Brothers), 1929.

“Sower Scheme,” where “the religious curriculum is divided into three periods based on the chronological age of the pupils.”<sup>52</sup> In each period of study the entire field of religion was studied, each year more intensively and extensively than in the last. In the first stage students learned through pictures, stories, talks, dramatizations, and drawing, creating little project booklets. (No textbooks were used.) In the second stage students’ stories, prayers, hymns, and dramatizations were used, and one hundred questions and answers were memorized. Students moved from answering in their own words to memorizing phrases from the catechism. In the third stage, the only prescribed “text” for use working with references, pictures, maps, written reports, and so forth was the notebook. Thus this scheme attempted to mirror the “unfolding life of the child.”<sup>53</sup>

The approach was described as “Child-Centered Instruction” because the content of instruction was “graded to suit the interests, the mental age, and the developmental stage of the pupil.”<sup>54</sup> Starting with stories, illustrations, and pictures, students came to gradually understand and deduce the given principles and truths. Teachers were instructed to consider the child’s past experience, academic background, and learning environment when using this method. They were also encouraged to make use of materials available in the local surroundings, which naturally varied from city to country.<sup>55</sup> Teachers were reminded that this was the method used by “the Master Himself [Jesus] who pointed to the birds of the air and the lilies of the field and deduced a lesson on the providence of God.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ostdiek, *Simple Methods*, 45. See also: SSAA, *School Notes*, September, 1936 (S19-03-3).

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>54</sup> SSAA, *School Notes*, September, 1936 (S19-03-3).

<sup>55</sup> Ostdiek, *Simple Methods*, 49.

<sup>56</sup> SSAA, *School Notes*, September, 1936 (S19-03-3).

In child-centered instruction questions were important -- for “a good questioner is a good teacher.”<sup>57</sup> The sisters were taught that there are two types of questions: those to test the memory, and those to invoke the child’s reasoning, judgment, interpretation, or explanation and use of facts. While memory work was not frowned upon, teachers were encouraged to work toward engaging students in the latter kind of thinking. Six rules governed the use of questions:

1. Questions should be concise, definite, relevant, and based on learned material.
2. Questions should be addressed to the whole class and then a single child should be called on to answer.
3. In order that all pupils may feel the joy of answering successfully bright pupils should be named to answer the difficult questions leaving the easier ones for the dull or backward.
4. The teacher should not repeat her questions nor the pupils’ answer.
5. The pupils’ questions are often important. Usually they should be taken up and discussed as they bespeak an interest and readiness to learn.
6. Concert answering by the pupils is often appropriate in drill work such as learning the prayers, poems, hymns, commandments, etc.<sup>58</sup>

Teachers were informed: “Investigations reveal that teachers talk two thirds of the time during the recitation. The principle of self-activity demands that the pupils do more talking and teachers less. Pupils learn through responses.”<sup>59</sup> The Sisters of St. Ann’s provincial prefect closed her comments in the community newsletter about the archdiocese’s catechetical method by reminding the sisters that adjusting to the new methods would require work on their part: “the teacher is an instrument in the hands of God. To do her part as well as possible she must make use of all talents, skills and devices at her command. It would be tempting God to expect Him to supply these deficiencies for which she is responsible.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ostdiek, *Simple Methods*, 50. Quoted in St. Ann’s Journal: SSAA, *School Notes*, September, 1936 (S19-03-3).

<sup>60</sup> SSAA, *School Notes*, September, 1936 (S19-03-3).

The ways in which the teaching sisters responded to Bourrie's religious instruction course outline varied. The outline raised a number of questions for the Sisters of the Child Jesus, who were unclear about which catechism texts were to be used in the high schools, and requested more information about the sources he had drawn upon in writing his outline.<sup>61</sup> They also questioned whether students were required to memorize all or any of the prescribed Bible history and Gospels, and were particularly concerned with figuring out how to teach the course Bourrie had outlined to classes containing students at different grade levels. The Sisters of Charity, Halifax, were also concerned with memorization, complaining "the new Religion course... [lacked] the time necessary to drill important points in Catechism."<sup>62</sup> They needed to be reminded that students could provide any correct answer, not the exact wording from the Catechism.<sup>63</sup> The Sisters of St. Ann were encouraged by their provincial prefect to "meet the changing conditions with apostolic energy and try to advance the cause as far as lies in our power by active and interested co-operation with the forces at work for the standardizing of schools."<sup>64</sup> The evidence suggests that these sisters had the greatest amount of understanding and investment in the progressive techniques underlying the new curriculum.

In addition to instructions and resources made available by the archdiocesan superintendent and the prefects of studies, the Sisters of St. Ann's newsletters contained notes

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<sup>61</sup> RCAVA, *Letter to the Superintendent of Catholic School from Sister M. Octavia (St. Edmund's School, North Vancouver, January 2, 1937 (Chancery Office Fonds, 401-3).*

<sup>62</sup> SCHA, *Vancouver Parochial School Council Meeting Minutes, April 5, 1939 and ca. September, 1942.*

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> SSAA, *Letter from the Provincial Prefect of Studies to Sister Superior and Sisters, September 21, 1936 (S19-03-3).* The long term goal of uniformity among Catholic schools was felt with the superintendent's school visits, as all Sisters of St. Ann teachers were required to prepare the following: a neatly printed the name of the class on the outside of the classroom door, and post a timetable for the class(es); On each teacher's desk: seating plans, class registers including the student's age, covered textbooks with markers for the day's lesson, and an extra copy of the timetable; Teachers were to be prepared to conduct a lesson in the school inspector's presence, if called upon.

about lectures in neighbouring diocese where sisters of their order taught.<sup>65</sup> For example, the sisters' monthly newsletter included notes from a lecture by Dr. Williams, professor of methods at the Washington University School of Education, for the Seattle Diocese Teachers' Meeting on the Morrison Method of teaching, also known as the unit method. This method was adopted by the Archdioceses of Seattle and Chicago in religion classes at all grade levels, and included workbooks. Mary Dorothea's notes convey three points about this method: 1) it provided a psychological rather than a deductive approach to learning, allowing the pupil to receive an education built around a central theme or idea; 2) the aim was to provide a more integrated understanding of the concept, and through problem or project, for the student to master the concepts being studied, thereby allowing more meaningful learning experience; and 3) it was a departure from drilling and testing to supporting the student to accomplishing something on their own.<sup>66</sup>

To help teachers transition to the new methods, the 1938 summer program for Catholic teachers included demonstration lessons for each grade in religion.<sup>67</sup> Two teachers per grade level were selected to prepare a lesson and conduct a class, presenting subject matter, asking questions, and so forth, as though they were teaching children. These teachers were instructed to decide on their approach (the Munich method, the Sower Method, etc.), select materials, prepare a lesson plan, and suggest projects. Their lesson plans included an aim, presentation, explanation, Catechism reference, and application (projects and assignments). For projects, teachers exhibited class projects prepared by their students during the previous year.

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<sup>65</sup> SSAA, "Pedagogical Lecture," Mid-September to Mid-October, 1937 (S26-3-1).

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> SSAA, *School Notes*, 1937 (S26-03-2). It is unclear whether this summer school was held in Victoria or Vancouver. In 1938 the Victoria Diocese hosted its first annual session of Summer School of Religious Instruction; the Vancouver Archdiocese summer sessions had been running since 1933 or earlier; cf. SSAA, "The Church's Stand on Education," (S26-03-5). (The Sisters of St. Ann taught in all dioceses on the West Coast from Alaska to Oregon.)

When students returned to school that autumn, the Vancouver Schools hosted a Catechetical Display. The purposes of the display were “to stress the importance of Religious Instruction as part of the daily school curriculum and to illustrate modern teaching methods; 2) to help the teachers by a comparison of methods and thus to make their teaching increasingly effective; 3) to acquaint parents with what is being done in schools for the religious education of their children and to awaken enthusiastic support for their work; and 4) to interest the pupils and to encourage them by an appreciation of their efforts.”<sup>68</sup> Examples of projects at the exhibit included posters, artistic work, and dioramas. One celebrated project was a model in a box of a sickroom with a miniature priest with surplice and stole, administering the sacrament of extreme unction (the anointing of the sick) to a patient in bed, complete with potted plants and religious pictures on the walls.<sup>69</sup>

In 1940, the Sisters of Charity on the Vancouver Parochial School Council were notified that the Archbishop was considering a new course in Catechism, with a brief reference to “De Paul’s Christian Doctrine course.”<sup>70</sup> The rationale behind this possible switch, and the ultimate decision itself, remain a mystery. Moreover, the degree of progressive pedagogy included in the new course is unknown. It is clear, however, that progressive education made its mark on religious instruction in the late-1930s, and that Catholic teachers embraced it, implementing it to varying degrees in their schools.

### **4.3 Towards a Diocesan System**

As Catholic teachers in the Vancouver Archdiocese explored new methods and delivered new courses, they were increasingly interconnected through diocesan directives and meetings.

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<sup>68</sup> SSAA, “Catechetical Display – Vancouver Schools,” September 1938 (S26-03-3).

<sup>69</sup> This project came from a school run by the Sisters of St. Ann.

<sup>70</sup> SCHA, *Vancouver Parochial School Council Meeting Minutes*, September 21, 1940.

Catholic teachers and leaders were inspired by reforms in administrative progressivism that would strengthen Catholic education in British Columbia, and so the influences of administrative progressivism were primarily evident in increased centralization and standardization.<sup>71</sup> Already in the 1920s and 1930s, differentiated tracks of learning had become a feature in some Catholic high schools, and by that time more than ever administrators were interested in improving teacher qualifications and uniformity among Catholic schools. Though increased standardized testing and intelligence tests also made their way into Catholic schools, there was less emphasis on academic measurement and testing than on improving the organization and standards within the Catholic school system.

On February 13<sup>th</sup> 1943, the Vancouver Parochial School Council had their last recorded meeting. Just under a month later, on March 12<sup>th</sup>, the Vancouver Catholic School Board had their first. Although religious sisters continued to teach in and run parochial and private schools, the role of the archdiocese as overseer of Catholic education was growing. This was the result of work to standardize Catholic schooling that Archbishop Duke had begun in the mid-1930s when he instated the Archdiocesan Superintendent and the Board of Catholic School Trustees. His plans culminated with the establishment of the Catholic School Board, made up of all parish pastors, a representative from each parish, under his presidency.<sup>72</sup> Duke's goal was to "adopt even higher standards of study, to advocate thoroughly qualified teachers in all departments, and

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<sup>71</sup> See Chapter 2 on administrative progressivism. Administrative progressivism sought modernized schooling through testing, measurement, increased school organization and in administrators and educational specialists, standardized teacher training, specialized programs, and differentiated courses of learning according to future employment. See Tyack, *One Best System*, 180-5.

<sup>72</sup> RCAVA, "First Meeting – March 12<sup>th</sup> 1943" *Minutes of the Meeting of the Catholic School Board* (401-8).

to make possible for all... growing boys and girls all the advantages in modern buildings and playgrounds and classroom equipment.”<sup>73</sup> He hoped for a school in every parish.

