

## **International Handbooks of Religion and Education VOLUME 2**

### **Aims & Scope**

The *International Handbooks of Religion and Education* series aims to provide easily accessible, practical, yet scholarly, sources of information about a broad range of topics and issues in religion and education. Each *Handbook* presents the research and professional practice of scholars who are daily engaged in the consideration of these religious dimensions in education. The accessible style and the consistent illumination of theory by practice make the series very valuable to a broad spectrum of users. Its scale and scope bring a substantive contribution to our understanding of the discipline and, in so doing, provide an agenda for the future.

**International Handbook of Catholic Education:**

**Challenges for School Systems in the 21st Century**

**Part One**

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## Dedication

These volumes are dedicated to the memory of the many thousands of religious sisters, priests, and teaching brothers who established the work of Catholic education across the world, faithful to the call of Jesus Christ- "Go and teach all nations", and, in respect, to the work of their lay successors who carry on the mission amidst the many challenges of the contemporary world.

Gerald Grace Joseph O' Keefe, SJ.

# CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL RELATIONS OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION: CHALLENGES FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN PORTUGAL

Joaquim Azevedo, Antonio M. Fonseca, and Rodrigo Queiroz e Melo

## Introduction

This chapter examines the issues related to the Catholic school in Portugal. It is divided into three parts. The first contextualizes the situation of Portuguese Catholic schools, the second presents the challenges that the Portuguese Catholic school faces today, and the third proposes a more profound role of the Catholic school in developing personal identities in education for citizenship of its students.

First, a summarized situation of the Primary and Secondary Education in Portugal is presented. Its purpose is to contextualize the action of the Catholic school in the wider framework of the national educational system. Second, a historical evolution of the Portuguese private educational system from the second half of the 20th century till today is presented, with a particular focus on its constitutional and legal framework starting from the revolution of 1974.] Third, the results of a study are presented that attempted to understand what impression the young Portuguese people have of school and of God, in order to situate the action of the Catholic school in the context of the young people it serves. Lastly, the funding situation is discussed. The importance of this issue is derived from the fact that funding is an essential part of the relationship between Catholic school and State. For some years now the lack of public funding in private education has reduced this type of education to an elite and socially exclusive school. To conclude the first part of this chapter, we state what we consider to be the main challenges that the Portuguese Catholic school faces at the beginning of this century.

I Contemporary schooling in Portugal began shortly before 1974. It was then that the state invested in opening schools all over the country in order to allow that every child went to school. This was especially true in the years following the revolution. Besides this, the contemporary legal framework of state and private schooling in Portugal was built after the revolution. Therefore, we opted to consider only this period following the revolution in our analysis.

In the second part, each one of these challenges is analysed. Its purpose then is (i) to deepen the associative relationship between the Catholic schools, creating a strong movement that defends and promotes the improvement of the group; (ii) to create awareness about the reality of the Portuguese Catholic school, namely promoting a collection, analysis, and dissemination of information that characterizes the schools, the students, their families, the teachers, and the non-teaching staff; and (iii) to reinforce the capacity of the Catholic school to attract and maintain investment (public or private) as a means to open itself to the entire community it serves and participate in the national goal to fight against school abandonment and failure.

In the third part, we believe that one of the privileged missions of the Catholic school in Portugal is to help its students build life projects that are meaningful and contain values, as well as to educate them for the contemporary civic realities, making them aware of the life experimented by their peers, learning to look at the world, and at others with true *catholic eyes*.

## **Part 1**

### **The Catholic School in Portugal: Reality and Challenges**

#### *1. An Inside Look at the Current Situation of Education in Portugal*

At the beginning of the 21st century, Portugal maintains a considerable educational deficit. In spite of the enormous efforts made in the last quarter of the 20th century, the situation continues to be very worrying: the overall quality of the educational system is not good and we are in a terrible position in the European plan, despite public funding being within the average of the OECD countries. As can be seen in Table 1, there is a heavy historical inheritance that penalizes us, but the recovery of the delay has been slow, much lower than the other countries that have meanwhile caught up (e.g., Spain, France, and Italy).

