"Living a Philosophical Contradiction?": Progressive Education in the Archdiocese of Vancouver's Catholic Schools, 1936–1960

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Progressive education swept across Canada in the early to mid-twentieth century, restructuring schools, introducing new courses, and urging teachers to reorient the classroom to the interests and needs of the learner. The women religious who taught in Vancouver's Catholic schools negotiated the revised public school curriculum, determined to utilize the latest methods and meet public school standards in hopes of receiving government funding. But they were equally adamant about preserving Catholic beliefs regarding human life and resisting "false" philosophy. Despite their caution, progressive education began to transform Catholic pedagogy in this period, most notably in religious education. Looking back over the decades, Catholic educators in the early 1960s would observe that progressive education had brought about a shift in schools that emphasized process over content and self-expression over discipline. They found themselves questioning whether the curriculum undermined revealed knowledge by overemphasizing empirical science as the foundation for all knowledge.

Key Words: Catholic education, curriculum history, progressive education, women religious, Pacific Northwest, British Columbia

In 1924, George M. Weir, Professor of Education at the University of British Columbia, and J. Harold Putman, senior inspector of the Ottawa public school system, were commissioned to conduct what was to become "the most searching and comprehensive educational survey ever undertaken in Canada."[1] Canadian historian of education Robert Patterson identifies the survey as "the single most important

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[1] "Putman-Weir Survey," *The Homeroom*, https://s.web.viu.ca/homeroom/content/topics/programs/progress.htm; and J. H. Putman and G. M. Weir, *The Survey of the School System* (Victoria, BC: C. F. Banfield, 1925).

doi:10.1017/heq.2019.18

event which indicated that Canadian educators were seriously studying and becoming a part of the progressive education phenomenon."[2] Progressive educators advocated for a broadened school curriculum that responded to contemporary concerns with vocational education, health education, and support for ensuring quality family and community life. They sought to implement pedagogical practices that were based on the latest scientific research in psychology and the social sciences, and they believed that, if education were for all people, individualization in learning would be essential to keeping children in school longer. Progressives saw education as the key to a successful democracy.[3] A conservative implementation of this trend would spread throughout Canada, starting with experimentation in the 1920s and, by the 1930s, bringing about extensive curriculum revisions in most provinces.[4]

Also in the mid-1920s, the Archdiocese of Vancouver's Catholic school system began to take shape, through the work of religious communities of men and, predominantly, women from across Canada, the United States, and France. The most prevalent included two of Canada's largest female religious congregations in the twentieth century: the Sisters of St. Ann, whose motherhouse was in Lachine, Quebec, and whose sisters worked in both eastern and western Canada and the United States; and the Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul of Halifax, Nova Scotia, an offshoot of the American congregation of the same name, established by Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton.[5] The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the Sisters of the Child Jesus, both originating in France, were also widespread, though they primarily administrated and taught in schools for Indigenous children.[6] Religious congregations taught in

[2]Robert S. Patterson, "The Canadian Response to Progressive Education," in *Essays on Canadian Education,* ed. Nick Kach et al. (Calgary, AB: Detselig, 1986), 61–77.

[3]Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education*, 1876–1957 (Toronto: Knopf, 1969), vii-xi.

[4]Patterson, "Canadian Response to Progressive Education," 100. See also George S. Tomkins, *A Common Countenance: Stability and Change in the Canadian Curriculum* (Vancouver, BC: Pacific Educational Press, 2008).

[5]In this period, the Sisters of St. Ann referred to the region from Washington State to Alaska, including British Columbia and part of the Yukon Territory, as St. Joseph's Province. For statistics about Canadian congregations, see Heidi MacDonald, "Smaller Numbers, Stronger Voices: Women Religious Reposition Themselves through the Canadian Religious Conference, 1960s-80s," in *Vatican II and Beyond: The Changing Mission and Identity of Canadian Women Religious,* ed. Rosa Bruno-Jofré, Heidi MacDonald, and Elizabeth M. Smyth (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017), 26–63.

[6]In the early decades of the twentieth century, they were joined by the Congregation of Christian Brothers; the Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto; the

some or all of four school types in the province: diocesan (parochial) schools, academy schools run by religious orders, and residential and day schools for Indigenous students. This paper primarily focuses on the work of the Sisters of St. Ann in the Vancouver Archdiocese in their diocesan and academy schools. Despite increasing from 12.2 percent of the population in 1921 to 17.5 percent in 1961, Catholics were always a minority in twentieth-century British Columbia.[7] By 1960, a network of over fifty Catholic schools existed in the province, primarily located in the province's largest urban center: the city of Vancouver and its surrounding suburbs.[8]

Officially, Catholic schools historically came under the bishop's authority and that of his representative, the superintendent of schools. In reality, up until the late 1960s, when the number of religious sisters and brothers began to dramatically decline, individual schools were shaped by the religious order that supplied their teachers and administrators. From their inception in 1858 until legislation was passed that approved partial government funding in 1977, Catholic schools were not obliged to follow the provincial public school curriculum.[9] Historically, however, most Catholic schools offered the curriculum the provincial Department of Education prescribed and their students had the option to take provincial examinations.[10] It was important to the religious women and men that their graduates qualified to attend university or teacher training programs in British Columbia. Perhaps more significantly, because of their ongoing petition for

Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception of St. John, New Brunswick; and the Religious of the Sacred Heart, among others. In the 1850s, the Sisters of St. Ann and the Oblates of Mary Immaculate were the first to arrive in the region.

[7]Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 433–34, Table 10.

[8]This area is often referred to as the Lower Mainland and typically includes the Fraser Valley, Greater Vancouver, the Sunshine Coast, and parts of Squamish-Lillooet. Since the 1930s, it has held over 50 percent of the province's population. See Barman, *West Beyond the West*, 437–38, Table 14.

[9]In 1978, for the first time in their history, Catholic schools in British Columbia became subject to government inspection and regulation. Since 1989, Catholic schools have received 50 percent of a given local public school district's per-student grant amount, while remaining under church control. In the 2017–2018 school year, 22,162 students were educated in B.C. Catholic schools, representing more than one quarter of the 13 percent of British Columbia children who attend independent schools. See "Enrolment by Independent School Association—Historical," Federation of Independent School Associations, https://fisabc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Enrolment-by-Assoc.-Historical-2018.pdf.

