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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

School of Education

Catholic Schools in English Speaking Cameroon and their Educational Outcomes

by

Joseph Awoh Jum

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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

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Whilst the main purpose of education is a matter for political debate, there is broad consensus that it is about the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, the development of responsible attitudes and the preparation of young people for later life and wider society (Bigger and Brown, 1999). Thus, schools, as the places where the majority of young people are formally educated (McGilchrist et al., 2004), are concerned with more than just the acquisition of knowledge. Their ultimate objective in a democratic society must be to facilitate the social, academic and identity development of young people (Verma and Pumfrey, 1988) while contributing to their personal and collective happiness (Noddings, 2003).

Using a cross-sectional, mixed-methods approach with 10 secondary schools from three main school types, this study investigates how well Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon are achieving these educational outcomes for their students. The results show that even though Catholic schools have had a longstanding reputation for achieving the highest overall academic attainment, Presbyterian schools have recently performed better on this measure. The cluster of Catholic schools which have consistently produced outstanding results have perhaps perpetuated the perception that Catholic schools are still the highest performing. Catholic schools appear to fare better than 'government' and 'lay private' schools at promoting non-academic outcomes such as nurturing the spiritual development of pupils, preparing pupils for life after school, promoting the common good of society and promoting community cohesion, but appear to fail to provide to the same extent upward social mobility for poor pupils, which is an important claim for Catholic education in the literature.

This research, the first of its kind in Cameroon, should enable the Church and state authorities to engage in a properly informed way in a national debate about the contribution of Catholic schools to the education system and to society. In addition, contrary to the negative literature about faith schools generally, this study shows Catholic education to be fertile ground for cultivating the democratic potential of schools (Parker, 2008) which can only be welcome news in a country enmeshed in corruption and splintered along tribal, cultural and religious lines.

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Joseph Awoh Jum

declare that the thesis entitled

Catholic Schools in English Speaking Cameroon and their Educational Outcomes

and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- none of this work has been published before submission.

Signed:

Date:.....

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1 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Education and schooling

The term 'education' has a wide variety of meanings and at a minimum involves several complex processes, but the litmus test for any effective educational activity is that something 'worthwhile' is achieved by the activity and some improvement is involved (Lawton and Gordon, 1996); in other words, some beneficial change takes place. Consequently, while education must involve some learning, not all learning is educational. Educational learning must make the learner a 'better person' in some way. Macbeth (1989: 2) uses the term broadly to include "all the circumstances and actions leading to a child's intellectual, social, moral and physical development". In this sense, education can take place outside school and not everything that is learned in school is necessarily included. As Buetow (1988: 9) puts it: "one can receive an education outside school and one can miss an education in school." Education can happen at home, in school and in the community, and some have insisted that most of it actually happens outside school (Macbeth, 1989). Schooling is only one factor in a range of factors that influence learning and, for *secondary* school students, learning is not only influenced by home and community, but by the *primary* schools they attended (Morris, 1998; Harris, 1999). Nevertheless, casually the word 'education' has been used in the literature to mean *what goes on in schools*; in other words, the process of education has been institutionalised so that education and schooling are used almost synonymously (Hamm, 1989). This process is sometimes referred to as 'formal education' and at the beginning of the 21st Century, 'school' still remains the place where the vast majority of young people are formally educated (MacGilchrist et al., 2004). And this is how the term is employed in this study when describing what 'goes on' in secondary schools in English speaking Cameroon.

Society has a myriad of goals and expectations of schools (Sadker and Sadker, 2000). Some have come to regard formal education as essential for economic progress, the transmission of culture from one generation to the next, and the cultivation of children's intellectual and moral development (Serpell, 1993). Others see the role of school as protecting the national economy and defence, unifying multicultural societies, preparing students for the world of work, improving academic competence, encouraging tolerance and ensuring economic mobility (Sadker and Sadker, 2000). Foskett and Lumby (2003) argue that there are two dominant perspectives on the aims of education: on the one hand there is the liberal approach which calls for education to fulfil the intellectual and emotional potential of the individual; on the other, there is the instrumental stance, which advocates that education should meet the social and economic needs of the family and the state. However, it would seem that throughout

the world, the most coveted outcome of education is not the publicly articulated goal of fulfilling intellectual and emotional potential, but rather its ability to develop human potential and contribute to economic growth. Following this view, Bush (2003) argues that it is no accident that countries with highly developed education systems are also those with successful economies and high standards of living. It would seem, therefore, that the main aims of education revolve around knowledge and understanding, preparing children for later life and wider society, and the development of responsible attitudes (Bigger and Brown, 1999), though there will never be full consensus (Bigger and Brown, 1999; MacGilchrist et al., 2004). Different individuals and different societies have had, and will continue to have, different views about the role of education, reflecting their cultural, ideological, economic and religious views. In addition, even within the same community or state, there is usually a conflict of expectation about education between various interest groups. What politicians want education to achieve may differ from the views of professional educators, which in turn might diverge from the views of parents and children, though many would agree with Fullan (1993) that education has a moral purpose to make a difference in the lives of students regardless of background. The ultimate objective of education in a democratic and multicultural society must be to facilitate the social, academic and identity development of young people in an increasingly complex and interconnected world (Verma and Pumfrey, 1988) and contribute to personal and collective happiness (Noddings, 2003). It could be argued that schools should be fundamentally and obsessively concerned with providing children with the very best educational opportunities possible (West-Burnham, 1996), and for this reason, all countries and societies are concerned with making their schools more effective to enhance quality and raise standards of achievement (MacBeath and Mortimore, 2001).

Unfortunately, schools in Cameroon do not provide children with these kinds of opportunities and as a nation state, Cameroon is not concerned with making schools more effective or in raising standards of achievement. Tchombe (2001) contends that the rapid expansion of the educational system there to match the growing youth population and the demand for education has eroded educational quality at all levels. Bipoupout (2007) confirms that one of the problems that has plagued the Cameroon education system is overall poor performance, high repetition rates and poor results in examinations. The situation is not unique to Cameroon, of course. Glewwe (2002) suggests that developing countries spend hundreds of billions of dollars each year on education, but that these funds are not spent efficiently. He argues that the more effective use of these funds would increase the rate of human capital accumulation, which would in turn increase income and raise living standards. To be sure, more effective use of funds may not always lead to higher standards of living and the

promotion of social justice. Education is not the magic bullet that will cure all the ills of society and will not supply all the answers to the problems that beset individuals and societies. Nevertheless, “it is the best single means of promoting intellectual, moral, physical and economic well-being” (Aldrich, 1996: 1).

Until 30 years ago, there was widespread belief that schools made little or no difference because intelligence was inherited and a child’s academic potential was a result of that inheritance (Chapman, 1986). While the debate continues as to the nature and extent of genetic factors in ability and personality, we do know that congenital (inter-uterine) effects combine in complex and powerful ways with genetic infrastructures to switch on and off gene activity, laying down some of the key parameters of human capacity (MacBeath, 2009). In addition, the power of poverty to shape an individual’s encounter with learning can dwarf the impact of educators’ intentions (Foskett and Lumby, 2003), and home background, which includes genetic factors and family socio-economic status, plays an important role in a child’s education, as does community influence. However, it is not true to say that schools make little or no difference to the achievement and attainment of pupils, notwithstanding the importance of socio-economic and family backgrounds. The ‘social determinist’ view has lost much of its credibility.

The period since 1980 has also seen the development of research, scholarship, debate and political rhetoric regarding the connection between schooling and pupil outcomes (Harris, 2001). School effectiveness and school improvement research has challenged the view that heredity and/or socio-economic environment had a full deterministic impact on pupil achievement. It suggests that schools can do much to foster good behaviour and attainment, and be a force for good even in disadvantaged areas (Foskett and Lumby, 2003). In fact, there now exists a wealth of research evidence from the school effectiveness field to confirm that schools ‘matter’ and *do* have a major effect upon children’s development (Harris and Bennett, 2001). The broad thesis of the school effectiveness and school improvement movement has been that it is schools, and the way they are managed and operated, which make the difference to learner outcomes: firstly, that schools typically receive variable intakes of pupils but that the outcomes of schooling are not totally determined by those intakes (Thomas, 1998); secondly, that schools serving very similar intakes can give their pupils very different experiences and achieve different outcomes for their pupils (Morley and Rassool, 1999; MacGilchrist et al., 2004; Opdenaker and Van Damme, 2006). School effectiveness and school improvement research has thus “convincingly helped to destroy the belief that schools can do nothing to change the society around them, and has also helped to destroy the myth that the influence of family background on

children's development is so strong that they are unable to be affected by school" (Reynolds, 2001: 29). As Macbeth (1989) argues, schools *do* make a difference, school performance can be more professional or less professional, and its effects on children's attainment can vary accordingly. There is a 'school effect' and the key lesson from international research about effective schools is that schools can make a difference for better or even for worse (MacBeath and Mortimore, 2001). However, the effect of a school on a student is only one of a number of effects, the others being home, community and, in the case of secondary schools, prior attainment. Schooling makes *a* difference and not *the* difference to students' educational achievement (Harris, 1999; Easen and Bolden, 2005). It supplements the upbringing provided by families and communities with a more systematic preparation for the future (Claxton, 2008). It serves the needs of the present and the future, and has a crucial role to play in the lives and learning of pupils as they inherit daunting and exciting tasks as global citizens of the 21st century (MacGilchrist et al., 2004).

1.2 School Effectiveness and School Improvement

School effectiveness research originated in the 1960s and 1970s (MacGilchrist et al., 2004), but since the mid-1980s there has been added impetus to improve school performance and raise standards and this has contributed to the field of school improvement (Harris, 2001). In an effort to increase school effectiveness and improve performance, educators and researchers have sought answers to two fundamental questions: what do effective schools look like?, and how do schools improve and *become* more effective? While the first of these questions focuses specifically on the *outcomes* of schooling and the *characteristics* of effective schools, the second is concerned with the *processes* of schooling and ways in which the quality of schooling can be improved. As this study aims to investigate the impact of Catholic¹ schools in English speaking Cameroon on student achievement, school effectiveness research seemed the obvious model to investigate initially. As a research paradigm it is premised upon the measurement of outcomes and quantifying differences between schools (Harris, 2001). Its central aim is to judge whether differences in resources, process and organisational arrangements affect student outcomes and, if so, in what ways. Unfortunately, even though this study set out to investigate how Catholic schools differ from other schools in English speaking Cameroon, it was not possible to make use of the school effectiveness research paradigm. The first and most important reason was that it is impossible to obtain school-based data in Cameroon. Head teachers do not keep pupil level data so that it is not possible to obtain empirical information on socio-economic status and prior performance, and match it to

¹ 'Catholic' is used throughout this work to mean 'Roman Catholic'. In Cameroon, 'Catholic' is used and understood in this sense, rather than in the sense of 'universal'.

outcomes. There is also a lack of pupil attainment data at national level. It was even impossible to obtain information regarding the number of permanent exclusions per school per annum, so that the measures so readily available to researchers in the UK, the US and Europe are simply not available in Cameroon. For example, while it is true that many methods of estimating socio-economic differences among schools have been used, the most commonly used one in the UK is entitlement to free school meals (FSM), which has been used as a proxy for socio-economic disadvantage (Gibson et al., 1998). This measure has the advantage that it is routinely collected for *all* schools on *an annual basis*. Such a measure does not exist in Cameroon and the estimations of economic differences between schools is extremely difficult to make even anecdotally. Thus, while schools in the UK, the US and Europe have developed a range of self-evaluating strategies to monitor progress and systematically collect data to provide evidence for improvement (MacGilchrist et al., 2004), schools in Cameroon have not, and since school effectiveness has to do with the value a school adds to a child over time, without data to track a child's progress it is impossible to measure whether or not the school is relatively or absolutely effective.

In addition to a lack of school-based data, there is an equal lack of inspection data. School inspections are a rarity in Cameroon and when they do happen, they are either subject-or department-based and the results are not fed back to the school in writing. The lack of school inspection data means that data that characterises schools as effective or ineffective is not available. This data would have offered a measure of two key factors in the assessment of effectiveness; namely, consistency and stability (MacBeath and Mortimore, 2001). Although school effectiveness studies are mostly cross-sectional (Harris and Bennett, 2001), it is important that judgements about school processes are not based solely on snapshots of school activity but also on observations over time. Fortunately, "there are many exciting ways to view and measure school life" (Sadker and Sadker, 1988: 198) and a mixed method, cross-sectional approach was adopted for this study.

1.3 Motivation for the study

The Catholic educational system is the largest faith-based educational system in the world, with more than 200,000 schools and 1,000 universities (Grace, 2009). At the primary and secondary levels, their effectiveness in achieving higher general standards than non-Catholic schools has been widely acknowledged in the industrialised world², which has led some civil authorities, especially in the US to seek to mimic education strategies from the Catholic school sector (Sander, 2001) and politicians in the UK

² The exact cause and extent of greater Catholic school effectiveness is hotly disputed, but not the fact of their good relative performance.

actively to encourage their existence (Gardner et al., 2005; Walford, 2008). Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon have also been praised for achieving relatively higher standards (Mosima, 2007), and it seems an enticing undertaking to investigate how and why these schools achieve relative high outcomes at least anecdotally.

Consequently, the questions which this study seeks to answer are three-fold:

- Whether Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon achieve relatively higher academic results
- Whether their academic success is the result of their catholicity, and
- Whether they also have non-academic outcomes which contribute to the building up of a democratic Cameroon.

Foskett and Lumby (2003) argue that at a simple level, learning outcomes represent all of the changes that occur to learners as a result of the experiences they have in school, whether cognitive, affective or in the development of physical skills. These outcomes can express themselves in terms of acquired knowledge and understanding, or in changes in attitude, skills and behaviour. At the level of the individual learner, the outcomes may be explicit and observable, or implicit and largely private. Where observable they can be measured (as in tests of knowledge and understanding) or they may not (as in changes of attitude). They can be short-term in their impact (for example, in gaining the qualifications for higher education entry) or long-term in raising the economic or social capability of an individual over a lifetime. Thus, 'learner outcomes' is a term that is usually used to cover a broad range of gains that individuals (and society) can accrue. On the other hand, because the Cameroon education system is very examination-oriented, test results are the basis for making value judgements about educational outcomes (Tchombe, 2001) so that many pupils 'graduate' from school without being properly prepared for life and work. This is unfortunate because "in a historical sense the changing needs of Cameroon have been addressed at each political period through education [and], in recent times, education is seen as the chemical crucible for blending all the ingredients that will forge a united, consolidated Cameroon" (Tchombe, 2001: 19). As has been pointed out above, one of the reasons for undertaking this research is to find out whether Catholic schools, in addition to obtaining good academic results, achieve other educational outcomes which contribute to the life of the individual and to society. In order to establish what these gains accruing to students of Catholic schools and to society might be, and whether they outweigh those made by other schools, it was necessary to compare school processes in Catholic schools with other school types. Data on internal processes was therefore collected from Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist, 'government' and 'lay private' schools in the hope that a comparison of these processes across

school types would show up *what Catholic schools do differently* and how this affects their effectiveness. As Anyon et al. (2008: 2-3) argue:

One cannot understand or explain x by merely describing x. One must look exogenously at non-x – particularly the context and social forces in which the object of the study is embedded. Class size, curriculum or student demographics; teacher experience, pedagogy or skills; leadership, budget, buildings or library holdings are not all that make a school what it is. And describing them does not constitute a satisfying explanation of what occurs there...One could manipulate and empirically test these and other characteristics endogenous to education systems, and still fail to fully know how or why schools work, do not work, fail or succeed. Instead, one needs to situate schools and districts, policies and procedures, institutional forms and processes in the larger social contexts in which they occur, in which they operate and are operated upon.

From a personal and professional point of view, this study is important for a number of reasons. First, having worked in Catholic schools for 12 years, it was easy for the researcher to identify some of the strengths and shortcomings of the Catholic education system in Cameroon. As someone engaged in managing these schools as a head teacher and priest, it was natural to try to find out how these impacted on teaching and learning in the schools and what could be done to improve the educational outcomes of these schools. It was the researcher's view that in order to better manage these schools it is important for the heads to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding necessary to run a Catholic school, and this study was seen to form part of that knowledge base. In addition to giving serving and prospective Catholic school head teachers this knowledge and understanding, this study was also motivated by the dearth of studies on Catholic schools in Cameroon in general and in English speaking Cameroon in particular. Most of what is known about Catholic schools is from people's perceptions and biases and it was deemed important to begin building a scientific knowledge base about Catholic schools which would help in the formulation of research-based Catholic school policy but also enlighten debate on the contribution of Catholic education to the national educational project. Finally, while it has been a long-held belief that Catholic (and other faith) schools can be an example to government and lay private schools in the area of achieving educational outcomes, there has been no systematic study so far to show what these outcomes are and how they are achieved in faith schools. It was thought that this study could shine a light on what these outcomes are and how they are achieved and in that way enable other school types to mimic Catholic (and other faith) school practice with a view to improving educational outcomes all round.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis comprises 12 chapters. The first, this one, lays out what the study is about and why it was undertaken. The second chapter is a review of the relevant literature and is divided into two sections: the first section traces the historical beginnings of faith-based schooling in the industrialised world and then situates faith-based schooling in the developed world today. It concludes with a topical debate on faith-based schooling. The second section of Chapter Two narrows the focus to Catholic schooling in the industrialised world. Here, even though schools have achieved higher relative educational standards and are very popular with parents, they have not received universal government support and their existence continues to be a thorny issue in a pluralistic (not to say secularist) society. Government reaction to Catholic schools in these countries has ranged from full-hearted financial support to no support at all. Chapter Three is also divided into two sections: the first presents the historical context to education in Cameroon. It traces the role of the government and the Christian churches in the development of education in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods, demonstrating that the contribution of the various Churches to education in Cameroon has been enormous. The second section of Chapter Three discusses the specific contribution of Catholic education to the Cameroonian education system. Though the Catholic Church is a relative latecomer to education in Cameroon, its contribution in terms of quality and quantity has been very significant, though the loss of subsidies from foreign missionary bodies and the non-payment of government subventions to these schools has meant that quality has been compromised and some key objectives of Catholic education downplayed.

Chapter Four describes the research methodology and is divided into two sections. The first section begins with a simple definition of research and then goes on to present the positivist and interpretive models and to discuss the debate around these approaches. An argument is then made for a mixed-methods approach on the understanding that by incorporating *ab initio* both qualitative and quantitative approaches, it makes use of the strengths of both and flattens their weaknesses. The choice was also driven by the belief that the key underlying principle which guides the choice of methods is fitness for purpose (Gorard, 2002). The second section describes the research design and data collection strategies.

Chapters Five to Ten present the findings and lay out the views, concerns, conflicts and dilemmas of the participants in a systematic manner. While chapter Five presents findings from examination results for all school types, chapters Six to Ten present findings from a parents' questionnaire, focus group discussions with students,

interviews with teachers, interviews with head teachers and interviews with education policy makers respectively.

Chapter Eleven discusses the findings of chapters Five to Ten as they relate to the literature in chapters Two and Three; specifically to the literature on Catholic education. It seeks to reconcile these findings with educational theory as well as with the teachings of the Catholic Church on the aims and purposes of Catholic education. It discusses the consistencies and inconsistencies between the findings and the literature.

Finally, Chapter Twelve is a presentation of conclusions drawn from the study. Essentially, these demonstrate that while Catholic schools in Cameroon are currently doing better than 'lay private' and 'government' schools, they are not doing as well as they could. Catholic school authorities need to review their philosophy and school processes in order to enable their schools to optimise academic and non-cognitive outcomes. The 'reflections on the implications for future research, policy and practice' at the end of Chapter Twelve aims to provide a possible 'roadmap' for this review.

1.5 Chapter summary

This introductory chapter explains why this study is important. Schools form a crucial part of a child's education in 21st Century Cameroon, yet these schools do not always give children the life chances they are supposed to provide. To improve Cameroonian children's life chances, it is important to improve their school experience, and this experience cannot be improved without a systematic study of what works and does not work in the current system. Though this study limits itself to Catholic schooling, it is treated as part of faith schooling generally, so the next chapter discusses faith schooling in industrialised countries before narrowing the focus down to Catholic schooling.

2 CHAPTER TWO: FAITH-BASED SCHOOLING

2.1 Faith-based schooling in the developed world

2.1.1 Historical background

It seems reasonable to begin this review with a historical perspective on faith schools to provide the context in which to set out the issue of faith schooling today. There are two main sources of education provision in the West; namely, by the state and by religious groups (Soysal and Strang, 1989). In the case of the former, education helps to construct a nation-wide society and enhance collective progress (Meyer et al., 1992); for the latter, schools propagate religious doctrine and are used as a means of carving out the evangelical crusade of various churches¹ and religious groups (Parker-Jenkins et al., 2005).

The activity of the various churches in education predates that of the state in many instances (Walford, 2001; Francis, 1990); in England and Wales, for instance, educational provision was established along denominational lines as far back as the Middle Ages (Gates, 2005; Parker-Jenkins et al., 2005; Marples, 2005; Reed, 2006). An early partnership between church and state became particularly prominent in 19th Century Europe. In countries that either had 'national churches' or where an accommodating relationship already existed between church and state (e.g. Denmark, Norway, Prussia, Sweden), this allowed the state to 'lean on' existing religious organisations and their schooling structures when building their national systems (Soysal and Strang, 1989; Morgan, 2002; Jackson, 2004) so that mass education was achieved earlier in these countries than in nations where there was conflict between churches (or other societal groups) and the state (Soysal and Strang, 1989).

Where religious bodies happened to be independently organised Protestant churches and the supranationally organised Catholic Church, conflict tended to block or slow the creation of a national education system. In such cases, the educational activities of the state and the religious groups often conflicted, with the churches resisting the state's attempt to impose a unified and homogenous national system, as was the case in France and Italy (Grew and Harrigan, 1985; Ramirez and Boli, 1987).

One of the most important reasons why religious groups engaged in education at all was because they saw education not only as a way of propagating their doctrinal messages - in the case of Christian churches the Gospel - but as a means of recruiting adherents; of 'winning souls'. Stone (1969) suggests that one of the main causes for

¹ 'Church' is used here to mean any of the organised Christian denominations.

the growth of popular education in the West was this struggle between the various Christian groups for control of the poor, and contends that the Protestant churches were the first to see the value of schooling as a weapon in this struggle. Thus education and Christianity have been inextricably linked in the public mind in the West for a long time (Tropp, 1957) and in England and Wales, at least until the late 1950s, religious and moral education and civic responsibility were accepted as closely related (Jackson, 2004). In most countries, different faith groups were instrumental in promoting education with a strong inculcation of religious and civic values, even when the state opted itself to provide education for all, and religious clergy continued to have influence, even when the state was the main provider (Parker-Jenkins et al., 2005). And where religious groups could not afford universal provision they were either given financial assistance by the state (Gates, 2005) or had government-operated schools running alongside and supplementing faith schools (Grew and Harrigan, 1985). In England, for instance, assistance was given to schools in the Anglican, Catholic and Jewish traditions, and more recently, Muslim, Greek Orthodox and Sikh (Parker-Jenkins et al., 2005).

2.1.2 The situation of faith-based schools today

Faith-based schools are now a significant feature on the educational landscape of most Western countries. In England the continued popularity of faith schools is 'remarkable' (Johnson, 2002; Gates, 2005) and faith-based schools are generally oversubscribed (McKinney, 2006). Recent large-scale research has found that those attending faith schools achieve, on average, higher points scores in their GCSE examinations (Godfrey and Morris, 2008), which has led the government to expand faith-based schools as part of its strategy to extend provision of a category of schools which it sees as potentially successful in terms of parental support and academic attainment (Johnson, 2002; Parker-Jenkins et al., 2005; Reed, 2006). Publicly-funded schools, known as 'maintained' schools, operate a dual system of faith and secular schools in which all schools conform to a National Curriculum determined by the government and are subject to the same inspection by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) (Jackson, 2004). The 1994 Education Act established a range of categories of denominational schools in the UK with various levels of government control (Parker-Jenkins et al., 2005), which were generally referred to as 'voluntary' schools in that they were originally funded by religious bodies but went into *voluntary* partnership with the state (Jackson, 2004). Today, however, a 'voluntary' school is one within the state-maintained system but which is owned or administered by an education trust (usually religious) (Lankshear, 1996). The two most common are the 'voluntary *controlled*', where the local education authority provides all of the funding in return for more control over religious education and on the governing body, and 'voluntary

aided', where the voluntary organisation provides a percentage of the budget (currently 10 percent of certain elements like building costs) in return for more control over religious education and on governing body (Jackson, 2004). The 'voluntary controlled' option was taken by most Church of England schools, whereas other denominations, particularly the Roman Catholic, chose the 'voluntary aided' option (Gates, 2005; Cush, 2005) because it feared proselytization by a Protestant state. Only 'voluntary aided' schools can have 'denominational' religious education (Jackson, 2003) and today, other faith-based schools (Muslim, Sikh and Greek Orthodox) have followed Christian and Jewish communities to secure state funding on the same basis (Parker-Jenkins et al., 2005; Jackson, 2004).

In the Netherlands, educational diversity has been a tradition since the 1920s (Daun and Arjmand, 2005). The Dutch constitution guarantees freedom of education, including the freedom to found schools and to determine the principles upon which they are organised (Driessen and Valkenberg, 2000; Daun and Arjmand, 2005). There are two main categories of schools; namely 'state' (non-denominational) and 'denominational' (Protestant, Roman Catholic, Muslim, etc). Individuals and groups may establish schools with particular religious, ideological or educational orientation (Daun and Arjmand, 2005) and every school is entitled to full government funding provided they meet certain minimum criteria (Driessen and Valkenberg, 2000; Walford, 2001). The statutory requirements for founding a school in the Netherlands are four-fold: the school must be attended by a minimum number of students determined on the basis of the area and population density; the language of instruction must be Dutch; the teachers must be adequately qualified; and the curriculum must comply with the stipulations of the Primary Education Act (Daun and Arjmand, 2005; Driessen and Merry, 2006). Two thirds of primary schools are Christian, even though the country has been predominantly secular for several decades (De Wolff et al., 2003). In 2005, the distribution of primary schools was 33, 30, and 30 percent for public, Protestant and Roman Catholic schools respectively, the remaining 7 percent comprising a number of smaller denominations like Muslim, Hindu and Jena Plan and Montessori schools (Driessen and Merry, 2006). It seems clear that in the Netherlands, as in many other Western European countries, while the waning influence of the various churches can be observed in most social institutions and organisations, the denominational educational system has remained remarkably intact (Driessen and Merry, 2006).

In Australia, schooling was largely in the hands of church or private bodies for most of the early colonial period, but in the second half of the 19th Century legislation was enacted to provide free, compulsory and secular elementary education for all children

in schools operated by the state (Wilkinson et al., 2006). This legislation effectively abolished state assistance to schools operated by Christian and other Jewish denominations so that from the 1880s to the mid-Twentieth Century, education (at least at elementary level) was the responsibility of the state (Stewart and Russo, 2001). However, there was an abrupt turnaround with the passing of the 1964 Science Grants Bill, which included provision for direct government grants to both government and non-government secondary schools for science facilities (Caldwell and Spinks, 1988). This marked a turning point in the history of state aid to non-government schools in Australia and by the end of the decade, a general scheme of grants to all schools was introduced by the federal government (Stewart and Russo, 2001).

The 'Schools Assistance Learning Together Achievement Through Choice and Opportunity' Act 2004 currently provides the legislative framework for Commonwealth funding to schools (Wilkinson et al., 2006). Like previous school funding legislation, this Act requires school authorities to meet certain conditions in order to receive financial assistance. They must sign an agreement with the government which commits them to implementing certain programmes, achieving performance targets and providing information regarding educational and financial accountability (Wilkinson et al., 2006).

Research from Australia suggests that students who attend private (predominantly Catholic) schools outperform those from government schools on almost all educational, social, and economic indicators (Vella, 1999). Consequently, Catholic schools enjoy extensive popularity, not only among Catholics, who make up approximately 30 percent of the population, but increasingly with Australians of other faiths or none, in spite of the fact that Australian Catholic schools are fee-paying (Vella, 1999). These schools are oversubscribed, even though the vast majority of Catholics attending them are not practising or active in their faith (McLaughlin, 2005). The diversity and popularity of faith-based schools means that this sector now plays a crucial role in Australia's education system (Striepe and Clarke, 2009). Compared to other Western countries, Australia is quite unique in that it provides public funds to non-government schools but places no limits on the amount of income that such schools can generate from fees and other resources (Vella, 1999; Stewart and Russo, 2001).

The republican principles upon which education in France is based include the strict separation of religion from schooling (Daun and Arjmand, 2005), and Religion as a subject has been removed completely from French public schools (Bertrand, 2006). Today, 95 percent of faith schools in France are Catholic (Deer, 2005; Daun and

Arjmand, 2005; Bertrand, 2006), most of which are subsidised by public funds. The legislation that defines the role of private education in France is the *Loi Debre*, enacted in 1959, and it has proved to be a very significant step towards the integration of faith schools within the French education system (Deer, 2005). By this law, the state determines the basic syllabus for all schools and pays private school teachers' salaries on condition that the schools must be open to all pupils in the area and respect the religious convictions of each pupil (Limage, 2000). In addition, French private schools can have one of three relationships with the state, depending on the type of agreement which the school enters into with the state. First, where the private school has an 'organisational status agreement' with the state, the latter pays teachers' salaries and also funds equipment and buildings. Second, where the private school has a 'simple agreement' with the state, it only pays teachers' salaries. Third, where the school has no agreement with the state (non-contractual private schools) it does not receive any government subsidy (Deer, 2005; Bertrand, 2006).

Even though secularity is one of the pillars of the French public school, dual faith and multi-faith schools are becoming more and more common and popular in France (Bertrand, 2006). An attempt in the early 1980s by then Education Minister (Alain Savary) to create greater control over Catholic schools led to such protests that the minister was forced to resign and the legislation withdrawn (Limage, 2000; Deer, 2005). Nevertheless, the specificity of faith schools has been greatly reduced and their pedagogical practice has been largely secularised (Daun and Arjmand, 2005). Faith schools are still seen as integral contributors to the national educational effort but in return for government subsidies these schools have to admit *all* children and to respect their beliefs, whether religious or non-religious (Deer, 2000).

In the early years of the new republic, schooling in the US remained a local affair and was provided largely by religious establishments (Totterdel, 2005). However, the 'common school movement' that started in the 1820s speeded up investment in education institutions, and between 1825 and 1850 nearly every state in the US that had not already done so enacted a law strongly encouraging localities to establish 'free schools' open to all children and supported by taxes (Sokoloff and Engerman, 2000). After the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, education decision-making began to shift from the local to the state level (Hursh, 2005). Even so, the US still has a very decentralised system of education, with no National Curriculum and with much of the control over schools devolved to school districts which act on behalf of the state (Smith, 2005), but which makes it harder to draw a clear picture of school provision (Whitty and Power, 2000).

With regard to funding, the state funds public education through taxes and bond issues (Payne and Biddle, 1998), but does not fund faith schools because of the strict legal separation of church and state (Dee, 2005). However, by issuing school vouchers² which parents can use for tuition at a private school, the state indirectly supports private schools by supporting individual children who attend those schools (Walford, 2001; De Jong and Snik, 2002) and thereby funds faith schools in consequence of parents having choice. Public attitudes have not been overwhelmingly positive toward school vouchers and local referenda on vouchers have often been defeated by sizeable margins (Klitgaard, 2007). On the other hand, Charter schools have faced much less resistance than voucher schemes (Moe, 2000). Charter schools are public schools that receive a specified sum of funding for each student from their local school district or State and are released from compliance with many local and state regulations providing that they adhere to their declared mission or charter (Levin, 2002).

The US solved the public-private dilemma by introducing the voucher scheme and so funding all schools that meet certain minimal requirements, whether publicly or privately sponsored (Levin, 2002) by allowing families to choose schools for their children that are premised on their values, educational philosophies, religious teachings and political beliefs. There is a lot of support in the US for devolution and choice and school choice plans include specialist or 'focus' schools, magnet schools associated with desegregation plans, charter schools and private faith schools, and privately managed schools are on the increase (Whitty and Power, 2000). Schools, including profit-making ones, compete for students and their vouchers and it is believed that this competition will lead to greater choice and rising efficiency and innovation in education (Levin, 2002).

Within the educational systems of Western societies, therefore, there is a mixed system of schooling where children are able to attend schools provided by a variety of suppliers. In many of these countries, states have taken on the responsibility of organising education (Corten and Dronkers, 2006) and the differences between them with regard to funding of faith-based schools is amazing. For instance, while in the Netherlands it is unconstitutional and therefore illegal to distinguish between public and private schools in the allocation of funds, in the US it is unconstitutional and therefore illegal to provide any public funding to private schools that have a connection to a faith group (Wilkinson et al., 2007). However, the general picture which emerges is that some schools are fully governed and financed by public agencies while

² School vouchers refer to a system of public educational finance in which parents are given a tuition certificate by the government that can be used to pay tuition in any "approved" school, public or private.

others are established by private initiative, as a result of the efforts of various churches and faith groups but also of commercial and ideological organisations.

2.1.3 The Faith School debate

Since 2001, when the Church of England announced its intention to expand the number of its schools and the government expressed support for such expansion (Cush, 2005; Marples, 2005), the issue of faith-based schools has been one of the most debated questions at the interface of religion and education in England (Grace, 2003; Kelly, 2003; McGreery et al., 2007). In a way, this is surprising since in England the existence of 'schools with a religious character' maintained by state funding dates back to the introduction of state education in 1870 (Walford, 2001; Cush, 2005; McGreery et al, 2007). Of course, this debate has not been limited to England alone. It is a debate that has characterised discussion on the nature of school provision in Western society as it becomes increasingly secular in character, both in terms of conventional multiculturalism and the intellectual plurality of postmodernism.

The advocates of state-funded faith-based schools have advanced a variety of arguments in favour of such schools. These include the claim that these schools offer high quality education and that as a result their pupils achieve better academic results than secular schools (Garrod, 2003; Jackson, 2003; Pugh and Telhaj, 2007). They have also contended that they bring special qualities to education, which include nurturing a positive school ethos and character (Judge, 2002). The quality of teaching and learning is better in faith schools as evidenced by the fact that they are less likely to require special measures or have serious weaknesses than other schools (Jackson, 2004). They also point to the fact that parents' views of faith schools are very positive and applications for places in church primary and secondary schools outstrip availability nationally (Jackson, 2003). Jackson (2003) also presents research evidence from England to show that the provision of spiritual development is much stronger in church schools (especially in church *secondary* schools) than in other schools, and that the behaviour of students in church schools is more likely to be better than in other schools.

Furthermore, supporters of faith-based schools have argued that these schools better promote social cohesion and the integration of minority communities into the democratic life of the nation by ensuring the interaction of pupils from different socio-economic backgrounds and neighbourhoods and reducing disparities in educational attainment between different ethnic groups (Short, 2002; Grace, 2003; Flint, 2007). Parker-Jenkins et al. (2005: 97) found that "educational institutions may share a religious belief but have varied cultural, socio-economic or linguistic backgrounds".

Others argue that faith schools are not only compatible with social cohesion but can actually reinforce it by strengthening their pupils' knowledge of their cultural heritage, and by raising their students' self-esteem which has been shown to lead to tolerance (Glenn, 2001; Short, 2003; Wright, 2003).

With regard to school choice, proponents of faith schools hold that these schools increase diversity and provide greater choice for parents which, according to Kelly (2007), should lead to better quality education since choice produces competition and competition enhances quality.

Lastly, supporters of faith-based schools see these schools as a 'collective right' in a multicultural society, and believe that parents should be free to educate their children in accordance with their religious convictions in line with Article 26/3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that 'parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children'.

On the other hand, critics of faith-based schools argue that these schools represent a real threat to children's autonomy, especially their emotional autonomy, by forcing them to conform to the demands of a particular religious tradition (Marples, 2005) and by pressuring them to accept particular teachings and practices on the authority of others (Jackson, 2004). This is indoctrination and indoctrination is the antithesis of what education should be about (Pring, 2005). They argue further that faith schools erode social cohesion by separating young people of different religious (and non-religious) backgrounds so that they are brought up ignorant of, or hostile to, other religions (Judge, 2001; Gokulsing, 2006), especially when they are actually politicised (Marks, 2003). In this way, faith schools either cause or reinforce divisions in the community (Pring, 2005). These critics hold that future citizens should learn to live together in society despite their religious and cultural differences since learning citizenship involves interacting with others from different backgrounds (Jackson, 2004).

Against the argument that faith schools offer better quality education, critics argue that even though the overall perception is that faith schools are successful, there is little empirical evidence on their impact in raising academic performance (Parker-Jenkins et al., 2005). In fact Schagen and Schagen (2005) maintain that the impact of faith schools on school outcomes is *not* significant when other variables (socio-economic background, quality of intake, etc) are factored into the equation. Furthermore, they disadvantage other schools by putting in place selection procedures

that cream off the most able students and admit fewer pupils with special educational needs (Jackson, 2004; Pring, 2005).

Critics also regard the use of state funds to finance faith schools as a diversion of resources away from schools committed to promoting a common culture and respecting a diversity of cultural identities (Judge, 2001). In addition, they argue that faith schools nurture a particular faith tradition, and to make state funding available to them is to fund proselytisation and 'mission' (Judge, 2001; Jackson, 2004).

A question that seems to come naturally to mind is why a system that had been in existence for so long in so many Western democratic states should suddenly become controversial. It would seem that with the increasing plurality in culture and religious belief, secularisation and the postmodernist tendencies of Western society, it was just a matter of time before this debate gained momentum. The prevalent view in the 1950s that religious education was a binding force, integrating spiritual, religious, moral and civic elements is gradually being abandoned, it would seem (Jackson, 2004), though after the attack on the World Trade Centre in September 2001 the debate seems to have been reignited (Parker-Jenkins et al., 2005).