There continues to be a high rate of school abandonment and failure (Table 2), found mainly at the secondary level. Not only do these results convey one of the lowest rates of nine-year school completion in Europe, they also indicate a disastrous situation at the secondary level. This fact causes the weak results found in Table 1, as well as a real impossibility to enhance an adequate growth of higher education-polytechnic and university. As long as the existing problems in these three grades (10th, 11th, and 12th) are not overcome, it will be difficult to positively make the Portuguese educational system evolve.

Besides the aspects already mentioned, we can also add the weak performance on the national and international exams by analysing the results of our students (4th, 9th, and 12th grades) in the core subject areas, such as Mathematics, Mother Tongue, and Science.

**Table 1.** Population that has reached at least secondary education (12th grade) in 2003 (percentage per age group)  
(From OCDE Education at a Glance, 2(05))

Countries	Age group				
	25-64	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64
Germany	83	85	86	84	78
Australia	62	75	64	58	47
Austria	79	85	83	75	69
Belgium	62	78	68	55	43
Canada	84	90	86	83	71
Korea	73	97	83	55	32
Denmark	81	86	82	80	74
Spain	43	60	48	33	19
Finland	76	89	85	73	55
France	65	80	69	59	48
Greece	51	72	60	44	28
The Netherlands	66	76	71	62	53
Hungary	74	83	81	75	53
Ireland	62	78	67	52	38
Iceland	59	64	62	58	48
Italy	44	60	50	39	24
Japan	84	94	94	82	65
Luxembourg	59	68	61	54	50
Mexico	21	25	24	18	12
Norway	87	95	92	85	76
New Zealand	78	84	81	76	64
Poland	48	57	49	46	40
Portugal	23	37	22	16	10
UK	65	71	65	64	57
Czech Republic	86	92	90	84	77
Slovak Republic	87	94	91	84	70
Sweden	82	91	88	80	69
Switzerland	70	76	72	68	61
Turkey	26	33	25	21	16
USA	88	87	88	89	85

A big paradox is also found as far as the qualifications of the Portuguese population are concerned: on the one hand, the active population presents very low levels of schooling (67'10 only has a maximum of 6th year schooling) and, on the other hand, the number of unemployed university graduates has frighteningly increased."

This paradox is founded on the fact that a large sector of the Portuguese economy is based on low wages to keep production costs low. This is the case especially in economic sectors that are run by employer who, themselves have low levels of schooling. Therefore the educated labour force produced by universities is frequently unemployed.

Table 2. Retention and dropout rates in primary and secondary education  
(total, public, and private education)

Academic year	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th
1994-1995	15.9	9.2	15.8	12.5	11.7	19.4	16.6	13.6	27.9	9.9	29.6
1995-1996	16.6	8.7	14.6	14.9	11.7	21.3	18.2	15.3	39.7	19.2	37.5
1996-1997	19.2	9.4	14.6	16.0	13.9	22.2	19.1	19.6	38.5	19.5	48.9
1997-1998	17,0	9,3	13,1	14,2	13,4	21,7	16,8	16,2	35,8	20,4	49,2
1998-1999	16.4	8.4	11.8	14.0	13.0	20.8	16.4	15.4	36.4	20.3	49.7
1999-2000	15.8	7.8	10.7	13.7	12.5	20.1	16.3	14.8	36.9	20.8	49.8
2000-2001	14.8	8.7	10.2	12.6	12.8	21.2	17.2	15.8	39.4	24.4	52.5
2001-2002	14.9	8.1	9.8	15.1	16.1	22.3	18.0	16.7	38.9	21.9	48.8
2002-2003	13.8	7.5	8.4	14.9	14.6	24.4	17.0	15.3	34.8	19.2	45.3
2003-2004	12.3	5.8	8.0	14.0	13.9	22.8	16.4	13.1	33.4	17.8	48.7
Average	15.7	8.3	11.7	14.2	13.4	21.6	17.2	15.6	36.2	19.3	46.0

Within the framework of the society of knowledge, which is highly competitive, this panorama is certainly disturbing because it helps to foresee enormous future difficulties not only in the area of accessing knowledge but also in the area of accessing information (pertinent and opportune).

It is in this context that Portuguese Catholic schools struggle to make a difference.

## 2. Historical and Judicial Framework

The contemporary history of the Catholic school in Portugal is confused with the history of private education in general.