In January of 1938, Archbishop Duke wrote in the *B.C. Catholic* there were over 700 high school and over 4000 elementary school students attending Catholic schools throughout the province.<sup>74</sup> These numbers are corroborated by a rare report on Catholic education, written in the mid to late 1930s, titled “Catholic Education in the Vancouver Diocese.”<sup>75</sup> The report provides statistics about Catholic schools in British Columbia, along with goals and critiques of the system. Of the 4808 students, 11.5 percent were non-Catholic and 21.4 percent were high school students. There were 179 teachers teaching in 29 schools, with an average of 27 students per teacher.<sup>76</sup> One hundred sixty of the teachers were religious, and all of the 19 lay teachers were Roman Catholics, who for the most part worked in the high schools. Seventy-seven percent of the teachers had normal school diplomas (largely from eastern Canada), and 49 percent had Bachelor of Arts degrees. At the time of the report, the diocese had set a rule that by 1950 every elementary school teacher had to have a normal school diploma, and every high school teacher a Bachelor’s degree, though it was noted that this rule would be difficult to enforce, especially among the religious congregations. The salaries of the religious and lay teachers varied significantly. The religious were paid \$30 per month plus a “hidden salary” of food, housing,

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<sup>73</sup> RCAVA, *Letter to the Clergy, Religious Orders and Laity of the Archdiocese from William Mark, No. 50*, January 29<sup>th</sup>, 1940 (47-111), p.4.

<sup>74</sup> RCAVA, *B.C. Catholic*, “Archbishop Views Catholic Education Situation in B.C.,” 8 January 1938, Vol.7(9), 6. See also report on education: RCAVA, “Catholic Education in the Vancouver Diocese” ca.1936 (418-13).

<sup>75</sup> RCAVA, “Catholic Education in the Vancouver Diocese” ca.1936 (418-13).

<sup>76</sup> The report compares the pupil to teacher ratio with that of public schools (32:1).

heat, etc. The lay teachers were reportedly paid \$135 per month, though they likely received less. By comparison, the provincial salary average for teachers was \$173 per month.<sup>77</sup>

The report notes that there were three types of inspectors in Catholic schools: the priest who acted as superintendent of schools; the superiors and prefects of the various religious orders, who were required to submit a report twice a year to the superintendent; and “Mr. Straight” (sic), i.e. Mr. Straith of the Vancouver Public System, who visited Catholic schools to check on Grade 8 students and recommend them for entrance into a Vancouver high school without them having written the provincial government entrance exams. Because the provincial government did not finance private education, public school inspectors were not sent into Catholic schools and no set standard of teacher certification existed.<sup>78</sup> Medical and dental services were free for students and paid for by the Catholic school board. Psychological tests were also given to students. At the time of the report, three new schools in Vancouver, one in Chilliwack and one on Lulu Island were being considered. The shortage of high schools was seen as a major weakness of the system, and the establishment of regional high schools, with three or more elementary feeder schools, was recommended.<sup>79</sup>

The report suggested that non-Catholics were attracted to Catholic education because the schools taught manners and because of their boarding facilities, sports, and the social prestige they brought. Catholic schools also attracted problem cases where the public schools were no longer willing to accept the student. Advantages of Catholic schools listed include smaller size of school, and therefore more attention for the individual student, character formation, cultural

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<sup>77</sup> The report’s author notes by the lay teacher’s salary: “I don’t know any R.C. Lay Teacher getting this much from R.C. School” [sic]; R.C.A.V.A., “Catholic Education in the Vancouver Diocese” ca.1936 (418-13), 3.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 4.

training (such as manners and social graces), and the emphasis on religion.<sup>80</sup> The report notes several weaknesses of the system: the superintendent needed a trained assistant thoroughly familiar with the educational field; library facilities were weak; proper gym and playground facilities were needed; more high schools were needed, which further would require specialized instruction and expensive equipment (and the following departments: library, gym, science labs, home economics, manual arts and commercial, all with multiple expenses). The report notes in two places that very few of the teachers in the Catholic schools in this period practiced modern teaching methods.<sup>81</sup> Though the report suggests the school fund had around \$400,000, and that more money was coming in, the need for more money to improve and maintain Catholic schools is evident.<sup>82</sup>

Archbishop Duke passionately objected to the provincial government's refusal to fund Catholic schools.<sup>83</sup> In multiple public addresses and written statements, he stressed the value and quality of Catholic education, hoping first and foremost that Catholic parents would send their children to receive spiritual and intellectual formation in Catholic schools, and second, that the government would see the legitimacy of Catholic education and fund schools (a goal which would not be realized in his lifetime). Duke drew society's attention to Catholic schools' use of the public curriculum, modern pedagogical methods, and alignment with the public school calendar, all of which allowed them to offer students "knowledge of this world" in the same way that public schools did.<sup>84</sup> He pointed out that, in addition, Catholic schools provided religious training and knowledge of God, which Catholics sincerely believed to be the most important

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>83</sup> RCAA, *Letter to the Clergy*, 47-111.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 3.

aspects of education, and which public schools did not even pretend to offer.<sup>85</sup> He supported his position by pointing out that Catholic school students scored well on government examinations and after graduation became responsible citizens.<sup>86</sup>

Another way Duke provided education on Catholic schooling was through the *B.C. Catholic* newspaper. Articles by Duke, Bourrie and others reviewed the status of Catholic schools in the province, examined the separate school question, and articulated the unique aims of Catholic education.<sup>87</sup> Aspects of secular society associated with progressive education that were concerning to Catholics were also discussed. For example, an article reporting on the annual retreat of the Community of the Sisters of the Child Jesus, explains that the “Indian School Inspector,” Captain Barry, gave them an address, which “dealt with the trend of so called Progressive Education,” and highlighted the “extreme danger to Catholics in the training of children in the philosophy of materialists as Mr. John Dewey, and others held up to teachers as examples of all that is best in Modern Education.”<sup>88</sup> Elsewhere, readers were warned of naturalism, “which discounts entirely the supernatural in man and is the main cause of the Godlessness and lack of restraint that disfigure modern living.”<sup>89</sup>

The Catholic School Board furthered Duke’s goal of securing public funding for Catholic schools. They even considered using the name “Catholic Public Schools” in an attempt to make clear to non-Catholic school authorities that they were not private schools. But this was

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<sup>85</sup> RCAVA, *The Archbishop Speaks ca.1945* (401-7), 4.

<sup>86</sup> RCAVA, *Letter to the Clergy, Religious Orders and Laity of the Archdiocese from William Mark, No. 50*, January 29<sup>th</sup>, 1940 (47-111), 3.

<sup>87</sup> RCAVA, *B.C. Catholic*, “Our Aims of Education,” 24 Oct. 1936, Vol. 6(4), 2; “Archbishop Duke on Catholic Inequality in B.C. Education,” 4 Dec. 1937, Vol. 7(5),1; “Archbishop Views Catholic Education Situation in B.C.,” 8 January 1938, Vol. 7(9), 6; L.O. Bourrie, “Catholic Education,” 5 Feb. 1938, Vol. 7(11), 4.

<sup>88</sup> RCAVA, *B.C. Catholic*, “Indian School Inspector Guest of Sisters,” 19 August 1939, Vol. 8(38), 6, 5.

<sup>89</sup> RCAVA, *B.C. Catholic*, “Christian Principles of Education Outlined by Monsignor Chaloner,” 10 July 1941, Vol. 10(34), 1, 6, 7.

considered impossible since it would entail admitting any student, and school law forbade the teaching of religion in any “public” schools.<sup>90</sup> It was unanimously agreed, however, that “every opportunity should be taken to emphasize the fact that [Catholic parochial] schools [were] not actually private schools.”<sup>91</sup> This would become a public battle in the autumn of 1949, when Catholic parochial schools decided they were no longer willing to pay an annual fee levied by the City of Vancouver on a variety of private businesses, including private schools.<sup>92</sup> Their case was eventually heard at the Supreme Court of British Columbia, where it was successfully argued that the phrase “private school” had no universally accepted meaning (a point made with reference to England and other parts of Canada), and that Catholic schools were not considered “private schools” in other parts of Canada. Evidence to support this claim drew on the differences between parochial schools, e.g. Our Lady of Perpetual Help, and Catholic private schools, e.g. Little Flower Academy, Seton Academy, or Vancouver College. In 1950 Catholic parochial schools were no longer legally considered private schools.<sup>93</sup>

Discussion at Catholic School Board meetings primarily focused on administrative aspects of education, which at times directly related to the teachers. However, the teaching sisters did not attend the Catholic School Board’s meetings. Board members included the pastors and a representative from each parish, with the archbishop as president.<sup>94</sup> The archdiocesan superintendent in 1943, G. McKinnon, often acted as a liaison between the Catholic School Board and the teachers. For example, McKinnon explained to the school board that

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<sup>90</sup> It is unclear which students were not permitted to attend Catholic schools. A report from the time period shows that 11.5 percent of students in the Vancouver Catholics Schools were not Catholic. RCAVA, “Catholic Education in the Vancouver Diocese” ca.1936 (418-13), 2.

<sup>91</sup> RCAVA, “First Meeting – March 12<sup>th</sup> 1943” *Minutes of the Meeting of the Catholic School Board* (401-8).

<sup>92</sup> RCAVA, *B.C. Catholic*, “Parochial Schools Not Private Schools, Lawyer Show Court,” 19 October 1950, Vol.19(50), 1, 6.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>94</sup> RCAVA, “First Meeting – March 12<sup>th</sup> 1943” *Minutes of the Meeting of the Catholic School Board* (401-8).

the curricula in our Catholic schools exactly parallels that of the public schools, with the exception of religion. Also, that the standard in our Catholic schools was higher than the public schools even though they have fallen somewhat during the last five years due to the new courses of studies issued by the government. Our teachers, while being just as good as any in the public schools, are not as qualified as public school teachers for work in B.C. Quite a number of our Sisters are taking summer courses to obtain the certificates of B.C. teaching requirements.<sup>95</sup>

Teacher qualifications were a point of discussion at this time between the superintendent and archbishop as well. When the teaching sisters inquired with Duke about attending normal school or university in order to qualify as teachers, Duke turned the question over to McKinnon, who recommended that each congregation explain their qualifications to the registrar in the Department of Education in Victoria, in order to find out which courses they would need to take to become qualified teachers in British Columbia.<sup>96</sup> In this time period, schools also began to report their teachers' names, grades taught, certificates and specialties to the superintendent's office.<sup>97</sup> As discussed in Chapter 3, certificates varied widely, with some sisters holding primary methods certification from Dalhousie University, Halifax, another with a Master of Arts degree from Fordham University, New York City, and still others with membership in the Royal Drawing Society of London, England, or the Toronto Conservatory of Music.<sup>98</sup>

The superintendent also acted as a liaison between the archbishop and the teachers. He notified the teachers of special prayers the bishop wanted all students to memorize, or hymns to be sung on a given feast day at a special liturgical celebration.<sup>99</sup> He urged them to diligently keep attendance records, pointing out that public schools had the support of the truancy officer, but

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid. The issue was not that the sisters were unqualified teachers, as many of the sisters had qualifications from other provinces or states, but that they were not qualified to teach in British Columbia.