At the local level in the UK, a link has apparently been made in people's minds between religious segregation in education and some of the ethnic and racial problems that society has faced, like the 'race riots' in Oldham, Bradford and Leeds in the summer of 2001 (Pring, 2005) as well as the violence at Holy Cross Catholic Primary School in Belfast (Jackson, 2004). All these raise doubts about the wisdom of separate religious schooling and seem to strengthen the arguments against faith-based schools.

We should note, however, that while "none of the arguments put forward against faith-based schools are intrinsic to them" (Jackson, 2004:57), some writers think that supporters of faith-based schools must justify their continued existence (and possible expansion) in terms of the meaning and aims of education (Pring, 2005) and by displaying an openness about ways in which particular religious beliefs impact on the ethos of the school, admissions procedures, curriculum content, social learning and engagement with the wider community (Parker-Jenkins et al., 2005). While it is very difficult to reconcile the opposing sides of the faith school debate, it seems possible to find some kind of compromise that is acceptable to both. As we saw earlier, the US has tried to solve the dilemma by the introduction of vouchers by which they fund individual pupils rather than particular schools. In Northern Ireland and Israel, attempts to address community divisions have resulted in 'integrated schools' (Donnelly and Hughes, 2006). In Northern Ireland, although these schools have reflected a

predominantly Christian society, they have tried to be inclusive of other world faiths and to take into account the needs of children of parents with no faith, thus creating schools which are neither denominational nor secular (Smith, 2001). These and other new models suggest that diverse religious and philosophical convictions can be accommodated within an inclusive community school (Parker-Jenkins et al., 2005), but it remains to be seen if these models can accommodate the concerns of all those involved in the faith school debate.

While Catholic schooling is part of the overall model of faith-based schooling, it is significantly different to other faith-based schools in its philosophy, its processes and its outcomes. This section has discussed the historical origins of faith-based schools, their situation in the developed world today and the controversies that have surrounded them. The following section focuses on *Catholic* education in the developed world with particular attention to its philosophy and the achievement of educational outcomes.

2.2 Catholic schooling in the developed world

Supporters of school choice argue that, in a liberal democratic society, parents have the right to raise their children in a manner consistent with their lifestyle and their religious, philosophical and political values and beliefs (Bosetti, 2004). This is consistent with the stipulation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that 'parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children' (Article 27 § 3). Further, Part II, Article 1 of the 1998 Human Rights Act states that the state shall respect the right of the parents to ensure that education and teaching is in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions. The Catholic Church echoes these statements in one of the documents of the Second Vatican Council - the 'Declaration on Christian Education' - which says

All men of every race, condition and age, since they enjoy the dignity of a human being, have an inalienable right to an education that is in keeping with their ultimate goal, their ability, their sex, and the culture and tradition of their country, and also in harmony with their fraternal association with other peoples in the fostering of true unity and peace on earth (1965, § 1).

Supporters of faith-based schools have used these Acts to bolster the 'parental right argument' and research in the area shows that religion is one of the major factors influencing parental choice of schools (Yang and Kayaardi, 2004; Denessen et al., 2005). According to Bosetti (2004), the primary factor in choice of school for religious private school parents is that their child is in an environment that shares their religious

values and beliefs. This is confirmed by research in the US where Sander (2005) has found that more religious Catholic parents are substantially more likely to send their children to Catholic schools. This phenomenon is explained by the fact that, while secondary schools differ with respect to many characteristics, many of these differences are associated with the denomination of the school (Opdenakker and Van Damme, 2006).

Writing specifically about Catholic schools, Sander (1996) asserts that the key objective of Catholics sending their children to Catholic schools is for them to have a 'Catholic education' which permits them both to get a good grounding in the Catholic faith and to enjoy the 'Catholic school effect'. In other words, Catholics who choose a Catholic school for their child do so because they want an education that takes place within a given perspective, that of the Catholic faith (Arthur, 1995). This is because, as Opdenakker and Van Damme (2006) argue, the effects of denomination (and school type) are related to what is happening inside schools, and what is happening inside schools is critically important for explaining differences in achievement between students in different schools.

Thus, even though the previous section treated faith-based schools as if they were a homogeneous entity, there are differences *between* them. Writing about Church of England schools, for instance, Burn et al. (2001) hold that while Church schools are distinctively and recognisably Christian institutions, the approach of Church of England schools to education is distinctively Anglican rather than Catholic or Evangelical. In the same way, Catholic schools claim to have a distinctive nature and purpose, which marks them out from other schools (secular and faith-based) and which enables them to serve the religious needs of their own faith community (Morris, 2005). In fact, the Catholic Church holds officially that Catholic schools and colleges *do* have a distinctive educational philosophy and purpose based on a specific religious understanding of the nature of humanity and the role of the Catholic Church in society. The 'Declaration on Catholic Education' (1965: §§34-35) says:

Christ is the foundation of the whole educational enterprise in a Catholic school...The Catholic school is committed to the development of the whole man, since in Christ, the Perfect Man, all human values find their fulfilment and unity. Herein lies the specifically Catholic character of the school.

In 1997 the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education issued a document titled *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*. This document focuses

attention on the nature and distinctive characteristics of a Catholic school (§ 4). It affirmed that the Catholic school is at the heart of the Church and has as aims:

- ❖ to participate in the evangelising mission of the Church and to be the privileged environment in which Christian education is carried out (§11).
- ❖ to be a school for the human person and of human persons (§9)
- ❖ although clearly and decidedly configured in the perspective of the Catholic faith, it is not reserved to Catholics only, but is open to all those who appreciate and share its qualified educational project (§16)

From an analysis of this document and others (e.g. Catholic Education, 1977; Declaration on Catholic Education, 1965) it is possible to conclude that the main aims of Catholic education are three-fold: first, to provide opportunities for catechesis; second, to provide a holistic education for all; and finally, to present Christianity in a positive way in an increasingly plural and secular society, by stimulating dialogue with those of other faith traditions and none (Meehan, 2002; CES, 1999). However, it seems clear that even *within* one faith tradition like Catholicism there are schools which reflect different philosophies about education (Parker-Jenkins et al. 2005). In this way, schools have both ‘between’ and ‘within’ differences in student and school outcomes (Marks, 2006) because schools belonging to the same faith tradition can be placed on a theological spectrum ranging from liberal to highly conservative (Jackson, 2004) and because historical contexts and legislation governing school provision differ from one country to another (Conroy, 2001). In addition, the increasing heterogeneity of pupils in Catholic schools with regard to race, religious persuasion and socio-economic status (Parker-Jenkins et al., 2005), necessarily warrants different models of Catholic schooling in different situations. Today, Catholic schools in England and Wales (and elsewhere) are very much inclusive and reflective of the communities in which they are situated (CES, 2003), which makes it very difficult to have consensus about the aims and purposes of Catholic education (Meehan, 2002). The designation ‘Catholic’ does not, in itself, imply a uniformity of educational philosophy. Catholic schools need not view their religious purposes in the same way (Morris, 1997). The Declaration on Christian Education (1965, § 9) makes it clear that although schools that are in any way dependent on the Church must conform as far as possible, the Catholic school may take on different forms in keeping with local circumstances. This lack of consensus regarding Catholic schooling has resulted in competing models in schools. Arthur (1995) identifies three very different models of Catholic schools: the ‘dualistic’, the ‘pluralistic’ and the ‘holistic’. The ‘dualistic’ model separates the secular and religious aims of the school. Religious education, school assemblies, school liturgy and religious events in general are viewed as having little or no relevance to, for example, the teaching of science or preparation for examinations. In this model, the Catholic

ethos of the school is seen as something *additional* so that even in the teaching of religious education, there is separation between catechesis and religious education. The 'pluralistic' model is based on the assumption that all single-faith schools offer an educational setting which is narrow and divisive. It therefore advocates the application of multi-cultural and multi-faith principles to all aspects of a Catholic school's education programme and structures, since many cultures are inextricably linked to particular faiths. In this model, the Catholic school ceases to be 'confessional'³; in other words, it ceases to be based on Catholic beliefs and practices. Lastly, the 'holistic' Catholic school commits itself to pursuing the meaning, values and truths specific to the Catholic faith. While the 'holistic' model does not exclude non-Catholics, it does limit their numbers and non-Catholic pupils who are admitted are expected positively to support the school's character and life (and their parents must demonstrate that they agree with the model of education offered by the school). In this model, the Catholic school seeks to establish a partnership with parents in being the fertile ground for the apostolic mission of the Church and explicitly shares the aims of the Catholic Church so that even in the curriculum there is an attempt to understand each subject from a Catholic perspective.

The *Catholic Schools and other Faiths Report* (CES, 1997) suggests that there can be different valid approaches used by Catholic schools in different situations. The Report recognises three approaches: to offer 'hospitality' to non-Christian children of other faiths whose parents are seeking a faith environment for their children; to see Catholic schools as 'servants' to the local community and at the service of other religious communities, especially in socio-economically deprived areas; and lastly, to see such schools as places of 'encounter, dialogue and partnership' between the Catholic community and other religious communities. In the post-Vatican II period, therefore, the Catholic school has made a conscious effort to change the perception that it is inward-looking and segregated, and instead placed an emphasis upon commitment to social justice and the common good, and this has been evident especially in Western Europe (Parker-Jenkins et al. 2005). Research conducted by Grace (2002) in England shows that Catholic schooling has undergone a considerable transformation, particularly with regard to educational processes, the personal autonomy of pupils, and its relationship with other faiths and the wider community. He concludes that although Catholic education is faith-based, it is entirely compatible with the principles of a liberal education, and a democratic and socially caring society. Furthermore, Kay (2002) holds that the new diocesan comprehensive school in the UK is less obviously

³ Since the pluralistic Catholic school seeks to serve the needs of a multi-cultural and multi-faith community, it is likely to lose its specifically Catholic characteristics and beliefs.

Catholic in its ethos than its selective predecessors, even to the extent of being criticised by traditionalists within the Catholic Church for being too accommodating and too liberal.

As well as adapting to the challenges of plurality in society, Catholic schools are perceived to provide high quality education (Grace, 2001; Parker-Jenkins et al. 2005) and consequently enjoy widespread popularity (Arthur, 2005). In the US, Catholic schools dominate the private secondary school sector (Sander and Krautmann, 1995; Neal, 1997) and have been found to have a positive effect on students who attend them (Morgan 2001). Research in the US also suggests that, for a typical student, attending a Catholic high school substantially increases the likelihood of high school graduation (Sander, 1996; Altonji et al., 2005). In fact, Evans and Schwab (1995) found that attending a Catholic high school raises the probability of finishing high school or entering a four year college by 13 percent. This is partly because Catholic high schools have a low drop-out rate which is particularly noteworthy since many inner-city high schools have very high drop-out rates (Sander and Krautmann, 1995) and most Catholic secondary schools are located in urban areas (Neal, 1997).

Sander and Krautmann (1995) note that several studies in the US suggest that Catholic schools have a positive effect on academic achievement. Sander (1996) found that students in Catholic schools in the US are associated with greater achievement on various academic tests and educational researchers in the US generally find that Catholic schools are more effective than public schools, even when contextual factors are taken into account (Sadker and Sadker, 2000; Sander, 2001; Opdenakker and Van Damme, 2006). In fact, Arthur (2005) argues that given the social and ethnic variety of their intake, it is clear that Catholic schools are among the most successful.

Research in Australia similarly shows that the Catholic school has unique positive effects on the academic results of pupils (Flynn, 1985; cited in Arthur, 2005). In addition, attendance at a Catholic school increases the probability of completing high school by 17 percent and increases the probability of obtaining a higher education and superior performance in the labour market (Vella, 1999). As a result, there is great pressure in Australia for places in Catholic primary and secondary schools, with two out of the six dioceses having to exclude hundreds of children each year (Leavey, 1990). Evidence from New Zealand also shows that Catholic schools, which are integrated into the state system there, are on average between 10 and 20 percent more successful in public examinations (Arthur, 2005).

Comparisons of school performance in the UK suggest that, all other things being equal, pupils attending Catholic schools are likely to achieve better examination results than those attending other maintained schools (Morris, 1997) and secular schools (Garrod, 2003). In England and Wales the performance of Catholic schools in both primary and secondary phases, based on a variety of measures, is high compared to other sectors (Morris, 2005; Arthur, 2005) and Catholic schools are now widely regarded as a 'success story' (Grace, 2001). Furthermore, a survey of Catholic schools in England and Wales shows Catholic schools outperforming other schools in the proportion gaining at least 5 GCSEs⁴ at A* - C level in GCSE, exceeding the national average by between 6 and 8 percent consistently from 2003 -5 (CES, 2006). It seems clear that, even though there has not been a great deal of research in this area in continental Europe, research where such studies have been conducted indicates that Catholic schools have higher levels of achievement as measured by public tests (Arthur, 2005).

Catholic schools in the US which are not selective academically (Lee et al., 1998) have also been shown to be more successful with disadvantaged pupils, like ethnic minorities, the poor and those whose initial achievement is low (Hoffer et al., 1985; Polite, 1992; Morgan, 2001; Kay, 2002; Morris, 2005). For instance, the majority of voucher students (61% in the 2004/2005 school year) attend Catholic schools, which shows that Catholic schools are more racially integrated than public schools. In addition, studies by Sander (2001) indicate that African Americans and Hispanics have substantially higher levels of educational attainment and academic achievement when they attend Catholic schools. Grogger and Neal (2000) found that Catholic schooling enhances attainment for urban students in general, and for urban minorities in particular. Attending a Catholic high school raises the probability of high school graduation for urban minorities (Altonji et al. 2005) especially those who are economically disadvantaged (Cooper, 1996; Neal, 1997; Arthur, 2005). Thus, although there are mixed findings in the literature in this area in the US, there is some evidence that Catholic schools benefit African Americans and Hispanics (Sander, 2005). In England and Wales, Catholic schools closely reflect the national school population in terms of level of disadvantage and special educational needs (SEN) and have a higher proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups (CES, 2006). Nevertheless, the advantage gained by students in Catholic schools tends to increase with level of

⁴ GCSE is the acronym for General Certificate of Secondary Education. This is the external examination system which merged and replaced the old Ordinary ('O') Levels and Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE). Although the original GCSE pass range ran from A to G employers and universities recognise only the 'higher grade' passes, A to C, which are held to be equivalent to the old 'O' Level.

deprivation (Morris, 2005) and a similar trend has been observed for Catholic schools in Australia and New Zealand (Arthur, 2005).

Some writers have argued that these favourable Catholic school effects on school outcomes are at least partly the result of the specific nature of Catholic education (Sander and Krautmann, 1999) since they are all school-related. These writers have pointed to the commitment of Catholic school staff (Kay, 2002; Arthur, 2005); an awareness in the students of the genuine sacrifice they and their parents are making (Morgan, 2001) and to the emphasis on the education of the whole person as particular strengths of Catholic education (Meehan, 2002). In addition, researchers have pointed to a positive school ethos as one of the reasons for the difference in effectiveness between Catholic and public schools (Mok and Flynn, 1998; Opdenakker and Van Damme, 2006). Compared to other faith-based schools, Catholic schools are seen to be more successful in creating an ethos where pupils learn effectively (CES, 2006). They are more successful in setting high expectations and stimulating a desire to learn (Jensen, 1986; CES, 2006). The level of parental involvement in Catholic schools is high compared to public schools (Muller, 1993; Arthur, 2005) and parents are more likely to make a valuable contribution to their children's education than in other schools, especially at secondary level (CES, 2006). Moreover, greater discipline and a certain refinement of manners (Leavey, 1990; Jensen, 1986; Vella, 1999) are also reasons that have been advanced for the better school outcomes of Catholic schools.

However, some have disputed the Catholic school effect on school outcomes. Noell (1982) has argued that Catholic school pupils in America do no better or worse than public school pupils, except for a statistically significant but small advantage on sophomore⁵ reading tests. Willms (1985) suggests that there is no pervasive Catholic school effect on academic achievement, while Hoffer (1998) found weak support for the hypothesis that Catholic schools do particularly well with disadvantaged students. Furthermore, Neal (1997) found that the gains from Catholic schooling are modest for urban whites and negligible for suburban students. Still in the US, some other research suggests that even if Catholic schools do well with disadvantaged pupils, non-Hispanic white Catholics who attend Catholic schools do not receive a superior education to those who attend other schools, as measured by test scores (Sander, 1996). In other words, it seems less clear whether Catholic schools provide a higher quality education for white students (Sander, 2005). More recently, Lubienski and Lubienski (2004) argued that the relatively high raw scores of private (including Catholic) schools were more than accounted for by student demographics.

⁵ A sophomore is a student in the second year of a US college or the tenth grade of high school.

In addition, the findings of Sander and Krautmann, (1995) suggest that while sophomores in Catholic schools in the US may do better, seniors in Catholic high schools are no more likely to acquire more schooling than seniors in public high schools if adjustments are made for selectivity and other background factors. Thus critics hold that the Catholic school effect could be the result of positive selection rather than causation (Sander, 1996). This seems to agree with research in England and Wales where Morris (1998) found that pupils in Catholic schools obtain high levels of academic success at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4⁶ compared to those attending other maintained schools but their achievement in the Advanced Level examinations are lower than one would expect. Better performance of Catholic schools in England and Wales is more noticeable in '11 – 16' than in '11 – 18' schools.

That notwithstanding, Opdenakker and Van Damme (2006) assert that comparisons between Catholic and public schools almost always indicate that – on average – Catholic schools have a higher score on positive school characteristics than public schools. With regard to the US, Neal (1997) and Sander (2005) hold that Catholic school students perform better, on average, than observationally similar students in public schools. This is significant since Catholic schools in the US most closely resemble the ideal of the common school model; that is, they educate children from different backgrounds (especially African American and Hispanic) and achieve promising academic outcomes (Polite, 1992). In the UK they also seem to be more effective than other public and faith-based schools having similar socio-economic pupil profiles (Morris, 2005). If this is true, then it would seem that Catholic schools have substantial strengths, over and above other schools, particularly in creating an inclusive environment where pupils of all abilities can attain highly and develop personally especially during the period of compulsory education (CES, 2006).

Accordingly, Bryk et al. (1993) argue that the academic superiority of Catholic schools in the US is related to their catholicity⁷; in other words, it is something more than simply good or poor pedagogical practice that is responsible for the observed Catholic school effect. This appears to be a reasonable claim to make since school effectiveness research (SER) has demonstrated that school types matter because they have an independent effect on student outcomes (Morris, 1997). However, this is not to say that Catholics have found the perfect school model. As Conroy (2001) argues, it is important that while proponents of Catholic schools involve themselves in a robust

⁶ Key Stage 2 is ages 8 to 11 (years 3, 4, 5 and 6 – formerly the junior school years) while Key Stage 4 is ages 15 and 16 (years 10 and 11).

⁷ Catholicity is used here to refer to the doctrines and practices of the Catholic Church.

defence of what is good and positive in Catholic schooling they must avoid the defence of the indefensible. Nevertheless, there appears to be a persistent and positive association between Catholic schooling and school outcomes the world over. This could be one of the reasons why Catholic schools continue to expand on a world basis. They represent the world's largest non-governmental school system, and would be trebled if the Church had the resources to fund new schools (Arthur, 2005). However, researchers have offered different and sometimes contradictory explanations for the performance and popularity of Catholic schools (Sander, 2005). There appears to be a need for research to show how the Catholic educational philosophy influences educational practices in Catholic schools. In other words, more research is needed to ascertain what combination of 'Catholic' and 'school' factors influences academic effectiveness and accounts for the comparative educational achievement of these schools (Arthur, 2005).

2.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed faith-based education in the developed world and made the point that even though Catholic education is faith-based, it is different to other faith-based educational institutions. Within the Catholic school system there are various kinds of Catholic school depending on where these schools are found and the place which they give to catholicity in their schooling system. More importantly, however, Catholic schools have been shown to be relatively successful in the achievement of educational outcomes even though it is not clear whether the achievement of these outcomes is down to the catholicity of the schools alone. The next chapter discusses education in Cameroon and provides the backdrop to the discussion of Catholic education in Cameroon.

3 CHAPTER THREE: EDUCATION IN CAMEROON

3.1 Historical development

The history of education in Cameroon (as in the rest of Africa) is linked to its traditions and customs indicating the existence of an indigenous system of education before any contact with Europeans. This system of education had as aim the immediate integration of the child into the society and the preparation for a responsible adult life. Traditional education included all the processes by which a child acquired and developed the abilities, attitudes and forms of behaviour which rendered him a useful member of society (Fonkeng, 2007). However, with regard to 'formal' education, Islamic education was the first to be introduced to Cameroon. Early contacts with Western Sudan and the Islamic world led to the establishment of Koranic schools, especially in the northern part of Cameroon which is predominantly Muslim (Leke, 2003). Western-type schooling effectively began in Cameroon with the advent of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) pioneered by the Rev. Joseph Merrick who opened the first school in Bimbia in 1844 (Ihims, 2003; Fonkeng, 2007). In fact, in the pre-colonial period¹, the BMS was the *sole* provider of Western-type education in Cameroon (Leke, 2003) with three primary schools and eight feeder schools (Che, 2007). Baptists provided education to Cameroonian children for more than 40 years (1844-1888) before the first government school was opened (Ihims, 2003). Thus, in Cameroon, as in many other nations, religious bodies pioneered the educational endeavour, and again as elsewhere in the world, the basic purpose in opening schools was the evangelisation of indigenous peoples (Fonkeng, 2007; Leke, 2003).

The German annexation of Cameroon on July 12, 1884 put an end to the educational endeavour of the Baptist Missionary Society (Leke, 2003). In January 1886 the BMS handed over all their assets to the Basel Mission, a German-speaking missionary society with headquarters in Basel, Switzerland (Ihims, 2003). The task of educating Cameroonians was then taken over by the German Basel Mission (Che, 2007) so that a British-oriented system of education was replaced by a German-oriented education system. Between 1886 and 1920, eight Christian missionary bodies, mostly of German origin, took over education in Cameroon with a brief not only to "Christianise" but also to "Germanise" the local people (Ihims, 2003; Fonkeng, 2007). It was during this period

¹ The Germans, who were Cameroon's first colonial masters, annexed the country in 1884, 40 years after the BMS had opened the first school in the country. During this period the focus of education was on the primary level.

(more precisely in 1891) that the German Pallotine Fathers² opened the first Catholic school in Cameroon (Shu, 2000; Leke, 2003).

It was during this period that the government joined in the task of educating Cameroonians by opening the first government (public) primary school at Bell Town in Douala in 1888 (Shu, 2000; Ihims, 2003), though the German authorities were not particularly enthusiastic about the mass education of Cameroonians since throughout the entire period of German annexation (1884-1918) only five government primary schools out of a total of 793 schools were in operation in the country (Shu, 1985. cited in Leke, 2003). Public schools had as objective to maintain the 'Pax Germanica' (that is, helping the colonial authority to maintain security, order and authority) but there also developed a *cooperation* between the colonial power and the missionaries in which, in return for keeping their autonomy and identity, Church schools promoted German culture and political stability (Fonkeng, 2007).

In 1892 the German authorities drew up a syllabus for Togo and Cameroon which covered a period of five years (Boyle, 1996), and which was followed in 1907 by a conference between the missionaries and government authorities to formulate official guidelines for education in Cameroon (Leke, 2003; Ihims, 2003). In 1910, an educational law was enacted by which the German colonial government assumed control and regulation of all education in both government and mission schools (Leke, 2003). Mission schools were required to prepare their pupils for state examinations, and to promote German culture and civilization. They were also obliged to follow the programme laid down by government and teach the German language in order to obtain financial assistance (Mensah, 2000; Ihims, 2003), the amount of which depended on the number of pupils who passed the official examination.

As it turned out, the colonial government created very few schools, leaving the task of education largely in the hands of missionaries, with the government acting as regulatory authority (Allo Allo, 2003). By 1913, just before the First World War, there were only four government schools in Cameroon with an enrolment of 833 pupils, as against 625 mission schools with in excess of 40,000 pupils (Ihims, 2003). Between 1844 and 1916 (i.e. the period of German administration in Cameroon) it is estimated that 95% of schools in the territory were owned and run by Mission bodies (Ihims, 2003).

² The Pallotine Missionaries, also known as the Society of the Catholic Apostolate, were founded in 1835 by the Roman priest, St. Vincent Palloti. The members run schools and retreat houses, and work in parishes and clinics and undertake charitable works.

Mission Body	Number of Schools	Total Enrolment
Basel Mission	319	17,833
Catholic Mission	151	12,532
American Presbyterian	97	6,545
German Baptist Mission	57	3,151
Gossner Society	1	Not Available
Total	625	40.061

Table 1: Distribution of schools among mission bodies at end of German period (Ihims, 2003)

With the defeat of Germany in the First World War, Cameroon became a League of Nations' mandate under joint French and British rule (1922-1946). In 'French Cameroon', a series of Orders signed by the government between 1920 and 1930 guaranteed not only a steady expansion in educational provision but also collaboration between the state and voluntary agencies (Leke, 2003). According to Mensah (2000) the Order of July 25, 1921, brought the system of education in French Cameroon in line with practice in France, but contrary to the French spirit of separating Church and state, the government imposed as a condition for the creation of a Church the opening of a school alongside it.

Thanks to this practice, by the end of the mandate period, there were in French Cameroon 137 public primary schools, 1,188 private primary schools (which at this time belonged to the various missionary bodies), 3 private higher primary schools, 5 public secondary schools, and 2 private secondary schools (Shu, 1985. cited in Leke, 2003).

Che (2007) argues that one of the principal reasons why schooling spread so quickly in French Cameroon was that French educational policy in Cameroon laid great emphasis on the teaching of the French language to the masses for political and administrative reasons. Additionally, the French seem to have inherited from the Germans the policy of giving financial assistance to Mission schools. Initially, the amount was based on the number of pupils being taught French in school. Later, a new system of financial support was introduced by which assistance was based on the number of pupils who passed the First School Leaving Certificate examination conducted by the government in French and based on a prescribed curriculum (Ihims, 2003).

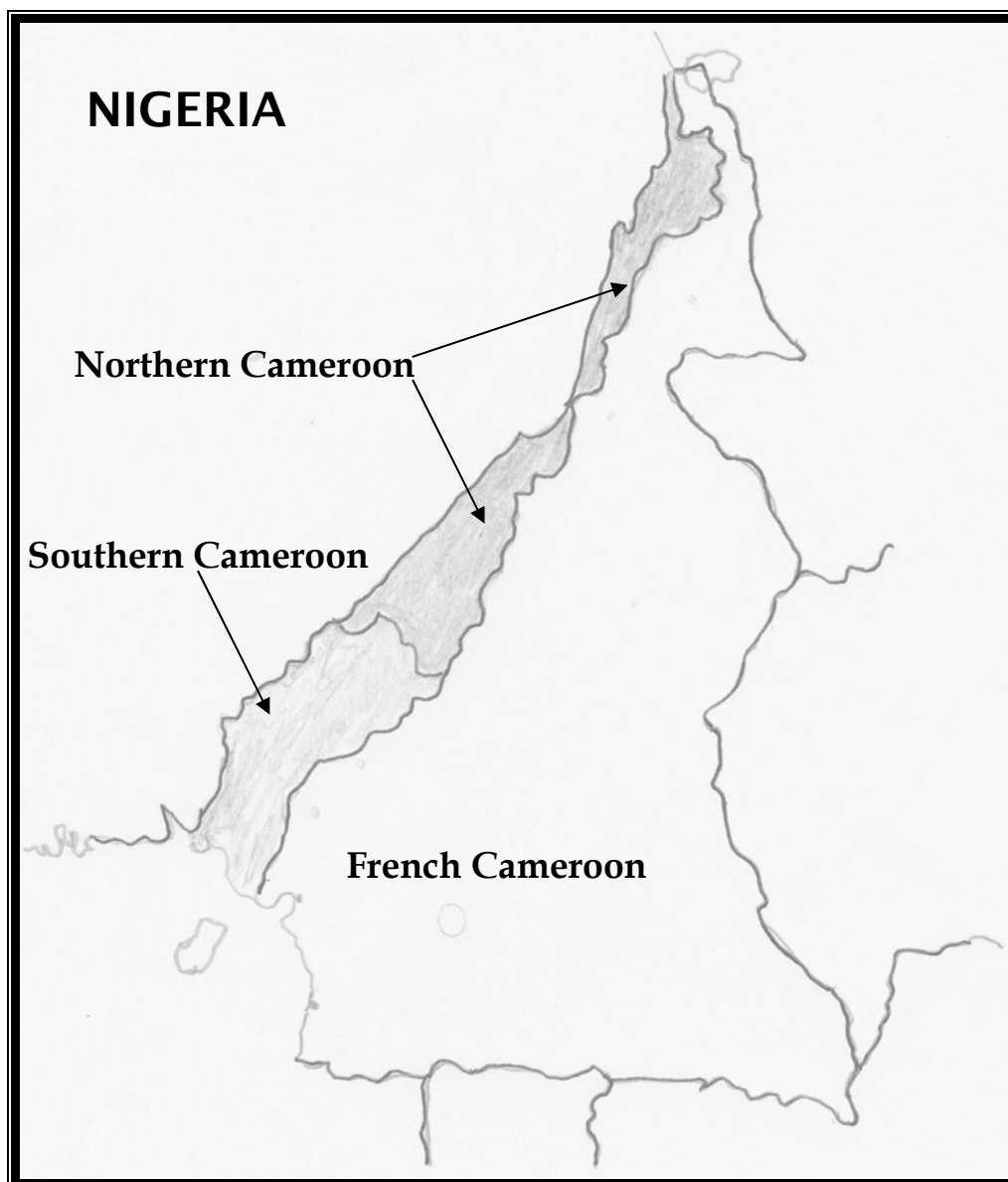


Figure 1: Map of British and French Cameroons (1922-1961)

On the other hand, educational activity in British Cameroons (i.e. Northern and Southern Cameroons) took off less smoothly. For one thing British Cameroons did not have as many missionary bodies as French Cameroon; for another, British Cameroons was administered by the British as part of Nigeria and consequently treated as an appendix to Nigeria (Leke, 2003). However, as in French Cameroon, the education of the indigenes was essentially left in the hands of the missionaries (Che, 2007). Shu (2000: 4) cites the Report of the United Kingdom Colonial Office to the League of Nations in 1922 which states:

All schools will in due course come under the direct control of Mission Societies, who are in a better position to develop the discipline and character with the aid

of those moral...sanctions without which all knowledge becomes harmful to the individual and a danger to the state.

Church schools were divided into two categories, namely 'Assisted' Mission Schools and 'Unassisted' Mission Schools. The former were those which met government standards and were given financial assistance; the latter, which were in the majority, did *not* meet government standards and so received no financial assistance (Leke, 2003). By the end of the British mandate there were fewer schools in British Cameroon than in French Cameroon. While the British government supported the mission schools both financially and administratively, they lacked the centralised style of the French educational authorities. (Che, 2007).

At the end of the Second World War (1939-1945), the United Nations Trusteeship Council took over supervision of mandated territories of the defunct League of Nations but the French and British continued to administer their parts of Cameroon as 'Trust' territories. In the UN trusteeship period (1946-1960/1)³ greater emphasis was laid on post-primary and professional education in both the French and British Cameroons (Leke, 2003). In addition, collaboration between the governments and voluntary agencies increased. The 1952 Ordinance made provision for the teaching of Religious Knowledge in government schools and ensured a system of education where all schools in the territory were open to all children, irrespective of creed, race or colour (Ihims, 2003). By 1959, for instance, the Catholic, Basel and Baptist Missions in British Cameroon operated 187, 140, and 54 primary schools respectively and between them, ran three secondary schools and six teacher training schools (Mensah, 2000).

After the war, a new element was introduced into the educational landscape of British Cameroons: the entry of two private firms into the domain of education. The Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) and Messrs Elders and Fyffes, owners of plantations in the territory, were granted the status of 'Voluntary Agency' in 1951 (Ihims, 2003), and opened and ran primary schools for workers' children.

In French Cameroons, two secondary schools had been established prior to the trusteeship period. They were College Vogt in Yaounde (opened by the Catholic Church) and the Institute of Evangelical Missions opened at Libamba in 1945 by the American Presbyterian and French Evangelical Missions. By 1959 there were in all 10 private secondary schools in the territory (Ihims, 2003). The French administration

³ The trusteeship period ended for 'French Cameroon' in 1960 and for 'British Cameroon' in 1961 when they obtained independence from the British.

continued to make various kinds of grants available to Mission schools, as had been the case in the Mandate period.

Overall, when independence was proclaimed in 1960 for French Cameroon and 1961 for British Cameroons, missionary bodies had more than double the number of pupils in their schools (primary, secondary and professional) compared to public schools: 234,490 for mission schools as against 108,325 for public schools (Mensah, 2000). The predominance of mission schools before and after independence particularly at the primary level was remarkable (Fonkeng, 2007).

After independence, when the British and French Cameroons came together to form a federation (Federal Republic of Cameroon) in 1961, control of secondary and higher education was placed in the hands of the federal government, while control of nursery, primary and teacher training schools was in the hands of the states (Leke, 2003). Thus, primary education in British Cameroon (now West Cameroon) continued to be carried out by missionary bodies, while the government in French Cameroon (now East Cameroon) gradually took control of primary education, opening more schools to the detriment of mission schools and even taking over some of the mission schools (Mensah, 2000). The French republican principle of strict separation of church and state seemed to take root during this period in East Cameroon (Shu, 2000).

When the two states came together to form the United Republic of Cameroon in 1972, this did not alter the educational systems which had existed under the federation. The English-speaking provinces (former West Cameroon) still operated a system of education similar to the British system while the French-speaking provinces (former East Cameroon) had a system similar to the French educational system (Fonkeng, 2007). In fact, the tendency after reunification⁴ was for each state to cling tenaciously to the education system of its former colonial master (Amin, 2000; Fomenky, 2000). This affected the relationship between the state and private schools. While in West Cameroon the state continued to participate in private education by providing Grants-in-Aid to private schools, in East Cameroon private schools received government subventions determined by government budgetary provisions (Mensah, 2000).

During the period of reunification (1972 – 1984) secondary education was widely recognised throughout the country as the domain of private agencies (mission and lay private) as there were few government or public schools (Fonkeng, 2007). The

⁴ Reunification refers to the period when the two states came together to form a unitary state similar to the one which had existed before Cameroon was divided between the British and the French, except that Northern Cameroon had now become part of Nigeria.

existence of a large and influential private educational sector was bound to 'impose' a partnership on the government. According to Fonkeng (2007), one of the main characteristics of this period was the role of the Church and lay private school proprietors and the maintenance of a mutually consultative, cooperating relationship with state authorities regarding pedagogical procedures and financial assistance from the state.

During this period a law in 1976 on private education replaced Grants-in-Aid which had existed in the West Cameroon school system since 1926 with the state subventions system practised in East Cameroon (Nwana, 2000). This affected the financial situation of mission schools in West Cameroon adversely but the worse was still to come. According to Boyle (1996) government subsidies to denominational schools were reduced in 1989 at national level from CFA francs 8,000 million (about £10,333,312) to 6,000 million (about £7,748,104). The situation worsened in the next three years as government began to delay payments, and by 1993 was over CFA francs 205 million (about £264,705) in arrears for 51 Catholic schools in the capital (Yaounde) alone. This led to the raising of tuition fees to enable these schools stay afloat but it also led to the closure of others. For this reason, Mensah (2000) holds that the greatest problem that has been facing private education in Cameroon is finances as private schools have to charge school fees to raise the money they need to run their schools.

One of the problems that has plagued Cameroon since reunification is how to cope with the two educational systems that were inherited from the British and French (Nwana, 2000). In spite of several attempts by successive ministers to reform and harmonise the two educational systems, very little progress has been made (Fomenky, 2000; Allo Allo, 2003). These attempts have been hampered not only by fears that one educational system could assimilate the other but also by the fact that for a long time Cameroon has been running an education system dictated by the whims and caprices of high government officials (Leke, 2003). Cameroonian writers hold that there is need to evolve a comprehensive national educational policy which would stay while individual politicians come and go (Shu, 2000).

To many Cameroonians, harmonisation implies a synthesis of both systems of education to bring out what is best in each system with a view to adopting a single curriculum leading to the same end-of-course examinations (Fonkeng, 2007). However, there are other people who think that harmonisation should also mean a blending of the two education systems without necessarily creating a monolithic system. In this strategy certain aspects of the curriculum at the primary and secondary school levels could have the same content but taught in conformity with the method and procedures

that define each of the two existing systems. The pedagogical assumption here is that content is universal no matter the medium of instruction used, and consequently subject to standardisation (Tchombe, 2001). At any rate, research findings in the area of harmonisation of the two systems of education have remained unimplemented (Fonkeng, 2007). Today, English-speaking and French-speaking Cameroonians operate independent and autonomous examination boards (the GCE Board and the *Office du Baccalaureat* respectively) and the drive toward harmonisation seems to have lost steam. Moreover, Law no. 98/004 of 14 April 1998 which lay down guidelines for education in Cameroon stipulates that the Cameroonian education system shall be organised in terms of the English-speaking and French-speaking sub-systems (Leke and Ndongko, 2000).

In spite of this, some aspects of education in Cameroon have been harmonised. For instance, the state subvention system which was introduced to the English-speaking region of Cameroon from the French-speaking region is one of the very few successful attempts at harmonisation. In addition, technical education and teacher training syllabuses have been harmonised in the whole country (Nwana, 2000) and a common syllabus for nursery schools has been introduced since 1987 (Fomenky, 2000). Apart from these, the harmonisation of the two systems has been limited to structural aspects in terms of the duration of the courses. Both systems start with nursery education that lasts for two years, where children enter at the age of four years and graduate at the age of six years. Primary education for both systems now takes six years when it used to take six years for French-speaking Cameroonians and seven for English-speaking Cameroonians. Secondary education remains seven years but with a structure common to both systems. The first cycle has an observation sub-cycle of two years with common core syllabus and an orientation sub-cycle of three years of general or technical education (Tchombe, 2001).