[10]This is with the exception of Indian residential schools, which had received federal government funding since the late nineteenth century and, though required to follow the provincial curriculum after the 1920s, did not receive funding for high school grades until after World War II.

government funding, Catholics implemented the public school curriculum with the intention of making their schools a Catholic, but nonetheless legitimate, version of public schools. In spite of ongoing public interest and the introduction of government support, very little academic research has examined the historical development and nature of Catholic education in English Canada. Historiography on Catholic schools typically explains their fight for government funding,[11] or examines the work and lives of women religious who taught.[12] Scholars

[11] Research on the history of public funds for Catholic schools in English Canada has largely focused on the province of Ontario. See, for example, Robert Dixon, *We Remember, We Believe: A History of Toronto's Catholic Separate School Boards, 1841 to 1997* (Toronto: Toronto Catholic District School Board, 2007); Franklin A. Walker, *Catholic Education and Politics in Ontario, Volume III: From the Hope Commission to the Promise of Completion* (Toronto: Catholic Education Foundation of Ontario, 1986); R. D. Gidney, "The Completion of the Separate School System, 1960–1987," in *From Hope to Harris: The Reshaping of Ontario's Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 124–40; and Mark G. McGowan, "Nurseries of Catholics and Canadians: Toronto's Separate Schools," in *The Waning of the Green: Catholics, the Irish, and Identity in Toronto, 1887–1922* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 118–48. Literature on government funding for nonpublic (including Catholic) schools in British Columbia includes L. W. Downey, "The Aid-to-Independent Schools Movement in British Columba," in *Schools in the West: Essays in Canadian Educational History*, ed. Nancy Sheehan, J. Donald Wilson and David C. Jones (Calgary, AB: Detselig Enterprises, 1986), 305–23; Jean Barman, "Deprivatizing Private Education: The British Columbia Experience," *Canadian Journal of Education/Revue canadienne de l'éducation* 16, no. 1 (Winter 1991), 12–31; Victoria Cunningham, *Justice Achieved: The Political Struggle of Independent Schools in British Columbia* (Vancouver, BC: Federation of Independent School Associations, 2002); Mary Margaret Down, *A Century of Service, 1858–1958: A History of the Sisters of Saint Ann and their Contribution to Education in British Columbia, the Yukon and Alaska* (Victoria, BC: Sisters of Saint Ann, 1966); and Vincent J. McNally, "Challenging the Status Quo: An Examination of the History of Catholic Education in British Columbia," *Historical Studies* 65 (1999), 71–91.

[12] On the history of women religious who taught and changes to their communities and Catholic education after the Second Vatican Council, see Marta Danylewycz, *Taking the Veil: An Alternative to Marriage, Motherhood, and Spinsterhood in Quebec, 1840–1920* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 1987); Elizabeth Smyth, ed., *Changing Habits: Women's Religious Orders in Canada* (Ottawa, ON: Novalis Publishing, 2007); Rosa Bruno-Jofré and Jon Igelmo Zaldívar, eds., *Catholic Education in the Wake of Vatican II* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017); and Bruno-Jofré, MacDonald, and Smyth, *Vatican II and Beyond*. On the history of Catholic education for Indigenous students in the West, see Jacqueline Gresko, "Creating Little Dominions Within the Dominion: Early Catholic Indian Schools in Saskatchewan and British Columbia," in *Indian Education in Canada Volume 1: The Legacy*, ed. Jean Barman, Yvonne Hebert, and Don McCaskill (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), 88–109.

have not considered how progressive education influenced Catholic school curriculum and pedagogy.[13]

This paper discusses a critical period in the development of Catholic schools in British Columbia. I observe the way teachers and administrators negotiated with progressive education, adamant to preserve a Catholic philosophy of education but equally determined to meet the standards of public schools and utilize the latest methods.[14] At its foundations, the Catholic education they offered was based on a Christian understanding of the human person as having a teleological nature, an inherent dignity and worth, and a capacity to do good or evil. It was also based on a conception of knowledge as discoverable through both reason and divine revelation. Catholic educators were willing to experiment with and implement progressive methods, such as the project method and the unit method, and to rearrange the curriculum to combine or introduce new courses. They would even acquiesce to the idea that education should not overemphasize discipline, memorization, and examinations, but they would not relinquish their view of the human person. This is most evident in their response to new curricular content in social studies (history) in the 1930s, and eugenics and sex education in the 1940s. Ultimately, Catholic educators were willing to engage in pragmatism, evaluating theories about learning in terms of their practical application, but they were not willing to allow the naturalism of progressive education to contravene religiously inspired beliefs about the meaning and purpose of human life. In spite of their determination—or perhaps because of teachers' keenness to develop their profession—progressive education made an indelible mark on Catholic pedagogy in this period, ironically, to the greatest extent in religious education.

Progressive education challenged traditional schooling, with its rote learning, classical curriculum, and highly disciplined academic approach, characteristics often associated with Catholic schooling. Pedagogical progressives, inspired by American philosopher and

[13]It should be noted that some scholars have included the Catholic response among other responses to progressive education, such as Nick Kach, "Criticisms of Progressive Education," in *Essays on Canadian Education*, ed. Kach, et al., 121–40; and 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.

[14]This research is based on newsletters, student work, and correspondence of the Sisters of St. Ann, Sisters of St. Ann Archives, (hereafter cited as SSAA); meeting minutes from the Vancouver Parochial School Council, Sisters of Charity, Halifax Archives, Halifax, NS (hereafter cited as SCHA); and correspondence, reports, and the *B.C. Catholic* newspaper from the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver Archives (hereafter cited as RCAVA).

educational theorist John Dewey's ideas about social education, promoted the use of the project method of Dewey's follower and colleague W. H. Kilpatrick, and called for a child-centered approach, wherein the needs, abilities, and interests of the child determine the subject matter.[15] They recommended activity-oriented, cooperative learning opportunities based on real life, which would prepare students for future employment and life in a democratic state.[16] In British Columbia in the late 1920s, under Weir and Vancouver principal Major H. B. King, the implementation of progressive education involved combining elementary history, geography, and civics courses to create social studies; creating junior high schools for children ages twelve to fifteen; and introducing differentiated programs of study, such as technical schooling.[17] This culminated in the revised *Programme of Studies* (public school curriculum) and educational philosophy of 1936 and 1937. By the early 1940s, progressive educators in Canada sought to expand the curriculum to include sex education, known to their American counterparts as "life adjustment," and to

[15] In Canada, Kilpatrick's project method was more commonly referred to by the British term, "enterprise education." Tomkins, *Common Countenance*, 174.

[16] Canadian curriculum historian George Tomkins suggests Hubert Newland, supervisor of schools in Alberta, best exemplifies pedagogical progressives in Canada. Tomkins, *Common Countenance*, 174. For example, see 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, AB: Alberta Department of Education, King's Printer, 1941). See also John Dewey, *The Child and the Curriculum* (1902; repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956); John Dewey, *My Pedagogic Creed* (New York: E. L. Kellogg, 1897); and John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1916). This paper focuses on the influence of pedagogical progressivism in Catholic schooling. Also in this time period, major reforms in measurement and efficiency, which were often referred to as "administrative progressivism," dramatically influenced public and Catholic schools. See David B. Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974). Ann Marie Ryan, examining American Catholic schools, suggests that administrative progressivism was more influential. Ann Marie Ryan, "'More than Measurable Human Products': Catholic Educators' Responses to the Educational Measurement Movement in the First Half of the 20th Century," *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice* 13, no. 1 (Sept. 2009), 76–96.

