EDUCATIONAL STUDIES AND FAITH-BASED SCHOOLING: MOVING FROM PREJUDICE TO EVIDENCE-BASED ARGUMENT

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ABSTRACT: Much of the political and public debate about faith-based schooling is conducted at the level of generalised assertion and counter-assertion, with little reference to educational scholarship or research. There is a tendency in these debates to draw upon historical images of faith schooling (idealised and critical); to use ideological advocacy (both for and against) and to deploy strong claims about the effects of faith-based schooling upon personal and intellectual autonomy and the wider consequences of such schooling for social harmony, race relations and the common good of society.

This paper will attempt to review some of these controversies in the light of recent educational and research studies. Particular attention will be given to research investigations of Catholic schooling systems in various cultural and political contexts, studies which are largely unknown outside the Catholic community.

In addition to reviewing educational studies of faith-based schooling, the paper will offer critical appraisal of the main arguments in the debate and it will also outline a possible research agenda for future inquiry in this sector of educational studies.

Keywords: faith schools, Catholic schools, prejudice, evidence-based argument.

1. SECULAR MARGINALISATION AND RESEARCH ON FAITH-BASED SCHOOLING

Michael Gallagher (1997, p. 23) has argued that 'secular marginalisation' has become a dominant feature of Western contemporary intellectual culture with the result that 'in the academic and media worlds ... religion is subtly ignored as unimportant'. The effects of such marginalisation can be seen in educational studies and research by the general neglect of the faith-based dimension of any

major issue under investigation. A detailed scrutiny of the literature on globalisation and education, policy studies, school effectiveness and school leadership or of the conference programmes of organisations such as the American Educational Research Association or the British Educational Research Association will demonstrate this lacuna. The assumption appears to be that research into faith-based schooling is a somewhat exotic minor activity primarily of interest and relevance to those in the various faith communities but hardly (post-Enlightenment) a major concern for mainstream educational research and discourse.[1] Thus it may be argued that while faith-based schools may have come 'out of the ghetto' in terms of their relations with external agencies, this process does not seem to have happened to the same extent in educational scholarship and research.

The outcome of this is that significant studies of globalisation and educational policy struggles in education, school effectiveness investigations and school leadership analysis take place as if the existence of faith-based schooling systems was peripheral to the central questions being raised. However, it is very clear in the cases cited that the values, worldview, principles and commitments of various faith communities *are* implicated in any understanding of such major educational issues. A comprehensive construct of educational inquiry must include engagement with specific faith cultures in given educational situations.

If mainstream educational study and research has largely ignored the relevance of faith-based cultures (until recently) it must also be noted that the various faith communities themselves have not given much priority to researching the cultures and outcomes of their particular schooling systems. Just as there has always been an uneasy relation between faith and reason, there has also been an uneasy relation between faith and research. Research can produce results which are disturbing to the faithful and for this reason some religious authorities have not encouraged systematic and critical investigations of their own schooling systems.[2]

The results of mainstream marginalisation on the one hand and of faith-based closure on the other has meant that research into faith-based schooling systems is remarkably underdeveloped given the extent and scale of faith-based educational provision internationally. The general absence of large-scale and sophisticated investigations of faith-based schooling has had a number of unfortunate consequences. One of these is that much of the current political and public debate about faith-based schooling has been conducted at the level of prejudiced and generalised assertion and counter-assertion

with little reference to research. There is a tendency in these debates to draw upon dated historical images of faith schooling, to use ideo-logical advocacy (both for and against) and to deploy strong claims about the effects of faith-based schooling upon personal and intel-lectual autonomy, social harmony, race relations and the common good of society.