<sup>96</sup> RCAVA, *Letter from Superintendent G. McKinnon to Most Rev. W.M. Duke, D.D.* May 17<sup>th</sup> 1943 (401-8).

<sup>97</sup> As mentioned in the introductory chapter, teachers of Aboriginal students reported to the federal government in Ottawa.

<sup>98</sup> RCAVA, *Teacher Qualifications 1943* (401-5,7).

<sup>99</sup> RCAVA, *Letter from Superintendent G. McKinnon to Sister Superior* April 28<sup>th</sup> 1943 (401-7).

Catholic schools had no such assistance, and while some schools kept excellent records, others were in need of improvement in this area.<sup>100</sup>

Corresponding with an unnamed “sister superior,” McKinnon lamented the lack of a council or federation for teachers to “improve and standardize the teaching” in local Catholic schools.<sup>101</sup> He envisioned a teachers’ council with two teachers from each teaching order or congregation in the diocese that would outline and submit a curriculum for religious instruction, study and apply the best teaching methods of the day, and encourage teachers to be qualified according to provincial standards.<sup>102</sup> He also envisioned a textbook committee with five or six teachers selected by the superintendent and the teachers’ council that would “investigate the best texts both for official texts and supplementary sources for religion; to try out such texts.”<sup>103</sup> Finally, he hoped to see a program committee emerge, which would “draw up an agenda of questions for discussion at each teachers’ meeting; to arrange meetings of the teachers according to the grade they are teaching so as to correlate the work done, the methods used and decide upon a unified treatment of subject.”<sup>104</sup> It would be five years before the British Columbia Catholic Educators’ Association was incorporated under the Societies Act of British Columbia in 1948.<sup>105</sup>

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

Catholic schools in the Vancouver Archdiocese underwent significant curricular changes between 1936 and 1945. Teachers wrestled with and implemented the new provincial

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> RCAVA, *The British Columbia Catholic Education Association (Incorporated under the Societies Act, Chapter 311, Revised Statutes of British Columbia, 1948): Constitution* (402-6).

curriculum, increasing course offerings and adjusting course content to reflect their educational priorities and worldview. New teaching methods were met with a reserved openness, as former teaching experience and practices were not easily abandoned. Child-centered, pedagogically progressive approaches were in no way identified as incompatible with Catholicism, as the revised religious education course made clear, and criticism of public education centered on its perceived shortcomings with regard to supernatural formation. Four new schools were added to over a dozen that had been established in the 1920s and 1930s. Together they formed a network of schools that came under the supervision of the religious communities who had started them, as well as the diocesan superintendent, trustees, board of representatives and the archbishop. Administrative progressivism was moderately impactful, evident in the work of the Vancouver Parochial Council and increasing organization of the diocesan school system, the standardization of teaching materials throughout schools, emphasis placed on record keeping practices, and increased attention to provincial teacher certification. All in all, evidence from the 1936 to 1945 time period reveals the impact of trends in progressive pedagogy on Catholic school instruction, and perhaps more so, the trends in administrative progressivism on Catholic school structure and administration.

## **Chapter 5: Catholic Schools between 1946 and 1960: Useful Methods, Unacceptable Curriculum and Divergent Philosophies**

By 1945, Catholic schools had become interconnected through diocesan special exhibits and religious celebrations, the same academic standards across schools, workshops and directives for teachers, and through the installation of administrators determined to foster the schools' success. The push for modern teaching methods had subsided and the curricular changes of 1936 and 1937 were no longer a point of discussion. To a certain extent Archbishop Duke had achieved his goal of establishing an archdiocesan school system. However, funding for the schools remained an issue. Rather than demonstrating the comparable qualities of Catholic schools with public schools, as was common in the 1936-1945 period, discussion about Catholic education in the 1946-1960 period focused on the contrasts between the underlying philosophies of Catholic and secular education, with the distinctive, irreplaceable nature of the former emphasized, and unacceptable products of the latter, such as sex education, rejected. When discussion of progressive education reemerged in the postwar period, it was in opposition to the underlying philosophy of progressive education as opposed to its methods. The understanding of the human person that shaped Catholic schools' aims of education in the Vancouver Archdiocese was a point on which Catholic educators and administrators were unwilling to compromise.

### **5.1 Progressive Methods Continue**

Evidence from classrooms in the postwar period suggests that progressivism continued to find its way into Vancouver's Catholic schools. Progressive activities such as student governments and school newspapers became popular in Catholic schools in the 1950s.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> NWMA, St. Peter's School Fonds, "St. Peter's School – Yearbooks – Mock-ups 1959-1960 and 1960," (Box 1, IHP851751, File 1); see photograph of student council.

Textbooks used in Religion classes demonstrated a shift on the part of their authors from the question and answer method with its reliance on rote memorization, to an emphasis on religion in action.<sup>2</sup> The introduction to a textbook used at St. Ann's Academy in New Westminster titled "Religion: Doctrine and Practice," explained that it is important that knowledge and belief in God results in action. The textbook's author highlighted the "Catholic Action" movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in which groups of lay Catholics sought to influence business, civic life, social life, and the school. He noted that, "according to Pope Pius XI, the organization of Catholic Action for young people is one of the most important duties of Catholic schools."<sup>3</sup> In addition to suggestions for ways in which students might take action in school beyond the classroom (committees, clubs, choir, athletics, etc.), each chapter of the textbook contains exercise and application sections where students were given the opportunities to discuss scenarios, reflect on their own experiences and actions, and generate ideas for further action.<sup>4</sup> The Baltimore Catechism also remained a standard textbook in Catholic classrooms in this period.<sup>5</sup>

Catholic administrators continued to use the diocesan religion course to influence and develop progressive pedagogy as well. For example, a handout titled "The Lesson Plan and Its Use," distributed at the Diocesan Catechetical Training Course (ca.1950s), outlines the importance of learning "by knowing, rather than by rote."<sup>6</sup> On the handout, teachers are guided through a five-step lesson plan, wherein the teacher is to 1) determine aim of lesson; 2) prepare the lesson, researching if necessary, and keeping in mind students' attention span: plan for "5-10

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<sup>2</sup> Francis B. Cassilly, S.J., *Religion: Doctrine and Practice for use in Catholic High Schools*, (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1942).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 7. See Chapter 3 regarding students performing skits after attending Summer School of Catholic Action in Boston, 1938.

<sup>4</sup> Although this type of resource was available, the degree to which teachers drew upon them is not clear.

<sup>5</sup> Michael A McGuire, *The New Baltimore Catechism and Mass*, (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1953).

<sup>6</sup> SSAA, *The Lesson Plan and Its Use by William Haley*, ca.1950s (S19-49-4).

min of talk, then questions. Move about, etc.”; 3) introduce the lesson, moving from known to unknown; use a parable or anecdote; 4) present the lesson: “make your problem their problem, draw your audience together, sum up from time to time”; and 5) provide an opportunity for students to respond to the lesson, or apply their learning – one third of the total time given to lesson; this involves oral questioning, and “a friendly attitude toward all questions;” aim to elicit answers from the other students to questions raised. A number of special considerations are included after the five steps: Teachers are reminded that words must be used at the level just above the learner, and to engage in movement: walking, sitting, hand movements, and voice projection. Moreover, the teacher should aim to provoke questions. The “teacher must decide whether the topic raised should be pursued... the teacher’s aim and preparation will serve as the boundaries of the discussion.” With regard to discipline, “attention must be obtained and held,” though the approach should represent the “we all learn together” attitude, the “we’ve all discovered it together” experience of shared learning.<sup>7</sup> While this type of lesson planning advocates for a pedagogically progressive, student-centered approach, as is evident in the promotion of physical activity and student talk, it is nonetheless teacher centered, with instruction engaging the entire class, the use of class time determined by the teacher, and teacher talk likely exceeding student talk during instruction. Larry Cuban suggests that hybrid versions or strains of pedagogical progressivism, such as this approach to lesson planning, were common in teacher-centered classrooms and were supported by progressive rhetoric.<sup>8</sup>

Another example of progressive pedagogy comes from *St. Ann’s Journal* in the summer of 1952. The teacher, writing of her experience working in a rural setting with Aboriginal

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Cuban, *How Teachers Taught*, 37. For more information on teacher centered and student centered classrooms, see Chapter 2 on Cuban as well as: Cuban, *How Teachers Taught*, 3-5.

students, proudly described her students' unit projects in social studies.<sup>9</sup> These included "movie projects" made from coloured pictures and a stage built out of an old apple box, and models of stucco dwellings because "stucco" was a term with which the students were unfamiliar. The teacher described what happened when she "let them go to it" in their unit on human dwellings:

Their initiative led them from one thing to another until our table portrayed a complete miniature trapper's dwelling including teepee, husky dog and sled, canoes, row boats, snow-shoes, cache, guns, hatchet, saw-horse, saw, and even small pieces of split wood and saw-dust. At the corner of the table [stood] a mile post sign, marked Mile 717. Most of these objects were carved out of odd pieces of wood. One boy asked if he could put a plane he had made on the table. He said it could be Dalzeil's plane, a well known flying trapper in this region. Mr. Dalzeil [had] flown several of these children from their bush homes to this school during the past year. Most of these articles the boys made on their own in the play hall or the manual training room. Someone painted and cut out a trapper to stand near the wood-pile...<sup>10</sup>

The students' project work not only represented their learning, but also acted as a medium of communication when the teacher and her students lacked a common vocabulary or life experiences to draw upon.

There is a striking similarity between this teacher's pedagogical approach and that described by Donalda Dickie in her popular teaching handbook, *The Enterprise in Theory and Practice*, published just a decade earlier. Dickie describes enterprise work (also known as project or unit work), which "in reality... is merely a unit of ordinary living carefully planned and carried out as an experience in intelligent living. Everyday life is made up of an infinite number of such units, many of them suitable for the teacher's purpose."<sup>11</sup> She then describes a young teacher working in a rural northern school with Aboriginal students, who uses "birch bark to

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<sup>9</sup> SSAA, *St. Ann's Journal*, July 1952 (S26-04-4), 11. By 1952 the Sisters of St. Ann were running 18 schools in British Columbia (and 5 in Alaska/Yukon), with a total of 3,576 students; in British Columbia at that time there were over 8000 students attending Catholic schools. Sisters of St. Ann Archives (SSAA), *St. Ann's Journal*, October 1952 (S26-04-4), 17.

<sup>10</sup> SSAA, *St. Ann's Journal*, July 1952 (S26-04-4), 11.