[17] Consequently many schools changed from an 8–3 system (eight elementary grades, three high school) to a 6-3-3 plan: six years of elementary schooling, three of middle school (which came to be known as junior high), and three of high school. This brought provincial public schools in line with schools in the United States. F. Henry Johnson, *A History of Public Education in British Columbia* (Vancouver: Publications Centre, University of British Columbia, 1964).

reduce academic objectives .[18] Scholars have debated, however, the degree to which progressive curriculum prescriptions were implemented at the classroom level.[19]

A number of scholars of progressive education in English Canada have argued that the historiographical debate between traditionalism and progressivism in education has been oversimplified.[20] In response to this debate, historian Paul Axelrod's research highlights the many instances of progressivism that historians have overlooked and suggests that educators in the 1950s were pragmatic and not inclined to the philosophical; the public school system of the mid-twentieth century still retained much of its order, discipline, and hierarchy, despite the introduction of progressive elements. Educators used new practices as they saw fit but were always working within the political culture and dominant values of their times.[21] Curriculum historian Amy von Heyking also highlights progressive elements—such as the project method and social studies—in both urban and rural Albertan schools that, once introduced, would remain in the curriculum throughout the twentieth century.[22] Axelrod and von Heyking's contextualization of this discussion depicts a hybrid form of progressivism, like that which historian Larry Cuban has observed in the United States, wherein teachers experimented with progressive methods, but classrooms ultimately remained teacher-centered.[23] Cuban suggests that teaching

[18]"Life adjustment education" was not identified as such, but nonetheless made its way into Canadian curriculum. William F. Pinar, "Introduction to the 2008 Edition," *A Common Countenance*, xv.

[19]This debate was sparked in particular by Neil Sutherland in "The Triumph of 'Formalism': Elementary Schooling in Vancouver from the 1920s to the 1960s," *BC Studies*, nos. 69-70 (Spring-Summer 1986), 175–210; and Robert S. Patterson, "The Implementation of Progressive Education in Canada, 1930–1945," in *Essays on Canadian Education*, ed. Kach et al., 79–96. Scholars are still exploring the definition and historical reality of progressive education in Canada. See, for example, Theodore Christou, *Progressive Rhetoric and Curriculum: Contested Visions of Public Education in Interwar Ontario* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

[20]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, no. 2 (Fall 2005), 227–41; 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, no. 1 (Spring 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, no. 2 (Fall 2005), 321–31.

[21]Axelrod, "Beyond the Progressive Education Debate," 240.

[22]Amy von Heyking, *Creating Citizens: History and Identity in Alberta's Schools, 1905 to 1980* (Calgary, AB: University of Calgary Press, 2006).

[23]Larry Cuban, *How Teachers Taught: Constancy and Change in American Classrooms 1890–1980* (New York: Longman, 1984). This is not to suggest that classroom

basically remained the same because many decisions were beyond the teacher's making and were the result of school structure and organization. But he also suggests that it was in part because teachers teach what they believe.[24] This paper demonstrates that this was particularly true in Catholic school classrooms, which were primarily teacher-centered and shaped by teachers' beliefs.

Although there was widespread rejection of progressive education in both mainstream secular society and among Catholics by the 1950s, the language of education had irrevocably begun to change.[25] Scholars examining progressive education have noted the way in which progressive education permanently changed the rhetoric of schooling, even if classroom practice changed little.[26] Over time, progressive education yielded new language for discussions about teaching, learning, children, and schooling.[27] In sum, historians R. D. Gidney and W. P. J. Millar explain:

> Beginning slowly and unevenly in the late 1930s and early 1940s, but gaining momentum across the two or three decades that followed, a thoroughgoing reconstruction would take place in the precepts and practices governing the way schools worked. New modes of administration and finance, accompanied by profound changes in program and pedagogy

instruction did not change in the twentieth century, but rather that the change was selective, not wholesale.

[24]Cuban, *How Teachers Taught*, 253.

[25]Perhaps the most widely-known Canadian opponent of progressive education was Hilda Neatby. See Neatby, *So Little for the Mind* (Toronto: Clark, Irwin, 1953). Neatby was a historian from the University of Saskatchewan and one of five members, and the only woman, of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences in Canada from 1949 to 1951. She was deeply concerned with the relationship between culture and education and, after serving on the commission, published the above work, which caused a media sensation and was debated nationwide. For curriculum in the 1950s, see Stamp, "Growing Up Progressive?" Parts I & II; and Johnson, *A History of Public Education in British Columbia*, 167.

[26]Exploring the rhetoric of progressive education, Theodore Christou observes the way Herbert Kliebard's three interest groups—those interested in child study and developmental psychology, social efficiency, and social meliorism—related to or worked with the concepts of active learning, individualized instruction, and the linkage between schools and society. Herbert M. Kliebard. *The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893–1958* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986). Christou argues that the social meliorists were less influential than those interested in social efficiency and child study and developmental psychology. Theodore Christou, *Progressive Education: Revisioning and Reframing Ontario's Public Schools 1919–1942* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

[27]Patrice Milewski, "'The Little Gray Book': Pedagogy, Discourse and Rupture in 1937," *History of Education* 37, no. 1 (Jan. 2008), 91–111.

> would emerge, marking a final rupture with the Victorian past and creating Canada's modern system of public education.[28]

It is essential to understand progressive education in order to understand education in the decades that followed, continuing into the twenty-first century.

This is also true for Catholic schools, which offer the public curriculum but strive to maintain their distinctiveness as Catholic institutions. Did the language and methods of schooling likewise change in Catholic schools in the mid-twentieth century? What would this mean for their philosophy of education? In retrospect, one Catholic educator would come to identify this period as a shift away from idealism and excellence in teaching. Writing in the early 1960s, a sister of St. Ann, Mary Eileen, looks back over the preceding century and laments the effects of Dewey's pragmatic philosophy, with its emphasis on material well-being, intense dislike of discipline, and encouragement of self-expression. She argues that Dewey's slogan, "not knowledge or information, but self-realization is the goal," is diametrically opposed to the development of the mind, the goal of a traditional liberal education.[29] She suggests that a philosophy of education is based on a "philosophy of man" and that, since humans are made in the image and likeness of their Creator, the educator must "develop to its utmost that spark of divinity, that ability to know"[30] in their students. Noting that it is the teacher, not the commissions, reports, and curriculum changes, who determines the education received in the classroom, Mary Eileen wrote:

> In contrast to the progressive notion that teachers should be "trained not educated," the idealistic school holds that teachers must be scholars with a zeal for the intellectual well being of their students. They must be convinced that the function of education is enlightenment, not merely a socializing process. … Love of learning, fear of ignorance, the pursuit of wisdom, regard for scholarship may strike your ears as idealistic terms, not valid in our present day materialistic society. Not so. In seventeen years of classroom teaching, I have yet to discard those ideas as unattainable. Properly motivated, students want to try the difficult, to be challenged, to meet exacting standards.[31]

How was it, then, that Catholic schools had become so preoccupied with progressive education thirty years earlier?

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[28] R. D. Gidney and W. P. J. Millar, *How Schools Worked: Public Education in English Canada, 1900–1940* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), 363.

[29] *St. Ann's Journal*, Sept. 1963 (S26-05), SSAA, 17; and Dewey, *The Child and the Curriculum*, 8.

[30] *St. Ann's Journal*, Sept. 1963 (S26-05), SSAA, 19.

[31] *St. Ann's Journal*, Sept. 1963 (S26-05), SSAA, 19–20.

Negotiating Progressive Curricular Changes

Professor of Education Neil Sutherland has argued that in public schools in Vancouver from the 1920s to the 1960s "nearly all teachers believed in, and followed, traditional practices," and that it was not until the 1960s that teachers were educated enough to implement new theories about teaching and learning.[32] However, in this same period, as Catholic schools were established and grew, Catholic educators drew on progressive techniques, pedagogically and administratively. Nearly 90 percent of Catholic schoolteachers in British Columbia in the mid-twentieth century were religious—men and women belonging to religious congregations—with a stated devotion to the service of God and humankind (in this case, through teaching).[33] Their high levels of discipline and order, and promotion of traditional Christian beliefs, have earned them a reputation as traditional educators, but I argue that Catholic teachers were exposed to, negotiated with, implemented, and resisted progressive education in their curriculum and pedagogy.