Within both systems of education, however, there remains a vibrant private education tradition (both secular and confessional) which continues to complement government efforts in the education of young Cameroonians (Fonkeng, 2007). The 1976 law on private education (Law no. 76/15 of July 8, 1976) gave the government direct control over all private schools; imposed a state curriculum on these schools and determined the rate of school fees and the salary structure for teachers in the private sector (Mensah, 2000). This law created four agencies under which private educational activities could be carried out, namely the Catholic, Protestant, Islamic and Lay Private educational agencies. However, in trying to stabilise the cost of education and keep tuition fees in the private sector from spiralling, the law triggered a situation where private educators could not meet the costs of running their schools. To make things

worse, Cameroon ranked high among heavily stricken countries in the economic crisis of the 1980s and 1990s (Eloundou-Enyengue and Davanzo, 2003) which made it difficult, and sometimes impossible, for government to pay subventions to private schools. The result was that teachers in private primary and secondary schools who were the lowest paid workers in the country sometimes went for months without their already meagre salaries (Mensah, 2000).

Despite all the odds private schools have evolved and are now firmly entrenched as an integral part of the education system of Cameroon. Islamic schools which were previously thought to be limited to the three northern (predominantly Muslim) provinces are now an important feature on the educational landscape of the country. According to Fonkeng (2007) the Northwest and West Provinces, which are predominantly Christian, now have the highest number of Islamic primary schools as well as pupils and teachers in the whole country, and there is every reason for Islamic education to gain grounds and to have a guaranteed future in the national education system in Cameroon.

The other denominational schools (Catholic and Protestant) are very popular in Cameroon and have a reputation for high quality education. They are smaller in size than most public or lay private schools and have a good record of educational excellence (Fonkeng, 2007). On the other hand, lay private schools are generally regarded as profitable ventures (Boyle, 1996) and tend to do less well in terms of academic attainment. They are less expensive than denominational boarding schools and so provide a cheaper alternative to students who cannot afford boarding school fees. In recent years, however, there has been an increase in the number of elitist private nursery, primary and secondary schools that charge the same or even higher tuition than denominational schools (Fonkeng, 2007).

Private educational initiatives seem to be shaping the future of education in Cameroon as public resources dry up (Boyle, 1996). According to Fonkeng (2007), private education in Cameroon constitutes 27.03% of students, 33.53% of teachers and 33.80% of schools, controlling more than a third of national education. These figures are impressive considering that private schools are all fee-paying while government schools are free. Private schools have made their mark in the national system of education and, in recent years, they have been in very high demand at all levels.

The evolution of education in Cameroon can be divided into three periods: the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. However, it is difficult to make such a neat distinction for every part of the country as traditional, non-formal education and

Koranic schools which existed prior to the advent of the Germans in Cameroon still exist in some parts of the country. Further, educational practices in the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial systems of education often overlap greatly and blur any neat distinctions which one could be tempted to make between these periods (Allo Allo, 2003). Whatever distinctions are made with regard to the different periods of development of the Cameroon education system, one thing is certain: faith schooling has been a feature of the Cameroon education system from the pre-colonial period till date. The government and lay private providers of education only joined in later to support the work which faith groups were already doing in the field of education. For the future, however, it seems that the government and private providers of education will have to work together if the quantity and quality of educational provision has to be maintained and improved upon.

This section has sketched the background to education in Cameroon and demonstrated that faith schools preceded government and lay private schools in the country and played a vital role in the formation of the first Cameroonian nationalists and elite. In addition, faith schools have consistently performed better than government and lay private schools and are popular among students and parents. However, following the economic crisis in the early 1990s and the subsequent withdrawal of government financial support to these schools they have gone through difficult times. Despite these difficulties, faith schools are still doing well, even though they are more expensive. The next section will trace the origins of Catholic schooling in Cameroon and the contribution which Catholic schools have made to education and to the nation.

3.2 Catholic education in Cameroon

As mentioned in the preceding section, Islamic schooling existed in the northern region of Cameroon before the advent of Christian missionary educational activity. Christian educational activity in Cameroon was pioneered by the English Baptist Missionary Society, who were followed in this venture by the German Basel missionaries, the North American Presbyterian missionaries, the German Catholic Pallotine missionaries, and the German Baptist missionaries (Fonkeng, 2007). These four missionary bodies were responsible for most of the education which Cameroonians received during the German era (1884 – 1916) (Leke, 2003).

Before 1890 there were no Catholic schools in Cameroon (Ndze, 1992). The Pallotine Fathers opened the first Catholic school in 1891 at Marienberg (Shu, 2000; Leke, 2003), mainly for the purposes of evangelisation (Betene, 1992) but also to provide education which they believed would improve on the status and living standards of

Cameroonians. The Pallotine Fathers also opened the first girls boarding school in the country in 1894 in Bonjongo (Ndze, 1992) thus making the Catholic Church the pioneer in the education of girls in Cameroon and consequently a pioneer in the improvement of the status of the Cameroonian woman. By 1910, the Pallotine Fathers were running 16 main schools and 72 feeder schools with a pupil enrolment of 15,801 boys and 665 girls; and by 1913 they were running 151 schools with an enrolment more than 15 times the total enrolment in government schools, making the Catholic Church the second largest provider of education in the country after the Basel Mission (Fonkeng, 2007). Further, of the four seminaries in Cameroon during the German period, one belonged to the Catholic Mission. In this seminary, students were trained as teachers *and* as priests, an indication that the quality of training and the importance placed on education was comparatively high. Generally speaking, the Pallotine Fathers not only offered education to greater numbers of Cameroonians, but offered *quality* education as well. In 1910, for instance, Catholic schools recorded the best results of any category at the end of course examinations (Messina, 1992). Between 1891 when they opened their first school and 1913, the Catholic Church was running a total of 204 schools with an enrolment of 19,576 pupils, second only to the Basel Mission schools which had an enrolment of 23,000 pupils (Messina, 1992).

The First World War both brought an end to German hegemony in Cameroon and disrupted educational activity. In 1916 Cameroon was divided between France and Britain as a League of Nations Mandate territory. In French Cameroon, Catholic educational activity was carried out by the Holy Ghost and the Sacred Heart missionaries, and later on by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, who worked predominantly in the Muslim north (Messina, 1992). Because the Germans had left the education of Cameroonians mainly in the hands of mission bodies, the French found it very difficult to take over education without the aid of missionaries. Catholic teachers who had taught under the German Pallotine Fathers were given an eight-month re-formation and re-engaged (Messina, 1992). Fondjo (1992) asserts that the French colonial administration even obliged missionaries to open schools because they only granted permission to build a church if the missionaries were going to open a school alongside it.

The period between 1916 and 1922 saw very little in the way of primary school growth (Ndze, 1992). In fact there was a sharp decline in the number of schools as a result of the war and German involvement in it. When the French Holy Ghost Fathers took over the work of the Pallotine Fathers in 1918 there were only 27 schools with a total enrolment of 1,934 pupils (Fonkeng, 2007). However, the French administration forged a collaborative relationship with the mission bodies and provided financial support in

the form of subventions to all recognised mission schools in return for regulating the functioning and organisation of these schools. Moreover, the results of the French language examination were to be used as the basis for government financial assistance to Mission schools (lhims, 2003; Fonkeng, 2007). The result was that by 1920 the number of schools had begun to rise again and Catholic schools now numbered 88 with a total enrolment of about 6,000 pupils (Fonkeng, 2007). By 1937, while French Cameroon had only 10,000 pupils enrolled in government schools, there were 85,000 pupils in mission schools of which 35,000 were enrolled in French Catholic schools, 31,500 in American Presbyterian schools, 18,000 in French Protestant schools, and 500 in American Adventist schools (Atayo, 2000). However, because eligibility for government subvention was based in part on performance in official examinations (Fonkeng, 2007), it would seem that Catholic schools were doing comparatively better than other religious schools in enrolment and teaching terms. For instance, in 1920, Catholic schools had 6,000 of the 9,000 pupils enrolled in religious schools but received a disproportionate 73% of the total subvention. (Fonkeng, 2007). Messina (1992) confirms that quality education provision was the chief concern of Catholic missionaries in this period in French Cameroon and this is demonstrated by the fact that in 1944 Catholic schools produced the best results among all religious schools. Again in 1952 and in 1957 Catholic schools presented the highest number of candidates and obtained the best overall results in the official examinations at the end of primary school.

Perhaps as a result of the quality of education provided by Catholic schools, their enrolment figures experienced a steady growth. According to Messina (1992), in 1951 Catholic schools numbered 315 with an enrolment of 72,516 pupils, and at independence in 1960 out of a national enrolment of 356,093 pupils, there were 159,515 (44.79%) pupils in Catholic schools alone, even though Catholics made up only about 25% of the population. This number comprised 104,798 boys and 54,537 girls nationally, but Catholic schools enrolled the highest number of girls and, as in the German period, they were pacesetters in the education of girls.

In spite of the fact that Catholic schools enrolled so many pupils, were running their schools well and were successful in official examinations, they encountered enormous financial difficulties during the French period. Under the French mission, teachers were less well paid than they were under the Germans. By 1926, Catholics, under Monsignor Vogt, were relying on various international associations to run schools (Messina, 1992). Later, when France agreed to pay subventions to religious schools, this depended on its good will. In 1945, for instance, no subventions were paid to private schools even though educating a child in a private school cost the government far less

than in a government school. According to Messina (1992), in 1952, while each pupil in a government school cost the state 21,500 French francs, their counterparts in private schools only received 1,700 French francs as government contribution to their education.

In British Cameroon, the colonial government followed the German policy of leaving education largely in the hands of Christian missionary bodies. After 1927, assisted schools which had up till then received grants-in-aid on a per capita basis became grant-aided on the basis of teachers' salaries and also became eligible for additional financial assistance towards school equipment, maintenance and salaries of expatriate teachers (Ndze, 1992)⁵. Mission bodies active in education in British Cameroon included the Catholic Mill Hill, the Basel Presbyterian, and the American Baptist missionaries (Fonkeng, 2007) and, as in French Cameroon, Catholic schools seemed to be leading in the provision of education. In 1938, the Catholic Church had the highest number of Assisted Mission schools (i.e. Mission schools eligible to receive grants-in-aid) and the highest enrolment as well, compared to the other religious bodies (Fonkeng, 2007). This is important because the official policy in Southern Cameroons for the award of grants-in-aid was based on the efficiency of the schools concerned. Ihims (2003) states that the standard of efficiency as laid down in the Education Code was the basis of allocating government grants-in-aid, so that the most efficient school received the highest amount. In 1939, the Catholic Church pioneered secondary education in Cameroon by opening St. Joseph's College, Sasse in Buea (Mensah, 2000) and in 1956, she again pioneered the secondary education of girls in Cameroon by opening Queen of the Rosary College in Mamfe as she had done at primary level. For a time this remained the only girls' secondary school in the country (Ndze, 1992; Ihims, 2003).

According to Mensah (2000), by 1959 the Catholic Church was the leading provider of education in British Cameroon with 187 primary schools (as against 140 for the Basel Mission and 54 for the Baptist Mission). In addition, it owned two of the four secondary grammar schools in British Cameroon – St. Joseph's College Sasse and Queen of the Rosary College Mamfe as well as three of the six private teacher training colleges. Between 1960 and 1966, the Catholic Church opened seven 'prestigious secondary schools' in British Cameroon as well as technical colleges to cater for the needs of Cameroon as a developing country (Ndze, 1992). This was a great leap forward for

⁵ Grants-in-aid was the difference between "recognised" or "total" expenses of a school and the total amount of fees collected, otherwise referred to as "assumed local contribution". The formula for allocating "grants-in-aid" was therefore: *recognised expenses – assumed local contribution = grants-in-aid* (Ihims, 2003)

English-speaking Cameroonians in educational terms since the British had opened no secondary school in the territory during the trusteeship period (Ihims, 2003).

Up until 1976, religious schools in British Cameroon received capital grants with which they could put up new buildings and renovate old ones, but state subventions replaced grants-in-aid to private schools in 1976. While grants-in-aid had paid the shortfall in the school budget between schools fees and teachers' salaries and other expenditure, the payment of subvention depended on government budgetary constraints and did not take the school's financial needs into account (Atayo, 2000). The 1987 law on education (Law No. 87/022) further made it clear that the payment of subvention was not an obligation on the part of the government. These laws had a devastating effect on private schools in Cameroon. Messina (1992) states that in 1976 a teacher in a government school with the same certificate as his colleague in a private school earned two or three times more than the latter. Catholic schools were the worst affected considering that in the 1976/77 school year Catholic schools alone accounted for 24% of national primary school enrolment and for 16.6% of secondary school enrolment (Atayo, 2000). Ten years later, in the 1986/87 school year, the Catholic Church still had the highest primary and secondary school enrolment among denominational providers of education. Catholic schools accounted for 63% of enrolment in faith primary schools and 66% of enrolment in faith secondary schools (Mensah, 2000). Thus, the introduction of state subventions to private schools and the fact that the payment of subventions was arbitrary, erratic, partial and sometimes not paid at all (Ndi, 2006) had serious consequences for Catholic education in particular. Further, in the 1990/91 school year, subventions were reduced by 33% and even the meagre contribution which government now had to pay was sometimes delayed for up to ten months (Betene, 1992). To further confound issues for Catholic education, the economic crisis which hit the country in the 1980s and 1990s led to two drastic salary cuts in 1993 and 1994 amounting to an almost 60% reduction in salaries, followed by a 50% devaluation of the CFA franc in 1994 (Ndi, 2006). Because all private primary schools are fee-paying and all government primary schools are considered free (Fonkeng, 2007) there was a mass exodus of pupils and teachers from Catholic to government schools. According to Betene (1992), between 1987 and 1991 Catholic primary schools in Cameroon lost 59,371 pupils, an average loss of 11,874 a year.

Thus, in spite of the fact that Catholic schools appeared to be doing so well, their survival was now threatened by two main dangers: the lack of financial resources to sustain Catholic educational activity and the consequent decline in Catholic school enrolment (Betene, 1991). This resulted in an inability to put up or even renovate existing infrastructure, an inability to pay teachers whose salaries were already a third

of the salaries of their government colleagues, and a decline in the quality of education provision in Catholic schools (Mensah, 2000). It was no surprise that the public examination results of these schools, which had hitherto been among the best in the country began to experience a slide into mediocrity (Betene, 1991).

In view of these developments, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Cameroon wrote a pastoral letter about Catholic education in which they insisted on a number of issues. Firstly, they advocated the right of tax-paying parents to choose the school that suits their convictions without being penalised for their choice. Secondly, they argued that the Catholic school safeguards and promotes educational pluralism which helps to prepare young people for a true democratic society. Finally, the bishops felt that the Catholic school was being forced to betray the Church's mission of serving the poorest and most disadvantaged in society and was now becoming a centre for forming the children of the rich (Pastoral Letter No 23). Ndi (2006) agrees with the bishops' last point and argues that this situation converted Catholic education, originally and always intended as a service for the humblest and the poorest people to a reserve for the well-to-do and the privileged. Further, delegates at the Sixth Catholic Convention of the Ecclesiastical Province of Bamenda (1991), expressed concern that in a bid to attract pupils, Catholic schools were laying too much emphasis on academic achievement at the expense of other values and were becoming the preserve of the rich.

The contribution of the Catholic school to the development of Cameroon has been both enormous and varied. Hopefully, it has been demonstrated from the literature that the Catholic school was at the forefront of the promotion of the Cameroonian woman and the formation of a Cameroonian female elite (Betene, 1992). Additionally, Catholic catechists and other 'products' of the Catholic school were at the origin of nationalist movements in Cameroon after the Second World War and many others contributed to the political emancipation of the country (Messina, 1992). In Southern Cameroon early leaders and founders of political parties and pressure groups all had distinct Catholic or Christian backgrounds (Ndi, 2005). Today, former pupils of Catholic schools hold leading positions in almost every area of public life in Cameroon (Betene, 1992) and the current president of the country as well as two former prime ministers are all products of Catholic schools.

The 1998 law which laid down guidelines for education in Cameroon clearly states that education shall be provided by the state and that private sector partners shall *assist* the government in the provision of education (Law No. 98/004 of 14 April 1998). Accordingly, Mensah (2000) argues that since it is the duty of the state to educate its children, the state of Cameroon should not consider religious bodies and lay

educational agencies as subsidiaries but as an arm of government in the task of educating young Cameroonians, at least at the primary level. However, in spite of the fact that Catholic schools are working in very difficult circumstances, they are perceived to be doing extremely well as far as school outcomes are concerned.

Carmody's (2003) description of the situation of Catholic schools in Zambia fits the situation of the Catholic school in Cameroon almost perfectly. He asserts that Catholic institutions' academic programmes have merited repeated acclaim from government, and have become much sought after by parents and students, both Catholic and non-Catholic. Even when government grants from the 1980s onward became less and less adequate, Catholic institutions maintained high academic and infrastructural standards. They had books and equipment which were frequently the envy of government institutions. What they have perhaps lost in terms of proportionate quantity, they greatly gained in quality. Even within a tightly government-regulated system they have made a distinctive contribution.

It is difficult to see why Catholic schools which are very popular with parents and have a good record of academic excellence and other educational outcomes (Fonkeng, 2007), and which have proven historically to be cheaper to run than government schools (Ndze, 1992) have not received the full support of the government.

Government financial support to Catholic schools would help make them more accessible to poorer Cameroonians and therefore less elitist and less the preserve of the rich and privileged. It is true that school effectiveness involves several factors bound up with each other in complex ways (Gerwitz, 1998) but in the light of the foregoing discussion, it would seem that Catholic schools in Cameroon are perceived to be more effective than government schools. It is hoped that this study will throw more light on Catholic school educational outcomes and so show whether Catholic schools in Cameroon actually do what they claim to be doing. The study will do so by attempting answers to the three research questions set out in Chapter One, namely:

1. Do Catholic school students in English speaking Cameroon achieve relatively high academic results?
2. Is the Catholic school academic success the result of its distinctive Catholic ethos?
3. What are the other educational outcomes of Catholic schooling and how do these contribute to build up a democratic Cameroon?

3.3 Chapter summary

Chapter Two explored the origins and development of faith-based education in the industrialised world and honed in on Catholic education in the second section of the chapter. This chapter has carried out a similar exercise for Cameroon only, tracing the

origins of faith-based education and then narrowing in on Catholic education in Cameroon. These two chapters have thus explored the origins and contributions of faith-based schooling and of Catholic schools in the industrialised world and in Cameroon and have focused specifically on Catholic education and its success in the developed world and in Cameroon. The claims which have been made for Catholic education and Catholic schools in Cameroon in this chapter will have to be investigated, and the next chapter sets out how this investigation is going to proceed. It lays out the philosophical assumptions that underpin the research methods adopted, explains why a certain methodology was chosen over and above others and the instruments that will be used to collect the data needed to investigate the claims about Catholic schools in Cameroon.

4 CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to choose, reflect upon, evaluate and justify the methods and approaches used to research the effectiveness of Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) define methodology as the philosophical framework that relates to the entire process of research. The aim of methodology is to help us understand, in the broadest possible terms, not only the products of scientific enquiry but also the process itself (Brannen, 2005).

Consequently, it is important to understand the methodology used in a piece of research to be able to effectively judge its worth. As Wellington (1996:16) contends, “no one can judge the value of a piece of research without knowing its methodology”. The chapter begins with a brief discussion of the meaning of research and the two traditions that have dominated social and educational research in the last few decades. Such a discussion allows researchers to position themselves within a research tradition and so to select those research methods which best suit their work. The rest of the chapter deals with this study’s empirical model and the specific instruments used. The appropriateness and limitations of these instruments are then discussed and the implications for their use in this study are considered.

4.1 Defining research

Howard and Sharp (1983:6) define research as “seeking through methodological processes to add to one’s own body of knowledge and, hopefully, to that of others, by the discovery of non-trivial facts and insights”. In addition to producing knowledge that is new, researchers work within certain research paradigms which are the “the worldviews or belief systems that guide researchers” (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998: 3) so that the knowledge they produce is deemed acceptable, interesting and trustworthy to the community that upholds the paradigm, and recognized as contributing to the specific discipline in which they are working (Booth, 2005). Thus, research is conducted to expand knowledge, as a way of knowing the world and what happens in it, but also as a way of solving problems (Drew, 1980). However, it is ‘a way of knowing’ that is based on systematic and reproducible procedures which aim to provide knowledge on which people can depend. To this end researchers have to follow particular canons which require the use of special procedures, instruments and methods of analysis (Wolf, 1993). It could be safely concluded that in all its many different forms, the central aim of research is knowledge development and that the processes of knowledge development are framed by the type of knowledge that is sought and is, by necessity, rigorous, meticulous and demanding.

For this reason the Frascati Manual (2002) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines research as 'creative work undertaken on a systematic basis to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of knowledge to devise new applications'. According to the OECD, research comes in three forms: 'basic', 'applied' and 'experimental development'. Basic research is 'experimental or theoretical work undertaken primarily to acquire new knowledge of the underlying foundation of phenomena and observable facts, without any particular application or use in view'. Applied research is 'also original investigation undertaken in order to acquire new knowledge. It is, however, directed primarily towards a specific practical aim or objective. Experimental development is 'systematic work, drawing on existing knowledge gained from research and/or practical experience, which is directed to producing new materials, products or devices, to installing new processes, systems and services, or to improving substantially those already produced or installed'. However we conceive of research it is absolutely vital that the processes involved be scrupulously applied throughout the entirety of a study, to ensure that the knowledge that is developed is not flawed, and therefore of little use to the discipline it purports to inform (Caelli et al., 2003).

While it is true that research methods are a matter of rational choice because it is the research question that ought to dictate the method used, there are other reasons why social scientists choose the methods they do, prime among which are underlying philosophies of social science and long-held and cherished tenets about epistemology (Oakley, 1999). As a result of the key ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions of social scientific traditions, there has been considerable controversy among social scientists as to the most appropriate models for researching in the social sciences and the best techniques to use. On the basis of key fundamental assumptions about the nature of the social world, the question of knowing and the nature of knowledge, and the practicality and appropriateness of certain techniques and instruments for social research, social scientists can be broadly divided into positivists and interpretivists (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). These are perhaps best seen as characteristics clustering into two general groups rather than as clear extremes (Burton and Bartlett, 2009).

4.1.1 The 'Positivist' or 'Scientific' model

From the late 19th Century, the scientific model used in the natural sciences was adopted as the most appropriate model for investigating the social sciences. The thinkers most closely associated with the application of the 'scientific' method to the social sciences were the French philosopher Auguste Comte, and the French sociologist, Emile Durkheim. Comte held the empiricist position that the only reliable

source of knowledge is experience. He and Durkheim were anxious to develop an autonomous social science by adopting the philosophy and methodology of the natural sciences and ensuring the researcher remained objective (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989; Ponterotto, 2005). This approach involved the establishment of objective procedures for the collection and interpretation of data, and developed into what most social scientists today refer to as 'positivism' and which finds its fullest expression in the empiricist scientific method. 'Positivism' is a very broad term under which many different approaches to social enquiry are known, including empiricism, objectivism, naturalism, and the 'scientific method' (Grix, 2004).

Positivism is based upon the view that the natural sciences provide the best and possibly only foundation for true knowledge and that the methods, techniques and modes of operation of the natural sciences offer the best framework for the investigation of the social world (Burton and Bartlett, 2009). Since a large proportion of research in the social sciences in general and in education in particular has adopted to a lesser or greater extent this scientific method as the model for its research design (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989), it is important for anyone engaged in educational research to be familiar with its underlying principles. The general principles underlying positivism come together in the 'scientific method', and include the concern to measure and quantify social behaviour in order to explain the regularities of such phenomena and the relationships that may be observed between them by matching the sophistication and rigour of the physical sciences to develop general, 'universal law'-like statements. Positivism thus depends on the belief that human society, like the natural world, is subject to fixed laws; that behaviour can be determined; and that there is little room for choice or multiple interpretations. It is associated with empiricism, behaviourism and naturalism, and tends to attribute 'scientific' status to social research, arguing that knowledge and truth exist only insofar as they can be proved (Wisker, 2008).

The scientific method (and the positivistic assumptions which underpin it), is only one method of social research, though it is arguably the most influential model and has played a crucial role in providing a basis for much educational research (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989) and, until the 1960s was the predominant approach to research in the natural, physical and social sciences (Cohen and Crabtree, 2008). Nevertheless, there has been an ongoing debate between those who argue that positivism and the scientific method provide the only acceptable route to knowledge of the social world and those who reject all or part of that claim. The main criticism against positivism hinges on the qualitative difference between the natural and social worlds. Since human beings can exercise choice and express their own individuality in many

different ways, it is not possible to use the same, hard, often mechanistic and calculating methods of natural science to investigate social phenomena. According to 'anti-positivists', positivism constructs human beings as 'things' whose actions are unproblematic, self-evident, quantifiable, and capable of being objectively investigated (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989). Cohen et al. (2007) suggest that the precise target of the anti-positivist attack has been science's mechanistic and reductionist view of nature, which by definition defines life in measurable terms rather than by inner experience, and excludes notions of choice, freedom, individuality and moral responsibility. Anti-positivists regard the universe as a living organism, rather than as a machine, and so object to positivism on the grounds that it reduces people to mechanistic systems, reduces complex human dynamics to simplistic patterns, and considers the question of causation to be independent of the question of value (Schrag, 1992). Little wonder then that, over time, there arose among social scientists and educational researchers a growing dissatisfaction with positivism and the logic which underpins the scientific method. Within educational research particularly, this model was regarded as having a 'straight-jacket effect' on the practice of research, and was increasingly seen as being incapable of capturing the fluidity, spontaneity and creativity of school and classroom life (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989). Thus, alternative traditions in social and educational research emerged *as a reaction to* positivism and the scientific method, and these 'alternative' methodologies can be subsumed under an interpretive, ethnographic approach.

4.1.2 The Interpretive Ethnographic model

Interpretivism or naturalism is one of the 'alternative' ways of making sense of social reality. These two terms capture the essence of the ethnographic, qualitative model of social research (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989). Although opponents of positivism within the social sciences subscribe to a variety of schools of thought, each with its own subtly different epistemological viewpoint, they are united by their common rejection of the belief that human behaviour is governed by universal laws characterized by underlying regularities (Cohen et al., 2007). As such, interpretivism is an umbrella term which covers just as many variations of approach to social inquiry as positivism (Grix, 2004; Rolfe, 2006). Interpretive social researchers argue for the need to distinguish between the characteristics of the natural world and those of the social world. Following from their belief that there is a qualitative difference between the natural and social worlds, they insist that ways of investigating one must be different to ways of investigating the other. According to them, therefore, the natural scientific paradigm of the positivists is not 'fit for purpose' in terms of investigating the social world. Instead, interpretive researchers hold that the social world can only be understood from the standpoint of individuals who are part of the ongoing action

being investigated, and that the ethnographic model of a person is an autonomous one, not the 'plastic' version favoured by positivists (Cohen et al., 2007). Human beings are thinking, feeling, conscious, language- and symbol-using creatures, and human action is for the most part deliberate and reflective (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989; Burton and Bartlett, 2009). Thus, interpretivism is underpinned by the belief that human beings are subjects with a 'consciousness' or 'mind'; that human behaviour is affected by knowledge of the social world, which exists only in relation to human beings. Moreover, the 'mind' of the subject *interprets* experience and events, and *constructs* meaning from them. Meaning does not exist outside the mind and the agreement of human beings (Wisker, 2008), so that interpretive researchers take seriously the question of language and meaning, and give priority to first unravelling actors' descriptions of events and activities in a qualitative fashion rather than in a quantitative fashion. Consequently, direct first-person accounts provided by actors themselves in their own language feature prominently in ethnographic, interpretive research.

A further implication of the assumptions of interpretive researchers is that their research is deliberately open-ended, prepared to change direction or take a developmental view, and accepts the possibility of using a variety of sources of data since the social world is so complex. More importantly, interpretive researchers recognize the inevitable involvement of the researcher in the investigation of social reality, and this leads them to choose more directly participant forms of observation.

Critics of the interpretive, ethnographic approach to social science have raised serious concerns about this type of research. They are concerned principally about the subjective nature of such studies and argue that this approach is neither scientific nor objective and that ethnographic, qualitative studies are so particular, localized and small scale that it is not possible to make generalizations from them based on 'factual' evidence. Interpretivists retort that while they may approach research design, data collection and analysis in a fundamentally different way to positivists, their research is nonetheless systematic, rigorous and analytical. Detachment and reflection are important skills in qualitative research, they say, even though the researcher is inevitably involved in the research process. Furthermore, interpretivists contend that most qualitative, ethnographic research in schools is not (nor should it be) concerned with the production of generalizations but with the production of adequate descriptions of educational contexts and analyses which highlight and explain the social processes that shape and influence teaching and learning in schools.

Notwithstanding its alleged weaknesses, the interpretive, ethnographic approach to social research has had a significant impact on educational research. There has been a gradual movement away from the domination of positivistic research and methodology, towards interpretive, ethnographic and qualitative research in education (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989). Since the two research approaches are underpinned by fundamental ontological and epistemological beliefs and assumptions, it seems natural that educational researchers remain somewhat polarized between the two traditions or paradigms. This polarization has led to what has been referred to as 'paradigm wars' (Gage, 1989) and subsequently to a positivist-interpretivist schism.

4.1.3 The Positivist-Interpretivist divide

For more than a century, advocates of the quantitative and qualitative research paradigms have engaged in ardent dispute (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004) with purists on both sides viewing their paradigms as 'the ideal' for research. The result was an 'incompatibility thesis', which held that quantitative and qualitative perspectives must of necessity be mutually exclusive and antagonistic (Gage, 1989). A disturbing feature of the paradigm wars has been its relentless focus on the *differences* between the two traditions (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004), which have evolved into subcultures in the research world: the subcultures of positivistic quantitative and the subculture of interpretivist qualitative thinking (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005). The relationship between the two subcultures is still being debated. The question has been whether the two approaches to research should be regarded as two paradigms based on incompatible and incommensurable philosophical assumptions, or as methodological variants within the same paradigm (Lund, 2005).

In spite of the fact that there still exist social researchers who hold to the incompatibility theory, many researchers in social psychology and education have come to practise a 'logic in use', which accepts the legitimate complementarity of the paradigms (Salomon, 1991; Green et al., 2006). For one thing, researchers have realized that paradigm *differences* do not require paradigm *conflict* (Gage, 1989). For another, they have also come to realize how potentially complementary the paradigms are *on a practical level* (Salomon, 1991) and how most educational investigations with both methods turn out to be more fruitful of insights, understandings, predictive power and control resulting in improvements of teaching (Gage, 1989). Authors have thus presented the 'compatibility thesis' based on a different paradigm underpinned by pragmatism (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998), which is itself a philosophical position which goes back to the works of Charles Sanders Peirce, William James and John Dewey. For these pragmatists, truth is 'what works'. Pragmatism is generally regarded as the philosophical partner of the mixed methods approach. It provides a set of

assumptions about knowledge and enquiry that underpins the mixed methods approach and distinguishes the approach from purely quantitative approaches based on positivism and purely qualitative approaches based on interpretivism (Denscombe, 2007). Hence the test is whether or not it is feasible to carry out worthwhile studies using qualitative *and* quantitative approaches side by side (Robson, 2004) and integrated with one another.

Schrag (1992) appears to have been correct in contending that despite the attacks levelled against it, the positivist paradigm is hard to avoid. The same can be said of the interpretivist paradigm. The realization that both paradigms possess strengths which social science and educational research cannot ignore has led to a 'paradigmatic rapprochement' whereby the research community has abandoned the debate on whether or not objectivistic-quantitative methods are compatible with interpretive-qualitative ones (Gage, 1989). With the realisation that the implication of necessary antagonism or incompatibility was unjustified (Gage, 2007), both methods have come to be respected, and are sometimes used alone and sometimes combined in the same study in what is now referred to as 'mixed methods' research. In fact, Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005) hold that some researchers now believe that mono-method research is the biggest threat to the advancement of the social sciences. In the end, the two paradigms are neither mutually exclusive nor mutually antagonistic since, as has been pointed out, words can be counted and numbers can be descriptive (Gorard, 2002). The result is that we are currently in a three methodological or research paradigm world where each approach has its strengths and weaknesses and times and places of need (Johnson *et al.*, 2007).

4.2 Mixed methods research

'Mixed methods research' has been proposed as a third research paradigm in educational research (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Johnson *et al.*, 2007). Since the 1960s mixed methods research has become more popular in many disciplines including education (Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2006; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). According to Greene (2005), a mixed methods way of thinking is an approach to applied social inquiry, including educational research and evaluation that actively includes, even welcomes, multiple methodological traditions, multiple ways of knowing and multiple value stances. It is a way of thinking that seeks better, more comprehensive understanding of educational phenomena, and an understanding that is woven from strands of particularity *and* generality, contextual complexity *and* patterned regularity, inside *and* outside perspectives, the whole *and* its constituent parts, change *and* stability, equity *and* excellence, and so forth. From an analysis of 19

definitions from leading mixed methods researchers, Johnson et al., (2007:123) proposed the following definition of mixed methods research:

Mixed methods research is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration.

This is important because, as the field of mixed methods has evolved, there has tended to be confusion in the way certain terminology is employed. According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) mixed methods research actually falls under the broad category of multiple method designs which is research in which more than one method or more than one worldview is used. However, also included in multiple method designs are multimethod research and mixed model research. In multimethod research studies, the research questions are answered by using two data collection procedures or two research methods each of which is from the same qualitative or quantitative tradition. On the other hand, mixed model research is mixed in many or all stages of the study (questions, research methods, data collection and analysis and inference process). One of the assumptions of mixed model research is that it is possible to have two paradigms, or two worldviews mixed throughout a single research project. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) suggested that mixed methods [plural] designs be used as a cover term for mixed method and mixed model research. In this research, however, 'mixed methods' will be used to mean the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts and language in a single study (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In other words, it will be used to represent research that involves collecting, analyzing and interpreting qualitative and quantitative data in a single study or in a series of studies that investigate the same underlying phenomenon (Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2006).

Proponents of mixed methods research (pragmatist in orientation) contend that there exists a false dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative approaches. Since both approaches have inherent strengths and weaknesses, pragmatists advocate the integration of the strengths of both methods within any single study in order better to understand social phenomena. They ascribe to the philosophy that research questions should drive the method(s) used, since they believe that epistemological purity simply does not get research done (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005). In fact, the combination of methods and deriving data from several methods is now a key feature of many

cognate disciplines. The question is no longer *whether* it is acceptable to combine findings from different approaches, but more crucially *how* they should be combined (Gorard, 2002).

For advocates of mixed methods research, the paradigm wars have tended to obfuscate rather than clarify issues and to divide rather than unite the educational academy. The division between the two camps has come about because debates have focused relentlessly on the *differences* between them. The implication is that researchers focus on *similarities*, which are always more numerous than the differences (Brannen, 2005). Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005) point to a number of similarities between the two paradigms. First, both quantitative and qualitative research procedures involve the *use of observations* to address research questions. They describe data, construct explanatory arguments from data and speculate about why the outcomes they observed happened the way they did. Secondly, both quantitative and qualitative researchers often attempt to *triangulate* data, using what is commonly referred to as 'within-method triangulation', involving the use of multiple quantitative or qualitative methods. Thirdly, meaning is not a function of the *type* of data collected (i.e. qualitative or quantitative), but comes from the *interpretation* of data, whether represented by words or by numbers. While quantitative researchers make use of statistical techniques and subjective inferences to make decisions about what the data mean in the context of an *a priori* theoretical or conceptual framework, qualitative researchers use phenomenological procedures and their views of reality to discover meaning.

Next, both sets of researchers select and use analytical techniques that are designed to *obtain maximal meaning* from the data, and *manipulate* the data so that findings have utility with respect to their respective views of reality. Moreover, both types of inquirers *attempt to explain* complex relationships that exist in the field of social science, even though they achieve this by using different techniques. Whereas quantitative researchers use multivariate approaches, qualitative researchers incorporate the collection of rich, thick data into their design through prolonged engagement, persistent observation and other strategies.

Similarly, they both have techniques for *verifying data*. While quantitative researchers use control procedures and random sampling techniques to maximize internal and external validity respectively, qualitative researchers have an array of methods to assess the auditability, credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research.

According to Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005), *data reduction* is an important part of data analysis procedures for both quantitative and qualitative researchers. Whereas statisticians utilize data reduction methods such as factor analysis and cluster analysis, interpretivists conduct thematic analyses. Thus, factors that emerge from factor analyses or cluster analyses are analogous to emergent themes from thematic analyses.

As a result of these similarities, quantitative and qualitative research, rather than representing bi-polar opposites, represent an interactive continuum. Neither tradition is independent of the other, nor can either school encompass the whole research process. Thus there is a growing consensus among social science researchers that both quantitative and qualitative research techniques are needed to gain a better understanding of social phenomena (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Burton and Bartlett, 2009). Regardless of orientation, all research in the social sciences represents an attempt to understand human beings and the world around them. Thus, it is clear that while certain methodologies tend to be associated with and utilized by one research tradition or the other, the objectives, scope, and nature of inquiry are consistent across methods and across paradigms (Dzurec and Abraham, 1993). Social science researchers differ, not in the goal of their research, but in the strategies they employ to reach that goal. Consequently, the combination of both techniques in any one study puts the researcher in a better position to use qualitative research to inform the quantitative portion of the study, and vice versa. Mixing methods enables the researcher to combine empirical precision with descriptive precision, thus combining the macro and micro levels of any research issue (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005) and thereby producing research findings that are greater than the sum of parts (Woolley, 2009).

In contrast to the oppositional duality of mono-method research, pragmatism provides philosophical support for mixed methodologies using quantitative and qualitative data within a single research project. In practice, mixed methods educational inquiry includes multiple and diverse methods for gathering, analysing and representing educational phenomena within a framework that intentionally engages with different ways of knowing and valuing. According to Schulenberg (2007), this is appropriate when the following conditions are met: the research topic is one that can be addressed from both a post-positivist and a constructivist point of view; neither type of data appears to be adequate alone to address the issues; existing theory and previous research related to the topic includes both post-positivist and constructivist elements that use both quantitative and qualitative data and analytic methods. Put simply, mixed methods research questions are those that ask either *what and how* or *what and why*

because in answering such questions both qualitative and quantitative approaches are required (Woolley, 2009).