In the past, the majority of educational establishments were of religious initiative (congregational or diocesan), as well as the only possible education existent. Big private schools only emerged throughout the country when the Republic was established in 1910. These were found not only in big cities but also in small towns (Cotovio, 2004). Up until the 1960s, private education of religious initiative was predominant both in the mainland and the islands. In 1968/69, of the 274 Portuguese districts, only 227 had secondary schools. In 184 districts there were only private schools available, in 2 districts there were only public schools available and in 41 districts there were both private and state secondary schools available (Cotovio, 2004).

At the beginning of the 1970s, with Minister Veiga Similo, the period of expansion of state run schools begins. His goal was to provide access to education for the entire population. With this expansion, financially supported by the State Budget and, after the revolution of 25 April 1974, applauded by the collective and anticlerical revolutionary ideology, J state run education became the norm and private education took a secondary role. Private schools were tolerated only because it they were needed until the state run schools covered the entire national territory.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 During the years following the revolution of 25 April 1974, power was seized by the communists allied to Moscow. For this sector of society, state schools should replace all private schools. Especially Catholic schools.

Illustrative to this purpose are the interventions of some members of the Socialist Party in the constituent Assembly of the Republic (parliament) at the time when the constitutional article on private education was discussed. The Socialist Party member Laura Cardoso stated:

[I]t is urgent that the Government take measures so that the educational establishments [the private establishments] are put at the service of the working people of our country. . . contributing so that these schools stop being, as they have been until now, another factor of social discrimination, that cannot be tolerated in a society in transition to socialism. (Gonçalves, 2004)

And her colleague Manuel Ramos concluded:

[T]he ideal would be -will be! - that such establishments [private schools] would not be - are not! - necessary [but] ... as long as we do not live in a society we aspire for-and which we fight for-we can not spare certain institutions [the private schools]. (Gonçalves, 2004)

In this context, in the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic of 1976, it was declared the obligation of the State to create a network of official educational establishments that covered the needs of the entire population (no. 1 of article 75). The only reference to private education was its complementary character and its subordination to the State: "The state supervises private education, complementary of public education" (no. 2 of article 75).

The attribution of a minor role to private education is in accordance with the revolutionary ideal that dominated the legislative and executive power in Portugal during the post-revolution time.

This situation was only altered at the end of the 1970s, beginning of the 1980s, when the Marxist tendency lost its strength and the country started to live within the democratic normality. In 1979, the Assembly of the Republic (parliament) approved Law 9/79, of 19 March, that established the basis of private and cooperative education. This law acknowledged that the freedom to learn and teach was a necessary instrument of the fundamental right of all citizens for their personal development (no. 1 of article 1) and that private education was, in this context, an equally worthy option to state initiative education.

Since then, private education won a legislative statute that was consolidating. In October 1979, a Law was passed (Law 65/79) about educational freedom. In 1980, the Decree-Law no. 553/80, 21 November, created the Statute of Private Education and developed the principles already expressed in Law 9/79. In 1982, during the constitutional revision, a number 4 was created in article 43, which established: "The right to create private and cooperative schools is guaranteed."<sup>4</sup>

At the beginning of the 21st century, the existence of private and cooperative education and its autonomy are an undeniable reality. According to the official

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<sup>4</sup> Cooperative schools are schools owned by cooperatives. Cooperatives are not for profit legal entities whose stakeholders are the workers (teachers and other staff in the case of education cooperatives).

numbers of the Ministry of Education regarding 2004/5, of the 1,339,935 students enrolled in primary and secondary education, 12.4% attended private education. Of the 17,507 existing schools in the entire country, 2,534 are private, that is, 14.7%.

As far as the Catholic school is concerned, acknowledging the Catholic school as a school dependent of the ecclesiastical authority and oriented towards the secular youth (Congregação para a Educação Católica, 1988), statistics with a level of necessary detail for a reliable description of its dimension do not exist. Therefore, we only present the data available by the Portuguese Association of Catholic Schools that indicates a universe of 173 schools. These are the schools that asked for the status of Catholic school to the competent Bishop. Here lies one of the challenges of the Catholic school in Portugal: acknowledging itself as a group (Antunes, 2005).