Although in his 1929 encyclical, *On the Christian Education of Youth*, Pope Pius XI warned Catholics about the dangers of a philosophy of education based on a non-Christian view of the human person, he also encouraged teachers to utilize effective modern teaching methods, as long as those methods did not undermine Catholic principles.[34] The philosophy of education that Pope Pius was concerned about was undoubtedly progressive education, which had its roots in the naturalism of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau saw children as naturally good and innocent and, believing that it is society that corrupts children, thought that children should therefore be in control of their own development. In contrast, Catholics saw children as naturally good, but with the capacity to sin (corrupted by original sin), and believed children were in need of an education that would help them avoid the tendency to sin. To this effect, Pope Pius wrote:

> 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

[32] Sutherland, "Triumph of Formalism," 209.

[33] "Catholic Education in the Vancouver Diocese" ca. 1936, superintendent's report (418–13), RCAVA.

[34] Pope Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri: Encyclical Letter of Pope Pius XI on Christian Education of Youth* (New York: Daughters of St. Paul, 1929). Likewise, subsequent Pope Pius XII, when meeting with teaching sisters in the early 1950s, encouraged them to ensure that they possessed the quality of education and degrees required by the state. Pope Pius XII, *Counsel to Teaching Sisters* (Washington, DC: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1951).

> 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 higher law, natural or divine, in the work of his education.[35]

Though Catholic educators in Vancouver recognized the limits of secular education, they agreed with Pope Pius that it was important to keep abreast of educational developments, not least for the sake of government funding for their schools and to benefit their students' future education and employment. It would take Catholic educators nearly three decades to object that because of progressive education there was a shift from absolute and permanent goals to relativism, an emphasis on process over content, and a challenge to the validity of religious belief through the widespread use of scientific investigation.[36]

In the Pacific Northwest, the Sisters of St. Ann approached the modern teaching methods espoused in the revised curriculum with openness, but not naivety. They were an experienced community of teachers who understood the new progressive provincial curriculum of 1936 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 discussed, typically in the community's internal newsletter and at community workshops, with the parts supporting religious ideals affirmed, and the parts diverging from the sisters' belief system revised. The Sisters of Charity, Halifax, through the Vancouver Parochial School Council, also actively implemented the new curriculum. Their council meetings emphasized the need for uniformity among schools and standardization of work by grade level, rather than providing an analysis or evaluation of the revised program of studies. In addition, archdiocesan records reflect that the clerical school leadership gave modern teaching methods a positive reception, with the superintendent of Catholic schools introducing pedagogically progressive catechetical material in 1936.[37]

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[35] Pope Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri*, 60.

[36] Kach, "Criticisms of Progressive Education," 126; and John Dewey, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (New York: Henry Holt, 1939).

[37] In spite of their shared mission, women religious who taught have their own chronology and history that is distinct from the institutional church and the (male) Catholic hierarchy. See Danylewycz, *Taking the Veil*. In the area of education in particular, life in the convent was transformed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as increasing numbers of women religious attended university. The "sister formation movement," which emerged from the doctoral work of Sister Bertrande Meyers in

The women religious who taught received pedagogical education from a variety of internal and external sources. The most influential source was the network of primarily hierarchical relationships within their communities, through which teachers were offered direction and mentorship. Indeed, this was a highly distinctive characteristic of Catholic schools compared to public schools in this period. Many religious communities paired an experienced mentor teacher with a first-year teacher. The provincial prefect of studies played a leading role in overseeing and directing the work of sisters within a given community. She would travel the province observing classrooms, writing reports, and meeting with teachers. She contributed to the monthly community newsletter and corresponded widely on educational matters. She used the newsletters, bulletins, and other directives to highlight pedagogical trends in a variety of ways. In addition to the education that sisters received within their communities, the superintendent of Catholic schools contributed to developing the religious education curriculum. Teachers routinely attended lectures given by local and visiting academics, priests, and officials from the public school Department of Education. Moreover, teaching sisters often attended summer school, both those established for public school teachers and the summer school for Catholic schoolteachers in British Columbia. They attended university locally but more often abroad.[38] It was common for the Sisters of St. Ann to take pedagogy courses (either in person or by correspondence) to obtain a Diploma or Bachelor of Education through a program at the University of Montreal.[39] Many sisters attended provincial normal schools. Other sisters attended Seattle University or Holy Names College at Gonzaga University for BA and MA work, or the Boston Institute for Teachers. They picked up modern teaching methods and implemented them upon their return.[40]

1941 and the (American) National Catholic Education Association in the 1950s, sought to address the need for professional, intellectual, and spiritual formation for religious sisters and had an unparalleled impact on the lives and work of women religious who taught.

[38] On education for the Sisters of St. Joseph, see Elizabeth Smyth, "Teacher Education within the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto, Canada, 1851–1920," *Historical Studies in Education* 6, no. 3 (1994), 97–113.

[39] *St. Ann's Journal,* Summer 1936 (S26-03-1), SSAA.

[40] For example, in September of 1938, the Sisters of Charity's superior at Seton Academy notified the archdiocesan superintendent that the students would be performing a short skit on September 24th and 25th that was taken from the "Summer School of Catholic Action" that some of the sisters had attended in August in Boston. Sister Agnes Camilla, SCH to Revered L. O. Bourrie, Sept. 12, 1938 (401–3), RCAVA. See also "Summer School," *St. Ann's Journal,* April-May 1938 (S26-03-3), SSAA, 18.

Guest lectures were a popular strategy that religious communities in Vancouver used to augment the sisters' education. In the summer of 1936, the year that the revised progressive curriculum was introduced, at the suggestion of the assistant director of the provincial summer school in Victoria, Major King came to speak with the Sisters of St. Ann about changes in the public curriculum.[41] Though the Prefect of Studies at that time, Sister Mary Dorothea, acknowledged it would take time to tell whether the changes were in the right direction, she was clear about two things: no principles underlying the teaching that were at variance with those of Christian teachers could be accepted, and "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."[42] In a letter the following autumn about the unit method in the new program of studies, Sister Mary Dorothea encouraged the sisters, explaining, "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."[43] The prefect also attempted to console the sisters by pointing out that the public school teachers were also "floundering."[44] 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 students preparing for professional careers, else our education will not have given its share to the development of civilization.[45]

[41] Major H. B. King was a central figure in the British Columbia Department of Education behind curricular reform in the 1920s and 1930s and was the main author of the 1936 "Aims and Philosophy" at the heart of the new curriculum. The following year, he was appointed chief inspector of (public) schools. Herbert B. King, "Aims and Philosophy of Education in British Columbia," in *Programme of Studies for the Junior High Schools of British Columbia* (Victoria, BC: Charles F. Banfield, 1936), http://curric.library.uvic.ca/homeroom/content/topics/programs/aims37.htm.

[42] Sister Mary Dorothea, "The New Programme of Studies," *St. Ann's Jounral,* Aug. 1936 (S26-03-1), SSAA. 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.