It is possible to construct a complex range of possibilities for combining qualitative and quantitative data within a single research project. However, the key decisions facing the social researcher in this context boil down to two: the order in which the alternative methods should be used, and the degree of importance to be attached to one or the other of the alternative methods (Denscombe, 2007). The order in which alternative methods are used depend on the researcher's beliefs about how the combination of methods and strategies work best. In this regard, a mixed methods design could operate either simultaneously or sequentially. With regard to the degree of importance attached to one or the other alternative method, there are three broad types of mixed methods research: quantitative-dominant, qualitative-dominant and 'equal/equivalent status' or 'pure mix' (Johnson et al., 2007). Furthermore, the mix of alternative approaches within a single research project can involve more than just data collection methods or the kind of analysis. As already noted, related to mixed methods research but quite different from it is mixed model research. Mixed model research mixes methods at a more fundamental level, building the mix into the fabric of the research strategy and design so that it is not just the methods and analysis that are mixed, but the nature of the research questions and the whole style of the research.

Mixed methods methodology is receiving greater attention today as researchers realize that in any field of research the kinds of questions researchers pose lead not only to a choice of method but, increasingly commonly, to *a complexity of methods*. Even though there is strong support in the area of social science research for the use of a complexity of methods and for working both qualitatively and quantitatively (Brannen, 2005; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007; Plano Clark, 2010), it must not be unproblematically assumed that data from different methods will corroborate one another as implied in the principle of triangulation, where different methods are used to investigate a single social phenomenon from different vantage points. Brannen (2005) insists that data from different methods cannot simply be added together to provide a unitary or 'rounded' reality. There are a number of outcomes of which corroboration is but one:

- ❖ *Corroboration*, where the 'same results' are derived from both qualitative and quantitative methods
- ❖ *Elaboration*, where the qualitative data analysis exemplifies how the quantitative findings apply in particular cases.
- ❖ *Complementarity*, where the qualitative and quantitative results differ but *together* they generate insights

- ❖ *Contradiction*, where qualitative and quantitative findings conflict.

While mixed methods research has its own limitations and does not put an end to the paradigm wars, it is born of the realization that no method is intrinsically preferable to any other and no one epistemology or single method is more valid or superior than another (Gorard, 2002). Mixed methods research is necessary to uncover maximum information and perspective, increase corroboration of the data, and render less biased and more accurate conclusions (Reams and Twale, 2008). Additionally, researchers who are attracted to the use of mixed methods approaches in social science and educational research are driven by the belief that the key underlying principle which guides the choice of methods is fitness for purpose (Gorard, 2002). This makes mixed methods research an expansive and creative form of research. It is inclusive, pluralistic and complementary, and it suggests that researchers take an eclectic approach to method selection and thinking about and conducting of research.

The foregoing discussion highlights the fact that the decision to use a mixed methods strategy should be based on how useful the methods are for addressing the particular question, issue or problem under investigation. In this study, for instance, an analysis of examination results alone would be inadequate by itself to address the research question because examination results alone do not tell the whole story and complete datasets are not available. As such, there was need to enhance the quantitative data that did exist with qualitative data, and to enrich and explain the quantitative results (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007).

4.3 Research design and data collection strategies

According to Kerlinger (1986), a research design is a plan, structure and strategy of investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to research questions. The function of the research design is to ensure that the evidence obtained enables the researcher to answer the initial question as unambiguously as possible. Thus the choice of research design is determined by the answer to the question: given this research question, what type of evidence is needed to answer the question in a convincing way? (de Vaus, 2001). The design includes an outline of what the investigator will do from writing the hypotheses and their operational implications to the final analysis of data. This involves operationalizing variables so that they can be measured, selecting a sample of interest for the study, collecting data to be used as a basis for testing hypotheses, and analysing the results (Thyer, 1993).

According to 'the fundamental principle of mixed research', researchers should collect multiple data using different strategies, approaches and methods in such a way that

the resulting mixture or combination is likely to result in complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The pragmatic maxim translates in mixed methods research as “choose the combination or mixture of methods and procedures that works best for answering your research questions” (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004:17). However, the number of possible ways in which studies can involve mixing of methods is very large because of a study’s many potential classification dimensions. One of these dimensions is the time-ordering of the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study. Another dimension of the mixing methods approach is *where* the mixing should occur; that is, whether in the study’s objective(s), methods of data collection, during data analysis or during data interpretation (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). To be considered a mixed method design, qualitative and quantitative findings must be *integrated* at some point.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) reduce the vast array of mixed methods designs to four: the Triangulation Design, the Embedded Design, the Explanatory Design and the Exploratory Design. The Triangulation Design was chosen for this study because it enables the researcher to obtain different but complementary data on the same topic and so to understand best the research problem. This design also suited the cross-sectional study of Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon since cross-sectional studies produce a ‘snapshot’ of a population at a particular point in time (Cohen et al. 2007). The single-phase nature of this design is the reason it has also been referred to as the ‘concurrent triangulation design’. It generally involves the concurrent, but separate, collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data so that the researcher may best understand the research problem (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). Further, within the Triangulation Design there are four different variants of triangulation of which the convergence model was preferred for this study. This means that quantitative and qualitative data on school types in English speaking Cameroon was collected and analyzed separately and the different results were converged (compared and contrasted) during the interpretation. The purpose of this model is to end up with valid and well-substantiated conclusions about a single phenomenon (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). Figure 2 below is a diagrammatic representation of the convergence model.

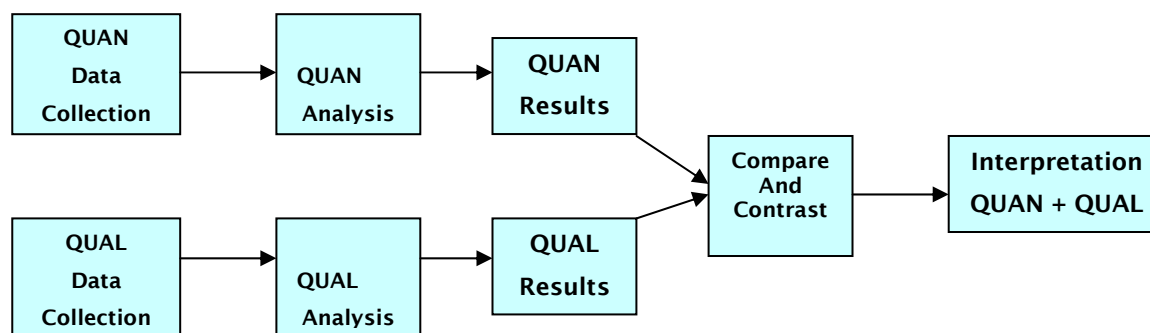


Figure 2: Triangulation Design: Convergence Model (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007)

The collection of data for this study was not strictly concurrent since it began with the collation and classification of examination results for all the schools involved in the study. This was followed by the administration and analysis of questionnaires, containing closed and open-ended questions, to parents of the schools concerned. Although a full analysis was not done on this data, enough was gathered from it to provide the basis for a series of semi-structured interviews with teachers, principals, and provincial and diocesan authorities for education, as well as for focus group interviews with students. The complete analysis was run only after the researcher had collected all data. Thus it could be said that this study attempts to utilize the potential of mixed methods by an eclectic use of data collection and data analysis techniques, research methods and data interpretation.

Apart from the strengths of mixed methods research discussed earlier, the decision to use pictures of schools and classrooms alongside narrative and numbers in this study seemed to suit the mixed methods research paradigm ideally. Mixed methods research has the ability to use words, pictures and narrative to add meaning to ‘numbers’ just as it can use ‘numbers’ to add precision to words, pictures and narratives (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Unfortunately, only a limited number of schools gave permission for pictures of their schools and school activities to be taken. Presenting photographs of only a few schools would have told a lopsided story and so the idea of using photographs was dropped.

4.4 Issues in mixed methods research

Even though there has been an increase in recognition of mixed methods research and the mixed methods movement is rising fast, researchers recognise that the mixed methods field is just entering ‘adolescence’ and there are many ‘unresolved issues’ to address before a more mature mixed methods research area can emerge (Teddle and Tashakkori, 2003). One of these ‘unresolved issues’ relates to the research design. There are a myriad of designs in existence which leaves the researcher who is new to

the field with the challenge of selecting optimal mixed methods designs (Johnson et al., 2007). Moreover, in an attempt to simplify researchers' design choices, several typologies have been developed (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2003; Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2004) but many of these typologies are either unnecessarily complicated, too simplistic or do not represent a consistent system (Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Regarding this study it is recognised that the description of the integration of the different approaches given above exaggerates the tidiness of the process, as there is always a synergy between the qualitative and quantitative phases (Blatchford, 2005) which is lost in the description.

Another challenge for the mixed methods researcher (especially the beginning researcher) is that it requires an adequate exposure to and understanding of both qualitative and quantitative approaches to research. This is so because the mixed methods researcher needs to use both approaches as part of a holistic, interactive and unifying process in mixed methods research (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005). Thus the adoption of a mixed methods research design requires a certain degree of 'conceptual gymnastics' on the part of the researcher and the audience (Schulenburg, 2007). Moreover, while it is true that divergent findings can be a strength of the mixed methods approach as they lead to a re-examination of the conceptual frameworks that were used to inform the research questions and hypotheses, nevertheless, one critique of mixed methods studies has been the manner in which different or contradictory conclusions from the quantitative and qualitative components are managed and the incoherence that can result when concluding the findings (Schulenburg, 2007).

Finally, it is always important to take cognizance of the conditions under which mixed methods are appropriate. Firstly, the topic should be one which can be addressed from both a post-positivistic and constructionist point of view. Secondly, the existing theory and previous research related to the topic at hand should include both post-positivistic and constructionist elements that use both quantitative and qualitative data and analytic methods. Lastly, the use of mixed methods is appropriate when neither type of data appears to be adequate alone to address the issues.

Just as there are dangers in sticking too rigidly to only one research approach, there may be dangers in being too rigid about mixing methods. The key idea that mixed methods requires some form of integration is clear but it would appear that additional research is needed to further explicate the process (Johnson et al., 2007).

4.5 The study population

Factors such as cost, accessibility and time frequently prevent researchers from gaining information from a whole population. The usual practice is to obtain data from a smaller group or subset of the population in such a way that the knowledge gained is representative of the whole group. In fact, with the exception of the National Census, all scientific research focuses on a small segment of the population (Davies, 2007; Dawson, 2009). This smaller group or subset is the 'sample population'. A sample is therefore a 'selection' from the population (Robson, 2004). In quantitative research there appears to be unequivocal agreement that sampling plays a very important role. Sampling procedures in qualitative researchers are not so rigidly prescribed as in quantitative research (Coyne, 1996). However, more and more qualitative researchers think that sampling should be a serious consideration in all qualitative inquiries, regardless of the purpose of the research, since sample selection has a profound effect on the ultimate quality of the research (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2007). Even in qualitative research the quality of a piece of research stands or falls not only by the appropriateness of its methodology and instrumentation, but also by the suitability of its sampling strategy (Cohen et al., 2007).

There are two main methods of sampling: 'probability' (also known as 'random') sampling and 'non-probability' (also known as 'purposive') sampling which are used as umbrella terms for several types of probability and non-probability sampling. The former seeks representativeness of a wider population and is the preferred sampling strategy for researchers who seek external generalizability. A non-probability sample, on the other hand, deliberately avoids trying to represent the whole population; it seeks only to represent a particular group or a particular named section of a wider population (Cohen et al., 2007; Dawson, 2009). This study made use of purposive sampling to select the study population at each stage of the data collection process. This sampling strategy is called 'purposive' because it involves researchers using their judgment to achieve a particular purpose. In purposive sampling, researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought (Cohen et al., 2007) or on the basis of their being "information rich" (Patton, 1990: 169). The purpose is to identify specific groups of people who either possess characteristics or live in circumstances relevant to the social phenomenon being studied. Informants are

identified because they will enable exploration of a particular aspect of behaviour relevant to the research (Koerber and McMichael, 2008). This approach to sampling allows the researcher deliberately to include a wide range of types of informants and also to select key informants with access to important sources of knowledge (Mays and Pope, 1995). Thus the principle of selection in purposive sampling is the researcher's judgment as to the typicality or interest (Robson, 2004).

This sampling method is suited to small-scale research because despite the disadvantages that arise from its non-representativeness, it is less complicated to set up, considerably less expensive and is adequate where researchers do not intend to generalize their findings beyond the sample in question (Dawson, 2009; Cohen et al., 2007). In any case, the primary concern of purposive sampling is not generalization; rather it is to acquire in-depth information from those who are in a position to give it. For this reason, the four Catholic schools selected for this study included three 'selecting'¹ schools (two single-sex and one co-educational) and one 'recruiting' (co-educational) school. The two Protestant schools included one 'selecting' (single sex) and one 'recruiting' (co-educational) school. Finally, the two government and two lay private schools were all co-educational and, while one of the government schools could be described as 'selecting', none of the lay private schools would fit this category since they accept all pupils who apply for admission.

In selecting the students, teachers and parents to participate in the study, a variant of purposive sampling, known as *maximum variation sampling* was used. This approach seeks to select cases from as diverse a population as possible (Cohen et al., 2007; Koerber and McMichael, 2008). In this case, students were selected from Form Two (second year of secondary school) and Lower Sixth (sixth year of secondary school) and came from both Catholic and non-Catholic families. Even in Catholic schools, the parents selected to respond to the questionnaires were both Catholic and non-Catholic; as were parents selected from the other schools involved in the study. Participants were identified with the help of the school principal or their deputy in an attempt to include those parents, teachers and students who might not think that Catholic schools were the ideal choice for everyone.² The idea was to improve the strength and richness of the data, and strengthen their applicability and interpretation.

¹ By 'selecting' schools I mean schools which are oversubscribed and set their own entrance exams for prospective pupils. 'Recruiting' schools, on the other hand, refer to schools which are generally undersubscribed and find it difficult to fill available places.

² It is typical in English-speaking Cameroon that 25-30% of students in denominational schools would come from other religious backgrounds.

4.6 Instrument design and administration

The collection of data is an extremely important part of all research endeavours since the conclusions of the research are based on what the data reveal. The process of preparing to collect data is called instrumentation. It involves not only the selection and design of the instruments but also the procedures and the conditions under which the instruments will be used (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006). While it is easier to make use of instruments designed by experts in the field, this study made use of instruments designed by the researcher himself. Though it takes time, energy, and skill to design instruments, this seemed the only available option to the researcher since no existing instruments in the area could be found in Cameroon. Of course, the research still made extensive use of literature in the area and drew inspiration from instruments designed elsewhere for school effectiveness research.

Four types of research instruments were used in this study: interview, focus group, questionnaire, and documentary analysis³. There were different interview schedules for teachers, principals, diocesan and provincial education authorities. Each of these was thought to bring a perspective, a lens or a vantage point from which to view the school and school type. As MacBeath (1999: 16) states:

It is the juxtaposition of these viewpoints which brings new insights, new ways of seeing. The willingness to treat all of those perspectives with concern for evidence and openness to challenge is, in itself, a model of educational process.

4.6.1 Interviews

Interviews have been used extensively across all social sciences and educational research to collect data (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989) probably because they generally provide rich data if used appropriately and sensitively in a focused way. They are commonly one-to-one or face to face but they can also take place in group settings and over the phone. Interviews can be used as the primary or only approach in a study, but they also lend themselves well to use in combination with other methods, in a multi-method approach (Robson, 2004). There are different types of interviews and the differences arise from the nature of questions asked, the depth of response sought, the degree of control exercised by the interviewer, the number of people involved, and the overall position of the interview in the research design. Accordingly, the continuum of interviews ranges from the 'structured' through the 'semi-structured' to 'unstructured' (Robson, 2004; Wisker, 2007). According to Robson (2004), a fully structured interview has predetermined questions with fixed wording, usually in a

³ The original plan to use pictures did not materialise.

preset order. A semi-structured interview has predetermined questions as well, but the order can be modified based on the interviewer's perception of what seems most appropriate. Question wording can be changed and explanations given, and questions can be omitted or included. The unstructured interview can be completely informal. The interviewer has a general area of interest and concern, but lets the conversation develop within this area.

Semi-structured interviews tend to be favoured by educational researchers since they allow depth to be achieved by including spaces on the interview schedule for the interviewer to probe and expand interviewee responses. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews facilitate the establishment of rapport, empathy and understanding between interviewer and interviewee, which are lost in structured interviews. However, semi-structured interviews lack the more systematic approach to data collection which is a strong feature of structured interviews. Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) argue that the results of structured interviews are more objective since the formality involved reduces the risk of interviewer bias. In addition, data from structured interviews is more easily analyzed. However, since some key research questions sought information "based on emotions, feelings, experiences and on insider experience and privileged insights" (Wisker, 2007:192), the semi-structured interview seemed best suited to obtain this data. Furthermore, the semi-structured interviews could (and did) supplement data provided in the questionnaire.

An interview schedule was prepared for the principal of each of the ten schools involved in the study and there were separate interview schedules for the 50 teachers who participated. Each school provided five teachers, three Catholics and two non-Catholics for Catholic schools, and three Protestant, Muslim or non-faith in Protestant, lay private and government schools. In addition, interviews were conducted with a Catholic Education Secretary for one of the four English speaking dioceses in Cameroon, the Baptist and Presbyterian Education Secretaries, a Provincial Delegate of Education for one of the two English speaking provinces, a Catholic Bishop and a Provincial Secretary for Lay Private Education⁴.

One of the often-cited weaknesses of face-to-face interviews, especially when they are conducted by a solitary interviewer, is 'interviewer bias'. This refers to the effect the manner of the interviewer may have on the respondents. In this study, care was taken that the personal characteristics of both researcher and interviewees did not overly influence the nature of the interviews and due care was taken to reduce the effects of

⁴ For interview schedules, see Appendices 4 – 8.

age, gender, class and tribe of origin. This was in an attempt to achieve as much objectivity as possible.

Robson (2004) holds that in conducting interviews anything under half an hour is unlikely to be valuable, and anything going much over an hour may be making unreasonable demands on busy interviewees. Due to the considerable number of interviews concerned, this method of data collection was both time-consuming and tedious. Since it may not be advisable to schedule more than three interviews a day (Howard and Sharp, 1983) it took quite some time to complete the 50 interviews for teachers and the other participants. Furthermore, being semi-structured it was not possible for the researcher to get someone else to conduct the interviews. All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

4.6.2 Focus groups

Focus groups originated in market research in the 1920s and arose from the recognition that many consumer decisions were made in a social, group context (Robson, 2004). They are a way of collecting data which essentially involves engaging a number of people in an informal group discussion 'focused' around a particular topic or set of issues (Wilkinson, 2004). Focus groups are different from group interviews in that the moderator does not ask questions of each focus group participant in turn, but, rather, facilitates group discussion, actively encouraging the group members to interact with each other (Silverman, 2004). Thus the reliance is on the interaction within the group to discuss a topic supplied by the 'facilitator' and yield a collective rather than an individual view. The participants interact with each other rather than with the interviewer and from that interaction the views of the participants emerge. For this reason, Cohen *et al.* (2007) define focus groups as contrived settings, bringing together a specifically chosen sector of the population to discuss a particular given theme or topic, and where the interaction within the group leads to data and outcomes.

From the early 1980s there has been resurgence in the use of focus groups as a popular technique for gathering qualitative data in many fields of applied social research (Robson, 2004; Hennink, 2007). Focus groups are currently used as both a self-contained method and in multi-method research designs which combine focus groups with quantitative methods or with other qualitative methods (Hennink, 2007).

Focus groups have a number of distinct advantages over one-to-one interviews. First, they can generate a large volume of data and identify a greater variety of views, opinions and experiences relatively quickly from a large number of participants

(Hennink, 2007). Second, focus group interactions allow participants to react to and build upon the responses of other group members. Third, simply by virtue of the number of members simultaneously involved, focus groups inevitably reduce the researcher's control over the interaction, making focus groups a relatively 'egalitarian method' of data collection (Wilkinson, 2004). Fourth, focus groups are ideal for discovering a range of views on a topic, for uncovering new insights or unanticipated issues (Hennink, 2007). Focus groups can yield insights which might not otherwise have been available in an individual interview. Lastly, focus groups have an additional advantage when used with surveys in that while surveys can describe what behaviours are occurring but cannot explain why they have occurred, focus groups can provide this greater depth of understanding (Cohen et al., 2007).

On the other hand, focus groups have their limitations. Firstly, the flexible nature of focus group discussions, which enables participants to contribute freely, requires a skilled and experienced moderator. Secondly, focus group discussions can generate a large volume of textual data which can be complex and time-consuming to analyze. The fact that the data is not numerical, quantifiable or generalizable, and is difficult to analyze can easily put off research students from making use of this method. Thirdly, it can happen in focus groups that some members dominate the discussion while others remain quiet and simply agree with the views of the dominant participant (Hennink, 2007). When this happens, it clearly impacts on the quality of the data collected, hence the need for the moderator to be good at group dynamics.

In a focus group, participants are allowed to disagree; consensus is neither necessary nor desired (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006). The object is to get data about what people really think about an issue or issues in a social context, where the participants can hear the views of others and consider their own views accordingly. The essential purpose of focus group research is to identify a range of different views around the research topic, and to gain an understanding of the issues from the perspective of the participants themselves. The group discussion is focused on a specific topic and usually explores only a limited number of issues to allow sufficient time for participants to discuss the issues in detail (Hennink, 2007).

There are several distinct styles of focus group research: the market research approach, the academic application, the approach of non-profit organizations and participatory approaches. The academic research approach (the one employed in this study) is focused on the careful application of a research method, the generation of quality data and detailed, rigorous analysis of the information (Hennink, 2007). Irrespective of style, focus group research is most suitable when seeking community-

level information, such as information about social behaviour, cultural values or community opinions (Hennink, 2007). A key ingredient to successful focus group discussions is the development of a permissive, non-threatening environment within the group, whereby participants feel comfortable to share their views and experiences without the fear of judgment or ridicule from others.

Since this study sought information about school experience from students, it was deemed necessary to use focus groups⁵ so that group, rather than individual, community views would emerge. Two focus groups were conducted for the students *in each school* involved in the study. Groups consisted of five members: Catholic and non-Catholic, and of different academic ability. In addition, groups were selected across the age range: from Form Two (second year of secondary school) and Lower Sixth (sixth year of secondary school). In this way a mix of religious affiliation, academic ability and experience was achieved.

4.6.3 Questionnaire

Questionnaires can be thought of as a formalized and stylized interview, or ‘interview by proxy’ (Walker, 1985) in which the subjects respond to questions in writing, or by marking an answer sheet (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006). Questionnaires are often used to gather information about facts, attitudes, behaviours, activities and responses to events (Wisker, 2008). As with interviews, there is a large range of types of questionnaire, from structured or ‘closed’, semi-structured to unstructured or ‘open’. Between the completely open and the completely closed questionnaire, “there is the powerful tool of the semi-structured questionnaire” (Cohen et al., 2007: 321). In this kind of questionnaire, a series of questions, statements, or items are presented and the respondents are asked to answer, respond or comment on them in the way they think best. This type of questionnaire has a clear structure, sequence and focus, yet the format is open-ended, enabling the respondents to answer in their own terms.

Questionnaires are favourites among researchers with a positivistic worldview and methodology. In fact, McKenzie (2001) holds that questionnaires are often wrongly associated only with quantitative research because it is assumed that they are fundamentally intended to achieve breadth rather than depth. However, researchers with a postpositivistic worldview also make use of questionnaires even though their questionnaires are likely to be more open-ended and delivered to fewer people (Wisker, 2008).

⁵ See Appendix 3 for Focus Group discussion schedule.

While questionnaires have the advantage that they can be mailed or administered to a large number of people at the same time, the tool suffers from the fact that unclear or ambiguous questions and answers cannot be clarified. A further weakness of the questionnaire is that respondents have no chance to expand on or react to a question of particular interest or importance to them.

A single questionnaire was prepared for parents of secondary school pupils across the four sectors investigated: Catholic, Protestant, government and lay private. However, some sections of the questionnaire were altered to address specific cohorts of parents⁶. The cohorts who were targeted included Catholic parents who send their children to Catholic schools; Catholic parents who do *not* send their children to Catholic schools; non-Catholic parents who send their children to Catholic schools; and non-Catholic parents who do *not* send their children to Catholic schools. In this way, data about the perceptions of Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon that emerged was more holistic than if only the views of Catholic parents had been sought.

The questionnaire used in this study was reviewed by other doctoral research students and piloted before it was used in the study as should happen with every questionnaire. This was in an attempt to eliminate ambiguous questions and clarify terminology used in the questionnaire. The final questionnaire comprised open-ended items, multiple choice questions, rating scale questions and closed items. While the open-ended and less structured questions helped to capture the specificity of each school's situation, the closed questions (multiple choice, rating scales, etc) enabled comparison of parents' perceptions of school effectiveness to be made across schools.

4.6.4 Documentary analysis

In research, 'document' is a general term for an impression left on a physical object by a human being. Robson (2004) holds that documents cover a very wide range and could include such non-written forms as films, television programmes, comic strips and cartoons and photographs. Researchers in education and the social sciences generally have made extensive use of written texts. According to Duffy (1999), most educational projects will require the analysis of documentary evidence. Once a written source has been created, for whatever reason, it becomes a 'potential' historical fact and therefore documentary evidence (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989). However, the most common type of documents used in educational studies is written or printed sources (Bell, 1999). Studies involving schools or other educational establishments usually include written curricula, course outlines and other course documents, timetables,

⁶ See Appendix 2 for parents' questionnaire.

notices, letters, and other communications to parents. In some studies, documentary evidence is used to supplement information obtained by other methods; in others, it is the central or even exclusive method of research (Bell, 1999; Denscombe, 2007).

Documents can be divided into primary and secondary sources (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989). Primary sources are those which came into existence in the period under research (e.g. handbooks, prospectuses, attendance registers, minutes of meetings, etc). Secondary sources, on the other hand, are interpretations of events of that period based on primary sources. Primary sources can in turn be divided into deliberate and inadvertent sources. Deliberate sources are produced for the attention of future researchers; they involve a deliberate attempt to preserve evidence for the future, either for purposes of self-vindication or reputation enhancement (e.g. autobiographies, memoirs, diaries, etc) while inadvertent sources are used by the researcher for some purpose other than that for which they were originally intended. These would include school or college prospectuses, attendance registers, and school websites. Even in inadvertent sources, researchers can find witting or unwitting evidence. Witting evidence is the information which the original author of the documents wanted to impart. Unwitting evidence is everything else that can be learned from the document.

When embarking on a study using documents, it is possible to have one of two approaches. One is the 'source-oriented' approach in which the researcher lets the nature of the sources determine the project and help generate questions for the research. The other is the 'problem-oriented' approach which involves formulating questions by reading 'secondary sources' and establishing the focus of the study before going to the relevant primary sources.

The documents used in this study included Cameroon GCE examination results and league table rankings over a period of ten years (1999 -2008). In addition, the study made use of school mission statements, prospectuses, school policies and regulations, drop out rates, letters to parents, disciplinary records and any other documents that were deemed to provide useful information for judging the ethos of the school. These are all primary sources, even though it could be argued that some of them – like the prospectus – are actually written to enhance the image of the school.

Furthermore, most of the documents were inadvertent primary sources; that is, sources used by the researcher for purposes other than that for which they were originally intended. This is important as inadvertent primary sources are usually the more valued kind of primary sources in terms of reliability (Duffy, 1999). Additionally,

because most of the documents provided 'unwitting evidence' about the schools involved, they served to strengthen the reliability of the findings. It might be good to note, however, that due to the scanty nature of most of these documents, an independent analysis of documents could not be undertaken. Instead, relevant information from documents was analysed and integrated into the rest of the research findings either to corroborate or to challenge other views. As Burton and Bartlett (2009) argue, such material can enhance data gathered via other research methods, such as interviews, observation and questionnaires.

Apart from the text-based documents mentioned above, there are other kinds of documentary data available to social researchers, ones that are based on visual images (Denscombe, 2007). These can be used in their own right as a potential source of research information. One of these visual images is the photograph. Since its discovery in 1839, photographers have explored the social function of the camera to capture, document and express perceptions about the world. Stzo et al. (2005) contend that the Frenchman, Eugene Auguste Atget (1856-1927) is the earliest known photographer to apply photography as a tool of social research. He demonstrated the power of the photograph to re-present reality in stark truthfulness. However, until relatively recently, the vast majority of qualitative researchers in the social sciences have had only minimal interest in visual inquiry or visual methodology (Burton and Bartlett, 2009). For a long time 'the visual' was the preserve of anthropology, sociology and cultural studies. Today, it is claimed that visual inquiry utilizing photographic images has produced some sophisticated studies which clearly demonstrate the viability of using visual material critically and reflexively (Emmison, 2004).

Documentary photography therefore continues to function as an important tool of social research. Hughes (1989) argues that photography may be seen as a perfectly natural extension of qualitative research since photographs can provide rich sources of descriptive data on a setting providing a sense of the location and environment. In addition, they can be used to support ethnographically-derived data. The continued popularity of this tool is explained by the belief that the high degree of correspondence between the external world and the photograph helps consumers of research to connect more fully with the presentation of data (Stzo et al., 2005)⁷.

⁷ As mentioned above, the idea of using pictures was dropped mainly because some schools refused to give permission for pictures of their schools and school activities to be taken. Pictures were therefore not included in the documentary analysis.

4.7 Validity

The quality of instruments used in research is of utmost importance because the conclusions drawn are based on the information obtained using these instruments. Accordingly, researchers use a number of procedures to ensure that the inferences they draw, based on the data they collect, are valid and reliable. If an instrument is to be of any value, it must allow the researcher to draw *accurate* conclusions about the characteristics of the population being studied; in other words, the researcher needs to employ valid instruments of data collection in order to arrive at valid conclusions (Burton and Bartlett, 2009).

Validity is the most important idea to consider when deciding which instruments to use. Fraenkel and Wallen (2006:151) assert that “in recent years, validity has been defined as referring to the appropriateness, correctness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of the specific inferences researchers make based on the data they collect”. In the same vein, Bell (1999:104) holds that validity refers to “whether an instrument measures or describes what it is supposed to measure or describe”. Thus the concept of validity revolves around the defensibility of the inferences researchers make from the data collected through the use of an instrument (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006). It is the extent to which the findings can be trusted, the extent to which they accurately represent reality (McKenzie, 2001). Seen in this way, validity is a requirement for both qualitative and quantitative research. However, while in quantitative research the importance of validity has been long accepted, in qualitative research discussions of validity have been more contentious and different terms have been produced (Morse, 2002). In mixed methods research, wherein quantitative and qualitative approaches are combined, discussions about “validity” issues are in their infancy (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006). Whilst the dialogue continues among mixed methods researchers and methodologists, it is important to note that it is impossible for research, qualitative or quantitative, to be one hundred percent valid (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2007b). What researchers suggest is that validity should be seen as a matter of degree rather than as an absolute state (Cohen et al., 2007), and that every researcher should aim for high quality research.

There are several types of validity, and while some of them are commonly used in quantitative research and others in qualitative research, it must be recognized that research is not ‘paradigm-bound’ (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2007). Recently, however, the validity of *qualitative data* has been addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data, the participants employed, the extent of triangulation, and the objectivity of the researcher (Cohen et al., 2007). The conceptual framework of

this study adopted a mixed methods approach and so the discussion on validity will be located within that research approach.

4.7.1 Internal Validity

According to Cohen et al. (2007), internal validity seeks to demonstrate that the *explanation* of a particular event, issue or set of data can actually be sustained by that data. The crucial question here is whether or not the findings describe accurately the phenomena being researched. This study sought to achieve internal validity by getting fellow doctoral research students to peer-examine the data collected. This is one way in which validity can be addressed in ethnographic research (Dixon et al., 1987; Cohen et al., 2007). Furthermore, it ensured a complete and balanced representation of the schools and individuals involved in the study so that a degree of fairness was achieved as all the possible viewpoints on Catholic education in English-speaking Cameroon were represented and examined.

Hammersley (1992) suggests that internal validity for qualitative data requires attention to plausibility and credibility, which is why Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007) refer to it as internal credibility and define it as the truth value, applicability, consistency, neutrality, dependability, and/or credibility of interpretations and conclusions within the underlying setting or group. Credibility was addressed in this study in three ways: first, by the triangulation of methods and sources to corroborate evidence and, second, through peer-debriefing so that 'disinterested' peers could cross-examine the researcher to test honesty and to identify the next step in the research. Lastly, policy makers were given the opportunity to check the transcriptions of their interviews for errors and to expand on their responses; in other words 'respondent validation'.

4.7.2 External Validity

External validity refers to the degree to which results can be generalized to a wider population (Cohen et al., 2007). This issue of generalization is problematical. While for positivist researchers generalizability is a *sine qua non*, for interpretivists, human behaviour is so complex, irreducible, socially situated and unique that generalization is impossible. Generalizability in interpretive research is thought of as 'comparability' and 'transferability' (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2007b). In other words, it is possible to assess the *typicality* of a situation, the participants and the settings, to identify possible comparison groups, and to indicate how data might translate to different settings (Cohen et al., 2007). This study sought to achieve external validity by ensuring that all school types in English-speaking Cameroon (religious, lay, public, urban, rural, single-sex, and co-educational) were represented in the study. In addition, it made use

of multiple types of data to collaborate or contradict interpretation. It sought to limit researcher bias by bracketing personal biases and *a priori* assumptions about school types and maintained a high factual accuracy in the reporting findings (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2007b).

4.7.3 Content Validity

Content-related evidence of validity refers to the content and format of the instrument, which must show that it fairly and comprehensively covers the items that it purports to cover (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006). It is unlikely that an interview schedule or questionnaire can address each issue in a research study in its entirety, but great care was taken to ensure that instruments were both appropriate and comprehensive. By matching the questions on the instruments to the key research questions, the researcher ensured that the instruments 'got at' the intended variables.

It is important to note that mixed methods researchers are not agreed on the use of these terms for mixed methods research. While they do not advocate that quantitative researchers cease to use the term validity or that qualitative researchers stop using terms such as credibility, plausibility, trustworthiness, and dependability, they suggest that in the context of discussing the overall criteria for assessment of mixed research studies, the term *legitimation*, or a similarly descriptive and inclusive term, be used (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, 2006). This is seen as an attempt to use a bilingual nomenclature that would be acceptable to both quantitative and qualitative researchers.

4.8 Reliability

Reliability is understood differently in quantitative and qualitative research and the emphasis on reliability varies according to the paradigm of the researcher (Burton and Bartlett, 2009). Cohen et al. (2007) contend that in quantitative research it is essentially a synonym for dependability, consistency and replicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents. It is concerned with precision and accuracy. In qualitative research, the suitability of this definition has been contested, and terms such as 'credibility', 'neutrality', 'confirmability', 'dependability', 'consistency', 'applicability', 'trustworthiness' and 'transferability' have been suggested as replacements (Morse et al., 2002; Cohen et al., 2007).

Reliability, therefore, is more commonly used in quantitative research since it assumes the possibility of replication. Here, the word refers to the consistency of scores obtained; how consistent they are for each individual from one administration of an instrument to another and from one set of items to another (Fraenkel and Wallen,

2006). However, as Cohen et al. (2007) argue, this is not to say that qualitative research need not strive for replication in generating, refining, comparing, and validating constructs.

Considering that this research is a cross-sectional study, it was not possible to test the concepts of replicability and consistency over time, over instruments and over respondents. As far as possible, however, the study sought a fit between what was recorded as data and what actually occurred in the settings that were being researched. For this study, reliability is regarded as “a degree of accuracy and comprehensiveness” (Cohen et al., 2007:149), the important thing being that the study made an eclectic use of instruments, perspectives and interpretations to achieve dependability of results.

Both qualitative and quantitative researchers seek to achieve rigour and trustworthiness in their research. While quantitative researchers achieve this through validity and reliability, qualitative researchers achieve it through credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Validity and reliability always depend on the context in which an instrument is used. Depending on the context, an instrument may or may not yield reliable or consistent scores. On the other hand, if the data is unreliable, it cannot lead to valid inferences (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006). However, what researchers desire is both high validity and high reliability, so a great deal of attention must be given to both concepts in all research methods (Morse et al., 2002). This ensures that any inferences drawn based on data obtained through the use of an instrument are appropriate, credible and supported by robust evidence.

4.9 Triangulation

A key way in which the validity and reliability of data can be assessed is through triangulation. Triangulation is defined as “the use of two or more methods in the study of some aspect of human behaviour” (Cohen et al., 2007: 141). The mixed-methods approach employed in this study lends itself easily to data triangulation since it uses a variety of instruments to collect data. According to Cohen et al. (2007: 141), triangular techniques in the social sciences attempt to “map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint and, in so doing, by making use of both qualitative and quantitative data”. Thus triangulation provides greater understanding of the phenomenon under study as well as increases the validity of the research findings (Burton and Bartlett, 2009).

There exist several types of triangulation. Denzin, (1970) distinguishes six, summarised as follows:

- ❖ 'Time triangulation' attempts to take into consideration factors of change and process by utilizing cross-sectional and longitudinal designs to collect data from the same group. This combination of approaches is thought to strengthen each method.
- ❖ 'Space triangulation' uses cross-cultural techniques to overcome the limitations of studies carried out in one country or one culture.
- ❖ 'Theoretical triangulation' draws upon alternative or competing theories in preference to utilizing one viewpoint only.
- ❖ 'Combined levels of triangulation' uses more than one level of analysis from the three principal levels used in the social sciences, namely, the individual level, the interactive level (groups), and the level of collectiveness (organizational, cultural or societal).
- ❖ 'Investigator triangulation' uses more than one investigator so that data is discovered independently by more than one observer.
- ❖ 'Methodological triangulation' uses either the same method on different occasions or different methods on the same object of study.