The results from the analysis of this list of Catholic schools indicate that 70 have more than one cycle of primary education. Therefore, the universe of Catholic schools compares not with the total universe of private schools (2,534) but with the universe of SOI schools that offer more than one cycle of primary education (1,689 only have pre-school, 58 only have the first cycle (grades 1-4) of primary education and 286 have these two cycles of education). Therefore, the Catholic schools represent approximately 14% of the comparable universe of private schools in Portugal.

To conclude this brief contextualization of the Catholic school in Portugal, we highlight that, as opposed to what happens in many countries, with special focus on the case of the USA, in Portugal there does not exist a "religious question" in education.) The law explicitly foresees that the education provided by public schools is not religiously oriented, but there is no limitation in the case of private schools, even in the case of those that receive, directly or indirectly, state funding. Consequently, the Catholic school in Portugal is not denied the right to declare itself as a religiously oriented project, nor has such fact kept this type of school from being funded by the State.

### *3. The Portuguese Students*

Given the legislative and political context in which the Portuguese Catholic schools finds themselves today, we will now observe their human context, especially in regards to the students. Little is precisely known about the young Portuguese people, especially their relationship with school and with God. Nevertheless, the results of a study performed in 1997 by the Society of Jesus in Portugal are presented next.<sup>2</sup>

This study aimed to obtain data about what the young Portuguese school-aged people think and how these students compare with those from the three Jesuit schools operating in Portugal (that have a total of nearly 3,500 students).

The results of this study were taken from a questionnaire given to a representative sample of young Portuguese people residing in the mainland, between the ages of 13 and 18. The sample of students from the Jesuit schools is a sample of convenience

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<sup>2</sup>In many countries, schools owned by religious bodies are treated differently from other schools. for example in the USA most states ban religious entities from creating charter schools and there are legal quarrels (with the intervention of the courts) about state funding of schools owned by religious entities. In Portugal, schools owned by religious entities have the same rights and obligations as any other private school and state funding for private education is granted with no regard as to who is the owner of the school. This is so even in the case of private schools that substitute state schooling (e.g.. the association contracts described in this chapter).

made of a total of 1,742 students (GRACOS, 2002). It is now presented, for contextualization purposes, that 87.1 % of those questioned in the national sample stated they were Catholic, 11.3% another Christian religion, and 11.2% agnostic, atheist, or without religion.<sup>6</sup>

### **Satisfaction with the School**

At the level of global satisfaction of young people with school, 89.6% of the national sample and 91.7% of the private schools sample stated they were satisfied with their school. The main factor of satisfaction with their school is the companionship with classmates (81 % and 79.8%, respectively). The second most relevant factor of satisfaction is the relationship with teachers (27.8%, and 36.1%), the third what they learn (24.1 % and 27%), and the fourth, the teachers' competence (10% and 15.7%).<sup>7</sup> The young people's development of satisfaction towards school does not vary significantly throughout the age groups.

What clearly stands out from these results is the central role of human relations in school. Young people like school because of their friends and the relationship with their teachers. It is not about what they learn in school (24.1 % and 27%) or about the technical competence of the teachers (10% and 15.7%). It is the human relationships that touch them and give them a sense for school. Once again, it is noted that there were no relevant differences found amongst the two groups of young people who responded.

### **Impression of the Subjects**

Curious data appears when searching to know what young people think about the different subjects they have in school. The subject most valued is Physical Education (42.1%), followed by Mathematics (31.3%), by Foreign Languages (31.9%), and then by Portuguese (31.3%). Moral and Religious Education appears as one of the subjects less appreciated, with a mere 1.2% of the national universe and 5.7% of the private<sup>3</sup> school students.

Though these are low figures (10% for teacher's competence), they are not surprising. Bearing in mind the students' ages (13-18), it is natural that teachers' competence is not the main factor of satisfaction with school. These results do not permit to conclude that students find teachers incompetent. The conclusion is only that teachers' competence is not a main factor of satisfaction with school.

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<sup>3</sup> 0.3% of those questioned in the national sample stated that they were of a non-Christian religion

situation due to the loss of students and therefore the people in charge of the school informed the Minister of Education that it was for sale. The Minister called the Director Priest and proposed that the State would bear the expenditures of the functioning of the private school as long as the Jesuits promised to receive the children of the local families. Thus, the first association contract was honoured even before its legal authorization.