<sup>11</sup> Dickie, *The Enterprise*, 125.

write and draw upon, the school ink, and the teacher's pen, modeling clay and wood for carving from the riverbank. The pupils made a survey and exhibit of the natural food supplies of the district, plant and animal, that amazed a summer school class of experienced teachers, and received the delighted commendation of both health and science departments."<sup>12</sup> By Dickie's standard, progressive pedagogy was evidently part of some Catholic teachers' repertoire of practice.<sup>13</sup>

A final example of schoolwork from this period, also from the Sisters of St. Ann, demonstrates a unique combination of progressive pedagogy and religion. In a prospectus from St. Peter's School, New Westminster, produced in April of 1960, Grade 1 to Grade 8 teachers illustrated how the public science curriculum would be infused with a Christian worldview the following autumn. For each grade a list of concepts was given and a corresponding set of activities. Concepts included learning objectives from the public curriculum and basic Christian principles. For example, concepts in the Grade 6 curriculum read: "each part of the plant has a specific structure and function; plants furnish us with food, clothing, shelter, medicine, and other needs; [and] the plant kingdom is a gift of [sic] our Creator to be used intelligently by humans." The pedagogically progressive activities include "discussing the structure and function of plants, experimenting: bacteria, seed germination, osmosis, capillarity, chlorophyll extraction; making booklets and posters; identifying and mounting leaves, [and] testing for the presence of starch in leaves."<sup>14</sup> The sisters' decision to integrate faith based objectives into the science curriculum, and then advertise this to prospective students and their families was no doubt the result of

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>13</sup> Though personal teachers' accounts remain, it is impossible to ascertain on the whole how widespread progressive practices were among Catholic educators.

<sup>14</sup> SSAA, *St. Peter's School Prospectus* April 1960 (S98-3).

frequent discussion in Catholic society about the importance of religion in education, namely that it should permeate the student's education rather than come in the form of a course tacked on to the public curriculum. In one example from the *B.C. Catholic*, the archbishop of Winnipeg explained to the Alberta Catholic Education Association that a Catholic school, according to Pope Leo XIII and as restated by Pope Pius XI in his 1929 encyclical on education, was "all the teaching and the whole organization of the school and its teachers, syllabus, and textbooks in every branch...regulated by the Christian spirit...so that religion may be in very truth the foundation and crown of the youth's entire training."<sup>15</sup>

In 1950, the *B.C. Catholic* reported that leaders in Catholic education at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. had developed a new curriculum for Catholic schools that aimed to move from the addition of religion to the public school curriculum to a system of education "guiding growth in Christian social living...[its goal was] the fullness of the Christian character expressing itself in Christian social living, so that the child who has experienced the curriculum may have achieved physical fitness, economic competency, social development, and most important of all, moral perfection."<sup>16</sup> However, Catholic educators and administrators in British Columbia seemed more interested in aligning their system with the public system in order to receive government support, than in implementing a distinctively Catholic curriculum. Part of their petition for government support was the request for free (public school) textbooks for Catholic school children up to Grade 6, and the rental system already in use in public schools for the remaining grades. When these were granted in the spring

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<sup>15</sup> RCAVA, *B.C. Catholic*, "Canadian Prelate explains why a Catholic School and Outlines its Religious Program" 17 January 1952, Vol. 21 (10), 6.

<sup>16</sup> RCAVA, *B.C. Catholic*, "Secularists Attacked for Removing Religion from Education" 28 December 1950, Vol. 20 (8), 1.

of 1951, Catholics throughout the province were expressly grateful for the Minister of Education, Straith's decision.<sup>17</sup>

Teachers who implemented progressive pedagogy between 1946 and 1960 did not explicitly name it, nor did they make a connection between modern teaching methods or trends and their selected approach. Instead, they simply strove to teach the material at hand and this involved drawing upon creative and engaging practices. This is not surprising, given that they had been instructed to implement progressive pedagogy in the late 1930s, and therefore it would have been a familiar and valid instructional approach. These teachers also did not make a connection between their progressive methods and the underlying philosophy of progressive education, let alone object to its compatibility with the Christian philosophy of education.<sup>18</sup>

Teaching methods and their underlying philosophy appear to be somewhat unrelated, or at least this relationship is not considered. Conflict between progressive education and Catholic educational philosophy emerged in the area of curriculum, however, when trends moved toward the inclusion of sex education in schools. In the late 1940s, the relationship between curriculum and philosophy of education became a popular concern for Catholic schools.

## **5.2 Sex Education: Progressive Curriculum Rejected**

The only area of the progressive curriculum that was explicitly rejected by Catholic schools in the Vancouver Archdiocese in the postwar period was the curriculum for sex education. Though sex education was widely controversial and rejected among many in secular society, Catholics expressed their concern in distinctly Catholic terms.<sup>19</sup> A 1939 article in the

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<sup>17</sup> RCAVA, *B.C. Catholic*, "Catholic School Children to get Free Textbooks" Easter 1951, Vol. 20 (19), 1.

<sup>18</sup> cf. Patterson, "Canadian Response," 66.

<sup>19</sup> Rejection of sex education was widespread in British Columbia, see: Mona Gleason, "Sex Talk in the City Exhibition: Contextual Essay – History of Sex Education in Vancouver" (lecture, Museum of Vancouver, 12 March 2012).

*B.C. Catholic* suggests that G.M. Weir had introduced some type of sex education into the curriculum three years earlier, but that it had been emphatically rejected in Catholic schools.<sup>20</sup> In April of 1941, Weir spoke to the British Columbia Parent-Teachers' Federation in Victoria about birth control and sterilization in eugenicists' programs abroad "to prevent hereditary defects in children."<sup>21</sup> The press understood him to be advocating for government involvement in the promotion of eugenics. Without delay, Archbishop Duke and other Catholic clergy – Father William H. Hingston at a Catholic Parent-Teachers Association meeting in Vancouver and Monsignor F. Chaloner at the Graduation Exercises of St. Paul's Hospital – spoke publicly against these views. Referring back to the Catholic understanding of the human person as body and soul, Duke explained "those who sponsor such movements... ignore the fact that by birth a child, rich or poor, irrespective of race, colour, or creed, becomes possessed of an immortal soul, intended by its Creator for an eternity of bliss."<sup>22</sup> Although Weir subsequently issued a public statement to clarify that he neither agreed nor disagreed with the views on eugenics that he had mentioned in his talk, the clergy's response foreshadowed their uncompromising stance on aspects of sex education in the postwar period.<sup>23</sup>

In 1946, when Duke received reports that Weir was planning to bring sex instruction into the upper grades in the public schools, he wrote Weir a confidential letter asking for specific information.<sup>24</sup> He was concerned about the education of Catholic students who were attending public schools, and requested that parents be given permission to excuse their children from

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<sup>20</sup> RCAVA, *B.C. Catholic*, "Sex Education in British Columbia Schools" 24 June 1939, Vol. 8 (30), 2.

<sup>21</sup> RCAVA, *B.C. Catholic*, "Hon. Dr. Weir and Sterilization Address" 1 May 1941, Vol. 10 (24), 1, 5. Weir spoke about eugenicists' programs "in Germany, 27 states in the U. S. A., and in several other countries."

<sup>22</sup> RCAVA, *B.C. Catholic*, "Hon. Dr. Weir and Sterilization Address" 1 May 1941, Vol. 10 (24), 1.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>24</sup> RCAV, *Correspondence between W.M. Duke and G.M. Weir*, 31 January 1946 (402-2).

these classes if they were not in favour of the instruction offered.<sup>25</sup> Weir responded, noting the respect he held for Catholic schools' emphasis on character development, and family and community relations. He explained that the curriculum committee was considering integrating into Biology, Health Education, Social Studies, Civics and Literature "an understanding of them in their bearing upon human relations, particularly family relations, so that there may be a better maturing of personality to meet the strain of very rapidly changing conditions."<sup>26</sup> Moreover, Weir informed the bishop that government leaders in education were "endeavouring to make [themselves] aware of the attitudes and points of view of religious communions so that the community as a whole, for which the State cannot escape its responsibility, shall not be at cross purposes with the creative and ultimate objectives of religious institutions."<sup>27</sup> To support this point, Weir requested the bishop's comments on an enclosed paper by Edgar Schmiedeler, S.J. presented at the National Catholic Conference on Family Life, which he had recently read to better understand the Catholic point of view.<sup>28</sup>

Schmiedeler's paper, titled "Sex Education – A Catholic View," outlined the basic principles that were frequently reported in the *B.C. Catholic* newspaper in the late 1940s, and discussed at teachers' conferences in Vancouver and abroad.<sup>29</sup> First of all, sex education was crucial and an essential part of parenting. The predominantly religious authors argued against accusations that Catholics were promoting ignorance by resisting the trend in "ultra-frankness"

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> RCAVA, *B.C. Catholic*, "Sex Education – A Delicate Matter" 13 February 1947, Vol. 16 (13), 4; "Parents, Not Teachers, Are the Ones to Give Sex Education" 11 December 1947, Vol. 17(6), 1, 8; "Sex Instruction is not Always Sex Education" 24 February 1949, Vol. 18(16), 6; "Catholic Teachers Against Classroom Sex Education" 28 April 1949, Vol.18(24), 6; and "Sex Education – Catholic Viewpoint" 29 December 1949, Vol.19(8), 6.

and urged parents to take up this important responsibility.<sup>30</sup> Again they argued the principle of subsidiarity, namely that parents have the primary decision-making power and authority over their own children and neither the school, nor the government, should take over that responsibility. Teachers should step-in only if parents are lacking in ability or unwilling, and efforts should be made to educate parents.<sup>31</sup> At the first annual convention of the Vancouver Catholic Teachers' Institute in the spring of 1949, it was agreed that no class instruction be given, but individual instruction "where necessary."<sup>32</sup> This was because they thought "it better for pupils to receive this information from someone officially appointed than to pick it up haphazardly."<sup>33</sup> Moreover, they agreed that principals and counsellors needed to have worthwhile resources on hand. Even if, under special circumstances, a Catholic educator should need to educate on sex, it was never with a whole class.<sup>34</sup> This is because sex education should be graduated according to the age, development, maturity and level of understanding of the individual child.<sup>35</sup> It should begin in the first years of a child's life in the form of basic self-control and continue, always "linking the spirit with the flesh, the soul of man with the body, the intelligence with the emotions, the act with its moral and social responsibility, conduct with conscience, pleasure with duty."<sup>36</sup> Catholics were adamant that sex education solely based on naturalism would fail, and that students needed to be educated in a holistic manner.

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<sup>30</sup> RCAV, *Correspondence between W.M. Duke and G.M. Weir*, 31 January 1946 (402-2). RCAVA, *B.C. Catholic*, "Sex Education – A Delicate Matter" 13 February 1947, Vol. 16 (13), 4.

<sup>31</sup> In one case, the suggestion was made that parent support groups be established. RCAVA, *B.C. Catholic*, "Sex Instruction is not Always Sex Education" 24 February 1949, Vol. 18(16), 6. This article is reporting on Bishop Popcock's talk to the Catholic teachers at the Normal School and College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan.