A typical example of this may be found in the pages of the *Times Educational Supplement* of 23 January 2001 where special features on faith-based schooling were given headlines such as 'God help us' and 'No faith in the absurd'. An article on this topic by Professor Richard Dawkins, Professor of Public Understanding of Science at Oxford University, was headlined as saying: 'Sectarian religious schools serve only to promote prejudice, confusion and division' and 'religious violence as seen in Northern Ireland is stoked by segregated schools'. Dawkins's own assertion in the article was that religious schools 'can be deeply damaging, even lethally divisive' (p. 17).

The implication of these statements (for which no research evidence is cited) is that wherever community conflict exists (espe-cially in Northern Ireland) a major causal factor is the existence of faith-based schooling systems. It will be argued later that such claims represent an ahistorical, decontextualised and oversimplified view of the causes of such conflict. What complicates political and public debate on faith-based schooling is that the great majority of parti-cipants (including Professors of Public Understanding …) actually know very little about the contemporary educational culture and practice of schools. Despite this lack of knowledge, many are pre-pared to make strong claims about how these schools operate and about their effects upon personal development and social harmony. This amounts to a form of intellectual prejudice (perhaps in some cases of ethnic and racial prejudice) where arguments are based upon distorted or partial knowledge or, as in the case of Northern Ireland, an assumption of guilt by association. Given the importance of these issues not only for national harmony and understanding but also for international understanding, the need for systematic, scholarly and impartial research on faith-based schooling is very clear.

2. The Catholic Schooling System: Partial Images and Contemporary Research

The Catholic schooling system is probably the largest faith-based educational provision internationally, involving about 120,000 Catholic schools serving almost 50 million students in a wide range of socio-economic, political and cultural settings worldwide.[3] In many

countries there is also a significant Catholic presence in higher education. This international system of education has been subject, to a greater or lesser extent in different parts of the world, to the renewal of Catholic theological and social teaching emanating from the Second Vatican Council (Flannery, 1998).

In a recent review of empirical research studies of Catholic schooling in the USA, England, Scotland, Ireland and Australia (Grace, 2002), I found that the USA has provided not only the largest data source for other researchers but also theoretical concepts and research paradigms which have been used by researchers in other cultural settings. This is hardly surprising given the Catholic population of that country (60 million), the number of Catholic universities and colleges and the strong empirical traditions of American social enquiry and intellectual life. While the findings of this research corpus cannot simply be extrapolated to other socio-historical and cultural locations, they do provide some empirical indicators, which need to be examined in those locations.

3. Research on Catholic Schools in the USA

a. On Religious, Moral and Social Formation and Attitudes

Two of the leading researchers of these issues in the USA are Andrew Greeley and Anthony Bryk, both University of Chicago professors of social and educational inquiry. Greeley, with others, studied the effects of Catholic schooling post-Vatican II (i.e. after 1965) upon the religious and social values and attitudes of adolescents. The studies were reported in 1976, 1982 and 1989. Greeley *et al.* found that Catholic secondary schooling in this period had experienced a significant cultural and educational transformation. The impact of the reforms of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) was apparent in an educational culture which was much more open to debate and dialogue and to relations with the wider society than had been the case with the defensive Catholic 'citadel schools' of an earlier period. This new culture of relative openness had produced a more mature understanding of Catholicism among many adults but it had also resulted in changed attitudes to other faith communities. Summing up his research and that of others, Greeley (1998, pp. 182–183) posed the question:

> Are Catholic schools (in the USA) divisive? Do they produce men and women who are more likely to be prejudiced than those who go to public schools?