Small details of history related to this issue are noted here: in 1974, having the revolutionary forces arrived at the private school to take it over and expel the Jesuits, they were received by the population who, barricading the passage, questioned "when the private school was only for the rich the priests were useful. Now that it is for the poor they are no longer useful?" The revolutionary forces withdrew and hence a take over of the school was avoided. Ever since, the school has provided valuable services to local education and today a population of 1,300 students benefit from it.

Because this contractual type received legal authorization, it was then possible to honour contracts with private schools that were in a similar situation.

According to the data available, of the 94 private schools that have an association contract, approximately 20 are Catholic schools.

According to the information available by the Coordinator Council of Private and Cooperative Education, the association contract had a quantitative development that is summarized in Table 3.

As can be seen from this data, the number of schools with an association contract have maintained stable since the 1997/98 academic year. Nevertheless, the number of students included in this contract started to decrease in 1999/2000. The total loss in the period is relatively insignificant--1.6%--but the tendency registered since 1999/2000 is not, verifying a loss of 6.37% in five years. 10

**Table 3.** Quantitative development of the association contract

	Schools	Students	Expenditures (€)
1997-1998	92	55,846	135,914,150,48
1998-1999	96	57,591	149,350,581,44
1999-2000	96	58,718	161,184,433,42
2000-2001	97	58,428	170,288,800,08
2001-2002	96	58,283	185,140,160,48
2002-2003	94	57,819	193,334,116,14
2003-2004	94	56,941	200,571,313,34
2004-2005	94	54,974	206,933,419,51

III This loss is due to state interference. In order to control state costs with education, the Ministry of Education has diminished every year the number of students that may enrol in these private schools and benefit from free private education.

### Simple Contracts

The simple contract appears in a different logic of the association contract and even, though with a full legal basis (including constitutional), in dissonance with the dominant thinking in Portugal as to the role of the State in education.

In fact, this type of contract has as its objective to maintain the *"functioning of private and co-operative schools, in order to progressively guarantee the equality of conditions of attendance with public education at the free levels and lessen the existing inequalities at the paid levels"* (article 6, no. 2, line d) of the Law 9/79, of 19 March). That is, by means of a simple contract, the State attempts to lessen the financial inequality between the students of public education with those of private education. We are dealing here with recognizing that the cost of education should not vary according to the legislative nature of the school, or better yet, of recognizing that the freedom of the parents in choosing their children's school can not be dissociated from the financial cost of such an option. As a matter of fact, the simple contract is honoured with schools located in "sufficiently equipped areas of public establishments" (article 8 of Law 9/79, 19 March). Moreover, and contrary to what happens in the case of schools with an association contract, the schools with a simple contract do not have any specific restriction at the level of criteria of acceptance of students. Therefore, they are able to establish the rules that they want within the general framework of the Portuguese legislative order.

To sum up, schools with simple contracts have a legal situation equivalent to that of schools that do not have, or wish to have, any kind of contract with the State (e.g., some international schools or elite schools).

If we add to this the fact that the State financial aid follows the student if he changes school, it can only be concluded that the simple contract is, substantially, a school voucher. The majority of Catholic schools that do not have an association contract have a simple contract. According to the information available by the Coordinator Council of Private and Cooperative Education, the simple contract had a quantitative development that is summarized in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Quantitative development of the simple contract

	Schools	Students	Expenditures (PTE)	Average cost (PTE)
1997-1998	419	27,487,00	18,826,041,74	684,91
1998-1999	426	28,936,00	20,636,073,74	713,16
1999-2000	421	30,312,00	22,987,780,43	758,37
2000-2001	427	30,721,00	23,286,166,79	757,99
2001-2002	422	30,168,00	22,896,079,13	758,95
2002-2003	424	28,291,00	21,477,812,98	759,17
2003-2004	405	26,086,00	19,792,025,96	758,72

As can be seen in Table 4, and opposed to what happens with schools with association contracts, the schools with simple contracts have decreased in number throughout the years. Despite this decrease being insignificant-3.3% between 1997/98 and 2003/04-it is in dissonance (i) with the growth of relative weight of private and cooperative education in the Portuguese educational system, and (ii) with the objective of gradual equalization of conditions of attendance of private and state run schools. Also, the number of students included in the simple contracts began to decrease in 2001/2, having the total loss of the period reached 5%, a result that already has some meaning.