<sup>32</sup> RCAVA, *B.C. Catholic*, "Catholic Teachers Against Classroom Sex Education" 28 April 1949, Vol.18(24), 6.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> RCAVA, *B.C. Catholic*, "Sex Instruction is not Always Sex Education" 24 February 1949, Vol. 18(16), 6.

<sup>35</sup> RCAV, *Correspondence between W.M. Duke and G.M. Weir*, 31 January 1946 (402-2).

<sup>36</sup> RCAVA, *B.C. Catholic*, "Sex Education – Catholic Viewpoint" 29 December 1949, Vol.19(8), 6.

In 1950, Archbishop Duke wrote to then Minister of Education, W. T. Straith, regarding a high school course called “Effective Living.”<sup>37</sup> Duke explained to the education minister: “there has been very considerable complaints from our clergy, religious teaching Sisters and Catholic parents concerning the course.”<sup>38</sup> Duke proposed that Catholic schools offer a Christian Doctrine course that would cover the non-objectionable parts of the Effective Living course, and for Catholic children attending public schools, he suggested the situation be addressed

either by exempting the children on the application of the parents, such as is done with non-Catholic children in our schools during the Catechism half hour, or secondly, by letting one of our Christian Doctrine instructors, or the pastor, take the children for the period that day or another day, at the convenience of the school, either on the premises or at another place.<sup>39</sup>

The absence of further discussion, requests, and news reports in the postwar period suggests that Catholic schools either abandoned this request or negotiated a satisfactory arrangement with the Minister of Education.

Catholic schooling’s rejection of progressive curriculum for sex education was rooted in their philosophy of education. In the late 1940s and 1950s, as secular education continued to move away from a Christian understanding of the human person – as both material and spiritual, with a transcendent destiny – Catholics reaffirmed their philosophy of education, and spoke out against secular education. This coincided with a widespread trend to blame schools for society’s shortcomings, in particular, to blame the philosophy and methods of progressive education.<sup>40</sup> Although some progressive methods were still practiced in Catholic schools, Catholic educators agreed with the opponents of progressive education, and rejected its underlying philosophy.

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<sup>37</sup> RCAFV, *Correspondence between W.M. Duke and W. T. Straith*, 14 December 1950 (402-8). (Ministers of Education: G. M. Weir 1945-7 and W.T. Straith 1947-52).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Kliebard. *The Struggle*, 260.

### 5.3 Progressive versus Christian Philosophy of Education

When the British Columbia Catholic Education Association (B.C.C.E.A.) was founded in 1948, the association focused its attention on philosophy of education rather than any specific pedagogical approach. The association's three main objectives were to advocate for (1) universal education, (2) an education that develops the whole person, promoting peace through intercultural and interracial understanding, and (3) to support parents in their right to choose the type of education their child received.<sup>41</sup> The specific aims of the association were to convince the government to allow taxes paid by Catholics to go to Catholic schools, to promote Christian education (primary, high school, and university), and "to promote the study of Christian philosophy to the end that teachers and our leaders in education may better understand what is meant by a Christian philosophy of education."<sup>42</sup>

The B.C.C.E.A.'s aims were supported by diocesan workshops for teachers, as well as the *B.C. Catholic* newspaper, which ran articles about lectures on Catholic education given all over North America.<sup>43</sup> When seventy religious attended a conference for the Vancouver diocese's Catholic teachers, the lecturer, Thomas Hanley from St. Martin's College, Oregon, explained that they "must go back to fundamentals to get a better idea of the principles [they were] making for [sic] other peoples' children to follow."<sup>44</sup> Hanley went on to explain that "philosophy of education must be based on broad, sane and correct analyses of human nature... Man is made up of the natural and the supernatural; body, mind, heart and will, and each

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<sup>41</sup> RCAA, *British Columbia Catholic Education Association (Incorporated under the Societies Act, Chapter 311, Revised Statutes of British Columbia, 1948): Constitution* (402-6).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> RCAA, *B.C. Catholic*, "School Board Arranges Lectures for Teachers" 3 November 1949, Vol. 19 (1), 1. A series of lectures were held on Sunday afternoons for all primary teachers.

<sup>44</sup> RCAA, *B.C. Catholic*, "The Necessity of Religion in the School Curriculum" and "Seventy Religious Attend Catholic Teachers' Meeting" 10 April, 1947, Vol. 16 (20), 2. The lecture was given at Sacred Heart Academy on 7 April 1947, under the direction of Superintendent of Catholic Schools, M.R. Hanley.

of these must be the subject of education. The techniques must be adjusted to that being as a whole.”<sup>45</sup> Catholics argued that schools should do more than prepare the child to meet her or his civic duties. They should educate the will of the child by “persuading the child to conquer its own passions and in teaching the child self-denial, obedience, patience, justice and truth.”<sup>46</sup> Catholic educators hoped that if they shaped the will of their students, their students would have the interior strength to avoid immoral actions, both as children and in adult life, and they maintained that the formation of the will was as important as intellectual formation.<sup>47</sup> They found support in secular educators who also disagreed with the modern philosophy of education, and with whom they held common ideas and priorities.

At the Vancouver Teachers’ Fall Convention in 1951, Dr. John M. Ewing, Principal of Victoria College (affiliated with the University of British Columbia), lectured on “Social and Educational Philosophies in an Age of Crisis.”<sup>48</sup> A representative of the public relations committee of the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation (B.C.T.F.) consolidated notes on Ewing’s talk with the intention of making them available to the teaching staff of Vancouver’s public schools, and had Ewing review and correct the notes.<sup>49</sup> Several months later the notes were given to the B.C.C.E.A., and in the spring of 1953 they were published in the *B.C. Catholic* under the title “BC School System Denies God, Truth, and Stable Ethics, Said Dr. Ewing,” where it was reported with disapproval that the notes had not been released to the public press by

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> RCAVA, *B.C. Catholic*, “Educating the Will” Christmas 1950, Vol. 20 (7), 4. See also RCAVA, *B.C. Catholic*, “Secularists Attacked for Removing Religion from Education (New York)” 28 December 1950, Vol. 20 (8), 1.

<sup>47</sup> RCAVA, *B.C. Catholic*, “Educating the Will” Christmas 1950, Vol. 20 (7), 4.

<sup>48</sup> RCAVA, “Vancouver Teachers’ Fall Convention – 1951” (376-4).

<sup>49</sup> RCAVA, Correspondence between Miss Frances A. Padgett (of Templeton Junior High School, Vancouver) and John M. Ewing, 19<sup>th</sup> November, 1951 (376-4).

the B.C.T.F.<sup>50</sup> Catholic teachers' and leaders' were decidedly concerned about the direction education was taking in British Columbia.

The correspondence and news article resulting from Ewing's lecture notes reveal in detail the nature of the criticisms of progressive education that emerged in the archdiocesan school system in the early 1950s. Prior to the *B.C. Catholic's* publication of the notes, they were distributed among a number of Catholics, including Catholic teachers and seminarians, at the direction of Father Prior Eugene, head of the archdiocesan seminary.<sup>51</sup> Prior Eugene added an introduction to the notes that explained:

the significant part of this material is...where [Ewing] outlines the basic tenets of the pragmatism of John Dewey which, he said, is the philosophy behind public school education in British Columbia...Dr. Ewing found that he was no longer satisfied with the pragmatic assumptions and many of the teachers who heard him felt the same way. Perhaps they do not suit you either?<sup>52</sup>

Prior Eugene also suggested that the reader be referred to Jacques Maritain's Terry Lectures at Yale University in 1943, published under the title "Education at the Crossroads," for a discussion of current problems in educational theory resulting from progressive education.<sup>53</sup>

Ewing's talk was significant to Catholic educators because he described the roots of concerns many held about the philosophy of secular education. His talk outlined the classical opposition between naturalism (realism) and idealism, and elucidated the impact of these two philosophies on education.<sup>54</sup> He explained that the progressivism in British Columbia's schools was the result of Dewey's pragmatist philosophy, which was rooted in naturalism and the

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<sup>50</sup> RCAVA, *B.C. Catholic*, "BC School System Denies God, Truth, and Stable Ethics, Said Dr. Ewing" Easter 1953, Vol. 22 (20), 3.

<sup>51</sup> RCAVA, Correspondence between Miss Olivia Regan (of St. Edmund's School) and Father Prior Eugene, O.S.B., 20 May 1952 (376-4).

<sup>52</sup> RCAVA, Correspondence between Miss Olivia Regan and Father Prior Eugene, O.S.B., 20 May 1952 (376-4).

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> RCAVA, "Vancouver Teachers' Fall Convention – 1951" (376-4).

educational thought of Herbert Spencer. Drawing upon Dewey's 1927 book, *Democracy and Education*, Ewing proposed that Dewey's work suggests "there is no ultimate reality," but instead an "immediate, dynamic, episodic, and contingent" reality. "There is no deity, truth is relative, and knowledge is of value only when it can be used." Furthermore, "society is the touchstone, e.g. If morals suit society, they are good."<sup>55</sup> Ewing argued that the impact of these ideas on education was as follows: "the pupil is a little animal in process of being personalized by society. The role of the teacher is to help the pupil to become socially efficient. Utilization of pupil interest has a great influence on curriculum."<sup>56</sup> In addition, "a learning situation must be concrete and actual to make students participate, therefore projects and excursions are favoured rather than lectures. Success and happiness are sought for all, therefore, competition is taboo." Finally, the "one fundamental method is the scientific method."<sup>57</sup> Ewing concluded that pragmatic philosophy applied to education was problematic because it "has no metaphysical basis...It is a godless philosophy...It has no absolute values. Its definition of truth is unsatisfactory, since it is dependent on the situation and continually in flux... There is an ample abundance of means, but there are no ultimate ends."<sup>58</sup>

Ewing's lecture was not the first the Catholic newspaper's readers had heard of progressive education. During the Christmas season in 1950, it was reported that "progressive education [had] all but wrecked New Zealand's public schools."<sup>59</sup> This was because progressive education had lowered standards by making "self-expression of the child...the primary educational aim, and disciplinary studies such as grammar and arithmetic [were] consequently

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> RCAVA, *B.C. Catholic*, "New Zealand Scholar says Dr. Dewey Wrecks Schools" Christmas 1950, Vol. 21 (7), 1.

slighted.”<sup>60</sup> Again in 1953 readers were warned about the dangers of “Left-Wing Education” which sought to make universal in schools the “scientific pragmatism which John Dewey [had] substituted in American schools for the traditional romanticism imported from Europe.”<sup>61</sup> By 1959, a series of articles criticizing Dewey for widespread moral relativism and the decline of standards in education appeared in the *B.C. Catholic*.<sup>62</sup>

There is evidence that the Sisters of St. Ann were also grappling with the impact of progressivism on Catholic education. In response to the imminent “crisis in modern learning,” in 1951 *St. Ann’s Journal* published “Credo of a Gonzagan” from Gonzaga University, as a statement of belief about Catholic education.<sup>63</sup> The creed reaffirmed belief in God, “the ability of education to bring to full splendor all the mental, physical and spiritual powers of man,” and reaffirmed the importance of philosophy – “that in the realm of the mind and spirit lies the road to unity and peace” – as well as democracy, science, the arts, religion, and Jesus Christ.<sup>64</sup> In subsequent issues of the journal, articles were published to clarify the Catholic vision of education and the importance of religious education. These articles explained the relationship between faith and reason, and emphasized that Catholic schools shaped the whole person while public schools struggled to do so.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> RCAVA, *B.C. Catholic*, “Left-Wing Education” 6 August 1953, Vol. 22 (37), 3. See also: “Irresponsible Politicians Not only Ones to Blame” 11 June 1953, Vol. 22(29), 6.