The notion of triangulation bridges issues of reliability and validity. The mixed-methods approach used in this study and its multiple sources of data helped to strengthen the validity and reliability of its findings. Walker (1985: 82) asserts that by combining methods to a single purpose "it is possible to observe the same event from several points of view" and so gain more accurate information. In fact, rich and supportive data from a variety of sources improves the likelihood that a researcher will be able "to create a valid description and complete a valid analysis" (Drew et al., 1996: 170).

4.10 Access and ethical issues

Researchers agree that research has as one of its primary concerns, the production of knowledge that is new and non-trivial. However, the production of new knowledge requires access to the relevant data, and gaining access to data is often a problem for researchers (Howard and Sharp, 1983). It involves persuading gatekeepers to allow access and respondents to take part in research and convincing both parties of the value of giving their time and, sometimes, other resources (Letherby and Bywaters, 2007). Nevertheless, negotiating access is an important task of the researcher, and part of that task will be agreement about conditions on which the research is to be conducted (Pring, 2000).

Access to schools and all the other participants involved in this study had to be negotiated at the beginning of the study, so it was necessary to identify the schools and individuals concerned very early on and gain their acceptance and cooperation. It was important to agree exactly what activities this researcher was going to carry out and what documents were going to be examined. The nature and scope of the project was explained to the principals, diocesan and other education authorities. This was to enable them weigh up the demands which engagement with the project would place on them. The permission of government and Church education authorities was sought and obtained in a bid to respect the hierarchy of these organizations. For lay private schools, permission was obtained from the proprietors before contacting the principals, teachers and students.

Concern about the ethical issues in research that involves human beings is growing. Research ethics are principally concerned with the effects of research on people, and, importantly, on those people who get involved in the research process in one way or another (Walliman, 2006). There exists amongst social researchers a broad consensus as to what constitutes good ethical practice and this has been set out in Codes of Ethics produced by professional bodies. These professional research bodies have defined the responsibilities of researchers towards their subjects as three-fold: obtain informed consent; protect from harm; and ensure privacy. The Nuremberg Code (1947) formulated following the Nuremberg Trials which took place at the end of the Second World War, and the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association 1964; Revised 2000), established certain ethical principles relating to research involving human subjects. Tarling (2006) states that an important principle emanating from the Nuremberg Code is that subjects should only participate in research voluntarily. In order for potential participants to be able to exercise free choice, the research and their involvement in it should be explained, so that their agreement is based, as far as is practicable, on 'informed consent'. Informed consent implies that those who are being researched not only know they are being researched, but also that they should be able to comprehend why they are being researched (Williams, 2003). Consequently, researchers have a duty to explain to the potential participants in comprehensible language what the research is about, why it is being undertaken and how the results will be analyzed and disseminated. They should also explain to the potential participant the nature of their involvement in the research and what demands their acceptance to participate might place on their time and other resources. Finally, researchers ought to inform potential participants that they have the right not to take part in the research and, if they initially agree to participate, that they can withdraw at any stage.

Tarling (2006) suggests that when the subject of the research is in an institution, public body, company or any other corporate entity, it is useful to have written agreement from someone in authority. Where research involves children or young people, consent should generally be obtained from parents and guardians as well as from the child or young person. The child's consent is not presumed when their parents agree for them to participate. They must be free to make that decision independently, although in some research contexts, there may be logistical or practical problems with obtaining parental consent. In this research, for instance, it was not possible to seek the consent of the Form Two parents because participants were selected by the teachers and the principals on the day, in the presence of the researcher. The Barnados Code recognises that parental consent can be waived "where it is clear that participation in research involves minimal risk and will not infringe the rights or impact on the welfare of participants" (Tarling, 2006:166) as was the case with this research. Similarly, there are situations where it is not possible to obtain informed consent. These situations concern especially vulnerable adults like people in care, elderly people, people suffering from dementia or mental illnesses and people incarcerated in institutions (Williams, 2003). Informed consent is also compromised in observational studies, especially where the research is undertaken covertly.

In addition to obtaining informed consent, researchers have the duty to honour participants' rights to confidentiality. The importance of confidentiality in the research setting is indisputable. Participants both deserve and require confidentiality in order to share their personal stories, and a lack of confidentiality can significantly hamper the type of information that is gathered (Duncan et al., 2009). As part of their obligation to subjects, researchers may not disclose identifiable information given to them in confidence by the subjects. Confidentiality in the research setting is therefore critical in order to maintain rigour and quality of research findings (Duncan et al., 2009).

Confidentiality is most often considered in connection with qualitative research methods and records from interviews with research participants, even though it is also possible to breach confidentiality in quantitative studies (Tarling, 2006). This research sought to protect confidentiality by anonymizing all the individuals and schools involved in the research, except the policy makers who were informed that they would be identified in the report. Anonymization of data is one way of protecting confidentiality and it is necessary where a duty of confidentiality is owed. It was necessary to enhance confidentiality, since anonymity and confidentiality can resolve many of the ethical problems that researchers come up against in their work (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989). For this reason, nearly all ethnographic researchers

anonymize the individual members of the community and usually the community itself (Williams, 2003). The requirements to protect from harm and ensure privacy aim to avoid embarrassment and any physical or psychological stress or humiliation for the subject, and it is also for this reason that data is held in strict confidence (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006).

Tarling (2006), however, holds that an exception to the duty of confidentiality exists in cases where information is gained in an interview from a person who has been engaged in a crime. While the researcher has no legal obligation to disclose information relating to criminal offences, if criminal proceedings are brought against the subject of the research, they are bound to disclose it. Furthermore, all ethical codes of professional bodies acknowledge that confidentiality can be breached where children are in danger. It is generally recognised that specific ethical problems can emerge from the use of one or other research strategy or data collection technique. However, as long as researchers recognise their responsibilities towards participants, and respect those responsibilities, ethical problems can be overcome.

Critics of anonymity as a default position for participants in qualitative educational research hold that current guidelines on anonymity are to a degree inadequate. Contexts are always bound to be different and, as has been pointed out already, there are situations where anonymity is easily compromised. In response to this, Kelly (2008) suggests that, until these guidelines are amended, it is important that researchers make clear that anonymity, though granted, is never guaranteed in cases of criminality or professional misconduct; that anonymity is primarily designed to protect the innocent and the vulnerable; that anonymity is always guaranteed against gratuitous and casual identification and that informed consent to participate includes a demonstrable or reasonably assumed understanding of the limits to which anonymity can be guaranteed.

Drew et al. (1996) hold that consent in research involves the procedure by which subjects choose whether or not they wish to participate. This was explained to all participants in this study so that they only participated if it was their wish to do so. In addition, the researcher explained, as clearly as possible, the aims, objectives, and methods of the research to all the parties involved. This was meant to ensure that 'informed consent' "which requires careful preparation involving explanation and consultation before any data collecting begins" (Bell, 1999: 39) was obtained. Informed consent also requires that participants have a complete understanding of the procedures to be used in the study, and risks involved and the demands placed on them as participants. The researcher tried to explain this as best they could.

4.1.1 Analysis of Data

It is important to give a brief explanation of the methods of data analysis employed in this study since how researchers account for and disclose their approach to all aspects of the research process are key to evaluating their work substantively and methodologically (Anfara et al., 2002). The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) is the computer programme commonly used to calculate the descriptive statistics which data from examination results and the parents' questionnaire generated. However, because the data generated from these statistics was relatively small and only descriptive statistics were involved, the EXCEL statistical software was used instead. The situation was different with qualitative data from the focus group discussions with students and interviews with teachers, head teachers and educational policy makers across all school types. Creswell (2002) contends that there is not one single way to analyse qualitative data; it is an eclectic process in which one tries to make sense of information gathered. Accordingly, a thematic analysis which seeks to unearth the themes salient in textual data and to illustrate this with some representational tool (Attride-Stirling, 2001) was performed on the interview data. The interview transcripts were analysed by drawing out the main themes which related to the framework that informed the interview schedule.

As with the interviews focus group discussions resulted in large amounts of contextually laden, subjective, and richly detailed data, which needed to be analysed. Here data analysis involved synthesising the focus group data in a systematic manner to provide information that effectively responded to the research questions (Hennink, 2007). The problem with analysing focus group data is that despite the abundance of published material on conducting focus groups, scant specific information exists on how to analyze focus group data in social science research. In fact Onwuegbuzie et al. (2009) contend that, to date, no framework has been provided that delineates the types of qualitative analysis techniques that focus group researchers have at their disposal. They suggest a number of analytical techniques that lend themselves to focus group data: constant comparison analysis, classical content analysis, keywords-in-context, conversation analysis and discourse analysis. It might be in order then to give a fuller explanation of the analysis of the focus group discussions.

The researcher decided to perform a content analysis on the focus group data, which is a common procedure for achieving data reduction in qualitative data analysis (Cohen et al., 2007). Moreover, Berg (2007) argues that content analysis can be effective in qualitative analysis and that counts of textual elements merely provide a means of identifying, organising, indexing and retrieving data. Specifically, it has been argued that content analysis is a good method to analyse focus group material since "every

effort to interpret a focus group represents analysis of content” (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990:106). Even so, it seems clear that in focus group research the level of analysis varies according to the purpose of the research and the complexity of the research design. For this reason, although classical content analysis emphasizes systematic, objective, quantitative description of content derived from researcher-developed categories, contemporary forms of content analysis include both numeric and interpretive means of analysing data (Schwandt, 2001). Accordingly, this research adopted Berg’s (2007:303) definition of content analysis as “a careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, themes, biases and meanings” since the purpose of focus group discussions in this research was to develop a greater understanding of how students see the way things are done in their schools and how this corroborated or contradicted what other data revealed. To identify these patterns, themes, biases and meanings, the ‘cut and paste technique’ (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990) was used to analyse the focus group discussion material. This involved reading through the textual data and becoming familiar with the information within the context of the focus group discussions. Next, the data was segmented into smaller, manageable parts for analysis. Data segmentation needs to be done by meaningful characteristics or themes which are “topical markers or focal issues of various parts of the discussion” (Hennink, 2007:221).

There are two broad approaches to identifying themes. The first involves identifying the issues raised by the participants and uses the principles of Grounded Theory whereby themes are identified inductively, that is, themes ‘emerge’ from the issues raised by the participants themselves. However, the second approach to identifying themes was adopted for this study. This involves using the explicit topic areas from the discussion guide to highlight parts of the discussion devoted to each topic (Holliday, 2002). Based on this initial reading, a classification system for major topics and issues was developed and material in the transcript related to each topic was identified and coded. Coding or labelling involved indexing the data to identify specific sections of the text where a certain issue was discussed. This then enabled the researcher to locate all segments of the data relating to a single theme. After the coding process was complete, the coded copy of the transcribed material was cut apart. Each piece of coded material was cut out and sorted so that all material relevant to a particular topic was placed together. The analysis of individual themes thus provided a more detailed analysis of each issue and enabled a comparison of the issues between discussion groups within the study. The various pieces of transcribed materials were then used as supporting materials and incorporated within an interpretative analysis.

While this is a very useful approach, it does tend to rely very heavily on the judgment of a single analyst and so there is obviously much opportunity for subjectivity and potential bias in this approach (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990). However, given the timeframe within which the research had to be completed, it was not possible for multiple analysts to code the focus group transcripts independently. Nevertheless, this was not a major issue since the findings from focus group discussions were going to be used alongside findings from other analyses. As Krzyzanowski (2008) holds, within the social sciences, as well as in other disciplines recently interested in focus groups, the analysis of the focus group material is frequently limited to its very general information level and used to support other types of analyses.

Having said that it is important to note that an honest attempt was made to follow the four guiding principles upon which the analysis of qualitative data is based. According to Denscombe (2007: 287-8), these principles are as follows:

- ❖ The analysis of the data and the conclusions drawn from the research should be firmly rooted in the data. There is a commitment to 'grounding' all analyses and conclusions directly in the evidence that has been collected.
- ❖ The researcher's explanation of the data should emerge from a careful and meticulous reading of the data. The researcher should derive their explanations of the phenomenon in question by looking closely at the empirical data that has been collected.
- ❖ The researcher should avoid unwarranted preconceptions into the data analysis as preconceptions are regarded as a hindrance to good analysis to the extent that they blinker the researcher's vision of the data.
- ❖ The analysis of data should involve an iterative process. The development of theory, hypotheses, concepts or generalisations should be based on the process that constantly moves back and forth comparing the empirical data with the codes, categories and concepts that are being used.

These principles are broadly based on the use of inductive logic, the logic of moving from the particular features of the data toward more generalised conclusions or theories. In this way, it is hoped that procedural clarity and consistency will give reasonable assurance that results are reproducible and credible (Kidd and Parshall, 2000).

Instrument	Subject involved	Sample Size	Analytical Technique
Examination results	All secondary schools in English speaking Cameroon	Schools increased from 164 to 276 at 'O' Level and from 80 to 141 at 'A' Level between 1999 and 2008	Excel computer software
Parents' questionnaire	Parents from 4 Catholic schools, 2 protestant, lay private and government schools each.	289 parents	Excel computer software
Focus Group discussions	2 groups of 5 students from each of the 10 schools (Form Two and Lower Sixth	100 students	Content Analysis
Teachers' Interviews	5 teachers from each of the 10 schools	50 teachers	Thematic analysis
Head teachers' Interviews	Head teachers of the 10 schools	10 Head teachers	Thematic analysis
Policy makers' Interviews	Catholic Bishop, Government Education Delegate, Catholic, Baptist, Presbyterian and Lay private Education secretaries	6 policy makers	Thematic analysis
School documents	Prospectuses, Letters to parents, School rules and regulations, school reports, records of dismissals, etc	N/A	Integrated with other data because limited and not evenly available

Table 2: Summary table of data collected and analytical techniques used

4.12 Limitations of the study and recommendations for future studies

All research work unavoidably has some limitations and even the most important breakthroughs are unlikely to be devoid of them (Ioannidis, 2007). Knowledge and discussion of limitations are essential for genuine scientific progress: they are useful for understanding a research finding, placing the current work in context, and ascribing a credibility level to it. Limitations are also likely to reveal how the current research work may be improved in future research and what caveats should be considered in trying to incorporate this new information in the evolving body of knowledge. In this regard, there would appear to be two major limitations to this study on Catholic schools and educational outcomes in English speaking Cameroon. One

concerns the Cameroonian context of the study and the other is to do with the nature of qualitative research. These limitations do not imply that the conclusions drawn above are without basis. Rather, they mean that these conclusions have to be read with a certain caution as they may have been influenced by the context of the study and the nature of the research methods used.

4.12.1 Limitations deriving from the Context of the study

The Cameroonian educational context is very different from the context of education in the UK, the US and other countries in the industrialised world from which most of the literature on Catholic education emanates. It is important to sound this note of caution since it is clear that the manner in which Catholic schools operate around the world is not only dictated by the directives from the Congregation for Catholic Education but also by national exigencies, and do not always view their religious purposes in the same way. For instance, while Catholic schools in Cameroon are all fee-paying, Catholic schools in the UK, Australia, and the Netherlands are free. Further, while Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon all adopt the holistic model of Catholic schooling, Catholic schools elsewhere tend to adopt the dualistic and pluralistic models and sometimes even within a single country there can be several models of Catholic schooling. For this reason it is important to realise that most of the conclusions about Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon are context-specific.

Secondly, even though a conscious attempt was made to word the parent questionnaire as simply as possible and it was piloted before the actual administration, some of the parents who could not write English (French speaking or illiterate) dictated their responses to their children or someone else so that it is not certain if the assistants remained faithful to the core of the messages throughout the exercise. In addition it was clear, reading through some of the questionnaire responses, that some parents did not quite understand the questions that were posed to them, either because they are French speaking or because their level of English is not good enough. This is a common problem when research is conducted in a language which is foreign to participants. Nevertheless, since the language of instruction in all the schools in the study is English and parents come from many different tribes the language that majority of them understand is English.

Thirdly, there were two difficulties arising from the fact that the researcher is a Catholic priest. The first difficulty arose from the fact that most of those who participated in focus group discussions and interviews knew that the researcher was a Catholic priest. While a good number of students, teachers and principals expressed their minds without any inhibitions, it was clear, especially in Catholic schools, that

some participants were careful what they said. In spite of the fact that they had been guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality, they did not seem confident that what they told the researcher would not be related to the headteacher or someone higher up the hierarchy⁸. A number of them probably said what they thought the researcher would want to hear rather than what they truly felt and believed. In this way, it is important to take into account participant reactivity, which is the effect which the researcher has on who and what is being studied (McKenzie, 2001). On the other hand, as a Catholic priest who had worked in some of these Catholic schools for 12 years prior to the research, it was always possible to approach issues with biases and prejudices from the past. When it came to researching non-Catholic schools, it was always difficult to leave the 'Catholic priest' outside and go in as an unbiased observer and listener. It is true that every researcher comes to a piece of research with an agenda and that they have to make an effort to be as unbiased as it is humanly possible. To this effect, a conscious effort was made to eliminate or lessen researcher bias as much as possible.

4.12.2 Limitations deriving from the nature of qualitative research

Even though this study follows a mixed methods study design, it is a qualitative-dominant design. Qualitative research methods are currently enjoying unprecedented popularity and qualitative research has become a global endeavour (Locke et al., 1998; Preissle, 2006). In fact, recent research in education shows the increasing popularity of qualitative methodologies and many educational researchers consider the legitimacy of the qualitative paradigm to be not only well established but soon may even supersede that of the quantitative paradigm (Niaz, 2009). Thus, in educational research the question is no longer whether qualitative methods are valuable but how rigour can be ensured or enhanced. Concern about assessing quality has manifested itself recently in the proliferation of guidelines for doing and judging qualitative work (Mays and Pope, 2000). To this effect, checklists have played an important role in conferring respectability on qualitative research and in convincing potential sceptics of its thoroughness (Barbour, 2001).

One of the controversial issues around all research is the generalization of results but it is even more controversial in qualitative research (Niaz, 2009; Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2010). While some writers believe that generalization is possible in qualitative research (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006; Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2010) it is a different type of generalization than that which is found in most quantitative research. In many experimental or quasi-experimental studies, the researcher generalizes from the sample under investigation to the population of interest. This is not possible in

⁸ One of the teachers in CS3 would not answer a question which she considered sensitive until the tape-recorder was turned off.

qualitative research since it investigates subjective meanings and personal dispositions associated with a specific situation and therefore by nature not representative of the population as a whole. However, the majority of qualitative researchers agree that the goal of interpretivist research is not to make statistical generalizations. Rather, they argue that the goal of qualitative research is to obtain insights into particular educational, social, and familial processes and practices that exist within a specific location and context (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2010). Accordingly, they hold that it is not their business to make generalizations and that even single case studies are worthwhile in their own right simply as a depiction of the specific, possibly unique, situation (Denscombe, 2007). Therefore, even though there seems to be consensus among researchers that one of the limitations of qualitative research is that there is seldom methodological justification for generalizing the findings of a particular study, the findings of qualitative research can always be useful to individuals who are in situations which are *similar* to the one investigated by the researcher (Bell, 1993). In this case, it is the practitioner, rather than the researcher, who judges the applicability of the researchers' findings and conclusions, and who determines whether the researcher's findings fit their situation. For this reason, qualitative researchers refer to 'transferability' rather than 'generalization' of research findings. The question becomes: 'To what extent could the findings be transferred to other instances?' rather than 'To what extent are the findings likely to exist in other instances?' (Schwandt, 2001; Denscombe, 2007). This study has been carried out in one of five Ecclesiastical Provinces of Cameroon and it would be completely legitimate to find out the extent to which the findings can be transferred to the other provinces.

Another important difficulty with qualitative research is that it is very heavily dependent on the researcher in the collection and interpretation of information since the researcher is inevitably involved in the research. In this way, it is subject to researcher bias which is thought to be particularly acute in forms of qualitative research that are intensely personal (Schwandt, 2001). The researcher's 'self' tends to be very closely bound up with the research instruments, sometimes an integral part of it. For example, as an interviewer, the researcher becomes almost an integral part of the data collection technique. As a result, the question of reliability translates from 'would the research instrument produce the same results when used by different researchers (all things being equal) to 'if someone else did the research would he or she have got the same results and arrived at the same conclusions?' (Denscombe, 2007). According to Bell (1993) it is easier to acknowledge the fact that bias can creep in than to eliminate it altogether. In addition, the prejudices of the researcher are always liable to come into play in the interpretations which they make. This could either produce the 'halo effect' (where their belief in the goodness of the participant

makes them to overlook or neglect the more negative aspects of the subject's behaviour or personality) or to the 'horns effect' (where their belief in the badness of the participant leads them to overlook or neglect the more positive aspects of their behaviour or personality) (Cohen et al., 2007). This threatens the reliability or dependability of qualitative research.

Finally, the fact that most of the data collection required personal contact between the researcher and participants could easily influence the findings of the study. Apart from the fact that the researcher is a Catholic priest and was known as such to many participants, one of the difficulties of qualitative research is that it is always open to the Hawthorne effect, otherwise known as reactivity (Cohen et al., 2007). The presence of the researcher is always likely to alter the situation as participants may wish to avoid, impress, direct, deny, or influence the researcher. Qualitative research always has to grapple with the issue of objectivity or 'confirmability' because it raises questions about the involvement of the researcher's 'self' and it raises questions about the prospects of keeping an open mind and being willing to consider alternative and competing explanations of the idea (Denscombe, 2007).

While it is important to point out these limitations on the study, it is equally important to state that a conscious effort was made to mitigate these limitations and so improve the quality of the research. These included triangulation of data sources and methods (Flick, 2009) as a strategy to add rigour, breadth, complexity, richness and depth to the inquiry (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). In addition the study incorporated a wide range of different perspectives and the researcher tried to be sensitive to the ways in which researcher and research process shaped the data collected, including prior assumptions and prejudices. This sensitivity is referred to as reflexivity and is used to refer to the process of critical self-reflection on one's biases, theoretical predispositions, preferences and so forth (Schwandt, 2001). Reflexivity helps to improve the validity or 'trustworthiness' of qualitative research. All these efforts notwithstanding, no research report is free of all limitations and even though researchers strive for the ideal, there are always reasonable (even inevitable) compromises with the ideal (Locke et al., 1998). Hallmarks of high-quality qualitative research include producing a rich, substantive account with strong evidence for inferences and conclusions and then reporting the lived experiences of those observed and their perspectives on social reality (Cohen and Crabtree, 2008), which is what this research attempted to do.

On a positive note, these limitations leave the door open for further research on Catholic education and educational outcomes in English speaking Cameroon. There is

always the possibility of some other researcher replicating the study and finding out whether the conclusions of this research are representative of reality in schools in English speaking Cameroon. It is also possible, for instance, to replicate the study in one or all of the other four Ecclesiastical Provinces of Cameroon, or in other Church provinces with a similar context in African countries. Secondly, because this research is cross-sectional and therefore presents only a snapshot of life in Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon, future research could investigate Catholic schools and academic outcomes from another methodological standpoint to see if the findings confirm or contradict the findings of this study. A longitudinal study would confirm whether the practices and processes observed are a culture of the schools or whether they are just passing fads. Thirdly, future research could investigate the similarities and differences between Catholic and other faith schools involved in the study and compare the strengths, cultures and outcomes of these schools and possible ways in which they could collaborate to maximise educational outcomes for their students and to address the nation's moral ills.

4.13 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the methodological paradigm adopted for this study, its methodological framework and the techniques that were used to collect data. In doing so, it has provided justification for the use of the paradigm, the research design and the use of the chosen instruments of data collection, but also pointed out that there remain certain 'unresolved issues' with mixed methods research. In addition, the chapter has discussed important issues that impinge on the robustness of the research findings and issues surrounding ethical research. In this light, limitations of the study have also been discussed. Since research methods are chosen because of their potential to answer research questions, the next chapter is a presentation of the findings generated by the mixed methods research approach adopted for this study. Although examination results were collected earlier, most of the other data was gathered simultaneously: parent questionnaire, school documents, focus group data and interviews. The findings will be presented in this order, except for the fact that data from documents will be integrated into the findings as and when appropriate.

5 CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS FROM EXAMINATION RESULTS

5.1 Catholic schools and academic achievement

If Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon are perceived to be doing particularly well, it is on the basis of their performance at the General Certificate of Education (GCE) examinations. Much like England and Wales, the Ordinary Level GCE examination is undertaken in Form Five (age 15/16), while the Advanced Level equivalent is undertaken two years later, in Upper Sixth (age 17/18). At both Levels faith schools have outperformed other school types (government and lay private) and the perception is widespread that Catholic schools rank at the top of the pile. The purpose of this section is to find out from examination results over the last ten years (1999 – 2008) whether it is generally the case that faith schools outperform other school types and whether Catholic schools specifically have had the best academic achievement.

Every year the Cameroon GCE Board produces a results booklet showing the overall performance of candidates according to school/centre type and a performance league table for all the schools/centres involved in the examinations.

Year	Government Schools			Faith Schools			Lay Private Schools			National Average		
	No. Sat	No. Passed	% Pass	No. Sat	No. Passed	% Pass	No. Sat	No. Passed	% Pass	No. Sat	No. Passed	% Pass
1999	7,194	4,567	63.48	1,598	1,362	85.23	3,197	1,677	52.46	19,176	9,772	50.96
2000	6,831	4,124	60.37	1,730	1,498	86.59	3,587	1,524	42.29	18,727	8,763	46.79
2001	7,383	5,024	68.05	1,937	1,747	90.19	3,635	1,870	51.44	20,904	11,066	52.91
2002	8,718	5,186	59.49	2,101	1,819	86.58	3,683	1,549	42.06	22,160	10,490	47.34
2003	9,614	5,415	56.32	2,165	1,867	86.24	4,642	1,880	40.50	25,455	11,183	43.93
2004	10,799	7,203	66.70	2,344	2,143	91.42	4,629	2,534	54.74	28,503	15,226	53.42
2005	11,724	6,793	57.94	2,403	2,126	88.47	4,478	1,957	50.36	30,129	13,669	45.37
2006	13,619	8,636	63.41	2,582	2,374	91.94	5,205	2,800	53.79	34,893	17,918	51.35
2007	15,041	10,083	64.04	3,108	2,783	89.54	5,485	3,170	57.85	37,950	21,060	55.49
2008	18,534	9,879	53.30	3,371	2,745	81.42	6,595	2,953	44.77	41,335	20,097	48.56

Table 3: Overall performance of all three school types at the Ordinary Level (1999 - 2008)

Table 3 and Table 4 show the overall performance according to school type from 1999 to 2008 for the Ordinary and Advanced Levels respectively. These tables do not include students who sat the examination as external candidates. Even though the candidates in this group outnumber by four times the candidates from all three faith school types put together, they have been excluded from the analysis because they are students

who either failed the examination the previous year(s) and were re-sitting or students who were home-schooled or were dismissed from other schools, or attended 'Evening Schools' which generally do not have examination centres attached to them¹.

Year	Government Schools			Faith Schools			Lay Private Schools			National Average		
	No. Sat	No. Passed	% Pass	No. Sat	No. Passed	% Pass	No. Sat	No. Passed	% Pass	No. Sat	No. Passed	% Pass
1999	5,010	3,280	65.47	1,080	882	81.67	1,782	989	55.50	13,186	7,011	53.17
2000	3,826	2,482	64.87	926	809	87.37	1,658	1,022	61.64	11,411	5,902	51.72
2001	4,834	2,902	60.03	1,151	905	78.63	2,000	815	40.75	13,492	5,919	43.87
2002	5,393	3,275	60.73	1,183	1,006	85.40	1,882	1,010	53.67	18,084	7,410	49.12
2003	6,155	3,520	57.19	1,189	1,011	85.03	2,297	1,006	43.80	16,889	7,520	44.53
2004	6,561	3,748	57.13	1,288	1,109	86.10	2,322	1,136	48.92	17,931	8,074	45.03
2005	6,871	4,823	70.19	1,344	1,232	91.67	2,293	1,427	62.23	19,305	11,147	57.74
2006	7,860	5,160	65.65	1,498	1,336	89.19	2,446	1,388	56.75	20,698	11,091	53.58
2007	8,021	5,497	68.53	1,616	1,465	90.66	2,603	1,549	59.51	21,970	12,211	55.58
2008	9,525	6,597	69.25	1,861	1,701	91.40	2,899	1,910	65.88	26,445	15,283	57.79

Table 4: Overall performance for all three school types at the Advanced Level (1999 - 2008)

Only examination results from 'Grammar'² schools are included in this analysis. There are 'Technical/Commercial' schools in the government, lay private and faith school sectors and some schools have both 'Grammar' and 'Technical/Commercial' departments, but the focus in this study is on 'Grammar' schools or Grammar departments in schools which run both departments. Again, this decision was driven by a desire to compare like with like.

The trend graph for overall performance (Figure 3) shows that the performances of all three school types at Ordinary Level have fluctuated over the ten year period under study. All three types have done rather poorly at the end of the period of study (2008) when GCE results are compared to those of 1999, but faith schools have consistently outperformed government and lay private schools by a very wide margin.

¹ Recently, in order to improve their standings in the league tables, some schools have started to register their academically weak students in external centres.

² In general 'Grammar' schools concentrate on Arts and Science subjects. To be awarded a certificate, candidates must obtain a pass in four or more subjects at the Ordinary level and in two or more subjects at the Advanced Level. Technical/commercial schools on the other hand prepare their students for specialised and professional courses. They sit such examinations as the GCE Commercial, London City and Guilds International, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) and the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) where certificates are awarded for a pass in single subjects. A few schools provide access to both examinations but students study the subjects separately.

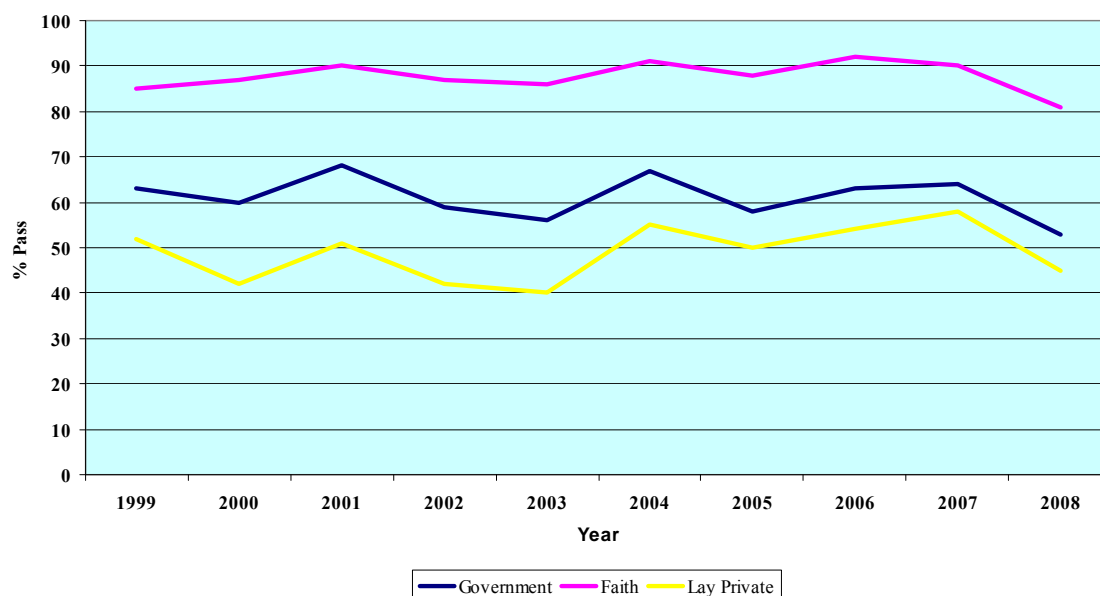


Figure 3: Trend graph for overall school performance at Ordinary Level (1999 - 2008)

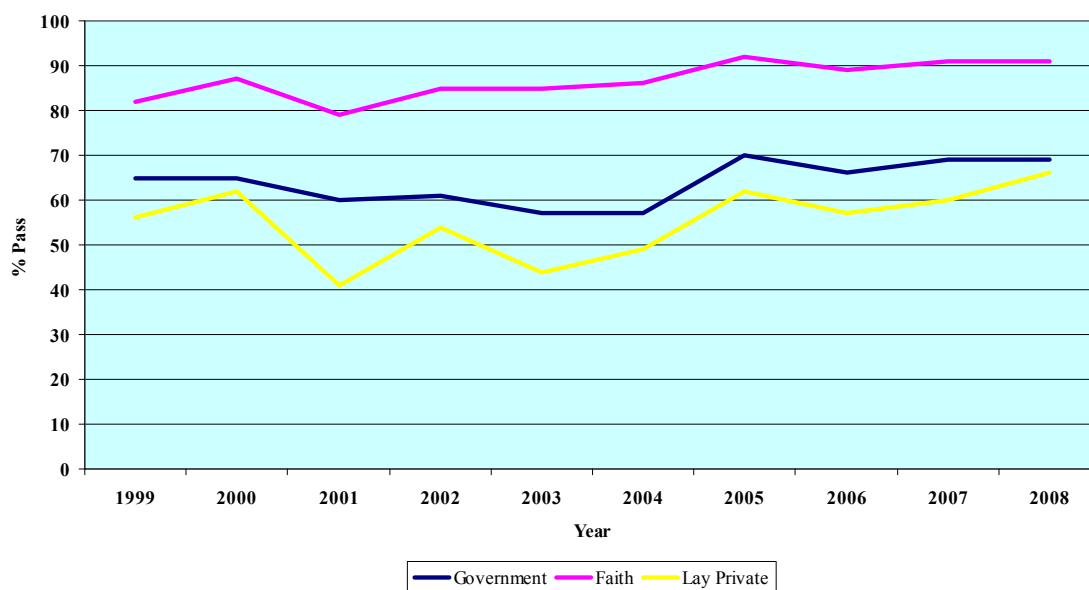


Figure 4: Trend graph for overall school performance at Advanced Level (1999 - 2008)

The difference in performance between government and lay private schools, while considerable, is not as large as the difference between government and faith schools³. At the Advanced Level, (Figure 4) the overall picture is much the same though the

³ The number of government school students who sit the GCE at both 'O' and 'A' Levels is usually four times the number of faith school students who sit the same examinations, while the number of lay private school candidates is usually nearly double that of faith school candidates.

trend is generally more positive. However, lay private schools exhibit the most erratic performance at this level, with steep dips and rises. Unlike at the Ordinary Level, all three school types show some improvement, albeit uneven, between 1999 and 2008, with the most marked improvement recorded by faith schools and lay private schools - ten percentage points. While critics of the modern trends in Cameroonian education argue that this improvement is due in large part to end of course examinations getting easier and easier as time goes on, there has been no empirical study to find out the reasons for the improved results.

Year	Catholic Schools			Presbyterian Schools			Baptist Schools			Government Schools			Lay Private Schools			Nat. Total
	Total	UQ	LQ	Total	UQ	LQ	Total	UQ	LQ	Total	UQ	LQ	Total	UQ	LQ	
1999	16	13	00	10	05	01	06	05	00	66	07	09	66	11	31	164
2000	16	15	00	10	09	00	06	02	00	69	08	15	62	07	26	163
2001	15	13	00	10	07	00	06	04	00	72	12	11	69	07	32	171
2002	15	13	00	10	09	00	07	04	01	86	14	09	71	07	37	189
2003	16	14	00	10	09	00	08	04	00	101	21	20	72	04	32	207
2004	18	15	00	11	11	00	08	05	01	116	15	24	70	10	31	223
2005	19	15	01	11	10	01RW	08	05	01	122	17	20	71	11	35	230
2006	21	17	01	13	12	00	08	05	01	128	18	23	79	08	35	240
2007	21	17	02	13	12	00	08	03	01	130	19	25	80	12	36	253
2008	21	18	00	13	12	00	08	06	02	147	21	26	89	12	41	276

Table 5: School distribution in Upper and Lower quartiles from 1999 - 2008 at Ordinary Level

Considering the quality of performance at both levels of the examination, it is clear that faith schools produce far better examination results than government and lay private schools. From 1999 to 2008, faith schools have consistently represented over half the number of schools in the top quartile⁴ of the GCE Ordinary and Advanced Levels despite the fact that government and lay private schools outnumber faith schools by a ratio as large as six to one.

Thus, while the average percentage of faith schools represented in the upper quartile at Ordinary Level over the ten years of this study is 77 percent, the average percentage representation of government schools in the top quartile is only 15 percent and that of lay private schools only 12 percent.

⁴ To obtain the top and bottom quartiles the researcher had to go through the results league tables year by year, eliminating all external examination centres as well as all centres outside of English speaking Cameroon, so that only school centres in English speaking Cameroon are included in the analysis.

Year	Catholic Schools			Presbyterian Schools			Baptist Schools			Government Schools			Lay Private Schools			Nat. Total
	Total	UQ	LQ	Total	UQ	LQ	Total	UQ	LQ	Total	UQ	LQ	Total	UQ	LQ	
1999	11	09	00	05	02	00	04	02	00	35	03	08	25	04	12	80
2000	12	10	00	06	03	00	05	04	00	35	02	05	22	01	15	80
2001	12	11	00	06	03	00	05	02	00	41	05	09	25	02	14	90
2002	12	11	00	06	04	00	05	03	00	44	04	11	30	02	13	97
2003	13	11	00	06	05	00	05	03	01	49	06	09	31	01	16	104
2004	13	11	00	06	04	00	05	05	00	49	02	11	32	04	15	105
2005	13	11	00	06	06	00	05	03	00	51	02	12	31	05	15	106
2006	14	13	00	07	06	00	06	04	01	54	01	13	34	05	16	116
2007	15	12	00	07	07	00	06	05	00	56	04	11	38	03	20	122
2008	16	12	02	09	07	00	07	04	01	69	05	16	40	07	16	141

Table 6: School distribution in Upper and Lower quartiles from 1999 - 2008 at Advanced Level

Total = Total Number of schools. UQ = Schools in Upper quartile. LQ = Schools in Lower Quartile. RW = Results Withheld

The faith school superiority is even more evident at Advanced Level. Here, faith schools are only rarely present in the lower quartile of the examination league tables, but government and lay private schools are *over-represented* in the lower quartile. For instance, over the ten year period, Presbyterian schools have never been represented in the lower quartile, while Catholic schools have been represented once (2 schools in 2008) and Baptist schools have been represented three times (one school each in 2003, 2006 and 2008). On the other hand, the average representation of government schools in the lower quartile over the same period is 10 while the average for lay private schools is 15. Furthermore, there are proportionately more lay private schools in the lower quartile than there are government schools, which strengthens the point made above that there is a significant difference in the quality of performance between government schools and lay private schools, with government schools producing better overall examination results consistently over the ten year period of the study. In sum, faith schools obtain better examination results than government schools which in turn achieve better results than lay private schools. Figure 5 and Figure 6 show a clear domination of faith schools over government and lay private schools in examination performance.