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On the basis of the available research Greeley responded:

> Quite the contrary, those who attend Catholic schools are less prejudiced than Catholics who attend public schools and less prejudiced than all public school graduates. Moreover, they are also more likely to be pro-feminist. All of these statements are true even when social class and educational achievement are held constant. (*ibid.*, p. 183)

A similar research conclusion has been provided by Anthony Bryk, Valerie Lee and Peter Holland in *Catholic Schools and the Common Good* (1993). Following a comprehensive review of existing research and in-depth analysis of secondary schools in Boston, Baltimore, Cleveland, Louisville, San Antonio and Los Angeles, Bryk *et al.* concluded:

> Traditional argument against public support for Catholic schools – the fear of religious establishment, social divisiveness and elitism seem ungrounded. We discern nothing fundamentally undemocratic about Catholic schools' educational philosophy of person-in-community and their ethical stance of shaping the human conscience toward personal responsibility and social engagement. To the contrary, these religious understandings order daily life and its outcomes in very appealing ways. It is not narrow, divisive or sectarian education but rather an education for democratic life.... (p. 341)

The implications of these research findings are that the world of post-Vatican II Catholic education is a very different cultural, religious and educational environment to that of the pre-conciliar period. Modern forms of Catholic education are, at their best, providing religious, moral and social formation which is respectful of the spiritual and intellectual autonomy of students, open to debate, dialogue and scepticism and sensitive to the responsibilities of good citizenship and to the traditions of other faiths.[4]

While the research of Greeley *et al.* and of Bryk does not provide definitive empirical answers to these contested issues, they do at least constitute an evidence-based argument that representations of Catholic schooling as authoritarian, indoctrinatory and socially divisive are based upon dated historical images of, or assumptions about, the nature of Catholic education. If these misrepresentations of Catholic schooling can exist in political and public debate, it suggests that misrepresentation of the contemporary schooling systems of other faith communities can also exist. One of the obvious ways to deal with these misrepresentations is that more large-scale, systematic and in-depth research should be undertaken into the cultures and practices of contemporary faith-based schools.

b. On Educational Service to the Poor and Disadvantaged

Catholic schooling in the USA has historically been associated with educational provision for the poor and disadvantaged and especially for immigrant communities of Irish, Italian, Polish and other European origins. Research on such provision and on its relative effectiveness has been undertaken in a series of studies, including Vitullo-Martin (1979), Cibulka *et al.* (1982), Greeley (1982), Raudenbush and Bryk (1986), Coleman and Hoffer (1987), Convey (1992), Bryk *et al.* (1993) and O'Keefe (1996). Many of these studies show that such educational provision appears to have good outcomes for poor and disadvantages students. Cibulka *et al.* (1982), for instance, in a study of 50 Catholic elementary schools with ethnic minority enrolments of at least 70 per cent located in Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Newark, New Orleans, New York and Washington, found that such schools were serving families which were larger and poorer than the average American family. Many were single parent families and *more than half of the families were not Catholic.* Generally students in these schools performed at higher achievement levels than students in neighbouring public schools (however, relative achievement levels are controversial – see below). Cibulka and his co-researchers noted the existence of high levels of motivation and dedication (vocation) among the teachers in these schools, about 30 per cent of whom were members of religious orders.

Although the question of relative achievement levels has to be scrutinised more carefully, what such research does demonstrate is that faith-based schooling, in this case Catholic schooling, can be a powerful and community-enhancing resource in inner-city and other deprived urban locations. What also emerges from these studies is that Catholic schooling in such locations does not simply meet the educational needs of the Catholic poor but also the needs of the non-Catholic poor including significant numbers of disadvantaged black students in inner-city America.

A faith-based schooling system which has a positive mission to the educational and social service of the poor would appear to be a major cultural asset in any society. It seems difficult to sustain the charge or image of 'elitism' in the face of such evidence.

c. On Contribution to the Common Good of Society

The major American research study on this subject, Bryk *et al.* (1993), concludes in these terms:

Although we have emphasised the education of disadvantaged students, we note that Catholic schools also advance an important agenda in the education of their more advantaged counterparts. In schools with large proportions of low-income students, the social justice mission of Vatican II is tangibly manifested.... The concern for social justice however is also manifest in the schooling of the advantaged. Catholic schools deliberately strive to inculcate an understanding for and a commitment to social justice in all their students. Many of these students are likely to move into powerful positions in society as adults.... The Catholic school emphasises to its students the value of leadership for social justice and hopes that this message will become internalised in adulthood. (pp. 340–341)