<sup>62</sup> RCAVA, *B.C. Catholic*, “Ethics Don’t Change with Time: Deweyites Disregard Fixed Moral Law” 26 February 1959, Vol. 28 (16), 7. See also: “Catholic Educators Tinged by Deweyism” 26 February 1959, Vol. 28(16), 6; “‘Dewey Jargon’ makes Writer Feel Ill at Ease” 19 March 1959, Vol.28(19), 6; “Progressive Education and Teenage Killings” 17 September 1959, Vol. 28(45), 6; and the promotion of a progressive method with Catholic roots: “Montessori Discovered Children’s Interior World” 12 March 1959, Vol. 28(18), 6.

<sup>63</sup> Gonzaga University acted as a leader in Catholic higher education. Several of the Sisters of St. Ann studied there. SSAA, *St. Ann’s Journal*: “Credo of a Gonzagan” July 1951 (S26-04-5).

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> SSAA, *St. Ann’s Journal* January 1948 – October 1951 (S26-04-2).

When the Catholic schools submitted their brief to the British Columbia Royal Commission on Education in 1959, they focused their concerns on academic standards and unclear aims in education, rather than raising their views on the nature of the human person and the way in which that should inform education.<sup>66</sup> In many ways their brief was a product of its time period. Echoing historian Hilda Neatby's famous critique of Canadian education published six years earlier, the brief expressed frustration about the lowering of academic standards and the need for more attention to academic work. Although the brief's authors did not explicitly condemn progressive education, they objected to vague educational aims and the lack of rigour in schooling. They argued that education should require mental discipline.<sup>67</sup> The brief's authors acknowledged that a strong technical training program was important for students who would not be attending university, but they thought it was essential that it not be mixed with the academic program, and that clearer aims would make the program more effective. With regard to student behaviour, the report suggested too little was expected of students, and their lack of maturity was the excuse. "All too often parents and school authorities are inclined to uphold the students' rights, while passing over lightly the students' failure to live up to their responsibilities."<sup>68</sup>

The authors petitioned for incompetent teachers to be replaced, while at the same time petitioning for the protection of teacher autonomy in the classroom in theory and in practice.<sup>69</sup> Though the brief acknowledged parents' need for schools, it explained that "the danger must never be overlooked that the educational process can become the victim of the 'professional

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<sup>66</sup> The brief was submitted on behalf of the Vancouver Archdiocese, as well as the Dioceses of Victoria, Nelson, and Kamloops, and the Vicariate Apostolic of Prince Rupert and of Whitehorse. RCAVA, "Brief of the Catholic Public Schools of British Columbia to the Royal Commission on Education – 1959" (395-9).

<sup>67</sup> See Hilda Neatby, *So Little for the Mind*, (Toronto: Clark, Irwin), 1953; RCAVA, "Brief of the Catholic Public Schools of British Columbia to the Royal Commission on Education – 1959" (395-9), 5.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

mind' which tends to consider educational matters its own exclusive field and to be extremely sensitive of objective and constructive criticism of its theories and practices."<sup>70</sup> The brief also called for a review of the Bachelor of Education program for training high school teachers, pointing out that too much attention was given to professional training over academic training in the current program.<sup>71</sup> With regard to textbooks, the brief argued "American texts re-hashed for Canadian use [were] not satisfactory, especially in such subjects as history and geography."<sup>72</sup> Moreover, "textbooks should not present theories as facts."<sup>73</sup> The brief closed with a note of gratitude about the exemption from property tax on Catholic school lands and buildings and the government's provision of free textbooks and free health services for children in Catholic schools, as well as a restatement of the Catholic schools' request for government funding.

After over 80 years of petitioning, Catholic schools in British Columbia were still hoping for government funding, which undoubtedly factored into their decision not to emphasize their distinctive philosophy of education, nor to criticize the underlying philosophy of public schools in their brief for the Commission. They instead emphasized the weaknesses of the present curriculum and instruction. However, in 1960 when the Sisters of Saint Ann heard a talk from Victoria priest, Father Ratchford, on the *Report of the Royal Commission on Education* (1960), he gave an analysis of the underlying philosophy of the report and the questions that its philosophy raised for Catholic education.<sup>74</sup> The Commissioners had attempted to avoid "speculative theories of education," but acknowledged that the recommendations the report made added up to "a direct philosophy of education. In the end it is in the operation of schools that the

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>74</sup> SSAA, *The Philosophy of the Chant Report by Father Ratchford* ca.1960, (S24).

effective philosophy of the school system is revealed.”<sup>75</sup> Ratchford encouraged the Sisters of St.

Ann to consider:

Do we agree that students should adopt the scientific testing methods in approaching all areas of man’s knowledge? (By the scientific method I mean that every hypothesis or theory if it is to be found true must be validated by the rules of empirical science)...there is [not] much disagreement that the scientific method is absolutely essential when treating of scientific subjects, but is this one method to be the guiding one for all questions that man asks?”<sup>76</sup> Moreover, “it is possible that when teaching the accepted B.C. curriculum, there is adopted one theory of knowledge when teaching prescribed subjects and another when teaching morality and religious truths? Is it possible that Catholic schools are living a philosophical contradiction?”<sup>77</sup>

Ratchford continued, expressing his deep concern with the report’s philosophy, which failed to take into account “the full dimension of man’s knowledge and nature.”<sup>78</sup> He suggested that the theory of knowledge reflected in the report, namely the use of scientific methods in approaching all areas of knowledge, would impact students’ attitudes toward revealed truth and morality, and that better religious instruction would not be the solution. According to Ratchford, Catholic schools needed a “sound approach to reality, grounded on a philosophy which takes into account the total nature and destiny of man.”<sup>79</sup> Ratchford’s reasoning and recommendations were not necessarily new to his Catholic audience; this philosophy was the fundamental reason why Catholic schools existed.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

Evidence from this period provides an important piece needed to understand the impact of progressive education on Catholic schools in Vancouver between 1924 and 1960. Namely,

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<sup>75</sup> *Report of the Royal Commission on Education* (Province of British Columbia, 1960), 24.

<sup>76</sup> SSAA, *The Philosophy of the Chant Report by Father Ratchford* ca.1960, (S24), 5.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

that Catholic educators and administrators were willing to engage in progressive methods and curriculum, as long as they did not conflict with their underlying philosophy of education. On the level of educational philosophy, they rejected progressive education in the postwar period because they were concerned about its overemphasis on the practical, material, and scientifically verifiable, and its neglect of the spiritual, especially with regard to the eternal and the development of the student's will. The most concrete example of their diverging philosophies of education was with regard to sex education, which progressives hoped to include in the school curriculum, and Catholics argued needed to primarily come from parents, and always within the context of the Christian worldview and understanding of the human person. While Catholic educators demonstrated minimal reservations in implementing progressive methods, neither rejecting the project method nor the progressive emphasis on increased student activity, they did not change their fundamental outlook on education. Moreover, their rejection of progressivism coincided with a broader social trend in the 1950s and was no doubt influenced by debate in secular society. Their brief for the *Chant Report* in 1959 demonstrated that they shared popular concerns about declining standards and rigour in education. But their concerns about the aims and philosophy of public education were perennial concerns restated. Catholic educators had been warned through lectures, essays, literature, and news articles about the dangers of naturalism since the 1920s.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion: Independence and Experimentation

Between 1924 and 1960, the majority of teachers who taught in Roman Catholic schools in the Vancouver Archdiocese were religious sisters. Clergy, sisters, and brothers shared the responsibilities of school administration, with the help of the occasional layperson. Teachers and school administrators came to British Columbia as missionaries to spread Christianity and provide education, and therefore saw teaching as more than a profession. For many it was a calling, or vocation, in the teleological sense of the word.<sup>1</sup> Belief in the importance of Catholic education, and therefore a belief in Christianity, was something which many Catholic educators, who were also religious sisters, had devoted their lives. That their role as teachers was more than occupational becomes particularly clear in their response to progressive trends in education, as they were willing to selectively implement progressive curriculum and methods, but were not willing to surrender their views about the material and spiritual nature of the student, nor their aims of education, which were rooted in their Christian worldview, nor its promotion.

The Sisters of St. Ann, the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul of Halifax, and the Sisters of the Child Jesus provided the largest number of teachers across the province. Catholic schools used the provincial public school curriculum and its supporting resources and textbooks throughout the 1924 to 1960 period. Although many teaching sisters lacked the qualifications to teach in British Columbia, they were not uneducated, and were thoroughly familiar with progressive education. Increasingly during this period, Catholic schoolteachers became qualified to teach in British Columbia. Their religious communities were committed to ongoing personal

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<sup>1</sup> See Tom O'Donoghue and Judith Harford, "The Conception, Construction, and Maintenance of the Identity of Roman Catholic Female Religious Teachers: A Historical Case Study from Ireland," *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 20(4)(July 2014): 410-26, DOI: 10.1080/13540602.2014.881638. O'Donoghue and Harford use interviews with former teaching sisters to argue that Irish female teaching religious (1930s-1960s) viewed their religious life a calling from God. Their work as teachers, which was central to their calling, where necessary, was second to that life.

education and both prior to arriving in British Columbia and while living in British Columbia, many sisters completed coursework and received degrees and teaching qualifications from universities in other parts of Canada and the United States. Teachers sometimes attended lectures or teacher education programs for public school teachers. At other times, a guest speaker would be invited to give a lecture for the community, or one community member who had attended a course or lecture would brief the other teachers on what she had learnt. The sisters spent their summer holidays studying, typically at workshops organized by a religious community or at universities abroad. All of the above ways provided Catholic teachers with the opportunity to encounter and experiment with new methods and trends in education.

This thesis has examined the impact of progressive education on three areas of Catholic education: the curriculum used in Catholic schools; their classrooms and teaching methods during this period; and the philosophy of Catholic education. It has done so through research in the archives of the Vancouver Archdiocese, the archives of religious communities who taught in Catholic schools, and with particular attention to the Sisters of St. Ann's community newsletter, *St. Ann's Journal*, and the Archdiocese of Vancouver's weekly newspaper, the *B.C. Catholic*. While Catholic school educators were committed to their primary goal of providing Christian education, they were also interested in meeting public school standards so that they could receive government funding. These interests brought them to experiment with trends in public education, while at the same time remaining independent as a result of their distinct vision for education.