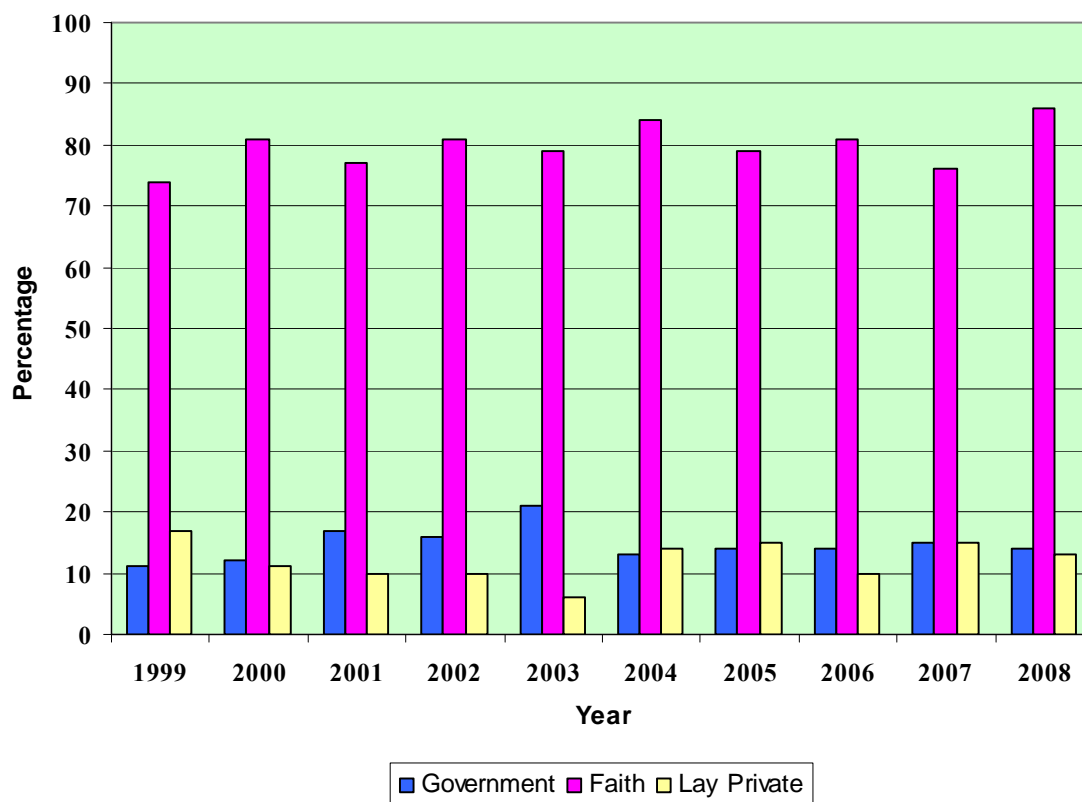


Figure 5: Percentage of schools in Upper quartile at Ordinary Level (1999 - 2008)

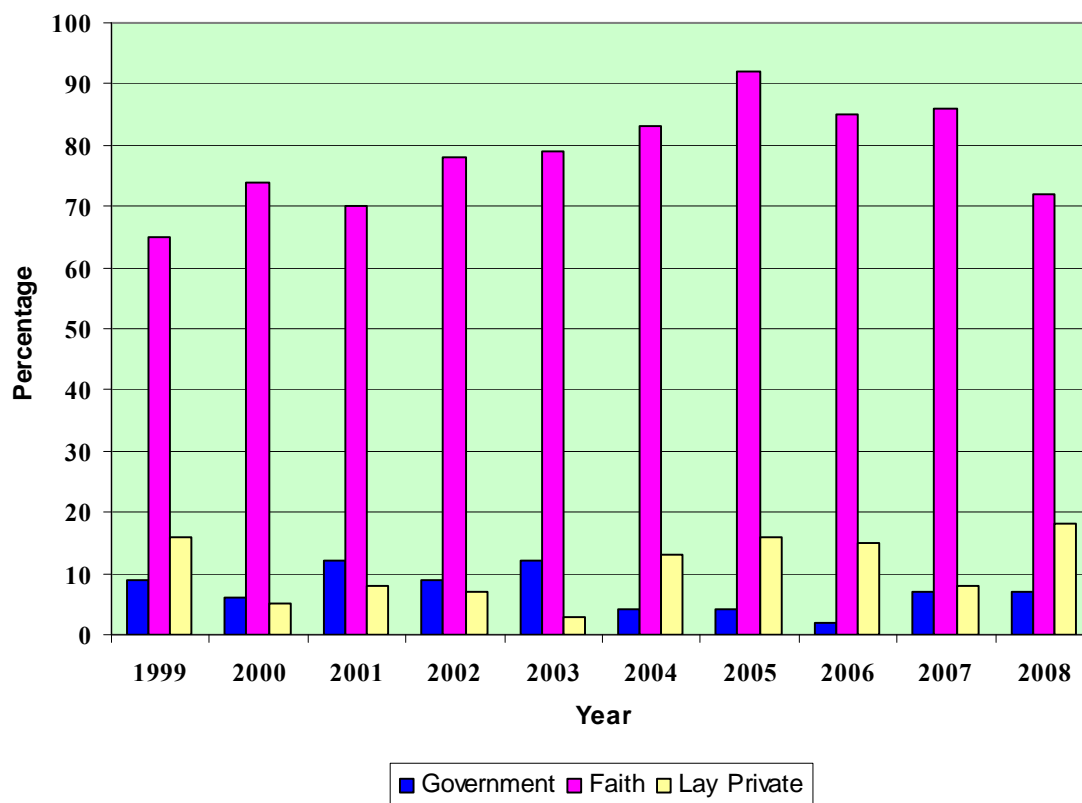


Figure 6: Percentage of schools in upper quartile at Advanced Level (1999 - 2008)

Among faith schools, it is possible to draw a distinction in academic performance as well. The faith schools represented in this sample are Catholic, Presbyterian and Baptist, not only because they are the denominations with significant numbers of secondary schools in English speaking Cameroon, but also because the other denominations (Full Gospel, Seventh Day Adventists, etc) are relative newcomers on the education scene and data is not available over the same ten-year period, if at all.

Year	Catholic	Presbyterian	Baptist
1999	89	75	81
2000	95	83	87
2001	85	71	71
2002	89	83	76
2003	83	84	71
2004	87	79	83
2005	92	92	86
2006	89	89	81
2007	90	93	90
2008	86	90	81

Table 7: Faith schools' overall performance at Ordinary Level (1999 - 2008)

Year	Catholic	Presbyterian	Baptist
1999	87	79	87
2000	88	89	71
2001	90	85	80
2002	91	86	76
2003	84	87	74
2004	92	94	80
2005	85	90	77
2006	90	96	81
2007	83	95	76
2008	89	93	77

Table 8: Faith schools' overall performances at Advanced Level (1999 - 2008)

In fact, the earliest secondary faith school outside the 'main' three denominations involved in the study (Full Gospel Secondary School, Bamenda) undertook the

Ordinary Level GCE for the first time in 2003. Table 7 and Table 8 show the average performance of Catholic, Presbyterian and Baptist secondary schools at the Ordinary and Advanced levels in the period under study. These statistics were compiled by the researcher from the GCE results booklets from 1999 to 2008 as they do not exist in this format anywhere. Compiling the results required going through the results booklet for each year, sorting out the individual results of each school and then working out the average percentages for each year for all the schools belonging to the same faith group and the average percentage for each school over the ten year period.⁵

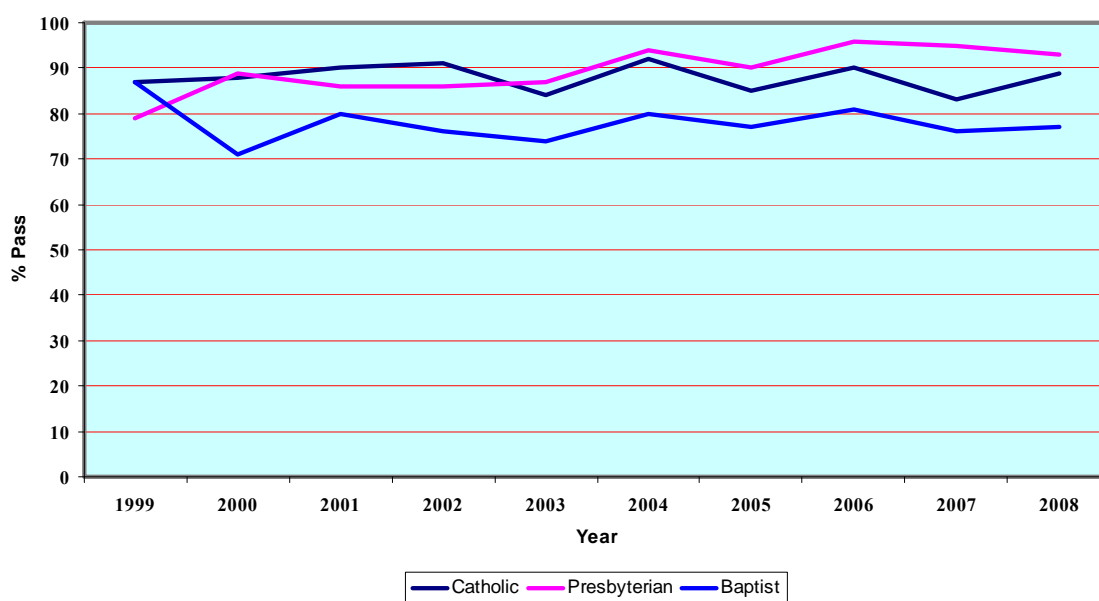


Figure 7: Trend graph for faith school performance at Ordinary Level (1999 - 2008)

Compared with the national average percentage passes these results are impressive for all three school types. In the ten-year period under study, faith schools have only three times had an average percentage performance below 80 percent (Baptist schools twice and Presbyterian schools once). However, the aim was to examine further the overall results of faith schools and find out if there are any differences in performance between them. At the Ordinary Level, Figure 7 shows that Catholic and Baptist schools started off jointly topping the examination league table in the first year of this study (1999). However, in the second year, Baptist schools took a very steep tumble while Presbyterian schools produced the best average performance. Catholic schools then regained the top position for the next two years after which Presbyterian schools consistently produced the best results from 2003 to 2008. In the ten-year period, Baptist schools have produced the best average performance once (1999), Catholic schools three times and Presbyterian schools seven times. The graph shows that after

⁵ . For details of individual school performances, see Appendix 1.

overtaking Catholic schools, Presbyterian schools actually *widened* the performance gap between them and Catholic schools. However, the difference in average performance between Presbyterian and Catholic schools is small compared with the difference in average performance between Baptist schools and the other two faith school types. On the other hand, apart from the first year, Baptist schools consistently performed below the other two faith school types and the performance gap between them and the other two faith school types is significantly wide.

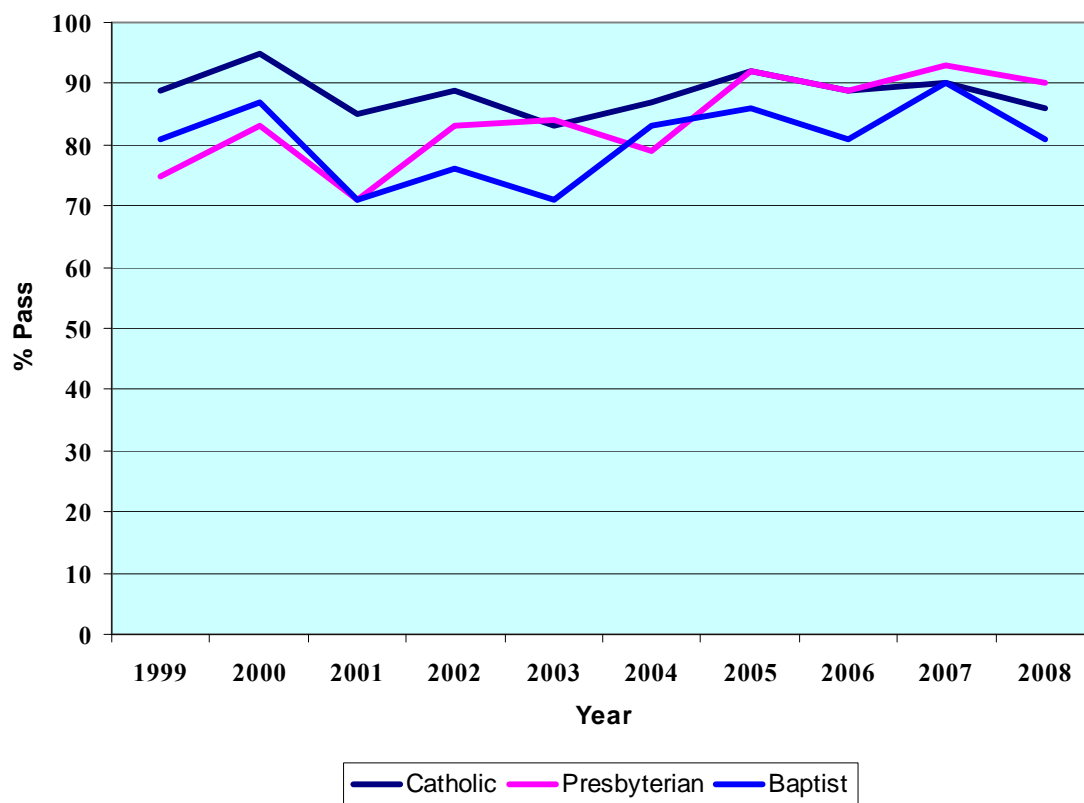


Figure 8: Trend graph for faith school performance at Advanced Level (1999 - 2008)

At the Advanced Level, Catholic schools were dominant in the first four years of the period under study. Presbyterian schools surpassed Catholic schools three times in the ten year period, by one percentage point in 2003, three percentage points in 2007 and four percentage points in 2008. The graph (Figure 8) shows Presbyterian schools not only overtaking Catholic schools but also (as at the Ordinary Level) opening up a performance gap between them. Again, at the Advanced Level as at the Ordinary Level, Baptist schools start off performing better than Presbyterian schools in the first two years, then fall below Presbyterian schools for the rest of the period. It is remarkable that Catholic schools' performance, at this level as at the Ordinary Level, is consistently high and Catholic schools never score below the 80 percent mark, unlike the other two school types. That notwithstanding, Presbyterian schools, having started off as worst

performers at both the Ordinary and Advanced Levels, have worked their way up to the position of best performers at both levels.

It is clear then that there was initial Catholic school domination during the first four years of the period of analysis at both the Ordinary and Advanced Levels. Thereafter, at the Ordinary Level, Presbyterian schools performed better than the other faith schools for the next six years, even if the difference in performance between them and Catholic schools was not large. At the Advanced Level, Catholic schools occupied the top position for seven out of the ten years. Again, after the initial four years Presbyterian schools closed the performance gap between them and Catholic schools, and actually outperformed Catholic schools in 2003, 2007 and 2008. Baptist schools, having started off performing better than Presbyterian schools, fell behind them and never once produced best overall results but six times produced the worst overall results among faith schools.

It would seem that the perception that Catholic schools do better than the other faith schools was born of the initial Catholic domination at the GCE examinations at both levels. For this reason they seemed to acquire a reputation which has been hard to shift in spite of the fact that Presbyterian schools narrowed the gap between themselves and Catholic schools and their overall performances at both levels 'trump' the performance of Catholic schools generally.

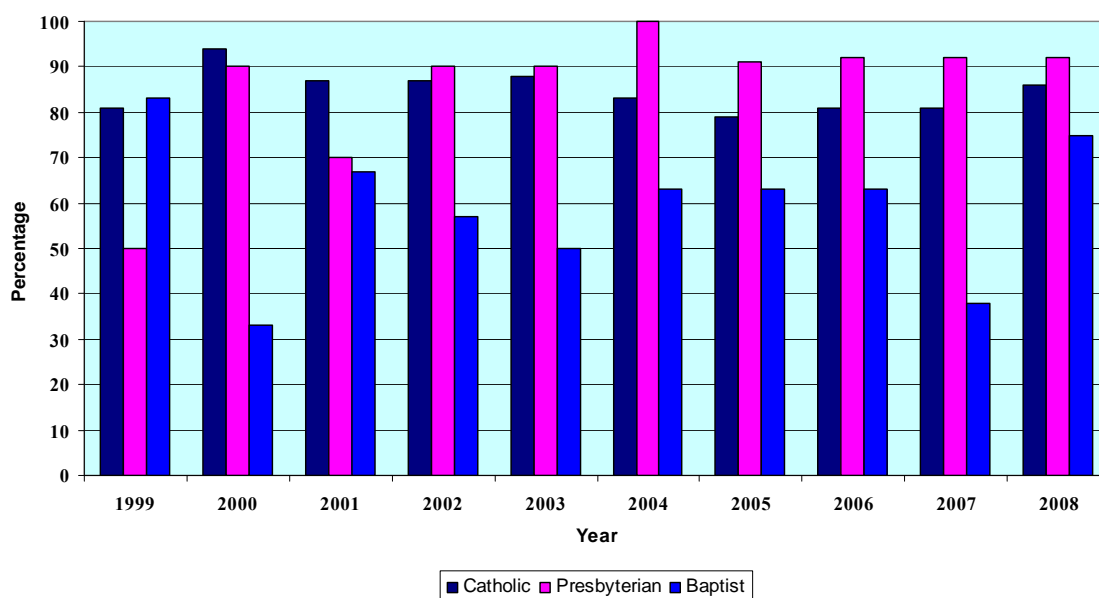


Figure 9: Proportional representation of faith schools in upper quartile at Ordinary Level (1999 - 2008)

Secondly, there have been overwhelmingly more Catholic schools in the upper quartile of the examination league tables than Baptist and Presbyterian schools. At Ordinary Level, over the ten-year period, there is an average of 15 Catholic schools in the upper quartile, compared to ten Presbyterian and four Baptist schools. At Advanced Level the Catholic school average representation in the upper quartile is ten compared to the Presbyterian schools' five and the Baptist schools' three. This gives the public the impression that Catholic schools do better, academically speaking, than the other faith schools. On closer examination, however, it emerges that the number of Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon is roughly equal to the total number of Presbyterian and Baptist schools put together.

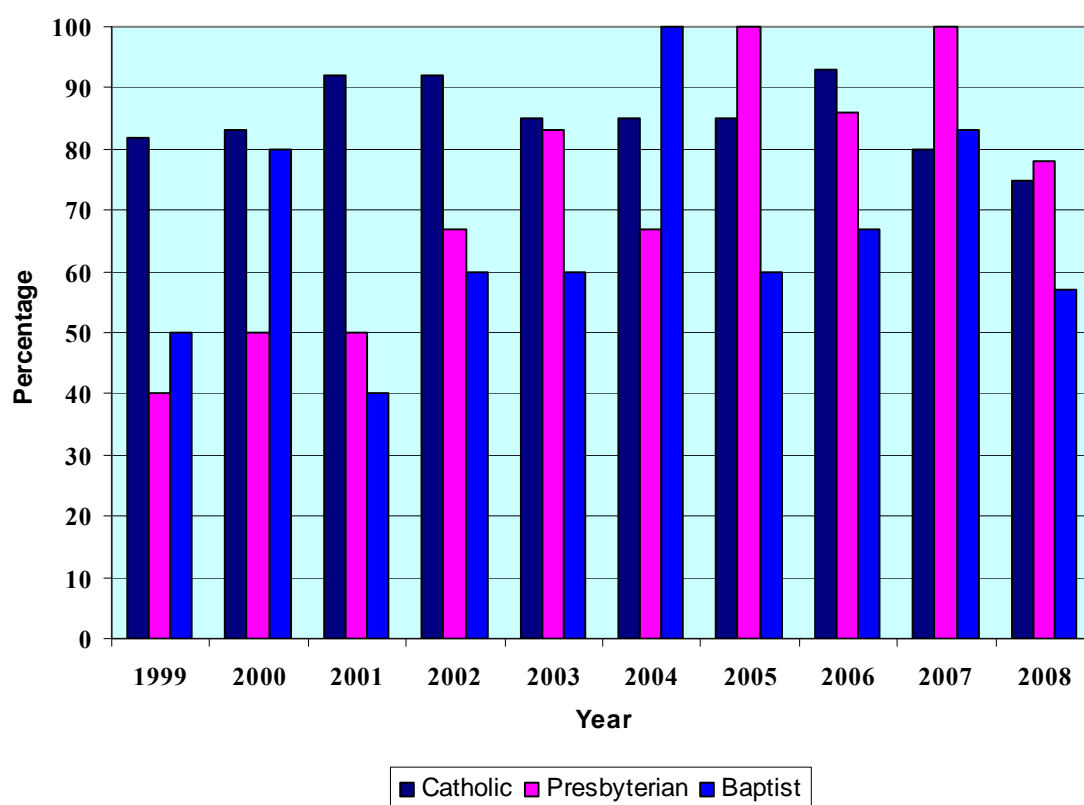


Figure 10: Proportional representation of faith schools in upper quartile at Advanced Level (1999 - 2008)

If proportionality is factored into the equation, a clear Presbyterian schools' domination emerges at the Ordinary Level (Figure 9). In the ten-year period under study Presbyterian schools seven times have proportionately more representation in the upper quartile against two times for Catholic schools and one time for Baptist schools. At the Advanced Level it is the reverse, with more Catholic schools represented six times in the upper quartile against three times for Presbyterian schools and one time for Baptist schools (Figure 10).

Lastly, there is a cluster of traditional Catholic schools which have produced outstanding results consistently over a long period of time (See Appendix 1). One of these schools (St Bede's College Ashing) consistently scored 100 percent at the GCE Ordinary Level every year for the ten years under study. Two other schools scored 100 percent at Ordinary Level nine out of ten years. It could be argued that the quality of results produced by these schools (and a significant number of other Catholic schools) has also enhanced the perception that Catholic schools achieve better academic results than the other school types. For instance, at the Ordinary Level, in the ten-year period, ten Catholic schools have had an average performance above 90 percent, compared to three Presbyterian schools and one Baptist school with a similar performance. And at the Advanced Level, there are seven Catholic schools with an average performance above 90 percent, but only three Presbyterian and one Baptist school with a similar performance.

5.2 Chapter summary

From our analysis of examination results, it seems clear that Catholic schools, having started off as best performers, are now facing stiff competition from Presbyterian schools which have, on average, produced better examination results at the Ordinary Level in the period under study. At the Advanced Level, Presbyterian schools have not only closed the performance gap between them and Catholic schools, but the trend shows they are overtaking Catholic schools at this level as well. However, the large number of outstanding individual Catholic schools which produce excellent results year in and year out assures them of the top position in the public's perception, which remains that Catholic schools on the whole achieve better results and are more successful in pursuing academic achievement than other school types.

6 CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS FROM THE PARENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was sent out to 30 parents in each of the 10 secondary schools selected for the study. The overall response rate was a very high 96 percent, though there was variation in the response rates of the individual schools concerned. The lowest response rate was registered by a lay private school (63.33%) while the highest came from a Catholic school (100%). The two lay private schools in the study together gave an overall response rate of 88 percent, the response rate for the two government schools was 95 percent, and the response rates for the Baptist and Presbyterian schools were 73 percent and 87 percent respectively. In total, 289 parents were surveyed from the three school types. It remains the largest study of its kind in English speaking Cameroon.

The questionnaire was designed mainly to elicit information about the socio-economic circumstance of parents, their level of involvement with the school and the reason(s) why they decided to send their children to a particular school type and not some other. The last open ended question asked parents from all three school types what they thought about faith schooling in Cameroon (See Appendix 2 for the questionnaire). The findings below are presented in that order.

6.1 Socio-economic background of parents

There is no entitlement to Free School Meals in Cameroon, as there is in the UK, so other (real and proxy) measures of socio-economic deprivation had to be used. In order to determine the socio-economic status of parents, it was necessary to find out where they lived (affluent or deprived), the size of their families, their occupations, their academic qualifications and their estimated monthly income (though many of these are correlated). In addition, it was important to know whether there were any other non-parent earners who supplemented family income and by how much. Parents were also asked if they had one or more TV sets and/or computers in their homes, and how many, if any, children currently attending secondary school shared bedrooms.

The results show that the majority of faith school students come from affluent backgrounds (54%) compared to 32 percent for lay private schools and 15 percent for government schools. Government school parents also tend to have larger families, with 53 percent having families of five or more children, which further puts a strain on their already stretched resources. They are followed in family size by faith school parents, 41 percent of whom have five or more children (but most of these have the resources

to sustain large families). Lay private school parents tend to have smaller families, with only 38 percent of them having five or more children.

As far as occupations are concerned, government school parents again seem to be the most disadvantaged, with 53 percent of mothers in this sector either not employed or working as peasant farmers, and only 15 percent in professional employment. Similarly, 23 percent of government school fathers are either not employed or working as peasant farmers, and only 26 percent are in professional employment. Parents of lay private school students do better than government school parents here. Only 23 percent of mothers are either not employed or work as peasant farmers, while 39 percent are in professional employment. The fathers do even better, with only 9 percent unemployed or peasant farming, and 57 percent in professional employment. Again, faith school parents perform best though they have a fairly high percentage of mothers unemployed or in peasant farming (24%). Faith schools have 50 percent of mothers in professional employment, far above lay private school mothers (39%). The fathers of faith school students have only 6 percent unemployed or working as peasant farmers and 72 percent in professional employment.

With regard to academic qualifications, government school parents do not do well either. Almost half of the *mothers* (49%) either have no certificate or have only a primary school certificate (known as the First School Leaving Certificate, (FSLC), and only 19 percent have a university degree. 38 percent of government school *fathers* either have no certificate or have only the FSLC, and only 21 percent of them have a university degree. By contrast, only 24 percent of lay private school mothers either have no certificate or have only the FSLC, although the percentage of those with a university degree is slightly more than government school mothers, at 20 percent. Moreover, only 7 percent of lay private school *fathers* either do not have a certificate or have only the FSLC, and more than half of them (57%) have a university degree. Again, as with employment, faith school parents come out well. While 25 percent of faith school mothers either do not have a certificate or have only the FSLC, 38 percent of them have a university degree. Surprisingly, 15 percent of fathers in faith schools either do not have a certificate at all or have only the FSLC, but then 59 percent of them have at least a university degree.

The picture emerging from this analysis is that more faith school parents live in affluent areas than lay private school and government school parents (in that order). Secondly, the majority of government school parents do not live in affluent areas *and* more of them have big families (five or more children) than faith and lay private school parents. Thirdly, faith school parents generally have more professional employment

than other parents. Finally, faith school parents are generally better educated than lay private and government school parents. It can therefore be concluded that on these four indicators, faith school parents are more affluent than lay private school parents who, in turn, are more affluent than government school parents.

When monthly salaries or earnings are compared, even larger discrepancies show up between the three school types. Government schools have the largest numbers of parents who earn less than 50,000 CFA a month (currently about £75). They have 74 percent of mothers and 39 percent of fathers in this group compared to lay private school parents' 58 percent and 23 percent respectively. Faith schools, on the other hand, have only 40 percent of mothers and 11 percent of fathers in this group. Similarly, only 8 percent of government school mothers and 11 percent of fathers earn anything above 150,000 CFA (about £215) a month. (This time they perform better than lay private school mothers, none of whom earns over 150,000 CFA, even though 24 percent of lay private school fathers have monthly earnings in excess of that amount). Faith school parents have both the lowest representation in the lower income distribution and the highest representation in the higher income distribution.

27 percent of faith school mothers and 48 percent of fathers earn over 150,000 CFA a month while 3 percent of faith school mothers and 13 percent of fathers earn more than the monthly ceiling amount of 400,000 CFA (about £570). That notwithstanding, 25 percent of faith school parents receive financial assistance from other earners in the household who supplement family income. Almost the same percentage (25%) of government school and lay private school parents (26%) receive financial assistance, but they receive far lower amounts than faith school parents. For instance, while 76 percent of faith school parents who receive assistance get above 45,000 CFA (about £64) a month, only 54 percent of lay private school parents and 27 percent of government school parents who receive assistance get that amount. Figure 11 is a diagrammatic representation of parents' earnings in the three school types.

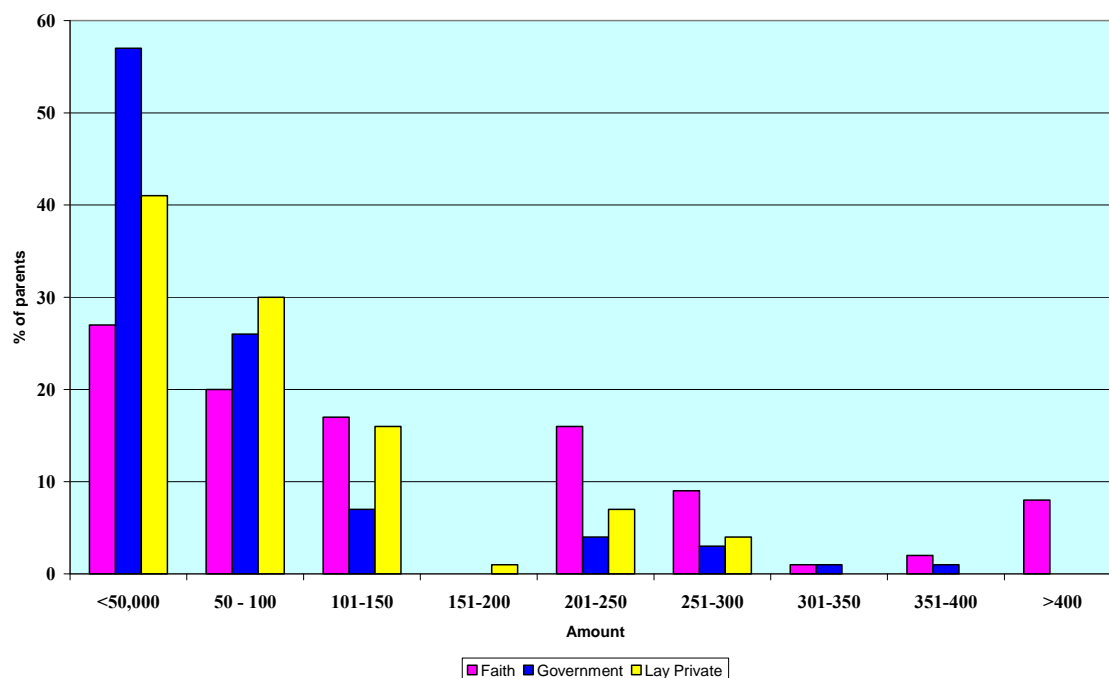


Figure 11: Parents' earnings in FCFA x 1000

Television is the most common form of entertainment in Cameroon. Only 3 percent of faith school parents and 8 percent of lay private school parents did *not* have a TV set, compared to 23 percent of government school parents. While 36 percent of faith school parents had *more than one* TV in their homes, only 26 percent of lay private school parents and 12 percent of government school parents had more than one. Computers are less common in Cameroonian homes, but 45 percent of faith school parents had at least one in their home, compared to 34 percent of lay private school parents and 17 percent of government school parents. These statistics take on greater significance when the powerful impact of the television and Information Technology on children's learning is considered.

The point has already been made that government school parents tend to have bigger families than parents in the other two school types. This places a bigger burden on them since their family sizes are not proportionate to their means. That notwithstanding, they have more children attending secondary school than the parents in the other school types. While 56 percent of lay private school parents in this sample have two or more children currently attending secondary school and faith school parents have 66 percent in the same category, 82 percent of government school parents are in this category even though they have the least means. It is no surprise then that they have more children of secondary school age sharing bedrooms than the parents of faith and lay private schools (93%, 78% and 85% respectively).

It is clear from the demographic data that faith school students enjoy a higher socio-economic status than their counterparts in lay private schools who in turn enjoy a higher socio-economic status than government school students: more of them come from affluent backgrounds, their parents tend to be better educated, hold professional jobs, earn higher salaries and are more likely to enjoy higher living standards. Lay private school students occupy the middle ground between faith school and government school students. While they enjoy a lower socio-economic status than faith school students they are better placed compared to government school students. The explanation is simple: all faith schools are fee-paying and mostly boarding, and therefore expensive. In this sense, they are accessible only to parents who can afford to pay tuition or those who receive outside aid to enable them to attend. Lay private schools, while also fee-paying, are mostly *day* schools and therefore more affordable, and even when they *do* offer boarding facilities, they tend to be cheaper than faith schools as their boarding facilities tend to be of a lower standard.¹ At the lower end of the spectrum, government schools are nominally free and the financial constraints on sending a child to a government school are far smaller.

6.2 Parents' involvement with school

The objective in this section of the questionnaire was to find out the nature and regularity of the contacts which parents made with their children's schools. Parents were required to state how often they attended Parent – Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, how often the school contacted them either by letter or telephone each year, and how many times they had met their child's school principal and teacher over the past two years. Finally, they were asked to state whether or not they were satisfied with the level of communication between them and their children's schools and whether they thought the school took parents' views into account in their decision making processes.

As far as attendance at PTA meetings were concerned, faith school parents fared better than government school parents who in turn did better than lay private school parents. 89 percent of faith school parents either always attended PTA meetings or attended them quite often, and only 11 percent of them either never attended meetings at all or only attended rarely. 75 percent of government school parents either always attended PTA meetings or attended quite often, and 25 percent of them either never attended at all or only attended rarely. Finally, 42 percent of lay private school parents either

¹ A new crop of lay private schools is emerging in English speaking Cameroon where standards are very high and tuition is quite high as well.

attended always or quite often while 58 percent of them either never attended at all or rarely attended².

The commonest means by which the school contacts parents in Cameroon is either by letter or by telephone. Here again, faith schools did better than the other two school types even though one would have expected them to do even better as far as making contact with parents is concerned. 48 percent of faith school parents said that their schools made contact with them 'always' or 'quite often', while 52 percent said they 'rarely' or 'never' made contact with parents³. 30 percent of government school parents said their children's schools made contact with them 'always' or 'quite often' while 70 percent said they 'rarely' or 'never' made contact. Lay private schools again fared worst here, with only 21 percent of their parents stating that they made contact with them 'always' or 'quite often', and 79 percent stating they 'rarely' or 'never' made any contact.

When it came to saying how many times parents had met the school principal and their child's teacher in the past two years concerning their child, the findings showed that there was very little personal contact between parents and their children's principals and teachers. Over a period of two years, 57 percent of faith school parents had not met with their child's principal on their own initiative and the other 43 percent had initiated a meeting with the principal at least once. 78 percent of them had never met the school principal on the principal's initiative concerning their child, while the other 22 percent had met with the principal at least once on his initiative. Over the same period of time, 72 percent of government school parents had not initiated any meeting with their child's principal, while 28 percent of them had initiated at least one meeting with their child's principal in two years. Lay private school parents fared better than their government school counterparts on this item. 71 percent of them said they had not initiated a meeting with their child's principal in two years while 29 percent had initiated at least one meeting with the principal concerning their child in the same period of time. However, a disproportionate number of lay private school parents said their child's principal had not initiated any meeting between them in two years (91%), and only 9 percent of them said the principal had initiated at least one meeting with them in the past two years.

² . In one of the lay private schools, the researcher was informed that the school does not have a Parent Teacher Association, and therefore there are no PTA meetings.

³ . This percentage is very high considering the fact that sample letters to parents collected from all the schools involved in the study showed that all faith schools sent out letters to parents at the end of each school term while government and lay private schools did not. While this might not be good enough for some parents, it is surprising that 23% of them thought their school never made contact by letter or telephone.

Contact between teachers and parents was slightly better than that between principals and parents, which is understandable since teachers are generally more accessible than principals and would provide parents fuller information about their children's behaviour and performance at school. Even so, the level of contact between teachers and parents was deplorably low in all three school types. 48 percent of faith school parents had not initiated a meeting with their child's teacher in two years, and only 52 percent of them had managed to initiate a meeting with their child's teacher concerning the child in the same period of time. When it came to teachers initiating meetings with parents of faith school parents, a massive 77 percent never met with their child's teacher at the teacher's invitation over a period of two years, and only 23 percent of parents were ever invited to a meeting about their child by the teacher. In government schools, only 37 percent of parents met with their child's teacher in two years on their own initiative; 63 percent of them never bothered to initiate a meeting with their child's teacher. A much higher percentage of parents (81%) said that their child's teacher had never invited them to a meeting in the past two years; and only 19 percent of parents had been invited to meet their child's teacher concerning the child. With regard to contact with the teacher on the parents' initiative, lay private school parents did better than government school parents. A lower percentage of lay private school parents said that they had not initiated a meeting with their child's teacher (59%), and more of them (41%) than government school parents had taken the initiative to meet with their child's teacher concerning the child. However, when it came to the teachers taking the initiative to invite parents, lay private school parents again fared worse than parents in the other two school types. 87 percent of parents had not met with their child's teacher at the teacher's invitation in two years, and only 13 percent had been invited by the teacher for an issue regarding their child. It would seem that in all three school types, it is the parents, rather than the principals and teachers who make the greater effort to initiate communication between the home and the school.

In spite of this, 74 percent of faith school parents asserted that they were either 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the level of communication between them and their child's school. Surprisingly, 58% of lay private school parents were either 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the level of communication between them and their child's school even though the statistics showed that lay private schools had the lowest amount of communication going on between the school and parents. In fact, 30 percent of them were 'very satisfied' with the level of communication between their children's schools and them. Government schools did rather poorly here, with only 48 percent of parents expressing satisfaction ('very satisfied' or 'satisfied') at the level of communication between them and their children's schools. Figure 12 shows the level of parental satisfaction with home-school communication among the three school types.