The notion of Catholic schooling as having a narrow sectarian remit is based upon an out-moded pre-Vatican II image of Catholic education. What those outside the Catholic educational community do not understand is how significant a social justice and common good mission has become in modern Catholic educational practice.[5] For post-Vatican II schooling, as the research of Bryk *et al.* (1993) and others demonstrated, the spiritual, the moral and the social are necessarily interconnected as categories. There can be no authentic love of God (a manifestation of the spiritual) which is not at the same time linked to living a good life (a manifestation of the moral) and to loving and helping one's neighbour (a manifestation of social concern and social justice). It seems unlikely that the Catholic system is the only faith-based education mission which has such spiritual, moral and social justice purposes.

d. On School Effectiveness and Academic Outcomes

The question of the relative academic effectiveness of the Catholic school system is a very controversial one in the USA and elsewhere. While there are studies which appear to show (after controlling for the relevant variables) that Catholic schools achieve better academic outcomes than comparable public schools, there are also studies which question such conclusions or the research methodologies involved. Researchers such as Coleman and Hoffer (1982) and Bryk *et al.* (1993) point to the positive effects of certain features of Catholic educational culture such as 'social capital', 'strong internal sense of community', 'structured environments', 'sense of mission' and 'vocational commitment of teachers'. Critics such as Lauder and Hughes (1999) and Goldstein (2001)[6] suggest that the prior

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achievement and the cultural background of students entering Catholic secondary schools largely accounts for their successful academic outcomes.

For the USA, Convey (1992, p. 6) makes a judicious summing up:

> Self-selection prevents a conclusive answer to whether or not Catholic schools are more effective than public schools. Studies that compare Catholic schools with public schools can never eliminate the possibility that some unmeasured or otherwise uncontrolled attribute of students that is associated with self-selection is responsible for a significant amount of the differences between the Catholic and public schools.... The possibility that the observed differences between Catholic schools and public schools are more a function of the type of students who enrol in each, rather than anything to do with the school, can never be completely eliminated.

In terms of the public debate about faith-based schooling, some potentially negative developments can result in the school effectiveness sector. The apparent academic success (as opposed to the value-added success) of faith-based schools may be appropriated by political and ideological interest groups which want to criticise the effectiveness of public schooling. In other words, faith-based schooling can be incorporated into a larger ideological struggle about the provision of education in terms which are derogatory to public schooling – and terms which are not endorsed by the faith community itself. These negative developments have emerged in the USA and are becoming apparent in other societies.

Part of the hostility to Catholic schools in the USA may be accounted for by this political strategy of using the relative academic success of such schools as a weapon to undermine the reputations and status of public schools in the eyes of parents. It is important to note that Catholic educators and researchers have sought to distance themselves from such a strategy. As Convey's 1992 statement shows, there is both a professional and a research recognition that qualitative differences exist between faith-based schooling and public schooling in the USA which prevent simplistic comparisons of academic outcomes. Research in the USA on the Catholic faith-based schooling system suggests that critical assertions about social divisiveness, indoctrination, authoritarianism, elitism and narrow sectarian focus cannot be sustained by empirical studies of post-Vatican II schooling. On the contrary, Catholic schools can be seen to have a spiritual, educational and social mission which contributes to the common good of American society.

4. RESEARCH ON CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN OTHER CONTEXTS

Empirical research on post-Vatican II Catholic schooling in the UK, Ireland and Australia is beginning to show similar findings to that conducted in the USA, although particular dilemmas and contradictions have become apparent in each socio-cultural setting. Changed approaches to religious, moral and social formation and a much stronger emphasis upon commitment to social justice and the common good is a feature of Catholic schooling in these contexts. This is apparent in research findings in the UK from the work of Hornsby-Smith (1978, 1999, 2000), Arthur (1995), O'Keeffe (1997, 1999), Paterson (2000), Grace (2001, 2002); in Ireland in the work of O'Sullivan (1996) and Feheney (1998, 1999) and in Australia in the work of Flynn and Mok (2002).