[43] Letter from the Provincial Prefect of Studies Mary Dorothea to Sister Superior and Sisters, Sept. 21, 1936 (S19-03-3), St. Ann's Academy Internal Newsletters, SSAA.

[44] "School Notes," *St. Ann's Journal,* Aug. 1936 (S26-03-1), SSAA.

[45] "Our Summer School," *St. Ann's Journal,* Summer 1936 (S26-03-1), SSAA.

When content in the new curriculum departed from their philosophy of life, the point of divergence was identified and alternative materials developed. 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.[46]

The prefect concludes by suggesting that a unit be prepared to replace this unit in the program. 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.[47]

When content in the new curriculum fell short of the Sisters of St. Ann's ideals, "School Notes" in *St. Ann's Journal*, their internal community newsletter, emphasized points of agreement between their approach and the public curriculum. 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 virtues (e.g., justice, prudence, temperance, and fortitude) and the sisters were encouraged to carefully study and allow their teaching to benefit from the section of the program on character training.[48] The sisters were also encouraged to use aspects of the new curriculum to explore Catholic thought and were referred to various newspapers and periodicals to support this study, including *America, Commonweal, The Sign, B.C. Catholic,* and *Catholic Digest.*[49]

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[46]Letter from the Provincial Prefect of Studies Mary Dorothea to Sister Superior and Sisters, Sept. 21, 1936 (S26-03-1), St. Ann's Academy Internal Newsletters, SSAA. The objectionable texts are not listed by name.

[47]"Social Studies," *St. Ann's Journal,* Aug. 27, 1938, (S26-03-2), SSAA.

[48]"School Notes," *St. Ann's Journal,* Aug. 1936 (S19-03-3), SSAA. The Sisters of St. Ann also encountered progressivism in their ongoing study of education. Suggested readings on the psychology of education and character formation included books by Jesuit authors: Raphael McCarthy, *Training the Adolescent* (New York: Bruce Publishing, 1934); Raphael McCarthy, *Safeguarding Mental Health* (New York: Bruce Publishing, 1937); and Ernest Hull, *Formation of Character: the Child and the Boy* (London: Sands, 1911). William Kelly's *Educational Psychology* (New York: Bruce Publishing, 1933), written primarily for a Catholic audience, was also recommended; "Psychology of Education," *St. Ann's Journal,* Aug. 27, 1938, SSAA.

[49]"Special Notes—Grade IX," *St. Ann's Journal,* Aug. 27, 1938, SSAA. They are responding to Section C "Modern Problems," in the Department of Education curriculum bulletin series, 1937.

The sisters demonstrated flexibility in some areas more than others. The prefect explained to the teaching sisters, "It is felt [by the Department 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.[50] 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 the Sisters of St. Ann were attempting to introduce junior high courses in some schools, they did not think it wise or necessary to change the names of their schools to include the designation "junior high," for the reason that they were enjoying high enrollment in every school.[51]

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 educator 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 textbooks for dates.[52] Not only did they earnestly use the public social studies curriculum (a sign of pedagogical progressivism in itself), they participated in the educational trend toward de-emphasizing examinations and used techniques to help students become more active and inspired. They were instructed to use 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

[50] Letter from Provincial Prefect of Studies Mary Dorothea to Sister Superior and Sisters, Sept. 21, 1936 (S26-03-1), St. Ann's Academy Internal Newsletters, SSAA.

[51] Letter from Provincial Prefect of Studies Mary Dorothea to Sister Superior and Sisters, Sept. 21, 1936.

[52] Vancouver Parochial School Council Meeting Minutes, April 17 1937, SCHA; Donalda J. Dickie and Helen Palk, *Pages from Canada's Story: Selections from the Canadian History Readers* (Toronto: J. M. Dent, 1928). Dickie published the only Canadian methods textbook on progressive education that was used in teacher education programs across the country. Dickie's writings reflect her close relationship with pedagogical progressives. Donalda J. Dickie, *The Enterprise in Theory and Practice* (Toronto: Gage, 1940); and Amy von Heyking, "Selling Progressive Education to Albertans," *Historical Studies in Education/Revue d'histoire de l'éducation* 10, no. 1–2 (Spring 1998), 67–84.

mistakes.[53] Like the Sisters of St. Ann, the superiors encouraged the Sisters of Charity to make use of the ideas and resources in the new curriculum. For the most part, however, the work of their Parochial School Council reflects interest in administrative efficiency and a traditional approach to education.

Community differences aside, Catholic teachers were capable of displaying their use of modern teaching methods and curriculum. This is evident during "Education Week" in February of 1938, when 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."[54] Schoolwork was displayed, while demonstrative hygiene and art classes, musical performances, and "physical culture classes with dramatized games and folk dancing" were held.[55] The morning session consisted of students attending their religion class, followed by their regular classes. In the afternoon session, students presented the pedagogically progressive demonstration program for each grade level.[56] By Dickie's standard, particularly with regard to the project method, progressive pedagogy was evidently part of many Catholic teachers' repertoire of practice.[57]

A final example of schoolwork from this period demonstrates a unique combination of progressive pedagogy, science, and Christian beliefs. In a 1960 prospectus, Grade 1 to Grade 8 teachers illustrated how the public science curriculum would be infused with Christian beliefs the following autumn. For each grade, concepts drawn from both the public curriculum and Christian principles were listed and a corresponding set of activities given. 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,

[53] Vancouver Parochial School Council Meeting Minutes, April 17, 1937, Sept. 17, 1938, and Feb. 15, 1941, SCHA.

[54] "Education Week: Feb. 6–11," *B.C. Catholic*, Feb. 5, 1938, 3, RCAVA.

[55] "Education Week: Feb. 6–11," 3.

[56] "Education Week: Feb. 6–11," 3. At St. Ann's Academy, Vancouver, the program was as follows: 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. 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 "Essentials in Business Proficiency," dictation (business letters), shorthand vocabulary drill, and typing (technical drill).

[57] Dickie, *The Enterprise in Theory and Practice*, 125.

and other needs; [and] the plant kingdom is a gift of our Creator to be used intelligently by humans."[58] The pedagogically progressive activities listed included discussing the structure and function of plants; experimenting with bacteria, seed germination, osmosis, capillarity, and chlorophyll extraction; making booklets and posters; identifying and mounting leaves; and testing for the presence of starch in leaves. This example offers a striking contrast between two areas of curriculum content with decidedly different epistemological foundations.

The sisters' decision to integrate faith-based objectives into the science curriculum, and then to advertise this to prospective students and their families, was no doubt the result of frequent discussion in Catholic society about the importance of religious beliefs permeating education rather than being reduced to a course tacked onto the public curriculum. According to Pope Leo XIII and restated by Pope Pius XI in his 1929 encyclical on education, "All the teaching and the whole organization of the school and its teachers, syllabus, and textbooks in every branch … [should be] regulated by the Christian spirit … so that religion may be in very truth the foundation and crown of the youth's entire training."[59] This proved to be a complex directive for Catholic educators committed to offering the public school curriculum. Perhaps what Catholic educators needed most, which was only just beginning to emerge, was an epistemology that recognized various domains of knowledge and their corresponding methodological differences.[60] In the meantime, Catholic educators would begin to seriously employ progressive methods in teaching religion.

Pedagogical Progressivism in Catechesis

The same year the provincial government introduced the revised program of studies, Catholic schools in British Columbia entered into a new phase of development and movement toward uniformity.