This thesis shows that teaching sisters who ran Catholic schools in the Vancouver Archdiocese were familiar with progressive education, and in many ways its impact on Catholic schools mirrored that of their public counterparts. Through the public curriculum that nearly all Catholic schools offered, progressive education was at work in social studies, as well as in

attempts to differentiate learning, as found in the provision of academic, industrial, and commercial educational tracks. The division of course content into thematic units and interdisciplinary projects were evident in Catholic schools. Catholic teachers were familiar with the progressive philosophy and aims of education as introduced in the revised provincial curriculum of 1936 and 1937, and were encouraged by administrators to implement the new methods. Catholic teachers and administrators held a shared understanding that progressive methods were useful only in as much as they facilitated the achievement of Catholic schools' educational aims.

Catholic teachers also encountered progressive education in the superintendent's archdiocesan religion course, first offered in 1936. Inspired by American Catholic educational leaders, the superintendent's course directed teachers to use progressive methods. Child-centered instruction was explicitly named and encouraged, and reference books for teachers on progressive catechetical instruction were provided.<sup>2</sup> Teachers were reminded of the educational use of narrative by Jesus in the Gospels, and urged to move away from rote memorization. Annual catechetical exhibits showcased the creative project work of students from schools across the archdiocese, and Education Week open houses in schools required teachers to demonstrate progressive methods in teaching. This research reveals that progressive methods were most evident in the religious education courses in Catholic schools.

On the level of classroom instruction, the progressivism that was implemented in Vancouver's Catholic schools was more in the style of what Larry Cuban identified as hybrid forms in a teacher-centered context, than a truly child-centered, activity-based progressive

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<sup>2</sup> Joseph H. Ost diek, *Simple Methods in Religious Instruction*, (New York: Bruce Publishing, 1935) and John K. Sharp, *Aims and Methods in Teaching Religion*, (New York: Benziger Brothers), 1929.

approach.<sup>3</sup> Like Axelrod's observations about public educators in the 1950s who were working within the political culture and dominant values of their times, Catholic educators too used new practices as they saw fit, but were nonetheless working within their worldview and social framework at that time.<sup>4</sup> Given Catholic educators' central interest in the religious education of the child, and the position of authority that they were granted over the child, Catholic educators were not in a position to fully relinquish their responsibility to develop the student's will and knowledge of the supernatural. Furthermore, although in the late 1930s, when pedagogical progressivism reached its height, and the project method and student-guided approaches to learning made their way into several Catholic school classrooms, given the evidence available for this study, conclusive comments cannot be drawn about the frequency, or degree of child-centeredness, with which these methods were practiced. The need for interviews with former Catholic school students is discussed below.

It is also significant that some of the examples of progressive education in the classrooms of teachers with the Sisters of St. Ann came from schools with Aboriginal students. This raises the question: was progressive education implemented to a greater degree in residential or day schools for Aboriginal students? Although the Sisters of St. Ann taught in all types of Catholic schools, the curriculum for Aboriginal students was federally developed and may have been a factor in the way progressive education was implemented in this type of Catholic school.<sup>5</sup> On the whole, it is clear that pedagogical progressivism impacted Catholic schools on the level of language and policy documents, as well as on the level of classroom instruction. Furthermore,

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<sup>3</sup> Cuban, *How Teachers Taught*, 137. Cuban found hybrid forms of progressivism to be most common in the schools he studied in the United States. See Chapter 2, footnote 79 in this thesis. Herbert Kliebard and Theodore Christou also describe hybridization in curriculum reforms in the 1930s. Likewise, Robert Patterson found Canadian progressivism to be "homegrown" and selective.

<sup>4</sup> Axelrod, "Beyond the Progressive Education Debate," 227-41.

<sup>5</sup> See introduction to this thesis for a description of the three types of Catholic schools: private, parochial, and schools for Aboriginal students.

progressive methods were required in courses based on the public curriculum, and very explicitly in religious education.

Catholic schools became interconnected by 1936 as a result of trends in administrative progressivism. In the interests of centralization and standardization, school supervision increased through the formation of a board of directors and a superintendent, and standards were established for attendance procedures, lesson planning, record keeping, academic achievement, testing, and other routine activities. As mentioned above, Catholic schools within the diocesan system offered differentiated courses of studies through industrial, commercial, and academic programs, and increasingly followed the public curriculum for all courses and examinations, apart from religious instruction.<sup>6</sup> Even before the superintendent was instated and the broader diocesan school system took shape, when religious order superiors were the primary overseers of their given schools, teachers were moving in the direction of increased standardization among schools. For example, teachers with the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Halifax formed the Vancouver Parochial School Council (1934) to meet regularly to generate resources and tactics to increase uniformity among their Catholic schools. The push for standardization and uniformity among Catholic schools continued through the 1950s. Administrative progressivism in these ways was decidedly impactful.

What inspired Catholic educators to attempt to implement progressivism? The progressivism embraced by Catholic educators came through the influence of local trends in public education as well as Catholic educators from the United States who sought to rejuvenate

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<sup>6</sup> In the 1920s, some Catholic teachers developed their own textbooks and teaching materials. E.g. Sister Hortensius created her own 13 page, typed, English History textbook for 1925-26 while teaching Grades 4, 5 and 6 in Kamloops. SSAA, *Sister Mary Hortensius Collection*, (24-5-1).

Catholic education through engaging and thought provoking progressive methods.<sup>7</sup> Catholic educators and administrators were interested in proving the comparable quality of Catholic education to public education so that 1) Catholic children would attend Catholic schools, and 2) the provincial government would fund Catholic schools. Underlying these interests was a firm belief in the uniqueness and necessity of Catholic education, at the heart of which was the desire to promote the Christian worldview.

Leaders in Catholic education had been encouraged early in the progressive period to implement what was valuable from modern innovations, while maintaining their unique worldview and not losing sight of its significance for Catholic education.<sup>8</sup> In his study of Catholic intellectuals in the progressive era, Thomas Woods argues that the Catholic Church in America was committed to maintaining their distinctive worldview, and to not being assimilated into what they perceived to be the “nondogmatic and nonsectarian” syncretism of progressive intellectuals.<sup>9</sup> They were hopeful that America would be converted to Catholicism. Furthermore, there was widespread agreement among Catholic intellectuals that “the ideas and learning taken from the secular world might be selectively appropriated by the Church in order to further its mission.”<sup>10</sup> This explanation fits well with the response of Catholic educators and administrators to progressive education in the Vancouver Archdiocese. Given their unique pursuit of funding, and the freedom they felt in implementing or rejecting progressive teaching methods and content,

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<sup>7</sup> Catholic educational theorists were particularly interested in improving religious education. Thomas Shields and Edward Pace at the Catholic University of America were among the leading Catholic educational theorists who explored progressive methods while maintaining distinctly Catholic aims in education. Thomas E. Woods Jr., *The Church Confronts Modernity: Catholic Intellectuals and the Progressive Era*, (Columbia University Press: New York, 2004), 86. See also: Fayette Breaux Veverka, “CATHOLIC EDUCATORS – Catholic Philosophers of Education 1900-1960.” Accessed November 2013: [http://www.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/catholic/catholic\\_philosophers\\_of\\_education/](http://www.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/catholic/catholic_philosophers_of_education/)

<sup>8</sup> Woods, *Catholic Intellectuals*, 21. Woods explains that this idea came from an encyclical from Pope Leo XIII in 1899.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-2.

the Catholic educational community's relationship with progressive educational trends can be characterized as one of independence and experimentation.

The relationship between Catholic educators and progressive education raises one of my opening research questions: Was progressive education at odds with Catholic educational philosophy? In terms of curriculum, Catholic educators valued, and in some cases favoured, traditional academic subjects such as history and literature, which allowed for the intellectual exploration of human existence and reality, but they also understood the value of commercial subjects which would prepare students for employment. Catholic educators were interested in developing the material and spiritual in their students, so that they could become responsible citizens in this life, and also experience eternal existence with God after death. Many Catholic educators welcomed the idea that teaching should be attentive to the child's developmental stages, and valued creativity and student activity. Administrators and educators sought to increase opportunities for discussion in the classroom and to move away from rote memorization. They promoted music, drama, athletics, community service and extracurricular clubs, which would each contribute to the well-rounded education of the whole child.

Their idea of developing the whole child meant that all the capabilities of the child would be developed through Catholic education, especially the spiritual. Catholic educators, therefore, did not attempt to develop the whole child because of a departure from late-nineteenth century faculty psychology (which argued for the isolated development of the intellect, will, imagination, etc.) in favour of a generalized inter-curricular, self-directed discovery style of education as progressive educators did.<sup>11</sup> Catholics also drew a line at the progressive idea that society has a

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<sup>11</sup> See Chapter 2 of this thesis on Kliebard, on the shift from faculty psychology to psychological theory. See also: Kliebard, *The Struggle*, 105.

negative impact on the development of children, and that children need to be given space so that they can develop themselves according to their own impulses and natures.<sup>12</sup> They agreed that the child was essentially good, but not that society was to blame for corrupting children. Instead, they believed children were corrupted by the human capacity for sin. Catholic educators were expected to help their students encounter the world around them and strengthen their will with the hopes of overcoming selfishness or immoral acts, and to gain control over their natural impulses, both good and bad, not submit to them. Thus in Catholic schools, where educators were seen to have authority and an important role in shaping their students as they developed, the classroom remained largely teacher-centered. The Catholic philosophy of education was the reason why Catholic schools existed.<sup>13</sup> It remained constant throughout the many changes that schools in British Columbia encountered between 1924 and 1960, and in the end was what caused Catholic educators to question and to reject the foundations of progressive education. It was the foundations alone, however, and not the methods, nor (for the most part) the modern curriculum, to which Catholics educational leaders objected.

This thesis contributes to the historiography on Catholic education, progressive education, and independent schools in British Columbia. In the area of the history of Catholic schooling in Greater Vancouver, this thesis makes important contributions through its provision of previously undocumented research on Catholic school curriculum, the development of the archdiocesan Catholic school system, and its teaching methods. Areas of further research called for by this study include interview-based research on students' experiences in Catholic schools as a way of determining the degree of implementation of progressive education on the classroom

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<sup>12</sup> See Kliebard's description of humanists' opposition of Rousseau, Chapter 2.

<sup>13</sup> Namely that education was to provide formation for the mind, body, will, and spirit of the student, and that the student needed to be educated in light of her/his eternal destiny.

level. Independent of other types of Catholic schools, this study calls for interview-based research on the impact of progressive education on Catholic schools for Aboriginal students.

This thesis builds on the work of historians of progressive education who acknowledge the impact of progressive education beyond the policy level. Progressive education had a direct and lasting impact on curriculum and classroom instruction in Catholic schools in British Columbia, as is evident in differentiated course selection, social studies, and learning by doing projects. My research challenges the idea that teachers in the 1930s may have lacked adequate training to implement progressive education by highlighting administrative directions, resources, and workshops for Catholic schoolteachers on how to implement progressive methods.<sup>14</sup> This thesis is inconclusive with regard to the degree of progressive education's implementation on the classroom level, as interviews were not conducted and remaining examples of student work are limited and represent special occasions rather than routine classroom work.