My own recent study of Catholic schools in London, Liverpool and Birmingham drew its evidence base from fieldwork visits to schools and communities (largely in inner-city and deprived urban locations), from a study of school documentation, Ofsted reports and Section 23 (Diocesan Inspector's) reports, from interviews with 60 Catholic headteachers and from focus-group discussions with 50 senior students (Year 10) in five London schools.

This research gives empirical support to the proposition that post-Vatican II Catholic schooling in England has undergone considerable transformation. While the faith of Catholic Christian belief remains fundamental, a significant transformation has taken place in the realisation of its spiritual message, the mode of its educational process, its relation to the personal autonomy of the young and its relation to other faiths and to the wider world. Although it is a faith-based system I would argue, from the evidence available, that it is entirely compatible with the principles of a liberal education and with the principles of a democratic and socially caring society.

On a larger international scale, it is evident that the Catholic schooling system and other faith-based systems have a crucial role to play in globalisation struggles. With the collapse of the Soviet Communist system, George Soros (1999) has pointed out that a new cultural imperialism has emerged, i.e. that of global capitalist values. Soros has charted the nature of this new global imperialism, and has concluded 'that market values have assumed an importance at the present moment in history that is way beyond what is appropriate and sustainable' (p. 46).

It can be argued that faith-based schools are one of the countervailing institutions against the global hegemony of market materialism, individual competitiveness and commodity worship. Their role

could be crucial not only in the preservation of various forms of spiritual and moral values but also in struggles of solidarity and social justice internationally.

5. Northern Ireland: Faith Schooling and Community Conflict

In recent political and public debate about faith-based schooling, Northern Ireland, either directly or by implication, has been used as the paradigm case of the negative consequences of such a system. Thus, in the direct mode, the Humanist Philosophers' Group in their publication *Religious Schools: the case against* (2001, p. 35) assert:

> We have clear evidence ... from Northern Ireland where the separation of Catholic and Protestant schools has played a significant part in perpetuating the sectarian divide.

However, it may be noted that no sources of evidence are cited to substantiate this assertion. In another mode, Richard Dawkins (2001, p. 17) argues:

> Why do people in Northern Ireland kill each other? It is fashionable to say that the sectarian feuds are not about religion, the deep divides in that province are not religious, they are cultural, historical, economic. Well, no doubt they are ... [but] ... if Protestant and Catholic children ceased to be segregated throughout their school days, the troubles in Northern Ireland would largely disappear....

It is important to note the use of ideological as opposed to scholarly language in this extract. Potentially significant structural causes of the troubles in Northern Ireland which refer to cultural, historical and economic relations are described as 'fashionable' explanations, while the thrust of the article is to suggest that faith-based schooling is the fundamental cause of the problem. This is an example of what has already been called the 'guilt by association' mode of analysis. It may reasonably be asked whether Professor Richard Dawkins would accept such an analysis in his own field of evolutionary biology.

In fact, assertions such as these represent an ahistorical, decontextualised and oversimplified view of the Northern Ireland situation, as any serious scrutiny of relevant literature demonstrates. In the 1970s, systematic investigation of this issue in relation to the British government's (1973) White Paper, *Northern Ireland Constitutional Proposals,* resulted in the following conclusion:

> To make the educational system itself the scapegoat for all the ills
> of Northern Ireland would obscure problems whose origins are of
> a much more complex character. (HMSO, 1973, p. 7)

and the research of O'Donnell (1977, p. 155) reported that:

> religion, *per se*, plays an insignificant role in the stereotypes of
> Northern Ireland. Power is the crucial factor.