[58] St. Peter's School Prospectus, April 1960 (S98-3), SSAA.

[59] "Canadian Prelate Explains Why a Catholic School and Outlines Its Religious Program" *B.C. Catholic,* Jan. 17, 1952, 6; Pope Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri*, 80; and Pope Leo XIII, *Militantis Ecclesiae: Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on St. Peter Canisius*, Aug. 1, 1897, http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_01081897_militantis-ecclesiae.html.

[60] For a brief history of Catholic theology, see Michael Attridge, "From Objectivity to Subjectivity: Changes in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries and Their Impact on Post-Vatican II Theological Education," in *Catholic Education in the Wake of Vatican II*, ed. Rosa Bruno-Jofré and Jon Igelmo Zaldívar (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 21–41. The relationship between faith and reason is addressed in an encyclical: Pope John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio: On the Relationship of Faith and Reason*, Sept. 14, 1998, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091998_fides-et-ratio.html.

Archbishop William Mark Duke appointed the Reverend Father L. O. Bourrie to the newly created position of superintendent of Catholic schools and director of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine.[61] Although, as superintendent, Bourrie offered little oversight for individual teachers, he began to shape the parochial and academy schools into a loose Catholic school system by introducing a calendar to align the Catholic schools' holidays and days in session with those of the public system.[62] In terms of curriculum, initially he focused on the program, examinations, and teaching of religion, for which he prepared a new approach. Bourrie was familiar with progressive trends and encouraged teachers to embrace modern teaching methods while maintaining their Catholic philosophy of education. He argued that Catholic education agreed, for the most part, with the tenets of progressive education, but that Catholic education was distinctive in that it offered *more* than progressivism in viewing the human person as capable of both natural and supernatural growth.[63]

The catechetical program Bourrie put forward for the sisters and brothers to teach was based on a pedagogically progressive system known as the Munich Method, after a group of catechists from Munich who had formulated it at the turn of the century.[64] The system utilized units of study based on groups of related catechism questions, which were taught in a series of steps designed to correspond 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 Sower Scheme from England, a spiral curriculum in which "the religious curriculum is divided into three periods based

[61] Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (more often referred to as CCD) was the diocesan department that oversaw religious education for children attending public schools.

[62] "Proposed School Calendar 1937–1938," memo from superintendent of Catholic schools to Catholic schoolteachers, (Chancery Office Fonds, 401–3), RCAVA.

[63] L. O. Bourrie, "Our Aims of Education," Oct. 24, 1936, memo from superintendent of Catholic schools, L. O. Bourrie to Catholic schoolteachers, RCAVA.

[64] Joseph H. Ostdiek, *Simple Methods in Religious Instruction* (New York: Bruce Publishing, 1935), 44–51. See also "Methods and Procedures in the Teaching of Catechism," and "School Notes," *St. Ann's Journal,* Sept. 1936 (S19-03-3), SSAA. Writing in the community newsletter, Sister 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 was John K. Sharp, *Aims and Methods in Teaching Religion* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1929).

on the chronological age of the pupils."[65] In each period of study, the entire field of religion was studied, each year more intensively and extensively than the last. In the first stage, which used no textbooks, students learned through pictures, stories, talks, dramatizations, and drawing, and created little project booklets. The second stage involved stories, prayers, hymns, and dramatizations, and students moved from answering in their own words to memorizing phrases from the catechism (one hundred questions and answers). In the third stage, the students were introduced to the only prescribed "text," the notebook, which was used for working with references, pictures, maps, written reports, and so forth. This scheme attempted to mirror the "unfolding life of the child."[66]

The Sisters of St. Ann identified the approach 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."[67] 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.[68] 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."[69] The teaching religious 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 help their students develop the use of reason. 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."[70]

The ways in which the teaching sisters responded to Bourrie's religious instruction course varied. The outline raised a number of questions for the Sisters of the Child Jesus, who were unclear about which catechism texts to use at the high school levels, and who requested more information about the sources the superintendent of Catholic schools had drawn upon in writing his outline.[71] They

[65] Ostdiek, *Simple Methods*, 45; and "School Notes," Sept. 1936.
[66] Ostdiek, *Simple Methods*, 46.
[67] "School Notes," Sept. 1936.
[68] Ostdiek, *Simple Methods*, 49.
[69] "School Notes," Sept. 1936.
[70] Ostdiek, *Simple Methods*, 50.
[71] Sister M. Octavia of St. Edmunds School, North Vancouver, to the Superintendent of Catholic Schools, Jan. 2, 1937 (Chancery Office Fonds, 401–3),

questioned whether students were required to memorize all or any of the prescribed Bible history and Gospels, and they 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 that "the new Religion course … [lacked] the time necessary to drill important points in Catechism."[72] They needed to be reminded that students could provide any correct answer, not the exact wording from the catechism. The provincial prefect encouraged the Sisters of St. Ann 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."[73] The evidence suggests that the Sisters of St. Ann had the greatest amount of investment in and understanding of the progressive techniques underlying the new curriculum.

One of the reasons that the Sisters of St. Ann were able to develop a relatively advanced understanding of progressive education was that sisters of their congregation also taught in neighboring, characteristically progressive, dioceses.[74] For example, sisters were informed about the work of a professor of educational methods at the Washington University School of Education, who had lectured at the Seattle Diocese Teachers' Meeting on the Morrison Method of teaching. Developed at the famous progressive Laboratory Schools of the University of Chicago established by John Dewey, this method was adopted by the Archdioceses of Seattle and Chicago in religion classes at all grade levels. In the Morrison Method, teachers moved through five steps, offering pretests, instruction, assessment, adjusted instruction, and final testing, while students worked through units that they were required to master before moving on. The aim was for the pupil

RCAVA. The Sisters of the Child Jesus, who taught Indigenous students at several schools in the province, also taught in a parochial school in North Vancouver.

[72]Vancouver Parochial School Council Meeting Minutes, April 5, 1939 and Sept. 1942, SCHA.

[73]Letter from the Provincial Prefect of Studies Mary Dorothea to Sister Superior and Sisters, Sept. 21, 1936 (S19-03-3), St. Ann's Academy Internal Newsletters, SSAA. The long-term goal of uniformity among Catholic schools was felt with the Catholic superintendent's school visits (the superintendent acted as school inspector for Catholic schools). Teachers were required to post the name of the class on the outside of their classroom door, along with a timetable for the classes. Required on each teacher's desk: seating plans, class registers listing the students' ages, 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.

[74]The Sisters of St. Ann taught in Port Angeles, WA in the Seattle Diocese from 1929 to 1946.

to receive an education built around a central theme or idea and thereby provide a more integrated understanding of a concept. Ideally, students could master the concepts being studied as they worked through problems or projects and achieve a more meaningful learning experience. It intended to support students in accomplishing something on their own, and it was a deliberate departure from drilling and testing. Most significantly, this method deliberately sought to provide a psychological (i.e., attentive to the student's learning process) rather than a deductive (i.e., primarily focused on the development of reason) approach to learning.[75]

To help teachers transition to the new methods, the 1938 summer program for Catholic teachers in British Columbia included demonstration lessons for each grade in religion.[76] Two teachers per grade level were selected to prepare a lesson and conduct a class, presenting subject matter, asking questions, and engaging with their audience as though they were teaching children. Teachers were instructed to decide on their approach (the Munich Method, the Sower Scheme, or the Morrison Method), select materials, prepare a lesson plan, and suggest projects. Their lesson plans were to include an aim, presentation, explanation, catechism reference, and application (projects and assignments). Teachers exhibited class projects students had prepared the previous year. When students returned to school that autumn, the Vancouver Catholic schools hosted a Catechetical Display, designed to show a variety of methods that could be used in religious instruction. Through this display, teachers could learn new methods and improve their teaching, parents could see and be impressed by their children's work, and students could be encouraged by and interested in the work.[77] 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 dressed with a 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.