Finally, this thesis contributes to debate about the distinctiveness of independent school education. As discussed in my review of the literature on independent schools in British Columbia, Jean Barman has questioned their distinctiveness in light of increased government and public oversight after independent schools received government funding in the 1980s.<sup>15</sup> Harro Van Brummelen has countered that administration and supporting school communities, coupled with funding authorities continuing to view independent schools as true alternatives, can maintain educational distinctiveness in spite of their need to meet the curricular and teacher qualification requirements of public schools, and in spite of increased public oversight.<sup>16</sup> In the

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<sup>14</sup> See Neil Sutherland's study of public education and the failure of pedagogical progressivism in Vancouver in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

<sup>15</sup> Barman, "Deprivatizing Private Education," 12-31.

<sup>16</sup> Van Brummelen, "Religiously Based Schooling," 101-22. See also Van Brummelen, "Effects of Government Funding," 14-28.

introduction to this thesis, I suggested that Catholic schools were distinctive because of their orientation toward religious education. Underlying Catholic schools' commitment to Christian education historically was a unique type of educator and administrator: religious men and women who had devoted their lives to Christianity. The teaching religious therefore significantly contributed to the distinctiveness of Catholic education in British Columbia between 1924 and 1960. Moreover, the religious educators and administrators moderated the impact of progressive education both pedagogically and philosophically on Catholic schools. From the 1960s onward, Catholic teaching sisters declined significantly, and the laicization of Catholic schoolteachers occurred. Further research, which might build on or challenge Van Brummelen and Barman's arguments, could examine the impact of the decline of religious Catholic educators and changes in the practices of Catholic laypeople in the post-Vatican II era on the implementation of Catholic school educational aims, philosophy, curriculum, and teaching methods in British Columbia, and on the distinctiveness of Catholic education.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> See introduction. After the Second Vatican Council (1962-5), there was a dramatic decline in religious congregations, Catholic school staff was laicized, and widespread changes and decline in the practice of Catholicism by lay people occurred.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A - Roman Catholic Schools in the Vancouver Archdiocese

Schools in the Vancouver Archdiocese established prior to 1960 <sup>1</sup>	Dates	Administrators and Teachers <sup>2</sup>
1. St. Mary's Mission Indian Residential School (up to Grade 12 by 1952)	1863-1961	Established by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI), who taught trades, some courses, but mostly administered the school until 1969, and Sisters of St. Ann (until 1961, when the government took over)
2. St. Ann's Academy, New Westminster (up to Grade 12; became a regional, diocesan girls' high school in 1954)	1865-1968	Sisters of St. Ann
3. St. Ann's Academy, Kamloops (up to Grade 12)	1880-1970	Sisters of St. Ann (reopened: 1980)
4. St. Joseph's Mission, aka Cariboo Indian Residential School/Williams Lake Industrial School	1886-1981	Sisters of St. Ann (founders), OMI; Sisters of the Child Jesus
5. St. Ann's Academy, Dunsmuir St., Vancouver, originally Sacred Heart Academy (up to Grade 10)	1888-1946	Sisters of St. Ann (post 1935)
6. St. Francis Indian Residential School, aka St. Paul's Indian Residential School / Squamish IRS	1889-1958	OMI & Sisters of the Child Jesus
7. St. Louis Mission aka Kamloops Indian Residential School (ages 7-15) (secondary grades offered starting in 1946)	1890-1978	Established and administered by OMI; Sisters of St. Ann (post 1891)
8. St. Joseph's Academy, Nelson	ca. 1890s-?	Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace
9. Kootenay Indian Residential School, aka St. Eugene's Indian Residential School, St. Mary's Indian Residential School), Cranbrook	1898-1970	Sisters of Providence 1890 – 1929; Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Halifax 1936 – 1970
10. St. Euphrasia School, aka Good Shepherd Convent/ The Monastery School, aka Monastery of the Grey Sisters on W. 14 <sup>th</sup> Avenue, Vancouver	ca. 1900-?	Sisters of our Lady of Charity of Refuge (arrived in 1931); Run in 1943 by M. Mary of H. Redeemer of the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd
11. Providence St. Genevieve Elementary School, New Westminster	1900-1959	Sisters of Charity of Providence, Good Shepherd Sisters
12. St. Peter's School, originally St. Louis College, New Westminster (up to Grade 12); (parochial from 1954 – ca. 1967).	1902-1967	OMI, Sisters of St. Ann, Christian Brothers (in early 1930s), then Sisters of St. Ann again
13. Our Lady of Lourdes, Maillardville	ca. 1910-	Sisters of the Child Jesus to 1952; Ursulines of Rimouski
14. St. John's School, Maillardville (and/or orphanage)	ca. 1910-?	Sisters of the Child Jesus
15. St. Edmund's School, North Vancouver (up to Grade 12)	1911-	Sisters of the Child Jesus
16. St. Augustine's, aka Sechelt Indian Residential School (up to Grade 9)	1912-1975	OMI (primarily administrators) & Sisters of the Child Jesus (teachers)

<sup>1</sup> No official or comprehensive list of Catholic schools in the Vancouver Archdiocese open between 1924 and 1960 is currently available. This document, developed from a collection of primary and secondary source documents, is an attempt to provide one, but is in no way definitive.

<sup>2</sup> With the exception of St. Thomas More Collegiate (1960), schools opened after the formation of the archdiocesan school system in 1936 were parochial/regional diocesan schools.

17. Convent of the Sacred Heart, Point Grey (elementary and secondary school)	1913-1979	Madames/Religious of the Sacred Heart (aka R.S.C.J.) (non-diocesan)
18. Eudestine School, Vancouver	Dates unknown	Good Shepherd Sisters; Run in 1937 by Sr. M. of St. Joseph
19. St. Anthony's College (up to Grade 13), Oak Street at 26 <sup>th</sup> Avenue, Vancouver	? - 1939	Sisters of the Love of Jesus (Mother Cecilia Mary)
20. Chinese School, Vancouver	ca.1921-?	Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (Pembroke)
21. St. Augustine's School, Vancouver (up to Grade 12 in the 1940s only)	1921-	Built by OMI, run by SSA; helped at some point by Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto
22. Holy Family School, Fernie	1922-1956	Sisters of Saint Joseph of Peace
23. Lejac Residential School, Fraser Lake	1922-1976	OMI & Sisters of the Child Jesus
24. Vancouver College (up to Grade 13)	1922-	(Edmund Rice) Christian Brothers (non-diocesan)
25. St. Patrick's School, Vancouver (first elementary, added up to Grade 12 in 1928)	1922-	Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto
26. St. Helen's School, Vancouver (up to Grade 9)	1923-	Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Halifax
27. St. Joseph's School, Vancouver (up to Grade 10)	1924-	Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Halifax
28. Our Lady of Sorrows, Vancouver (elementary)	1926-	Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Halifax
29. Immaculate Conception School, W.28 <sup>th</sup> Avenue, Vancouver (elementary)	1926-	Religious of the Sacred Heart (R.S.C.J.); Sisters of St. Ann (post 1954)
30. Our Lady's School aka Our Lady of Perpetual Help School, W.11 <sup>th</sup> Avenue, Vancouver (elementary)	1927-	Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Halifax
31. Little Flower Academy (up to Grade 13)	1927-	Sisters of St. Ann (non-diocesan)
32. Japanese School on Cordova Street, Vancouver	ca.1928-?	Sisters of the Atonement (kindergarten); Sisters of St. Ann (language classes)
33. Seton Academy, Burnaby (up to Grade 12)	1930-1968	Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Halifax
34. St. Mary's Elementary School, Euclid & Joyce, Vancouver	1931-	Sisters of the Child Jesus
35. Seminary of Christ the King	1931-	Benedictines took over in 1939
36. St. Francis Xavier Elementary School, originally on East Georgia, Vancouver	1933-	Grey Sisters of the Immaculate Conception
37. St. Andrew's Elementary School, South Vancouver	1937-	Sisters of Saint Joseph of Toronto
38. St. Anthony's Elementary School, Marpole, Vancouver	1940-1976	Sisters of the Love of Jesus; the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception, St. John, New Brunswick (reopened: 1995)
39. Sacred Heart Parish School on Pender, Vancouver	1940-1983	Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception
40. Guardian Angel Elementary School, Vancouver	1941-1960s	Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception
41. Our Lady of Consolation School, Ladner, later named Sacred Heart Elementary School	1944-	The School Sisters of Notre Dame
42. St. Francis of Assisi Elementary School, Vancouver	1946-	Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception
43. Holy Spirit School, Queensborough	1947-	Sisters of St. Ann
44. Our Lady of Fatima Elementary School, Maillardville	1947-	Sisters of the Child Jesus to 1952; Good Shepherd Sisters of Quebec to late 1960s
45. St. Mary's Elementary School, Chilliwack	1948-	Sisters of Saint Joseph of Toronto
46. Lower Post Indian Residential School	1951-1975	OMI, Sisters of St. Ann
47. Notre Dame Regional Secondary School	1953-	Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Halifax
48. Blessed Sacrament Elementary School	1954-	Diocesan school
49. Cloverdale Catholic School (originally up to Grade 10)	1954-	By 1956 it was run by the School Sisters of Notre Dame
50. St. Francis de Sales Elementary, Vancouver	1954-	Diocesan school
51. St. Patrick's Elementary, Maple Ridge	1955-	Sisters of St. Joseph, London, Ontario
52. St. Jude's Elementary School, Vancouver	1955-	Diocesan school
53. Holy Trinity Elementary School, North Vancouver	1955-	Diocesan school

54. St. Michael's Elementary School, Burnaby	1957-	Sisters of the Order of Charity of St. Louis (Saskatchewan)
55. Our Lady of Good Counsel Elementary, Surrey	1957-	Diocesan school
56. St. Anthony's Elementary School, West Vancouver	1958-	Diocesan school
57. Our Lady of Mercy Elementary School, Burnaby	1959-	Sisters of Charity of Providence; Sisters of Mercy (ca.1991)
58. Holy Cross Elementary School, Delta	1959-	Diocesan school
59. Immaculate Conception Elementary School, Delta	1959-	Diocesan school
60. Saint Thomas Aquinas Regional Secondary	1959-	Sisters of the Child Jesus
61. St. Paul's Elementary, Richmond	1960-	Diocesan school
62. St. Thomas More Collegiate	1960-	(Edmund Rice) Christian Brothers (non-diocesan)

## **Appendix B - Roman Catholic Dioceses in British Columbia**

Diocese of Victoria (est. 1846)

Archdiocese of Vancouver (established as a diocese in 1863; archdiocese in 1908)

Diocese of Nelson (est. 1936)

Diocese of Kamloops (est. 1945)

Diocese of Prince George (est. 1967)