A review of the impact of faith-based schooling in Northern Ireland
by A. M. Gallagher of the Centre for the Study of Conflict, University
of Ulster, noted that:

> despite years of discussion there is no consensus in the research
> literature on the impact of segregated schools on attitudes and
> behaviour. (1992, p. 354)

John Greer, a leading researcher in this field, reporting his own
investigations into 'openness', defined as 'the willingness of pupils to
value members of the other tradition as neighbours, relatives, workers
...' concluded from a large-scale survey of over 2,000 pupils in second-
ary schools (9 Catholic, 10 Protestant) that:

> Throughout the age range for both sexes and both denom-
> inational groups there was a positive relationship between attitude
> towards religion and openness. The young people most favourably
> disposed towards religion were also most open to members of the
> other religious groups. This is an important finding, contradicting
> the notion that in Northern Ireland religiosity increases closedness
> to 'the other side'. (1993, p. 458)

Of course, all of these considered statements and research findings
are open to challenge on conceptual, methodological and analytical
grounds but what does become clear from a survey of the literature
is that assertions which suggest that faith-based schooling in North-
ern Ireland is 'deeply damaging, even lethally divisive' can only have
a base in prejudice or ideology and not in scholarship and research.

6. The Future: a Research Agenda for Faith-based Schooling

With the growing importance of faith-based schooling systems inter-
nationally there is an obvious need for more systematic research and
inquiry into their spiritual, moral and intellectual cultures and into
their educational and social outcomes. Such research will need to be
impartial, comprehensive and sensitive to the pluralist range of faith

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traditions and faith communities. In addition to studies of the various forms of Christian educational provision (Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, Evangelical etc.) such research will need to focus upon Islamic, Jewish, Sikh, Buddhist and other schools founded by major faith communities. To combat ignorance and prejudice about how different forms of faith-based schooling actually operate in the contemporary world, systematic inquiry is necessary. This means that research trusts, foundations and also government agencies must recognise that such research has become mainstream and is no longer a marginal activity. It also means that the authorities of the various faith communities must be prepared to open their schools to such impartial inquiry. There are some encouraging signs that this is beginning to happen. My own research into Catholic schools in London, Liverpool and Birmingham was funded by the Leverhulme Trust and supported by twelve religious orders with missions in education.[7] In Jewish education, an important research report by Oliver Valins, Barry Kosmin and Jacqueline Goldberg has recently been published with the title *The Future of Jewish Schooling in the United Kingdom* (2001).[8] In the Anglican community the amount of research activity is increasing with the scholarly work of Leslie Francis, Jeff Astley, William Kay and Priscilla Chadwick.[9] The foundation of the Islamic Academy at Cambridge in the 1980s has prepared the ground for such systematic inquiry in that community.

However, as Harry Judge of Oxford University has recently argued, it is also important that researchers from *outside* the various faith communities should scrutinise the operations of faith-based schooling systems.[10] This would contribute helpfully to the process known as triangulation where a specific cultural phenomenon is viewed and analysed from a number of different perspectives. Some examples of this do exist in the work of Walford (2000, 2001) on Christian Evangelical schools and of Halstead (1995) and Hewer (2001) on Muslim schools, but much more needs to be done.

A possible research agenda for the future, it is suggested, could include some of the following main areas for investigation.

a. Faith Schools and Community Relations

The impact of faith schools upon community relations appears to be a priority area for research inquiry given that large claims are made on this subject with little reference to empirical evidence. A comprehensive examination of the subject would require an investigation of community perceptions, attitudes and evaluations of such schools at both adult and youth levels. For instance, does the existence of such