##### *5. The Contemporary Challenges of Catholic School in Portugal*

In the context described, the situation of the Catholic school in Portugal is one of relative serenity. It benefits from a correct legislative contextualization, it is not victim of ideological persecution, it serves the school population for those for whom God is Father and, not least importantly, it serves a Country with low levels of schooling-which represents a challenge to its capacity of creating educational offer-and with high levels of failure-which represents a challenge to continue improving of its educational proposal.

However, this relative lull is apparent and may be the forewarning of difficult times for the Portuguese Catholic School. In fact, given the budget difficulties that Portugal is going through, there is constant pressure from the Public Administration connected to education and from some syndicates to terminate the association contracts honoured by the State and private schools in general, which would have a devastating effect on the Catholic schools.

Furthermore, it is exactly these schools that have an association contract that affirm the social plurality of Catholic schooling and its openness to everyone, builders of men and women for others, and an important component of social cohesion.

To respond to this challenge, the following is necessary:

- To deepen the associative relationship between the Catholic schools, creating a strong movement of defence and promoting improvement of the whole
- To create awareness about the reality of Catholic schooling in Portugal, promoting the gathering, treatment, and dissemination of information characteristic of the school, students, families, teachers, and non-teaching staff; as the Congregation for Catholic Education states, *"the exact awareness of reality suggests the best educational behaviours"* (Congregação para a Educação Católica, 1998)
- To reinforce its capacity to attract and maintain investment (public or private) as a way to open itself to the community it serves and participate in the national goal of fighting against school abandonment and failure, even placing itself in the front of this struggle for schooling the Portuguese people.

## Part 2

### The Catholic School's Response to the Challenges It Faces

#### *1. Deepening the Associative Movement of Catholic Schools*

In Portugal there exist at least five associations representative of schools from private and cooperative education. Of these five, the more relevant ones due not only to their prestige, but also to their history are the *AP EC-Associação Portuguesa de Escolas Católicas* [Portuguese Association of Catholic Schools] and the *AEEP-Associação de Estabelecimentos de Ensino Particular e Cooperativo* [Association of Private and Cooperative Education Establishments].

These two associations, the later with a broad character because it is made up of all the schools belonging to private education, and the former more restricted because it is only open to Catholic schools, have had an important role throughout the years in defending private schools in general and Catholic schools in particular. It is important to note, given the relevance of the issue in relation to the Catholic schools in Portugal, the fact that the Presidents of the Board of Directors of AEEP were, since the beginning and with rare exceptions, Catholic priests and principals of Catholic schools.

Nevertheless, this associative movement still has to develop more and build a true community of schools, not only in the areas of intervention with the State and other social partners, but also in the area of promoting pedagogical and organizational innovation. Both of these associations promote training courses, evaluation projects and improvement of schools, but the real impact of this effort in the Portuguese society has not been what is desired.

#### *2. Creating Awareness About the Reality of Catholic Schools in Portugal*

Due to the previous issue, or possibly originating from the challenge that is mentioned there, in Portugal there does not exist detailed and relevant information about Catholic schools. Who are their students, families, teachers, and non-teaching staff; what are the results of their educational action, their contribution towards fighting school abandonment and failure. This fact is especially serious, because, again, it is undeniable that *"the exact awareness of reality suggests the best educational behaviour~/"* (Congregação para a Educação Católica, 1988).

A considerable number of studies and works about the different charismas and educational projects of the congregational and diocesan Catholic schools exist. There also exist some studies that were comprised of small universes of students/Catholic schools, generally resulting from Masters Dissertation research. However, extensive qualitative and/or quantitative studies concerning the sector of Catholic schools in Portugal are not known. This absence not only harms the action of each specific school, but also makes the action of the associative movement almost inefficient, since it does not know, with the demanded rigour, the sector (paraphrasing a well-positioned OECD employee, *"if you don't have data, you're just another person with an opinion"*).