[75] "Pedagogical Lecture," *St. Ann's Journal,* mid-Sept. to mid-Oct. 1937 (S26-3-1), SSAA.

[76] "School Notes," *St. Ann's Journal,* 1937 (S26-03-2), SSAA. It is unclear whether this summer school was held in Vancouver or in the provincial capital, Victoria. In 1938, the Victoria Diocese hosted its first annual session of Summer School of Religious Instruction. However, the Vancouver Archdiocese summer sessions had been running since 1933 or earlier. "The Church's Stand on Education," *St. Ann's Journal,* June, July, Aug. 1940 (S26-03-5), SSAA.

[77] "Catechetical Display—Vancouver Schools," *St. Ann's Journal,* Sept. 1938 (S26-03-3), SSAA.

Evidence from classrooms in the postwar period suggests that progressivism continued to find its way into Vancouver's Catholic schools, operating alongside traditional approaches such as the memorization of catechism questions and answers and essay writing competitions. Progressive activities in the form of student governments and school newspapers became popular in Catholic schools in the 1950s, as they did in their public counterparts.[78] While evidence suggests that religion teachers were thoroughly instructed on how to be pedagogically progressive and use a student-centered approach, classrooms were 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 the lesson. As Cuban points out, hybrid versions or strains of pedagogical progressivism were common in teacher-centered classrooms in this period and were supported by progressive rhetoric.[79]

Resisting Progressive Initiatives: Eugenics and Sex Education

The only area of the progressive curriculum that Catholic schools in the Vancouver Archdiocese wholly rejected was the curriculum for sex education. Although sex education was widely controversial and rejected by many individuals and groups in secular society, Catholics expressed their concern in distinctly Catholic terms.[80] The practice of sterilizing people classified as "mentally ill" or "retarded" was widespread in the United States and Canada in the first half of the twentieth century, but only two Canadian provinces, Alberta and British Columbia, passed laws condoning it. In interwar Canadian society, it was progressives and medical scientists who advanced the most extreme policies in response to eugenically based concerns. Conservative Catholics were among the strongest opponents of sterilization legislation across Canada and the United States, but as a minority in British Columbia they lacked the influence needed to prevent the passing of legislation in 1933.[81]

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[78]For a photograph of the student council, see: St. Peter's School–Yearbooks–Mock-ups 1957–1960, box 1, files 1–2, St. Peter's School fonds, New Westminster Museum and Archives, New Westminster, BC.

[79]Cuban, *How Teachers Taught*, 37. For more information on teacher-centered and student-centered classrooms, see Cuban, *How Teachers Taught*, 3–5.

[80]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, Vancouver, BC, March 12, 2012).

[81]Angus McLaren, *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada 1885–1945* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990). The magisterium had officially condemned eugenics

In April of 1941, when Weir, now minister of education, spoke to the British Columbia Parent-Teachers' Federation about birth control and sterilization in eugenicists' programs abroad to prevent hereditary defects in children, the public press that reported on his talk understood him to be advocating for government involvement in the promotion of eugenics.[82] Without delay, Archbishop Duke and other Catholic clergy spoke publicly against these views. Referring back to the Catholic understanding of the human person as body and soul, Archbishop 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."[83] 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.

Five years later, when the archbishop 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.[84] He was particularly concerned about the education of the many Catholic students who were attending public schools, and he requested that parents be given permission to excuse their children from these classes if they did not support the instruction offered. 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

three years before: Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii: Encyclical on Christian Marriage*, Dec. 31, 1930, https://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19301231_casti-connubii.html. Conservative Catholics in the United States were likewise staunch opponents. See Sharon M. Leon, *An Image of God: The Catholic Struggle with Eugenics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). Liberal religious leaders sometimes supported the eugenics movement, particularly prior to *Casti Connubii*. See Christine Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics: Religious Leaders and the American Eugenics Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[82] Weir spoke about eugenicists' programs in Germany, twenty-seven states in the US, and in several other countries.

[83] "Hon. Dr. Weir and Sterilization Address" *B.C. Catholic,* May 1, 1941, 1, RCAVA.

[84] W. M. Duke to G. M. Weir, Jan. 31, 1946 (402–2), RCAVA

conditions."[85] 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."[86] To support this point, Weir requested the archbishop's comments on an enclosed paper Edgar Schmiedeler, OSB, had presented at the National Catholic Conference on Family Life, which he had recently read to better understand the Catholic point of view.

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 1940s and discussed at Catholic teachers' conferences in Vancouver and abroad.[87] First of all, sex education was a crucial and essential part of parenting. The author argued against accusations that Catholics were promoting ignorance by resisting the trend in "ultra-frankness," and he urged parents to take up this important responsibility.[88] He emphasized that parents have the primary decision-making power and authority over their children, and that neither the school, nor the government, should subsume that responsibility. Teachers should step in only if parents lack the ability or are unwilling, and efforts should be made to educate parents, possibly through establishing parent support groups.[89]

Catholic teachers were willing to step in. At the first annual convention of the Vancouver Catholic Teachers' Institute in the spring of 1949, teachers agreed that principals and counselors needed to have worthwhile resources on hand, and that no class instruction on sex be given, only individual instruction where necessary.[90] This was because they thought "it better for pupils to receive this information from someone officially appointed than to pick it up haphazardly," if

[85] Duke to Weir, Jan. 31, 1946.

[86] Duke to Weir, Jan. 31, 1946.

[87] "Sex Education–A Delicate Matter," *B.C. Catholic,* Feb. 13, 1947, 4, RCAVA; "Parents, Not Teachers, Are the Ones to Give Sex Education," *B.C. Catholic*, Dec. 11, 1947, 1, 8, RCAVA; "Sex Instruction Is Not Always Sex Education," *B.C. Catholic,* Feb. 24, 1949, 6, RCAVA; "Catholic Teachers Against Classroom Sex Education," *B.C. Catholic,* April 28, 1949, 6, RCAVA; and "Sex Education–Catholic Viewpoint," *B.C. Catholic,* Dec. 29, 1949, 6, RCAVA.

[88] Duke to Weir, Jan. 31, 1946; and "Sex Education—A Delicate Matter."

[89] Parent support nights have been a feature of Vancouver Catholic schools' approach to sex education in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. "Sex Instruction Is Not Always Sex Education," 6.

[90] "Catholic Teachers Against Classroom Sex Education," 6; and "Sex Instruction Is Not Always Sex Education."

they were not learning it at home.[91] Teachers agreed that sex education should be taught according to the individual child's age, development, maturity, and level of understanding.[92] 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."[93] Catholics were adamant that sex education solely based on naturalism would fail and that students needed to be educated in a holistic manner. Supernatural and spiritual explanations could not be excluded or discounted from sex education.