schools contribute to perceptions of the 'strangeness' or 'otherness' of particular faith and ethnic communities in ways which seem negative for community and race relations? In other words, investigations of what might be called the external social consequences of faith schools are required. At the same time (because they are inter-related) research is needed in specific community contexts on the internal cultures and educational programmes of both state schools and faith schools. In particular, the extent and effectiveness of programmes of multicultural and anti-racist education in such schools should be evaluated and also the content and pedagogic methods used in all programmes of religious and moral education. For faith schools their own mission integrity should be a focus of self-evaluation as well as of external inquiry. Given that all the major faiths proclaim missions of love, peace, harmony, forgiveness and reconciliation (often formally expressed in school mission statements), a leading question for them all is, do the educational cultures, programmes and relationships in their schools contribute to the enhancement of these characteristics in their students and in wider community relations? Does the faith, in educational terms, lead young people to an open and caring relationship with others beyond their immediate community, or does it lead to closure and prejudice?

b. Faith Schools and Contribution to the Common Good

This is a related but wider area of investigation. To the extent that public funds are used in support of faith schools, can it be shown that such schools contribute to the common good of society and not simply to the particular good of the faith community?[11] Existing research evidence suggests that the common good effects of faith-based schooling can be demonstrated in various ways. The classic text on this subject, by Bryk *et al.* (1993), has shown empirically the substantial contribution made by Catholic schools to community resourcing and educational progress in American inner-cities. It has also shown that such provision has been at the service of students who are not Catholic, especially from black disadvantaged groups. Further research is needed to see how general this common good effect is in faith schools in other contexts. There is also the fascinating and very under-researched question of what effect does a faith-based schooling have on adult men and women in their personal, social and public lives? My own research, using personal oral history accounts of the long-term effects of a Catholic schooling, showed some interesting indications. While there were adults who had found it an oppressive experience, there appeared to be more who had

found it a positive experience which they related closely to the principles and practice of their public lives in politics, social and educational service, community work and contemporary feminist writing.[12] If the long-term outcome of faith-based schooling is the sort of adult citizen it helps to form, then we need to know more about this by systematic inquiry among adults from different faith communities. Here is a major field for oral history research in the future.

c. Faith Schools, Markets and Mission Integrity

Mission integrity may be defined as *fidelity in educational practice, and not just in public rhetoric, to the distinctive and authentic principles of a faith-based schooling*. As already mentioned, the leaders of faith schools have a particular responsibility to monitor and evaluate the contemporary practice of their schools to try to ensure that this is an authentic realisation of the faith and of its educational and social principles. In the contemporary competitive market-place of education which schooling has become in the UK, faith-based schools run the risk of becoming incorporated into the market materialist culture. The pursuit of improved academic results year upon year (as published in league-table results) may lead faith schools to adopt market strategies which are at odds with the values and principles of their own mission statements. I have tried to set out the challenges to Catholic schools (and by implication to other faith schools) in these terms:

> If a market culture in education encourages the pursuit of material interests, what becomes of a Catholic school's prime commitment to religious, spiritual and moral interests? If calculation of personal advantage is necessary for survival in the market, how can Catholic schools remain faithful to values of solidarity and community? If schools in a market economy in education must show good 'company' results in academic success and growing social status, what becomes of the Catholic principle of 'preferential option for the poor'? [...] The temptation in a market economy for schooling is to try, by manipulation of admission policies and exclusion policies, to maximise the number of potentially 'profitable' students and to reduce the number of challenging and uncooperative pupils. (2002, pp. 180–181)

What is needed for all faith-based schools is research which examines how they are responding to these challenges and achieving market survival and even 'success' without seriously compromising their mission integrity. In this research sector the relations between faith

schools and state schools in specific communities is clearly an important topic.

d. Faith Schools, Liberal Education and Democratic Culture

Critics of faith-based schools often imply that the pedagogical climate of such organisations is inimical to the realisation of a liberal education or of the formation of democratic citizenship. This view is premised on the assumption that the particular faith in question is absolutist, closed to liberal intellectual discourse and, in its own internal power relations, incompatible with modern democratic culture and citizenship. As suggested earlier in this paper, such assumptions may be based upon out-dated and distorted understandings of a particular faith community. To try to establish a more reliable evidence base in this sector, in-depth studies of particular faith school cultures are needed with a focus on liberal education practice and on citizenship formation.[13] Philosophers of education, such as Terence McLaughlin (1996) have argued that certain forms of religious schooling are compatible with a liberal and democratic education, especially if they are characterised by what McLaughlin and others have described as 'openness with roots', i.e.,