### *3. Capacity to Attract and Maintain Investment (Public or Private)*

As was previously mentioned, many Catholic schools in Portugal benefit from an important state aid. Not because they are Catholic, but because they are in the true public service of education. This situation leads to a unique opportunity of expression of the educational project of the Catholic school in more unfavourable social contexts (or in less benefited ones), converting these contexts in one of its preferential environments of action. However, it is necessary to guarantee that the *"temptation to create a State monopoly in education"* (Conferência Episcopal Portuguesa, 2002), associated since some years ago with the argument that Portugal is in a difficult financial situation, does not put at risk this state of things. In this way, each Catholic school individually, the ecclesiastical authorities and the representative associations of schools have developed an intense effort along with the successive governments in the area of defending freedom of education. Despite this effort, there have been some losses that, though not very noteworthy, may be very significant in its future consequences. Namely, the suspension of new simple contracts to be honoured with private schools and the restriction of the number of classes in association contract at the beginning of the cycles of education (which has a multiplying effect with the passing of the years).

If we take into consideration the statistics of education previously presented (the vast number of young Portuguese that leave school and the disturbing number of young people whose school success is poor), it is asked of the Catholic school to double its capacity of intervention in society, not only by creating new educational offers, but also by obtaining the necessary funding so that its offer can truly be *"inclusive and comprehensive"* (Conferência Episcopal Portuguesa, 2002). For this, *"one has to find the adequate ways of state support, in harmony with the diverse situations and means"* (Conferência Episcopal Portuguesa, 2002) so that the parents can choose their child's school, including, if they wish, a Catholic school.

## **Part 3**

### **Educating Children and Young People for the Community: A Portuguese Catholic School Mission**

#### *1. Building Personal Identities and Projects*

In a possible synthesis, Zabalza (1992) mentions two major functions that education should develop: (i) developing the subject's personality, and (ii) establishing the parameters of the relationship between the subject and others.

Schools cannot continue to regard their students (whatever their age) as passive elements and Catholic schools are no exception. We urgently need to reinforce pedagogical models that stress student's active role, stimulating initiatives that encourage them to take responsibility, coping with things that are different, challenging previous balances, and promoting the emergence of richer thoughts and more conscious action. The programmes adopted and the pedagogical practices

used by Catholic schools should respect the goal of nurturing people's autonomy and developing skills that enable them to enjoy the collective reality around them (i.e., the cultural, ecological, and relational heritage that supports life in common).

The process of building personal identities and life projects is an excellent way of acquiring this knowledge. When thinking about what role Catholic school should play in building personal identities and projects, we must remember how important it is for young people to have a feeling of control over their environment. **In** as much as people act according to their own idea of themselves (abilities, motivations, preferences, interests, and values), it is possible to estimate the importance of school and place it in the heart of the process of building their individual life projects and in the construction of their personality.

But building personal projects cannot be regarded only as an individual task resulting from psychological and vocational development. It is inevitably linked to changes that occur in the family and in social and economic settings. One of the most difficult situations that young people have to deal with in contemporary society is defining their personal projects. Never before have young people had so many opportunities at their fingertips, but never before has the competition for these opportunities been so fierce.

The emergence and implementation of personal projects necessarily mean a certain degree of involvement in considering the maximum number of variables as deeply as possible, thus reducing the risk of error. **If** schools do not provide the young person with these conditions of analysis, a new form of inequality may appear between those that can and those that cannot solve the problem of drawing up life projects. **In** this field, Catholic schools must be a context where individuals must assume responsibility, allowing students to get a critical view of the obstacles standing in the way of their projects, to understand the historical movement in which they are involved and their real opportunities. Students have to make choices that will gradually build their personal identities and schools are a part of the process.

Regarding the relationship between young people, their families, and Catholic schools, we find that "the school matters" and is of critical importance in the relationship between parents and children. **In** spite of the importance of friends as favoured conversation partners, matters related to school life are still one of the main subjects of communication between parents and children. On the other hand, school is undeniably a factor of supreme importance in modelling relationships between parents and their children. For many young people, the quality of the family environment often depends on their success or failure at school. It is therefore important to encourage all kinds of action on the part of Catholic schools to bring parents closer to their children's school life.

## *2. Education for Citizenship*

Finally, we cannot think about the missions and functions of Portuguese Catholic School in contemporary society without relating them to citizenship. Education for citizenship will have to be education for complexity and openness

to diversity (Fonseca, 200 1). It is not, however, an easy task, mainly due to two reasons.