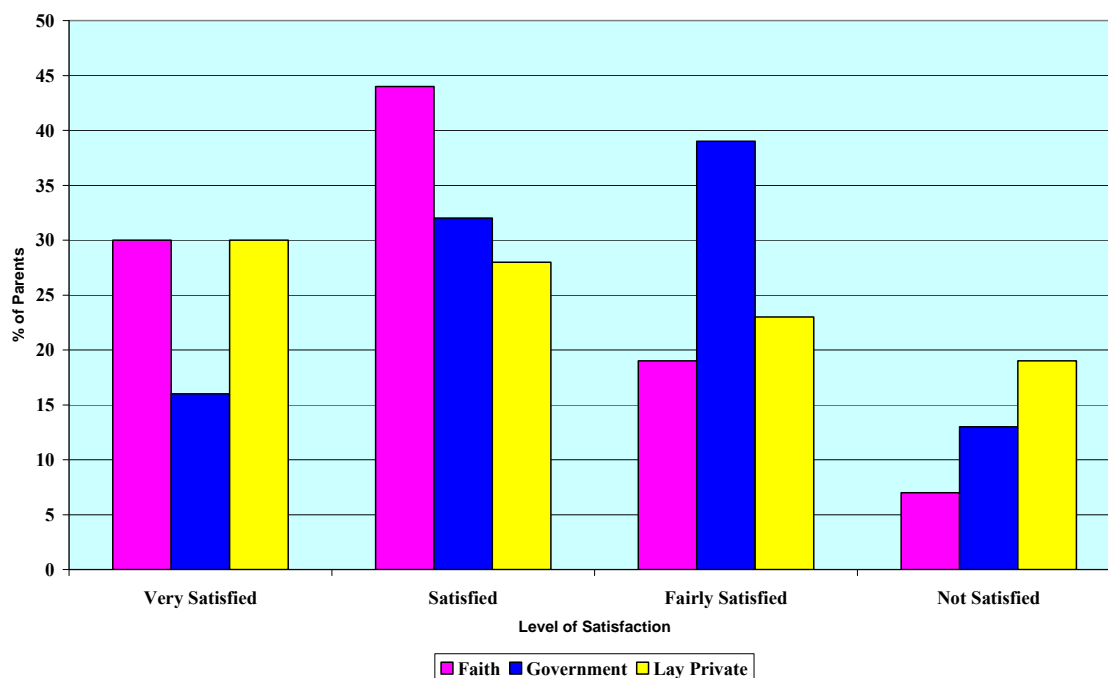


Figure 12: Level of satisfaction with home-school communication.

Communication between school and home is not a one-way street. It involves not just being able to express oneself but also an ability to actively listen to the other. It is evident that schools are listening to parents if the latter's views are seen to be taken into account in the decision-making processes of the school. While 72 percent of faith school parents thought that their views were taken into account in the decision-making processes of their children's schools, and 68 percent of government school parents thought the same, only 35 percent of lay private school parents thought their views mattered in the decision making processes of their children's schools. It is remarkable that only 3.5 percent of faith school parents and 9 percent of government school parents thought that their children's schools 'never' took their views on board in their decision making processes while 33 percent of lay private school parents thought their views did not count for anything. It is likely that the lack of a PTA in a school would limit parents' ability to channel their views to school authorities on matters concerning their children.

Home-school communication and parent involvement does not seem to be a strong point for schools in English speaking Cameroon. Despite this, it is clear that the home-school link is stronger between faith schools and their parents than it is between lay private and government schools and their parents. Further, government school parents are slightly more involved with their children's schools than are lay private school parents.

6.3 Reasons for choosing school

It was clear from responses to the questionnaire that fathers were mostly responsible for the choice of school for their children across all three school types. Mothers came next in rank, with children hardly ever being responsible for their choice of school except in the sense that they were 'consulted'. 91 percent of parents of faith school children consulted their children about the choice of school, compared to 96 percent of government school parents and 72 percent of lay private school parents. It is important, however, to note that it is very difficult to say what the term 'consultation' means to parents in the Cameroonian cultural setting. In view of the fact that most parents in government and lay private schools do not have the means to send their children to a faith school, which are mostly boarding and expensive, it is difficult to talk in any meaningful way about consulting children about choice of school.

That said, there were two top reasons why parents chose one school over others. In faith schools as well as government schools, '*discipline*' was the prime reason why parents chose particular schools, followed very closely by '*good examination results*'. Lay private schools had the same reasons at the top of their list but in reverse order. Examination results came first, followed by good school discipline. The fact that the faith school belonged to their Church was the third most important reason why faith school parents chose those schools over others. Worthy of note here is the fact that parents of children in lay private and government schools do not generally appear to choose those schools because they are anti-religious. Less than 2 percent and just over 1 percent of government and lay private school parents respectively chose those schools because they positively did not want their children to have a religious education.

While 'school climate' ranked fourth and 'nearness to home' and 'other reasons' came bottom of the list in determining choice of school for *faith school* parents, nearness to school and affordability came in joint fourth for *government school* parents, reinforcing the view that government schools are popular because they are affordable and since the government provides schools within walking distance from home for most pupils, it is understandable that 'nearness to home' and 'affordability' would be reasons for less privileged families to choose a school. This is similar to the pattern found in lay private schools where 'nearness to school' and 'affordability' are the third and fourth most important reasons for choosing the school. Faith schools are very different in this regard; they have the best boarding facilities and recruit their students from almost any corner of the country, even when these schools are situated in a village/rural setting.

Having established that parents are mostly responsible for choice of school and their reasons for so choosing, it is important to find out whether these parents think their children enjoy being at their schools. An overwhelming majority of parents in all three school types think that their children are happy where they are. 93 percent of faith school parents, 96 percent of government school parents and 94 percent of lay private school parents think their children enjoy school. However, when it comes to stating the reasons why they think their children are happy at school, it is clear that the reasons have more to do with the way *parents* feel than the way the *children* feel. For instance, in answer to an open-ended question which sought to explore why parents thought their children were happy at their current schools, faith school parents gave the following reasons, in order of importance:

Reason for being happy at school	% of parents
School has good results/reputation	32
Child speaks well of school	21
Child does well at school	19
Child has friends at the school	11
Child has never complained	7
School is near home	4

Table 9: Reasons why children are happy at their schools

The fact that a school has a good reputation or gets good examination results, that the child never complains about the school or even that they do well at that school or that the school is near home do not seem good enough reasons for thinking that a child is necessarily happy at school. The only two reasons on this list that seem to point to the fact that a child is happy are that they speak well of the school and have friends there. This re-enforces the view that parents sometimes 'strong-arm' their children to go to a particular school for reasons that suit the parents rather than the children. In fact, one of the parents in a faith school simply stated that his daughter "has no choice". On the other hand, a number of parents who thought their children did *not* enjoy being at faith schools pointed out that the children were bullied at those schools (2%) or that they did not like the food there (5%).

A similar trend obtained in government and lay private schools where the fact that the school 'produced good results', that the child 'did well at that school', and that the child 'never complained' topped the list of reasons why parents thought their children were content there. One of the parents in a government school thought that the child never complained because "he understands his parents' financial situation", giving the

impression of a child stoically bearing life at their school rather than enjoying it! Little wonder, then, that unlike faith schools, the fact children 'spoke well' of the school or 'had friends there' were given very low importance. Instead, 'nearness to home' ranked higher as an indicator of happiness at school, and again, coming from lay private and government school parents, this is understandable.

One of the criticisms levelled against faith schools in the industrialised world is that they are divisive. This does not seem to be the view of parents in English speaking Cameroon. Only six percent of faith school parents, ten percent of government school parents and 14 percent of lay private school parents said their children had had problems at school with children of other faiths (or none), and this only took the form of children arguing with other children or being criticised about their religious beliefs and practices. An important finding from the data is that faith schools have the least number of problems related to religious beliefs and practices even though they have a high mix of children from different Christian, Muslim and other faith backgrounds. And this cannot be attributed to the homogeneity of school populations because, of the total number of faith school parents who have children in other school types, 24 percent have children in faith schools *other than their own*. (A further 41 percent send their other children to government schools while 36 percent send their other children to lay private schools). Of the government school parents who have children in other school types, 48 percent have other children in faith schools while 52 percent have other children in lay private schools. Finally, among the lay private school parents who have children in other school types, 24 percent have children in faith schools and 76 percent have children in government schools. It is clear then that the decision to send a child to a school type other than the one being surveyed was motivated by reasons other than religious 'bigotry', and that faith schools have a constituency that is quite mixed in terms of commitment to religious schooling per se.

When faith school parents were asked why they chose to send their children to schools other than those of their own faith the reasons were given (in order of importance) as follows:

- The other school was more affordable (government and lay private)
- The school was nearer home.
- It was the child's choice (did not like boarding and/or strict discipline)
- They just wanted a school that produced good results (any school)
- The child failed to be admitted to their faith school of choice.
- All faith schools 'preach the same Christ'.

Government school parents who sent their children to a faith school did so because:

- They wanted better quality teaching and pastoral care
- Wanted a faith formation for their child
- The discipline in government schools was not considered good enough
- In a few cases, it was another family member paying the tuition fee at the faith school.

Whereas those who send their children to lay private schools do so because:

- The child did not pass the Common Entrance examination in List A⁴
- It was the child's choice

Lay private school parents who send their children to government schools do so mainly because they are affordable or near home. Those who send their children to faith schools do so because they want a moral formation for their children or because a member of the family has offered to help pay tuition for one of their children. While some parents want a faith formation for their children, the chief reasons why parents choose certain schools over others are good results and affordability. Faith schools in Cameroon do not seem to be regarded as divisive and many parents will send their children to faith schools if they can afford it.

At the end of the questionnaire parents of all school types were asked to say what they thought could contribute generally to faith schooling in Cameroon. The vast majority of those who expressed an opinion here said that faith schools were 'too expensive'. This corroborates what the demographic data revealed; namely that faith schools serve mainly the Cameroonian elite. It is remarkable that even in faith schools themselves, the majority of parents surveyed said that their schools were too expensive. Another negative comment on faith schools from their own parents was that teachers' salaries were too 'meagre' and that something should be done about it. Finally, some parents said faith schools are too *selective* though on the positive side, most parents surveyed across all three school types said that faith schools are vital for the moral formation of young Cameroonians and a few commented that faith schools were 'better managed' than other school types.

⁴ Successful candidates in the Common Entrance examination are divided into lists A and B, the list A candidates being those with higher quality performance. They are generally the first to get a place in government and other secondary schools.

6.4 Findings from the individual faith school types

6.4.1 Socio-economic background of parents

Before presenting the findings from the different faith schools, it is important to bear in mind that while the findings from four Catholic schools (three selecting and one recruiting) have been aggregated, we are dealing with only one Baptist (selecting) and one Presbyterian (recruiting) school. Even though all three faith school types share some common characteristics, there are also differences between them. Among the parents surveyed, 50 percent of Catholic parents came from affluent areas, compared to 68 percent of Baptist parents and 59 percent of Presbyterian parents. Also, it must be borne in mind that students in Catholic schools tend to come from bigger families than students in Presbyterian and Baptist schools. 46 percent of Catholic school parents have families of five or more children compared to 26 percent of Presbyterian school parents and 28 percent of Baptist school parents and there are fewer Catholic mothers unemployed than Presbyterian or Baptist mothers. There are only 22 percent of Catholic mums in unemployment or who work as peasant farmers, while Presbyterian schools have 45 percent and Baptist schools have 28 percent of mothers in the same category. However, Catholic schools have the least number of mothers in professional employment. Only 40 percent of them work as professionals while 50 percent of Presbyterian mothers and 56 percent of Baptist mothers work as professionals. A similar pattern appears when Catholic fathers are considered. While the percentage of unemployed Catholic fathers (5%) is almost equal to or lower compared to the Baptist 4 percent and the Presbyterian 13 percent, the Baptists and Presbyterians have a far higher percentage of fathers in professional employment (92% and 83% respectively) compared to the Catholic 48 percent. When it comes to academic qualifications, Catholic school mothers do better than Presbyterian school mothers but worse than Baptist school mothers. Twenty five percent of them either have no certificate or have only the FSLC compared to 33 percent of Presbyterian school mothers and only 20 percent of Baptist school mothers. Similarly, 38 percent of Catholic mothers have at least a university degree compared to 40 percent of Baptist and 33 percent of Presbyterian mothers.

Catholic fathers are clearly less educated than Baptist and Presbyterian fathers. While 17 percent of them have no certificate or have only the FSLC, only 14 percent of Presbyterian school parents and 8 percent of Baptist school parents find themselves in this category. On the other hand, only 52 percent of Catholic parents have at least a university degree compared to 68 percent of Presbyterian fathers and 76 percent of Baptist fathers.

While Catholic parents may be less educated than Presbyterian ones, they clearly make more money. 40 percent of Catholic school mums earn less than 50,000 CFA a month compared to 41 percent of Presbyterian school mothers, and 32 percent of Catholic school mothers earn over 150,000 CFA a month compared to the Presbyterian mothers' 10 percent. In addition, even though there are fewer Presbyterian school fathers (10%) earning less than 50,000 CFA a month compared to the Catholic 12 percent, there are by far more Catholic school fathers who earn over 150,000 CFA a month (52%) than Presbyterian school fathers (15%). Baptist mothers and fathers do better than fathers and mothers in the other two faith school types, with fewer of them in the lower salary bracket (36% and 4% respectively) and more in the upper bracket (32% and 61% respectively). Figure 13 shows the earnings of faith school parents.

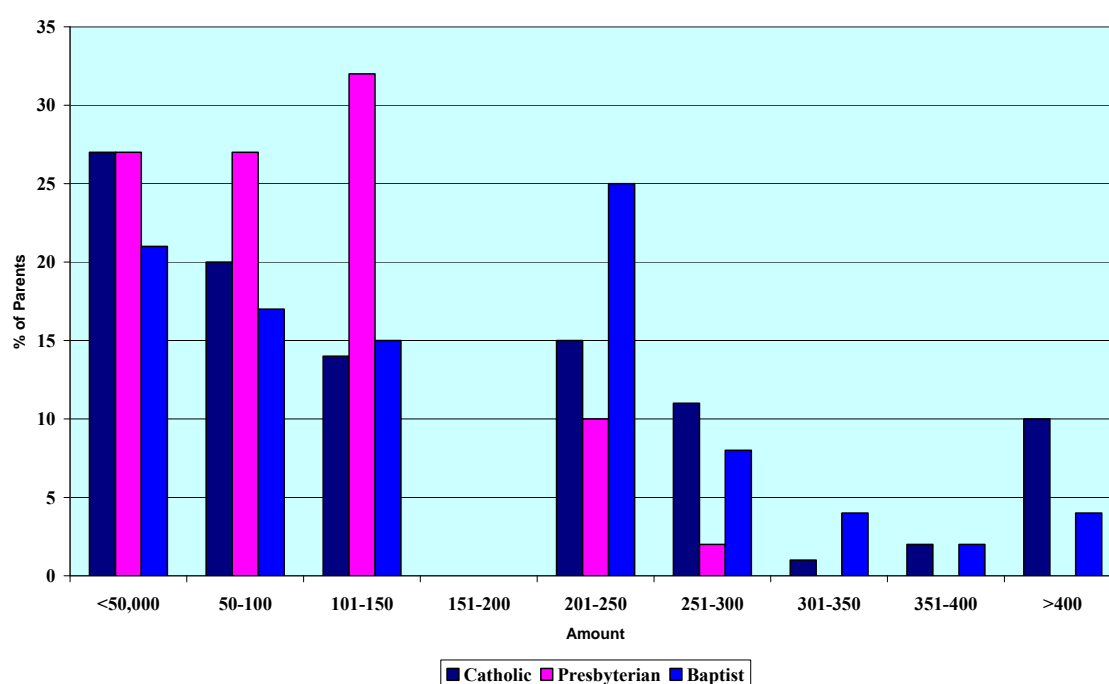


Figure 13: Faith school parents' earning in FCFA x 1000.

It is not surprising, therefore, that more Presbyterian parents receive financial assistance from other earners in the family. Thirty five percent of them receive assistance while 31 percent of Baptist and 24 percent of Catholic parents receive similar assistance. Even so, the amounts Presbyterian parents receive are small compared to what the others receive. While 100 percent of Baptist parents who receive assistance get over 46,000 CFA and 77 percent of Catholic parents receive similar amounts, only 33 percent of Presbyterian parents in this group receive assistance over 46,000 CFA. With regard to parents' earnings then, it is clear that Baptist parents are the highest earners, followed by Catholic parents, with Presbyterian parents coming in third place.

Nevertheless, both Baptist and Presbyterian school parents seem to enjoy better standards of living than Catholic school parents. All Baptist and Presbyterian school parents surveyed have at least a TV set in their homes while 5 percent of Catholic parents do not have this basic means of entertainment and information. Catholic school parents again trail Baptist school parents when it comes to having a computer at home. Of the Baptist school parents surveyed, 52 percent of them have at least one computer compared to 46 percent of Catholic school parents and 30 percent of Presbyterian parents. On the other hand, while only 48 percent of Presbyterian school parents and 48 percent of Baptist school parents surveyed currently have two or more children in secondary school, a very high 78 percent of Catholic school parents currently have two or more children in secondary school. Like with the parents of government school children, this is bound to put a strain on their resources, and that is probably why some are obliged to cut back on home entertainment and educational resources like the television and the computer.

6.4.2 Parents' involvement with school

Catholic school parents are not as involved with the children's schools as Baptist and Presbyterian school parents, even though 91 percent of them state that they either always attend PTA meetings or do so quite often. The same percentage of Presbyterian school parents (91%) attend PTA meetings 'always' or 'quite often' while only 75 percent of Baptist school parents attend PTA meetings regularly. However, on all the other items that deal with parent involvement with their child's school, Catholic school parents perform worse than Baptist and Presbyterian school parents. Only 46 percent of Catholic school parents have regular contact with their children's schools either by letter or telephone, while 52 percent of Presbyterian school parents and 58 percent of Baptist school parents have regular contact with their children's schools either by letter or telephone⁵.

When it comes to physically meeting the school principal concerning their child, Catholic school parents do better than their Baptist but worse than their Presbyterian counterparts. Of the parents surveyed, 43 percent of Catholic school parents initiated a meeting with their child's principal in two years, while 50 percent of Presbyterian parents and only 36 percent of Baptist parents did same. This could be because most of the faith schools surveyed had one or more Vice Principals who generally made more contact with parents than the principals themselves. On the other hand,

⁵ . Again, these percentages seem low since all the faith schools included in this study have telephone access and parents all know the school telephone numbers which are included in school prospectuses and on all letters sent out to parents at the end of each term. In one of the schools visited by the researcher, one of the Vice Principals was charged with facilitating communication between parents and school authorities.

however, only 13 percent of Catholic school parents met their child's principal on the principal's initiative, compared to 38 percent of Baptist school parents and 39 percent of Presbyterian school parents.

Catholic school parents again fare badly as far as physically meeting their child's teacher for a matter related to the child is concerned. This time, Baptist school parents do as badly as their Catholic counterparts. Forty nine percent of Catholic school parents and 48 percent of Baptist school parents had initiated at least one meeting with their child's teacher in two years compared to the Presbyterian parents' 73 percent. The picture looked even gloomier when it came to Catholic school teachers initiating meetings with parents concerning their children. A mere 16 percent of Catholic school parents had met their child's teacher at least once in two years for a matter concerning their child at the teacher's invitation compared to 40 percent of Baptist school parents and 35 percent of Presbyterian school parents who had been invited to a meeting by their child's teacher.

Little wonder then, that only 72 percent of Catholic school parents said they were either 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the level of communication between them and their child's school while 80 percent of Baptist school parents and 72 percent of Presbyterian school parents said they were either 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with it. The level of satisfaction is even clearer when we consider the fact that while only 4 percent of Baptist school parents and 5 percent of Presbyterian school parents were not satisfied with the level of communication between them and their children's schools, 9% of Catholic school parents said they were not satisfied with the level of communication, which gives Presbyterian school parents an edge over Catholic school parents. Figure 14 shows the level of parental satisfaction with home-school communication in faith schools.

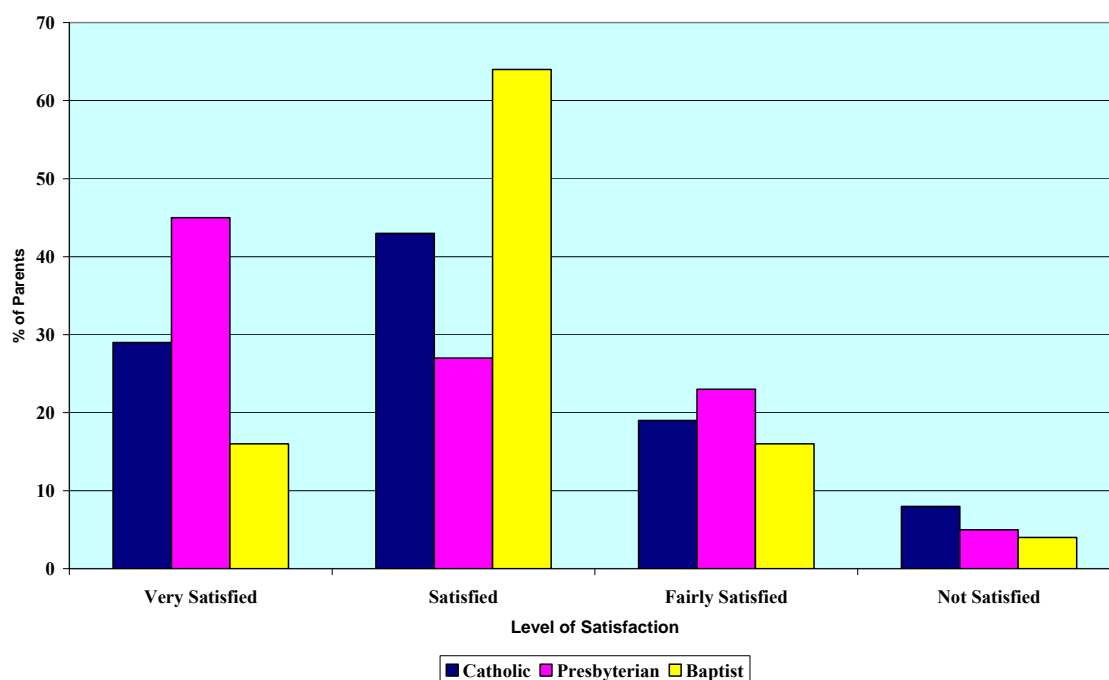


Figure 14: Level of satisfaction with home-school communication in faith schools

Nevertheless, it would seem that even though Catholic school parents are not as involved with their children's schools as they should be, a good number of them (72%) still think that their children's schools generally take their views into consideration in their decision making processes. This is even more so with Presbyterian school parents, 82 percent of who said that their children's school 'always' or 'quite often' take their views into account in their decision making processes. It is strange that Baptist school parents, who appear to be more involved with their children's schools, think less of their school's willingness to take their views on board when they make decisions in their school. Only 68 percent of them think that their views count for anything in the decision making processes of their school.

It is important to keep in mind the fact that this analysis does not exactly compare like with like. That notwithstanding, the discrepancy between Catholic schools and the other faith schools with regards to parents' involvement is clear. Even when Catholic schools are compared with the recruiting Presbyterian school, the latter is seen to be doing better as far as parents' involvement with school is concerned.

6.4.3 Reasons for choosing particular faith schools

While all faith schools have the majority of their students drawn from their own faith groups, they also have a good number of students from other faith groups. In Catholic schools, for instance, 9 percent of their students come from families with at least one Presbyterian parent, 4 percent come from families with at least one Baptist parent, 11

percent come from families with at least one parent from 'other Christian' churches, and 2 percent come from Muslim families. In the Baptist school included in this study, 21 percent of their students come from families with at least one Catholic parent, 19 percent from families with at least one Presbyterian parent, 13 percent from families with at least one parent from 'other Christian' churches, and 4 percent from Muslim families. Finally, in the Presbyterian school, 13 percent of their students come from families with at least one Catholic parent, 3 percent from families with at least one Baptist parent, 13 percent from families with at least one parent from 'other Christian' churches, and 0% from Muslim families. These findings show that there are more Catholics in Baptist and Presbyterian schools than there are Presbyterians and Baptists in Catholic schools. This could either mean that Catholic schools' admissions criteria are more discriminatory on the basis of faith than the other two, or the reason could just be that there are many more Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon than Baptist and Presbyterian schools, as the analysis of school results demonstrated.

In all three school types, the choice of school is made mostly by parents and children are rarely given choice. However, Catholic school parents seem to be the most liberal in giving choice to their children. 18 percent of them said their children chose which school to attend compared to 14 percent of Presbyterian school parents and only 3 percent of Baptist school parents whose children chose their own schools. This last statistic, combined with the fact that very few Baptists go to other faith schools, seems to reinforce the perception among Cameroonians that the Baptists are the most bigoted of the three faith groups. However, when it comes to ranking their reasons for choice of school, Baptist school parents put the fact that the school belonged to their church at the bottom of the list. Their ranking is as follows:

Reason for choosing school	Rank	Percentage
Good Examination Results	1 st	21
Discipline	2 nd	19
Other	3 rd	19
School Climate	4 th	17
Nearness to home	5 th	15
School belongs to my Church	6 th	9

Table 10: Ranking of reasons for choosing Baptist school

Instead, more Catholic school parents than all the others say that they chose a Catholic school for their child because it belonged to their Church. This ranks as the third most important reason why Catholic parents chose Catholic schools, after discipline and

examination results respectively. The reasons for choosing a Catholic school, in order of importance, for Catholic parents are as follows:

Reason for choosing school	Rank	Percentage
Discipline	1 st	33
Examination Results	2 nd	32
Belongs to my Church	3 rd	18
School Climate	4 th	11
Nearness to home	5 th	3
Other	6 th	3

Table 11: Ranking of reasons for choosing Catholic school

The factors affecting choice of school among Presbyterian and Catholic school parents are more similar than between them and Baptist school parents. Both Presbyterian and Catholic parents nominate discipline and examination results, in that order, as the most important factors influencing their choice of school. But school climate is a more important determinant of school choice among Presbyterian parents than among Catholic parents who think that sending a child to their faith school is more important. This seems to be the only difference between Presbyterian and Catholic parents as they both have 'nearness to home' and 'other' at the bottom of their list of important factors. The Presbyterian parents' reasons for choosing schools were ranked as follows:

Reason for choosing school	Rank	Percentage
Discipline	1 st	32
Examination Results	2 nd	27
School Climate	3 rd	17
Belongs to my Church	4 th	15
Nearness to home	5 th	5
Other	6 th	5

Table 12: Ranking of reasons for choosing Presbyterian school

What this shows is that the parents of students in faith schools do not necessarily choose those schools because of faith formation, even though the fact that the schools belong to their Churches ranks quite high among the factors that affect their choice of

school. Faith is only one of a raft of factors that influence school choice, even if it is an important one for some parents.

An overwhelming majority of faith school parents think that their children enjoy being at their current schools. However, fewer Catholic school parents say that their children are happy at their present schools compared to Baptist and Presbyterian school parents. While 93 percent of Presbyterian school parents and 96 percent of Baptist school parents say that their children enjoy being at their present schools, only 92 percent of Catholic school parents say their children are happy. Again, it is amazing how few parents cite the right reasons why they think their children are happy at their school. Far too many of them think that because faith schools perform well at end of course examinations and so have good reputations, their children necessarily enjoy being at those schools. However, a number of them mention that their children speak well of the school and have friends at the school. Again it is mostly Catholic school parents who point to negative issues about their schools which make their children unhappy at school. These include poor food quality or quantity and bullying, although it is unlikely that these would not obtain in the other schools as well.

It is remarkable that virtually all parents of faith school children said that their children had never had problems in school with children of other faiths or none. Those who said their children had had problems mentioned something other than faith as the origin of the problem. A good number of parents sent their children to faith schools other than their own. Here again, the lowest percentage of parents who sent their children to other faith schools were Baptist parents. While 25 percent of Catholic school parents sent their children to other faith schools and 33 percent of Presbyterian school parents did the same, only 13 percent of Baptist school parents sent their children to faith schools other than their own. On the other hand, more Baptist school parents sent one or more children to government schools (39%) than Presbyterian school parents (33%) but less than school Catholic parents, 43 percent of who had at least one child in a government school. More Baptist school parents than Presbyterian and Catholic parents had at least one child attending a lay private school. 48 percent of Baptist parents had at least one child attending a lay private school as against 32 percent of Catholic school parents and 33 percent of Presbyterian school parents. So there were more Presbyterian school parents with children in other faith schools than Catholic and Baptist school parents, in that order. In the same order, there were more Catholic parents with children in government schools than Baptist and Presbyterian school parents. And, finally, there were more Baptist school parents with children attending lay private schools than Presbyterian and Catholic parents. Table 13 shows

the percentage of faith school parents who have children in schools other than those of their faith.

School Type	% in other faith schools	% in government schools	% in lay private schools
Catholic	25	43	32
Baptist	13	39	48
Presbyterian	33	33	33

Table 13: Percentage of parents with children in other school types

Majority of Catholic school parents who sent children to government schools did so because those schools were affordable. They could not send all their children to their own faith schools because they are expensive. Majority of the Presbyterian school parents said the same thing of their own school. A good number of parents across all three school types cited nearness to home as a reason for choosing a school other than their faith school. However, it was only the Catholic parents who said that they sent their children to schools other than their faith school because they failed the admission interview into a Catholic school. So, even though they had wanted a Catholic education for their child and could pay for it, the selection process was too stiff for their child. While a number of Catholic parents argued that they would send their children to any faith school because all faith schools are "Christ-centred", a Presbyterian parent who had a child in a Baptist school thought that examination results were the most important thing. He said:

For me, results matter most. I will go for any school where my child will perform well.

Catholic school parents were more vocal about the shortcomings of faith schooling in Cameroon than parents of the other faith schools. In order of importance, they felt that faith schools were too expensive, that faith school teachers' salaries were inadequate, that they did not provide enough contact between students and their parents (prison), and that they too easily dismissed or permanently excluded their students.

Presbyterian school parents echoed some of these shortcomings especially the concerns about the amount of tuition parents pay and the fact that teachers' salaries are paltry. Catholic school parents further said that Catholic schools in Cameroon produce the best results, and that faith schools in general were vital for the moral formation of future Cameroonians. Presbyterian and Baptist school parents all agreed with Catholic parents that faith schools are very important for the moral formation of young Cameroonians.

6.5 Chapter summary

The findings from the parents' questionnaire appear to confirm the perception among many Cameroonians that more faith school students come from affluent backgrounds than government and lay private school students. Apart from that, their parents are more involved with their schools and school work than non-faith school parents. While this may be true for faith schools in general, Catholic school parents appear to be less affluent than Presbyterian and Baptist school parents and less involved with their children's schools as well. Faith school students definitely have an edge over government and lay private school students with regard to socio-economic background and parental involvement. This might be the reason why even after identifying some of their shortcomings and the fact that they are expensive, faith school parents still believe that these schools are making a great contribution to the national educational endeavour in terms of school quality and the formation of future Cameroonians. The next chapter will find out from the students how these and other factors influence teaching and learning in their schools.

7 CHAPTER SEVEN: FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of the focus group discussions was to elicit the views of the students on their schools and how “things are done” there. As such, the discussion guide focused on the quality of students, the quality of teaching and learning, school leadership, school culture/ethos, pastoral care, parental support, and how well the school prepared the students for the future.

7.1 Reasons for choice of school

There was a list of factors that influenced the ‘choice’ of school for students of all school types. Some of these factors were the same for all the schools. For example, almost all the students said they chose their schools because of the good results which the schools produced at the end of course examinations or because of the discipline in the school even when, compared to other schools, their results and their discipline were not so good. In this way, the students agreed with their parents that what determined their choice of school was that the school provided a safe learning environment and supported quality teaching and learning. Some others had chosen their schools because they were near home or because their siblings had gone through the same schools and had been seen to be successful. A good number of students went to particular school types because their parents decided that they go there. For faith school students it was either because the parents thought that the discipline in those schools was good for the child’s upbringing or thought that the school produced good examination results at the end of course examinations or simply because the school belonged to their Church. For lay private and government school students it was often because their parents did not have enough money to pay for them to go to a faith school, so that even though they would have liked to go elsewhere, they were stuck with a lay private school for lack of money. For instance, a Form Two girl in Lay Private School One (LPS1)¹ did not like to come to the school but her parents could not afford to pay for the school of her choice, which was a Catholic school.

Researcher: ____ (Name), you didn’t like it but they said ‘go there’?

Student: Yes.

Researcher: Okay, if you had the opportunity where would you have gone?

¹ In this chapter a code has been devised to identify the school and the class of the student who is being quoted. The first two letters identify the school type, the first number identifies the specific school, while F2 stands for Form 2 and L6 stands for Lower Sixth. CS1F2 then would be the code for a Form 2 student of Catholic School One.

Student: _____(Name of Catholic school).

Researcher: What was the reason your parents gave you for not sending you to _____?

Student: Because they don't have the money to send me to the school.

Even though students gave the impression that good examination results attracted them to a lay private school, the lay private schools in question were clearly not among the best performers in the GCE examination in the towns where they were located. In addition, more lay private school students than those of any other school type would have preferred to go to a different school type. It is more likely then that they went to the lay private schools either because no one else would admit them or because their parents did not have enough money to pay for their education elsewhere.

After faith schools, government schools seem to be the next schools of choice for parents and students. However, like faith schools, government schools have a stricter admissions policy than lay private schools so that not all those who wish to go to a government school end up being given a place there. Students who wish to be admitted to a government school have to be academically good, which confirms the perception among Cameroonians that, like faith schools, government schools also 'skim the cream'. As one of the Lower Sixth students in Government School Two (GS2) said,

For the results to be as good as we get them over the years it has been due to their own strategy of ...let's say admitting students because here I believe that... and I really want to affirm it because every student who is here, know that it is a good student. In _____(Name of school) they don't take students who are weak. When you come here... may be your papers... let's say your report card and your grades are not all that encouraging I think they will not give you that opportunity... So all this is what is bringing up the good results for the past years (Student 5).

A Lower Sixth student in a lay private school had wanted to go to a government school but could not gain admission because he applied late. While faith and government schools would have strict deadlines for admission of students, lay private schools would generally accept students any time they show up because the schools need the money. One of the ongoing debates in Cameroonian educational circles has been around the selection of good quality students at intake by government and faith schools. English speaking Cameroonians have argued that government and faith schools select the best candidates at intake and should therefore produce the best

results. This selection at intake could be one of the reasons why government schools do better than lay private schools in public examinations.

Apart from discipline and academic excellence, faith school students had additional reasons for choosing their schools. Some parents had chosen the schools for their children because they were faith schools and these parents wanted a faith formation for their children. In addition, students thought that going to boarding school was a way of expressing their independence and maturity. The Catholic and Baptist students especially thought that most of their top schools would be household names in Cameroon, not only because they did well in public examinations but because their ex-pupils are very active in society and in this way sell the schools to the general public. It is understandable that children and their families would be attracted to such schools. A Form Two student in Catholic School Two (CS2) said:

I have always wanted to come to this school. It has always been my dream. So...to me...this school...if you are in this school it is really a pride. It's a very big pride. This is one of the best schools in Cameroon. So that's why I chose to come to this school (CS2F2, Student 2).

Some of the Catholic students talked about less obvious motivations which, in a certain sense were revealing of the Catholic school ethos and culture. Apart from the fact that some of the students from Catholic schools went back to their primary schools and spoke very positively of their schools, their behaviour actually attracted primary school pupils to consider going to their schools. One of the Lower Sixth students in CS2 made up her mind to go to that school because "the way the girls used to behave, you just wanted to join them" (Student 1). Additionally, it was striking to learn that some students went to Catholic schools because of the perception that they were good for moral formation. One of the Form Two boys in CS3 said:

I came here because of the good morals. My cousin also came here. He was a rough guy but he came out a changed person so I knew that this school was good for morals (Student 3).

So Catholic schools attract students because of their reputation, their good examination results and the perception that they offer good moral formation. In addition, some parents choose a Catholic school for their children either because they went to the school themselves or because they want a Catholic education for their children. However, it was difficult not to notice the difference between the Catholic schools and the Baptist school in the area of spiritual formation. When asked about

their reason for choosing their present school, the Baptist girls' answers came spontaneously and they spoke convincingly about good student culture and the moral and spiritual upbringing which the school imparted on the students. For instance, after the other members of her group had given their reasons for choosing their school in the first place and deciding to do their 'A' Levels in the same school, one of the Lower Sixth students had this to say:

Apart from that... in fact, ___(Name of school) teaches us so much in our spiritual lives. I can say like 80% of students have really grown in their spiritual lives. Because, apart from that some of us would never have known certain things about God but now... I mean they really teach us a lot...I mean we have regular devotions. Amongst students, there are certain things that if people do, the way the rest of us will look at you, it will really make you feel funny. So most girls are really getting to be really decent and...as compared to other girls... let me just say girls...as compared to other girls who you may find in schools like maybe -----(name of another Baptist school) where they don't really... they are not strict and firm on them as we are held here (Student 4).

It was remarkable for a faith school that students spoke so enthusiastically about their spiritual lives, especially when this came from Lower Sixth students who had decided to go back to their school and complete the second cycle partly because of the good religious atmosphere. But while Lower Sixth students in the Baptist school spoke very enthusiastically about spiritual formation as a major factor which determined their choice of school, Catholic students, with the exception of the girls' school, were rather lukewarm about things spiritual.

7.2 Socio-economic background of parents

It emerged in the discussion with the Lower Sixth students of Government School One (GS1) that government schools are not as free as Cameroonians have been made to believe. One of the students thought that there were no free schools:

Yes, as I can say... you really need money to go into any school... to study as a whole. You need money even if you don't pay it as fees. You need money to buy your textbooks, buy your uniform and all other school needs because you cannot do without the needs (Student 5).