> providing a particular substantial starting point for the child's eventual development into autonomous agency and democratic citizenship. (p. 147)

We need extensive empirical research to investigate to what extent the phenomenon of 'openness with roots' exists in the cultures and practices of various forms of faith-based schooling.

e. Faith Schools: the Views and Experiences of Students

Ruddock and Flutter (2000, p. 86) argue that both educational research and school improvement projects have been impoverished by lack of serious attention to the perspectives of pupils:

> This traditional exclusion of young people from the consultation process, this bracketing out of their voice, is founded upon an outdated view of childhood which fails to acknowledge children's capacity to reflect on issues affecting their lives.

If mission integrity should be a central concept for the evaluation of faith-based schooling (as is argued in this paper) then it follows that students in faith schools are crucial participants and evaluators of that concept in practice. Faith-based schooling and all forms of

schooling must be open to the critical evaluation of the students in the system. Sensitive and facilitating research into students' views and experiences is integral to a research agenda for the future.

As the Humanist Philosophers' Group (2001, p. 12) point out:

> Autonomous commitment to beliefs is something which religious believers ought to value.

If faith-based schools wish to reject the charge that they are engaged in the religious indoctrination of the young rather than presenting an experience of, and dialogue with, a faith, then they must be prepared to listen to the voice of their own students. The students will be an important source of evidence about whether or not 'openness with roots' actually describes their educational experiences.

The overall argument of this paper is therefore that it is time to move on from prejudiced or ideological assertions about faith-based schooling to evidence-based argument. Faith-based schooling systems internationally have been a marginalised field for educational inquiry. A research agenda of major issues awaits scholarly and impartial investigation which can helpfully inform both policy-making and public debate about faith-based schooling in contemporary society.

7. NOTES

[1] There are some exceptions to this general neglect. See, for instance, Halpin (2001) and O'Keeffe (1997, 1999).
[2] This would appear to be the case in Ireland, for instance. McDonagh (1991, p. 72) noted, 'Relatively little has been done in Ireland to evaluate our schools from the perspective of Catholic education.... The overwhelming reality is that the Irish Church has not to date responded to the invitation to evaluate schools under its authority.'
[3] See Pittau (2000).
[4] For evidence in support of these assertions, see Grace (2003) forthcoming.
[5] See Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (1996) and Catholic Education Service (1997).
[6] Personal paper to the author. See Grace (2002) chapter 7.
[7] Religious orders in the UK and Ireland which supported the CRDCE research project included The Society of Jesus, De La Salle Brothers, Christian Brothers, Faithful Companions of Jesus, Sisters of Charity of St Paul (Selly Park), Salesians of Don Bosco, Benedictines of Ampleforth, Sisters of Notre Dame, Society of the Holy Child Jesus, Sisters of Mercy, Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Loreto Sisters, La Retraite Sisters, Servite Sisters, Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions and the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (Dublin).
[8] See also Miller (2001).
[9] Given this corpus of research on Anglican schools it is remarkable that none of this is cited in the Dearing Report (2001) *The Way Ahead: Church of England Schools in the New Millenium.*

[10] Personal letter to the writer (18 April 2002).

[11] As John Sullivan (2001, p. 176) comments, 'Unless Catholics can show that their desire for a distinctive form of education is not vulnerable to accusations of being inward-looking, isolationist and unconcerned about the common good, their schools will neither deserve nor attract the support of a wider society.'

[12] See Grace (2002) chapter 3.

[13] For one case study of a Catholic secondary school with significant achievements in citizenship education see Grace (2001).

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