The Catholic community's rejection of progressive curriculum for sex education coincided with a widespread trend in the postwar period that blamed schools for social issues, in particular, the philosophy and methods of progressive education.[94] Although Catholic schools still practiced progressive methods, Catholic educators increasingly agreed with opponents of progressive education and became vocal about rejecting its underlying philosophy. In response to the imminent "crisis in modern learning," *St. Ann's Journal* published "Credo of a Gonzagan" from Gonzaga University as a statement of belief about Catholic education.[95] 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, as well as democracy, science, the arts, religion, and Jesus Christ.[96] Subsequent issues of the journal published articles clarifying the Catholic vision of education and affirming the importance of religious education. These articles discussed the relationship between faith and reason and emphasized that Catholic schools shaped the whole person, while public schools struggled to do so.[97]

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[91] "Catholic Teachers Against Classroom Sex Education," 6.

[92] Duke to Weir, Jan. 31, 1946.

[93] "Sex Education—Catholic Viewpoint," 6.

[94] Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*, 260. See also Stamp, "Growing Up Progressive?" Parts I and II.

[95] Gonzaga University in Spokane, WA, acted as a leader in Catholic higher education in the area. Several of the Sisters of St. Ann studied there. "Credo of a Gonzagan," *St. Ann's Journal,* July 1951 (S26-04-5), SSAA.

[96] "Credo of a Gonzagan,"

[97] For articles on faith and reason, and the importance of religious education, see *St. Ann's Journal,* Jan. 1948–Oct. 1951 (S26-04-2), SSAA. In the 1950s, the *B.C. Catholic* newspaper published frequently on the dangers of Dewey and progressive education. See "New Zealand Scholar Says Dr. Dewey Wrecks Schools," *B.C. Catholic,* Christmas 1950, 1, RCAVA; or "Catholic Educators Tinged by Deweyism," *B.C. Catholic,* Feb. 26,1959, 6, RCAVA.

When the Catholic schools of the province submitted a brief to the British Columbia Royal Commission on Education in 1959, rather than raising their views on the nature of the human person and the way in which that should inform education, they focused their concerns on academic standards and unclear aims in the provincial curriculum.[98] In many ways, their brief was a product of its time. Echoing historian Hilda Neatby's famous critique of Canadian public schools published six years earlier, their brief expressed frustration about the lowering of academic standards and the need for more attention to academic work.[99] The brief's authors argued that education should require mental discipline. They acknowledged that a strong technical training program was important for students who would not be attending university, but thought it essential that the technical program not be mixed with the academic program. They argued that clearer aims would make courses of study more effective. It is unclear why they did not address the philosophy underlying progressive education in their brief for the Commission.

Criticism of the underlying philosophy of the subsequent *Report of the Royal Commission on Education* (*Chant Report*) (1960) emerged the following year, along with questions about the report's implications for Catholic education.[100] Commissioners S. N. F. Chant, J. E. Liersch, and R. P. Walrod had attempted to avoid, in their own words, "speculative theories of education," but acknowledged that their report's recommendations added up to "a direct philosophy of education. In the end it is in the operation of schools that the effective philosophy of the school system is revealed."[101] The Sisters of St. Ann were urged to question the findings of the Chant Commission:

> 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? [Moreover], is it possible that when teaching the accepted B.C. curriculum, there is adopted one theory of knowledge

[98] The brief was submitted on behalf of the Vancouver Archdiocese; the Dioceses of Victoria, Nelson, and Kamloops; and the Vicariate Apostolic of Prince Rupert and of Whitehorse. *Brief of the Catholic Public Schools of British Columbia to the Royal Commission on Education, 1959* (395–9), RCAVA.

[99] See Neatby, *So Little for the Mind.*

[100] Father Ratchford, "The Philosophy of the Chant Report," ca. 1960 (S24), notes from retreat given to the Sisters of St. Ann, SSAA.

[101] *Report of the Royal Commission on Education* (Victoria, BC: Royal Commission on Education, 1960), 24.

> when teaching prescribed subjects and another when teaching morality and religious truths? Is it possible that Catholic schools are living a philosophical contradiction?[102]

The *Chant Report's* philosophy was concerning for Catholic educators because it failed to take into account "the full dimension of man's knowledge and nature."[103] The theory of knowledge reflected in the report, namely the use of scientific methods in developing all areas of knowledge, was predicted to impact students' attitudes toward divinely revealed truth and morality, and it was suggested that better religious instruction would not be the solution. Nor would infusing Christian views into the science curriculum be sufficient (as described above in the prospectus from St. Peter's School). Catholic schools needed a "sound approach to reality, grounded on a philosophy which takes into account the total nature and destiny of man."[104] This epistemological debate reflects a culminating point of divergence between Catholic and public education in this period. Although Catholic educational leaders throughout the period had been aware that the supernatural was lacking in progressive education, this was the first time teachers were challenged to consider whether an overemphasis on empirically acquired knowledge would invalidate religious belief for their students.

Conclusion

On the level of classroom instruction, the progressivism that was implemented in Vancouver's Catholic schools was conservative, in the style that Cuban identified as a hybrid form found in teacher-centered contexts.[105] No single explanation can account for constancy and change in teaching methods. Like Axelrod's observations about public educators in the 1950s who worked within the political culture and dominant values of the period, Catholic educators also used new practices as they saw fit, while nonetheless working within their belief system and contemporary social framework.[106] Although in the late 1930s, when pedagogical progressivism was integrated into the provincial curriculum, the project method, unit method, and student-guided approaches to learning made their way into many Catholic school

[102] *Philosophy of the Chant Report*, 5.

[103] *Philosophy of the Chant Report.*

[104] *Philosophy of the Chant Report.*

[105] Cuban, *How Teachers Taught*, 137. Kliebard and Christou also describe hybridization in curriculum reforms in the 1930s (see footnote 27). Likewise, Patterson found Canadian progressivism to be conservative, homegrown, and selective.

[106] Axelrod, "Beyond the Progressive Education Debate."

classrooms, further research would be needed to determine the frequency or degree of child-centeredness, as well as the length of time that it continued to be implemented. While Catholic educators demonstrated minimal reservations in implementing progressive methods, neither rejecting the methods nor the progressive emphasis on increased student activity, they did not significantly change their fundamental outlook on education as being for both life in society and eternal life. Given that the students' catechetical formation was of central importance for many religious educators, and given the position of authority that they were granted over the child, Catholic teachers were not in a position to relinquish their responsibility to educate students, in particular to develop students' will and knowledge of both the natural and supernatural.

Evidence from the postwar period provides an important piece for understanding the influence of progressive education on Catholic schools in Vancouver. The most concrete example of their diverging educational philosophies was with regard to sex education, which progressives sought to include in the curriculum, and which Catholics argued needed to primarily come from parents, and always within the context of a Christian understanding of the human person. Moreover, when their outright rejection of progressive education emerged, it coincided with a broader social trend in the 1950s and was largely influenced by debate in secular society about the quality of education offered in schools. Their brief for the Royal Commission in 1959 demonstrates that they shared popular concerns about declining standards and rigor in education. It was only when the tides of progressive education appeared to be turning that Catholic educators would begin to question its overemphasis on the material and scientifically verifiable and to consider the significance of the prevalence of empiricism as the foundation for all knowledge.