The first is a certain inability of Portuguese schools in general to accept the cultural diversity of the population, which the recent influx of immigrants has accentuated.<sup>114</sup> Even today, the relationships between schools and the urban population and between schools and the rural population are still blocked by their difficulty in perceiving society as a cultural mosaic and diversifying their curricula.

The second has to do with the relevance of intercultural education. However, it does not seem possible to regard contemporary society(ies) in any other way than from the point of view of diversity. And this diversity is growing: the multiplication of national and ethnic origins and the polarization of values and behavioural standards that affect men and women today. This situation has obvious repercussions on the school system. Our education system is becoming increasingly multi-ethnic and is having trouble accommodating the situation.

According to Azevedo et al. (200 1), it is essential to educate new generations in three directions: (i) in the knowledge of social rights, promoting active insertion in a society that welcomes and values them; (ii) in the qualification of the concept of fulfilling rights, in the sense of valuing initiative and insertion; and (iii) in opening the way for enunciating and realizing rights as responsibilities, gradually freeing them from their reduction to the state. Being so, teaching values is going to be a central concern for educators in general and for Catholic school educators in particular. Catholic schools must be able to transform young people in citizens capable of participating actively and intelligently in society, to ensure the ongoing construction of civilization and a fairer world. The moral education of citizens is at the heart of the act of educating in Catholic schools. It is true that this viewpoint stresses the central role of teachers. Each group of students needs to be monitored by teachers to adopt work methods, capable of monitoring and nurturing the emergence of the human realities within the students, open to its social environment, and capable of building bridges with the diversity of sources of information available.

Every Catholic school should be a social institution with an identity, with goals, and with the ability to stress its results, oriented by a climate of social responsibility.

This must serve as a reference for the organization of all Catholic schools, for motivating teachers and for the human development of each student. School education as a way of preparing new generations for social life is now joined by an urgent need to pay attention to the development of each individual student as a separate personality, with a sense of social responsibility and a range of skills that go far beyond school practices and teaching.

The construction of such a personality is only possible within a network of civic oriented practices based on the values of social inclusion, participation,

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<sup>4</sup> 11 From the mid-1980s to the late 1990s, driven to a large degree by the country's increasing demand for labour, Portugal became a more attractive destination for non-EU citizens, resulting in the emergence of an immigration cycle. The result was a continuous increase in the number of foreign residents dominated by Africans (mainly from Cape Verde). Brazilians, and Western Europeans (mainly from Ukraine).

mutual respect, guaranteed rights, acceptance of differences, justice and equality, solidarity between people and groups, and implementing internal psychological processes such as listening, expressing opinions, negotiating, solving conflicts, and sharing common objectives.

All this is not only an opportunity but also an increasingly pressing need for reevaluation of Catholic school and school work in contemporary society.

## **Part 4**

### **An Agenda for Research for the Future**

From what was presented in this chapter it is possible to define three main themes for future research that will help in understanding the role of Catholic schools in Portugal and may also prove useful to win the challenges Catholic schooling faces today.

Firstly, it is necessary to create a battery of indicators to characterize each school and community in order to collect relevant data about Catholic schools in Portugal. This group of indicators should be accompanied by indicators of school performance, in order to allow the realization of reliable quantitative analysis about what the Portuguese Catholic schools are in fact doing.

Secondly, if catholic schools are to "produce" citizens capable of participating actively and intelligently in society, it is vital that they understand how to develop ethically and morally mature students. Although independent subject areas obviously have their own part to play in the curriculum, students want to have competent, active, enterprising, demanding teachers that encourage them to be independent and take personal responsibility, adults that are capable to promote students' development. How do we prepare teachers for this challenge? How can we teach values under a Catholic framework of life understanding?

Thirdly, because personal identities and life projects can only be demonstrated and built within an organizational environment and a network of democratically oriented practices, it is necessary to study what will be the main values for this organizational reevaluation of Catholic schools and Catholic school work. What will be the importance of practices of social inclusion, participation and joint decision-making, mutual respect, guaranteed rights, acceptance of differences, justice and equality, solidarity between people and groups, etc.? How will we be able to implement democratic processes such as listening, expressing opinions, negotiating, solving conflicts, sharing common objectives, encouraging collective involvement, etc.?

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