Probed as to what they estimated their parents spent on them each year at their school, this is what emerged:

Student 2: Roughly one fifty...one hundred and fifty thousand.

Researcher: A hundred and fifty thousand, everything put together? Okay. I see. That's quite much. I didn't think it was that much because they say that the government school is free.

Student 2: It is not all that free because when our parents pay our school fees, at home they still feed us but those going to the Mission schools they live there so they pay their money for feeding, everything as well.

Student 3: And in Lower Sixth too it depends on the series you want to do. In Science the text books we buy from twenty thousand upwards.

Researcher: Okay, so this one hundred and fifty... would that be for the science students or for everybody?

Student 3: For the average student.

Apart from that, students in GS1 complained that each time there was a disaster in school, their parents were asked to contribute money to repair the damage. They were even asked to pay for examination writing material.

Student 3: ... So when those types of things occur they ask the students to contribute something; so at times it is usually difficult for the students to do so, because they asked for 2,000 francs that we should contribute for wind. We are usually reluctant... They asked for 1000 francs to repair the building. We are reluctant to give it because it is a government school. Normally, we know that the government does everything in the school.

Researcher: So they shouldn't be asking for money?

Student 3: Then for papers, examination papers, writing material. They ask 2,000 francs; we believe that it is too much for that purpose.

Researcher: Is it only for Lower Sixth or is it for every class?

Student 3: The whole school because with the introduction of the multiple choice questions they have to provide us with the writing material and the multiple choice answer sheets.... but we believe that the money is too much for it so it is difficult for the students to pay. That is why I believe that the demand for money... I feel that it is too much.

If it is expensive to send a child to a government school it is even more expensive to send them to a lay private school. Asked if it was possible for poor Cameroonians to send their children to lay private schools, the Lower Sixth students of Lay Private School One (LPS1) answered in these words:

Student 5: It is possible because here we pay by instalments. First term you pay 30,000; second term you come and finish the balance, which is 20,000. So it is possible that the poorest person can come to this school.

Researcher: So your total fee would be 50,000?

All students: Yes.

Researcher: For Lower Sixth?

Student 2: For the lower...that is for the first cycle it is 50,000, then for Form Five it is 55,000, and then for Lower Sixth we have 65,000, Upper Sixth we have 70,000 or 75,000.

On the other hand, faith school students agreed with their parents that their school fee was very high for the average Cameroonian family. The average school fee for faith schools was about 345,000 CFA (£448) a year. However, they did not think that all the students in their schools came from rich families. On the contrary, they insisted that there were many students from 'struggling families' in their schools but the school authorities facilitated the payment of fees by enabling them to pay in instalments. However, there was no gainsaying that the fees charged were high and it would take great sacrifices for an average family to pay. In other words, it is a tough choice for an average or low income family to send their child to a faith school, but there are still families who make the sacrifice of sending their children to these schools. One such family was that of a Lower Sixth student in Catholic School Four (CS4) who put himself forward as an example of a student from a poor but determined family:

Well, it's said where there is a will there is a way and God always provides. Not all of us are rich. I, for one, I'm from a family which ...which barely has what we need for survival and sustenance. So God just provides for us. That's what I believe (Student 2).

A Lower Sixth student in the Baptist school put it thus: "If you really know what you want, no matter the cost, you will be able to get it" (Student 3).

The school fee for lay private schools was more than double what their government school counterparts paid and anything between 4 to 7 times what faith school students paid. So it would seem logical to expect that the poorest students would go to government schools while the middle income students would go to lay private schools and the high income earners would go to faith schools. This seems to confirm what the parent questionnaire revealed, that is, that faith school students come from more affluent families than lay private and government school students, in that order. However, while government school students were expected to pay an annual PTA levy

and were sometimes called upon to contribute towards the repair of buildings, lay private school students were not. The fee of faith school students included textbooks and uniforms and other school requirements. It could safely be concluded that while students in lay private schools did not always come from poor families, it was possible for many low income earners to send their children to lay private schools. That said, it is clear that there is nothing like a “free school” in Cameroon, and really poor people would not be able to send their children even to government schools.

This discussion therefore seems to confirm the perception that Catholic schools, far from being schools for the poor which the Church originally professed them to be, have become schools for the rich and even an average income family would have to make great sacrifices to send one of their children to a Catholic school. However, it might be good to note that Baptist and Presbyterian schools are equally expensive.

7.3 Distinctiveness of school

Students generally found it difficult to express the differences between their schools and other schools, lay private or government or even faith schools. Even though most students expressed the view that their schools were better than all other schools, it was clear that they did not know or could not say how they were different. The impression was given that students just wanted to defend their schools and present them as the best, especially at the beginning of the discussion. This difficulty is demonstrated in the responses of the Form Two students of LPS1:

Researcher: What about comparing your school to other lay private schools, let's say ___ or ___(names of other lay private schools in same town)... do you think your school is better or worse than those other schools?

Student 3: Our school is better because it has a comfortable environment.

Student 4: Our school is not nice because we have not even witnessed how the other schools are functioning. We don't know if they are performing like us, we don't know if they are clean. We have never visited them. That's...for me I know that we are not better than all the schools.

Certainly, what students ‘know’ of other schools in Cameroon is either from hearsay or from their own creative imagination, especially when schools do not have a strong ethos that makes them stand out from the others. One of the schools that stood out among the lay private and government schools was GS1 where discipline was more enthusiastically enforced than in other lay private or government schools. For instance, students were not allowed in bars and off-licenses in the village and would be severely punished at school if they were caught in any of those places.

Researcher: I see. ____ (Name of student), what were you going to say?

Student 1: I just want to say not only the crimes you commit in school can cause you... let me say a very serious punishment. Some crimes, like when you are found in a bar out of school campus.

Researcher: With your uniform or without your uniform?

Student 1: No, without... as a student if you are found in a bar out of say school hours ...let me say some criminal acts around the quarters... they contribute to your punishment.

This kind of discipline would not be enforceable in urban areas. In GS2, for instance, the students conceded that there was indiscipline in their school, but added that the rate was not as high as in other government schools. A student in the Lower Sixth focus group said:

When we talk about discipline here we mean we are much more better than other government schools... as compared to other government schools they are much more different. There are stages of indiscipline...they practise indiscipline here but it is just that in other schools the rate is too high as compared to ____ (Name of school). There are also radicals but not to that extent (Student 3).

The government school students seemed to believe that a major difference between their schools and faith schools was that their teachers taught them “to know what the subject is all about...not to pass the GCE as do private schools” (GS2L6, Student 1). This rhymes with one of the criticisms current in the Cameroonian society about faith schools, which is that they teach to the test. However, the researcher’s experience is that of all school types in Cameroon, faith school teachers have the most teaching time and the most contact time with their students as most of them are boarding. Faith schools are therefore the only ones which can afford the luxury of teaching anything outside the prescribed syllabuses and curriculum.

Faith school students found it easy to say what distinguished their schools from lay private and government schools. They thought that their students were better behaved than those of lay private and government schools and that their teachers were more devoted to teaching and to their students than their counterparts in lay private and government schools. Talking about differences in the dedication of teachers to their work, a Lower Sixth student in the Baptist school said:

Anyway, concerning the differences of the schools... the studies... because since that the teachers in the Mission schools are more devoted and they... that's they are more concerned about their students compared to those in government schools. Because the teachers in government schools might... they are just so carefree... that is they don't... they are just so...that's they know that even if they come or they don't come they receive their pay and so they don't care about the students. Sometimes they just neglect...they don't even...they just forget that they have to go to class sometimes, and so it leaves the students in the dark compared to Mission schools (Student 4).

As a sign that they were more disciplined faith school students pointed to the fact that their schools came first in the march past in most of the towns in Anglophone Cameroon on the National Youth Day (February 11). In addition, the moral standards and the spiritual formation made them stand out.

However, when they were asked if they could spot any differences between their schools and other faith schools the students struggled to find any. This might be one reason why faith school parents easily sent their children to schools of other faith. For example, one of the Lower Sixth students in the Presbyterian school said:

Even if we have some differences they will be very slight because not all human beings are the same. But I just do believe that in all boarding schools they have a type of programme they always want and they are always to a greater advantage that they are always the same (Student 1).

Catholic school students thought that religious activities like daily Mass attendance and the Stations of the Cross during Lent set them apart, not only from government and lay private schools but also from other faith schools which did not have the same frequency of religious activity. However, most students in three of the four Catholic schools in the study were not convinced that Mass attendance and religious activity had any positive effect on the majority of students and the way they related to each other. They saw daily Mass attendance and daily prayer as a boring imposition and reacted to it by sleeping in Church or reading their notes during Mass. Here is an excerpt from the Lower Sixth focus group of CS3 about the effect of Mass attendance on students:

Student 3: It has an effect to a certain extent. Now many people have just taken it as a normal duty...like I just have to, not that that they want to...I just have to do it. And as we are being forced to do that, many students no more have the

interest as they used to have in the past...in prayers. They are just being forced now so they just say, 'okay let me just do it to avoid punishment'.

Student 1: And also they do it because they are being threatened. If you don't do it you might have to leave the college. And also, the students have just taken it as a normal habit to be sleeping in Church so it does not really have an effect on them because they think it is a 'must' and they must do it.

It was only in the Catholic girls' school that students were agreed that Mass attendance and religious activity had a positive impact on student behaviour. Strangely enough, the students of this school believed that they were different to other Catholic school students as a result of their spirituality. They said that most of their students were very prayerful and attributed the lack of occultist practices² in their school to the effect of prayer. One of the Lower Sixth students gave this example to illustrate the effect of spirituality on the lives of the students:

I would like to give an example. In this school if you are coming to read and your classmate is in the dormitory sleeping, you don't just pass. You remind her to get up and go to class with you. Even if she is lazy and does not want to go to class, her mind will not be settled and she will finally come to class. Secondly, you can have a problem and ask your friends to pray for you. Sometimes you organise a novena with friends and pray. A friend is sick and she's out of school, as friends you organise a novena and you pray for the friend who is sick and out of school...and things like that. So spirituality affects the relationship we have with our friends (Student 4).

Like their friends in the Catholic girls' school, the Baptist girls were convinced that they stood out from other students in other schools by their morality and spirituality. Even the Form Two students thought that the school put greater emphasis on the spiritual development of students with the organisation of conferences, 'spiritual emphasis' and Young Women's Conferences. Sometimes the students organised their own devotions on Sundays, on their own initiative, without the assistance of chaplains or teachers and these were popular with many students, from Form One to Upper Sixth. It was not just that the students carried out spiritual activities; those activities had an impact on the majority of their lives. Of course there were students whose lives were not affected by the spiritual activities but the Lower Sixth students were convinced that the vast majority of them were.

² There have been instances in some Cameroonian schools where students were believed to have been initiated into occultist and demonic groups by others who were members of these groups.

Researcher: Do you have the impression that there are some students who go to devotion or who join in the services just because they have to?

All students: (Enthusiastically) Yes, there are people like that.

Researcher: But would they be the minority or would they be the majority?

All students: The minority...definitely minority.

As noted already, it is notable that the two girls' schools in the study are both passionate about prayer and spirituality and many of the girls seem to place a premium on prayer and spiritual exercises. One of the distinctive characteristics of the Catholic school is that it forms the whole person in their spiritual, moral, intellectual and physical aspects. While a few students mentioned this, it was not with any conviction and it was not evident that students knew they were different from others because they received a holistic education.

7.4 Quality of teaching and learning

Students in all school types asserted that their teachers were good. However, only government school teachers were usually trained, with only a few trained teachers in the lay private and faith school sectors. Their teachers were mostly graduates who had mastered their subject matter but had not undergone any pedagogical training. That notwithstanding, the quality of teaching and learning seemed to be better in faith schools than in either lay private or government schools. Firstly, the class sizes in government and lay private schools made it impossible for teachers to interact with students as individuals and get to know them. Even in GS1 whose population was small compared to most government schools, the Form Two students insisted that their teachers would normally only know the intelligent students who frequently answered questions in class and the very stubborn or wayward ones. Secondly, it was clear that teachers in lay private and government schools hardly gave homework to students and those who did give homework could only correct it on the blackboard for everyone to see. That was the best they could do. Other teachers tried to check to see if the students had done the homework. However, because of the numbers, there was no way they could check every individual student's homework. This is evident from the contribution of this female Lower Sixth student in LPS1:

Actually, they usually check, just to make sure at least everyone has done it. But not of making corrections; they usually find it very difficult because of the population. I think so because...(Name of School)...a teacher cannot really sit and attend to each individual's problem. And I think they are right and I don't really know what they can do to...but they do their best as far as teaching is concerned (Student 5).

Even though most teachers in the lay private sector are not trained, they are more dedicated to their work than their counterparts in government schools. The students thought that this is 'because if you don't teach the complaint will go to the principal' and one of the consequences might be the loss of their job. In addition, their job security also depended on the quality of results which they produced at the end of course examinations, which was not the case in government schools. Whatever the reason for it, the Lower Sixth students of LPS2 definitely thought that their teachers were devoted to their work. However, students admitted that they did not have enough teachers for the subjects on the curriculum. A female Lower Sixth student insisted that one of the problems in their school was a lack of teachers:

They don't have enough teachers to teach us. For example, like the science department, one man can teach Physics, can teach Further Mathematics, can teach Mathematics. That one...the teacher is overworking his body. So we need teachers (Student 3).

Maybe because some of them were overworked they looked for every excuse to stay away from class or were irritable when they came in to teach. Asked if there was anything in their school which they thought could be improved upon, the Form Two students of LPS2 answered as follows:

Student 2: Yes. And also the teachers; nowadays some of the teachers are lazy, they don't teach well. Some come to class, some do not ... excuses upon excuses. It makes me too to feel lazy.

Student 1: They are preparing us well but most of these Biology teachers, they don't teach well.

Student 4: Yes, most of them don't teach, if they give something on the board and you say that you don't understand they will say that you should go and meet your mother in the house or your friend.

Researcher: Are there other teachers who...or are these the only people you noticed who will not explain and will say 'go and meet your mother'?

Student 3: Not only the Biology teacher, even the Maths teacher.

Student 1: Especially... and even our Chemistry teacher... the man, if he is explaining something on the board and you say that you don't understand he will say that you should go and meet a private teacher or go and tell somebody to explain it very well.

Student 3: But sometimes the students make noise, that's why he gets angry.

So even though the students said their teachers were good, the discussion shows that the students were identifying more and more examples of 'bad' teachers. A possible reason for the poor quality of teachers in lay private schools is that faith schools usually scout these schools for good teachers whom they take over and pay better. As for the shortage of teachers, this probably has to do with the fact that lay private school proprietors want to be as economical as possible and so hire as few teachers as possible to do as much work as possible. So, apart from the fact that there were not enough teachers and sometimes one teacher had to teach several subjects, some teachers were either lazy or did not master their art. Furthermore, the school population made it impossible for teachers, even if they so wished, to give homework and feedback to the students. Moreover, there was very little evidence of a friendly, supportive relationship between teachers and students which in turn impacted negatively on students' academic work and made it difficult for teachers to challenge their students to work. It seems clear then that in lay private schools there was a more widespread lack of good quality teachers, a neglect of homework and feedback and a lack of attention to individual students' academic problems. In addition, the relationship between teachers and students was not very good, which probably made things a lot more difficult for the students.

In government schools the situation was worse. Even in the 'ideal' rural government school the problems with teaching and learning were typical of government schools. There was a lot of absenteeism and lack of dedication to duty on the part of government school teachers.

Student 2: There is also a problem with some of the teachers, if not with us then with the other classes....complaining of teachers sending notes and not coming to class; the students copy notes for a whole topic and there are no explanations. I think that is not really correct.

Student 4: Also, there are teachers who are not punctual. A teacher has a class at 8 o'clock but he comes at 8.30 to come and sit in the staffroom, discuss with colleagues for ten minutes and come to class for ten minutes, then he would come and rush over things. When you have a question to ask it is a problem; he scorns the students and leaves the class in anger. The next time he will come and say 'I will postpone the class... I have even cancelled that topic, I will not teach it again, read it on your own'. So the teachers... they are not punctual, many of them are not punctual.

Student 3: ...Some... they usually get up they have their personal commitments, they do their things, they forget, they are not devoted to their profession.

Student 1: I think many of them do so because they say this is a government school and that is what most of them usually tell us in class: that whether they come or not they will still pay them. So I think that is why.

The students of GS2 gave specific examples which showed up most of the bad practices of government school teachers. They are not accountable to anybody for the manner in which they teach and so the students cannot report them to anybody. Even if they did, nothing would be done. In addition, they can abandon the students at any time for greener pastures and it would take a very long time to get a replacement. Teachers can answer their phone calls and attend to their personal business even during class time. This is clear from the discussion that follows:

Student 1: Presently in Lower Sixth I have many good teachers like those in Further Maths... Maths but the only problem I have is the person who is teaching us Physics, the thermal section of Physics because the man is not that way good in the subject. Because sometimes the man will lecture, give notes but on giving examples the man will not give examples. When students want to confront him that why is he not giving examples he will just tell them that 'go to hell, I will not solve' (they all laugh). So that made students to be angry with the man, when the man just comes into the class some students leave the class.

Student 2: In the LA2 department, we have a problem in Geography because most of the branches that we are doing... may be the teachers are not always there, so that is a particular problem in Geography. So for that reason, actually we have the Population Geography that we were previously doing... the teacher may be when he comes he will lecture, he will not give examples, he will give notes in point form... so I don't know. The teacher... towards the end of this third term, the teacher actually went out of the school. We heard he had a transfer so for that reason we are very far behind in the Geography department.

Student 3: We did not even write that section in the promotion exam; we did not, even Meteorology, we did not.

It would appear then that government school teachers and their students are being disingenuous when they accuse faith schools of doing better in examinations because they teach to the test. The truth is that many government school teachers are frequently absent, that they come late to lessons, that they teach poorly when they bother to turn up, and that they can abandon their duty any time. In short, they are not devoted to their work. The silver lining in GS1 was that the students were agreed that a good number of their teachers were friendly and that they had a 'very good' relationship with them. This might be because village children are generally brought

up to defer to authority and seniority and this makes it easier for teachers to build a good relationship with them. As a result students said a number of teachers were very helpful and very caring. They were like mothers and fathers to the students and that helped them to concentrate on their studies. Some teachers went the extra mile and called for students whom they noticed had problems and advised them on how to handle those problems. Students in GS2 did not think the same of their teachers. While the Form Twos told of some teachers who heaped insults on them in class, the Lower Sixth students talked of teachers who treated them like animals, taking the law into their own hands and administering inhuman punishment.

Student 1: Like presently there is one teacher that I don't love his own way of punishment...our Maths teacher, because the man... when a student commits a crime, the man will not only use a whip, he will use but his bare hands to beat, kick and slap students which is very bad. I think we have a discipline department which is supposed to be responsible for punishment when a student commits a crime, not a teacher raising his or her hand against students.

Student 5: On what _____(Name) was saying you know it is actually a point to insist on because there are teachers here who are actually behaving as if we are in the zoo...You don't slap students as if you don't have mercy for them.

It seems clear from this discussion that a number of government school teachers, in spite of their training, exhibited a lot of unprofessional behaviour and showed very little sense of duty consciousness. In addition, their relationship with students was not good enough, both of which factors are seen to impact negatively on teaching and learning and therefore on student achievement.

On the other hand, faith school students acknowledged that some of their teachers were not very good. This came out most clearly from CS4 which is a recruiting school and the Presbyterian school where the Lower Sixth students spoke almost identically about their teachers:

Generally speaking, the teachers are very good... not in all domains. Like in the Science domain... yes, we have excellent teachers because in the Arts... the teachers are not quite good. So generally speaking, we cannot grade them as excellent; we can only say they are very good (CS4L6, Student 3).

Having said that, poor quality and carefree teachers were definitely in the minority in faith schools. It was clear from the discussions that the students believed they had very good quality teachers who showed an extraordinary devotion to their work in spite of

the fact that their pay was not so good. In fact, teachers competed with each other to produce the best results and the best grades. As one of the Lower Sixth students in CS1 said,

Our teachers seem to have acknowledged that even though their salaries are not as good as their government school counterparts, they are doing God's work. It is their call so they do it with love, affection and care. That is why very often you really feel like they are our fathers (Student 4).

That sentiment was expressed over and over in the discussions in the other faith schools.

Unlike in the lay private and government schools where teachers could not give homework, correct it and give feedback to the students, teachers in faith schools gave homework, corrected it and gave feedback to their students. Students who failed to do their homework were punished. The teachers knew the students as individuals and went after those who appeared to be underperforming to find out what their problems were and what they could do to help. This open access to teachers and the fact that teachers could spot individual students who had problems was put down to the fact that student numbers were small enough for teachers to be able to know individuals and attend to their problems. In CS2, for instance, it was clear that there were benefits to teaching smaller classes. One of the Lower Sixth girls said:

And they are also interested in knowing us... and they can have access to each student and know each one's problem. Sometimes they even pick out the weak students and give them extra questions for them to answer and...just to follow them up and help them improve (Student 5).

It was clear from the discussions that faith school students enjoyed a very good relationship with their teachers. They described their teachers as friendly, caring, motherly and fatherly. They felt free to go to their teachers with academic and personal problems and this was facilitated by the fact that most teachers in faith schools lived on campus and made themselves available to the students during individual study hours. This description of one her teachers by a Lower Sixth student in CS3 is typical of the way most faith school students talked about their teachers:

Yeah, especially our Biology teacher...she is very motherly. She is always giving us advice maybe in class or down in the dormitory. She comes there...They are really...they are always welcoming. You can smile at teachers when you are out

of class and you think that maybe they are our fathers. They are really friendly. They usually come around to check during study periods to...like encourage us, to see that we are studying, to wake those who are sleeping and...they are always there. They are friendly. You can book a rendez-vous with a teacher to help you with your studies, like to help you explain something and the teacher will happily do it. Or you can write an assignment or solve some problems and the teacher will help you correct them (Student 1).

In this way, faith school students had grown to know their teachers and how to relate to each one of them. As one of the Lower Sixth students in the Baptist school put it:

We know things that they like and things that they don't like, so we know how to relate with them. Like we know the type of jokes that they will not like, so that really makes our relationship grow. And, as for our set, like this Lower Sixth... they really like us, like our teachers, because we really try our best not to be disobedient and stuff; we try to obey them (Student 2).

This explains why, even though the vast majority of teachers did not receive formal training, most faith schools still enjoyed high quality teaching and learning. The unbelievable devotion of the teachers, their availability, their friendly and supportive attitude towards students, the manageable class sizes and the willingness of the students to learn all contributed to their success in examinations. The Baptist school did particularly well here, as did some Catholic schools. In the Presbyterian school the fact that students complained of teacher shortages and teaching quality and the fact that students could stay away from class, did not speak well of the school. In some Catholic schools there were teachers whose classroom management skills also left a lot to be desired and some did not appear to see the importance of getting students to do their assignments. While it is true that even trained teachers sometimes perform poorly and act unprofessionally, some basic training for Catholic teachers would have eliminated some of these shortcomings.

7.5 Resources

The basic resources which one would expect to find in Cameroonian secondary schools would include textbooks for students, a library, Science and Food and Nutrition laboratories and reading spaces. Some schools have Internet facilities for staff and students. In the lay private schools and government schools included in this study, students had only those textbooks which their parents could afford to buy for them. They were not obliged to have textbooks for the subjects which they offered and parents encouraged them to borrow books from their friends if they needed to use

them. The result was that very few students had the prescribed textbooks. Asked if their classmates had all their textbooks, a Lower Sixth student in GS2 said:

Not all. For example, out of 100% not up to 30% have textbooks and that is one thing that can also make studies somehow slow and difficult (Student 4).

In situations where students had brothers and sisters in other schools or at university, it became even more difficult for parents to provide textbooks for them. Some students tried to find ways around this difficulty but it was not always easy. Here is part of the discussion around textbooks in the Lower Sixth focus group of LPS1.

Researcher: Would your parents buy the books for you? Would you have the books you need for your Biology, Chemistry, whatever thing you are doing? Would you have all the textbooks which you need?

Student 2: We might not normally have all. We have about two, three textbooks and we use them judiciously. Then you go to a friend who has another one that you don't have, then you then exchange with that person to use just for that particular time. That is due to the fact that they are so expensive.

Researcher: Is there a lot of cooperation then between students as far as usage of books and materials is concerned?

Student 4: Some would easily give you their books, but not all. Some would fear that you might misplace their textbook which is much more expensive than yours. Another student may have a textbook but not offering your subject. So he or she might refuse saying that he or she is not offering any of your subjects and cannot exchange with you.

To make matters worse, lay private and government school libraries only exist in name in many cases. Even when the students of GS2 granted that they had a library, they described the books in it as 'insufficient and outdated'. One would have thought that a good library would make up for the lack of textbooks. Unfortunately, this was not the case in the lay private and government schools in this study. When this researcher asked to see the library in LPS2, the principal pointed to a bookshelf in the staff room! In LPS1 there was a very small room with a few old books covered in dust. Asked if the school had a good library where students could go to do assignments or to supplement what the teacher had taught in class, the Lower Sixth students of LPS2 said:

Student 2: Well, I have heard about... that ____ (Name of School) has a library but...

Researcher: You have heard? You are a student here!

Student 2: I have heard because we don't know where the library is. Yes, we have heard but we don't know where the library is. We have not even seen any book.

Student 5: The words of the devil... they fly, so you can imagine. So we have been in this school, we are just hearing that there is a library but we have never seen...to be very sincere, I have never seen even a book, not to talk about a library.

Student 1: To be sincere there is no library in this school.

With regard to the science laboratory, the story was the same. While all the government and lay private schools in this study had science laboratories, the students were not satisfied with the state of the labs. A Lower Sixth student in GS1 said that they had a lab “but it is not well equipped” (Student 2) and her friend added:

The science students...we need more attention. ... like they need to embark a lot on the lab to modify it, to modernize the lab but in this school they don't really see that to be necessary. So when you go to the lab without equipments and so on (Student 3).

Her counterpart in GS2 thought that the science lab in her school was what she hated most about the school.

There were no reading spaces in both government and lay private schools and none of them had a school hall, something which one of the Lower Sixth students in GS1 could not understand. She said:

And also the most important thing a school must have is a School Hall but here in this school we don't yet have a School Hall. So during our annual meetings either we are under the sun or under the rain, standing up even, not even sitting so we really need a School Hall” (Student 5).

Neither of the lay private schools had a playground of any sort but the government schools had a football pitch each. Finally, none of the lay private schools and GS1 had computers, not to talk of Internet access, not even for teachers' use. In GS2 there was a computer room and school authorities were working to set up an IT department.

In government and lay private schools therefore there was either a complete absence or very poor quality of resources. This is understandable for lay private schools most of whose proprietors would want to make as much money as possible and spend as

little as possible, but it is strange that there would be a general lack of resources and infrastructure in government schools which are directly funded by the government. The explanation is that in most cases government provides the buildings to start with or simply signs a decree creating a school without providing any infrastructure and the rest is left to the community and PTA of the school.

Unlike their counterparts in the lay private and government school sectors, the students of faith schools were provided with textbooks which were paid for by their parents. And, even though the younger students sometimes misplaced their books, the important thing was that each student was given all the books they needed for every subject. In addition, their schools all had libraries where the students could do research. Some had newspapers and all had novels in the library which they could use to build their language power, but they also had reference books which they could use to supplement what the teachers taught them in class. In one of the Catholic schools, the Form Two students had three marks (15%) added to their English average each term if they read and summarized a prescribed number of novels.

All the faith schools, even the recruiting ones, had good science laboratories and a number of them had Food and Nutrition labs which were used as examination centres by the Cameroon GCE Board. In the Presbyterian school, although the students were satisfied with the quality of the equipment which they had in their science lab, they complained that the lab was aging and needed renovation. The school chapel was getting too small for the school population and so were the sick bay and the college library. The picture painted by the students of the Presbyterian school was one of aging and inadequate infrastructure. This was remarkable since infrastructure and resources are some of the strengths of faith schools in Cameroon.

A very good facility in the Baptist school was a large and well ventilated reading room where students could go and read when it was hot since the school was located in a hot region of Cameroon. However, all the other faith schools had adequate study spaces for their students as well as open spaces and playgrounds. Unlike the Baptist and Presbyterian schools which did not have Internet access, all the four Catholic schools had Internet access for their students at the time this study was carried out. However, it was only in two of the Catholic schools that students actually made use of the Internet for research and even in those schools there were some who did not know how to use the Internet for research. It was remarkable that not one of the faith schools had a language room or language laboratory.

Generally speaking, resources and infrastructure were good in faith schools and students were proud of their school buildings, study spaces, study resources and sports facilities. Here is an example of an entry from our field notes for CS1:

"This school has lots of open spaces where students can roam. They have four football pitches, two basketball courts, a handball court, a volleyball court and a tennis court. They have recently put up a big new building which houses classrooms and offices" (21/04/09).

7.6 Pastoral Care

Government schools are generally supposed to have counselling services but only GS2, the urban school, had a counselling department. Again, this highlights part of the problem mentioned earlier with regard to resources and infrastructure. Government schools in rural areas suffer both from lack of instructional resources and personnel partly because they are very often treated as an afterthought when it comes to the distribution of resources to government schools, but also because most government school personnel do not like working in rural areas. However, the students of GS2 appreciated the work the department was doing and thought that they benefited from the expertise of those who worked there. This is what one of the Lower Sixth students thought of the counselling department:

Actually, there is a counselling department in this school. I think the counselling department is actually working because it is an indispensable department in the lives of the students. Many of us, let's say the students who have problems and we have gone there the problems are always being solved. So they give us the necessary advice and the rules to go by the problem in order to achieve. So I cannot say that the role of the counsellor is minimal but actually they are doing something very great (Student 5).

Their colleagues in the lay private schools could not say the same. The two lay private schools included in this study did not have any counselling and advisory services and students with personal problems had no clear idea who they could take their problems to. Following a discussion on the lack of counsellors in their school, one of the students in the Lower Sixth discussion group in LPS1 said:

Quite alright there is no counsellor here but...in short, you can go to anybody for him to counsel you, even to the boarding Master, Mr _____, or the Vice Principal or any other person and they will try and see what they can do for you (Student 2).

In both the government and lay private schools, apart from counselling services in GS2, students did not have any other services for student care. In GS1 the students who had problems could go to any teacher of their choice or go to the discipline master. This of course would depend on their personal relationship with the teacher. The Lower Sixth students of LPS2 were more vocal about the lack of pastoral care:

Student 2: But as for the intellectual we have it here, but since we don't have a person that may guide the students...you know in some other schools they have a special person that if you have a problem you can go and complain, if you have problem with your friend...yes, counsellor. We don't have any counsellor in this school. So what is...in the academic section we are good but for the counselling, counselling a student we are very poor.

Student 4: Since this school is a lay private school it depends on the number of students who are attending the school. For example, if this school did not have population they will not employ a lot of teachers to come and teach. After all, they are making their money. In this school we are supposed to have counsellors, we are supposed to have discipline masters, a lot of them but we don't have them.

It is exactly because lay private schools in Cameroon lack counselling and advisory services and medical facilities that one would expect the teachers to make up for the lack of such services by the way they handle students with personal problems as well as students who are sick. This did not seem to be the case as this discussion with the Form Two students of LPS1 shows.

Student 4: Some of them... they come to class... like our History Madam, she comes to class, she asks what is your problem. But some of them they don't even care, they come they just take a cane and start beating you anyhow.

Student 1: Some when they come to class and they are teaching, if you are sleeping they cannot ask what is wrong with you; they just come, they will beat you...either they beat you or they tell you to go out of the class, and they will not even ask you what is wrong.

Student 2: Then if you are sick they will not tell you in a calm manner to go and see the infirmarian. They will just tell you 'go to the house', begin to drive you, that if you are sick you are not supposed to come to school. And if they are beating you, they will not show any remorse for what they have done. They will not have any remorse, they will just send you to the house.

Pastoral care of students seemed to be absent in lay private and government schools and the picture painted by the students seemed to be one of 'survival of the fittest'.

None of the six faith schools in the study had a professional counsellor. In one of the Catholic schools a lady teacher had been designated as the 'counsellor' and students seemed to feel very comfortable taking their problems to her. However, all the faith schools had chaplains who looked after the spiritual and emotional needs of the students. In addition, teachers, housemasters and housemistresses were all expected to play the role of counsellors and students seemed to open up easily to them. Most principals lived on campus and made themselves available to students round the clock. One of the Lower Sixth students in CS2 said of her principal:

I even...there are times when the principal travels ...and we feel her absence in the school but when she comes back we are very happy, we are waving... we go and greet her. We tell her, 'Sister, we are happy you are back.' If you have any problem her doors are always open – every night, from 8pm to 11pm she is sitting there for students to come and present their problems to her (Student 1).

All six faith schools involved in this study had a sick bay in school with at least one nurse to take care of the medical needs of the students and the students seemed to know exactly what to do when they were sick. The schools had a system of referring their students to nearby hospitals if their conditions were serious and could not be taken care of in the school sickbay. In the Presbyterian school, students complained that the sickbay was getting too small for the school population and there was only one nurse for the whole school. In the same school, it was not evident that the students had a clear idea what to do when they had personal problems. While the Form Two students said they would go to any teacher whom they trusted or to the discipline master and only mentioned the chaplain after they had been prompted, one of the Lower Sixth students started by saying that she would go to her "closest friend" if she had a problem and if the closest friend could not solve the problem she would keep it to herself. Her friends said they would take their problem to any teacher they were close to. Again, they did not mention the chaplain, and even after they were asked if they would not bring their problems to the chaplain they answered that it was "mostly spiritual problems" that they brought to the chaplain.

While the chaplains in the Baptist and Presbyterian schools were full time, only one out of four Catholic chaplains was full time. Catholic schools provided their students with the spiritual help and attention they needed to learn but there was a lot of scope to do better. Counselling and advisory services and health and chaplaincy services could

easily be improved upon. The Presbyterian school did not have counsellors but had not built up the kind of family spirit which was evident in the Baptist school where teachers acted as fathers and mothers to the students. In addition, the Baptist school seemed to be the most organized as far as medical care for students was concerned as this contribution from a Lower Sixth student shows:

Like with health...when you are sick; if you have like, let me say cough, headache, they go to the sick bay, they meet the health prefect or the nurses, then they prescribe them drugs which they can take regularly till... whatsoever subsides. And then if it's too persistent, they see the doctor because there is a doctor that comes here... I think twice a week (Student 3).

7.7 Recognition and reward of excellence

It would seem that because lay private schools want to make as much money as possible and spend as little as possible, they hardly reward students for academic excellence, hard work or good behaviour. While in LPS2 students remembered that some years ago some students who had performed well had been given cash prizes (some thought it was scholarship money from the government), the students in LPS1 had never heard about prize giving for academic excellence or good behaviour.

Student 1: Actually, here in ____ (name of School), they don't give prizes; even if you are the best student in so far as...since I started in this school they have never given a prize to a student for taking highest in class.

Student 2: But I think the students wish it were implemented.

Principals rarely (if ever) congratulated students during Assembly who had either behaved well or performed well in examinations so as to encourage others to emulate their good example.

Unlike the lay private schools, government schools recognized good behaviour and academic excellence in students, even though GS2 seemed to concentrate on academic performance alone. In GS1 they gave prizes at the end of the year to the best behaved student, the most punctual student, the cleanest student, the student with the highest average in each subject, the most improved student, and so on and some of those prizes included textbooks which the students appreciated. The strange thing is that prizes given to the students of GS2 were less attractive – exercise books, pens, rulers and pencils, and students complained that even when they were given textbooks, these books were not relevant to what they were doing in school and were not a help in their study. One of the Lower Sixth students expressed it as follows:

Firstly, it is the point about the prize giving award during the end of year... the prize that they give I don't like it because many prizes that they give do not reflect the subject that you have. For example, you can be the best student in Maths but they will go and take an old book in Food and Nutrition and give you as a prize; that will not help you in any way. For example, in previous years I have received prizes in Physics, Chemistry and Economics but they are not the text books that will help me; they are giving me but other books like novels when I am not a Literature student... Food and Nutrition text books (Student 3).

Being an urban school, one would have expected them to give more attractive prizes. In addition, if it is true as the students claimed, that these prizes came from their teachers and not from the school, it is hard to understand why an urban government school would not organize a proper prize giving ceremony for its students.

There were various ways of recognizing hard work and excellence in faith schools and this ranged from congratulating students in class and at the Assembly to giving them awards at the end of the academic year. The schools recognized students who were well behaved, students who excelled in extracurricular activities, students who excelled in their school work and prefects who performed their duties well. In some Catholic schools, the names of such students were included in the School Magazine. However, in two of the four Catholic schools, students thought that the prizes given out to them at the end of the year could be better even though they all agreed that rewarding hard work and excellence “really encourages people to work harder and to compete” (CS3F2, Student 4). It was remarkable that the prize for the ‘most religious student’ in the Presbyterian school came from the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. All in all, the fact that faith schools recognized both good behaviour and academic excellence encouraged their students to both behave well and to excel in their school work.

7.8 Principal leadership

The students of lay private and government schools did not seem to warm up naturally to their principals but it was worse in the lay private schools than in the government schools. The Form Two students of LPS1 thought that their principal was ‘too wild’ and that he was ‘scaring children away from him’. He did not go into classrooms often to check students’ and teachers’ work but if he did go into class it was ‘only to threaten you’. Among the senior students the principal did not seem to command a lot of respect and they thought very poorly of the principal as a leader. A Lower Sixth male student in LPS2 said of his principal that he could easily be mistaken for a student

except that he did not wear the school uniform. This was confirmed by the Form Two students:

Student 1: The teachers too should be more active, and the principal...hey, that one eh, he is afraid eh.

Researcher: Afraid of what?

Student 1: Of the students na!

Researcher: What can the students do to the principal?

Student 1: Because the students are too rough.

Researcher: Oh, I see.

Student 4: If the principal close the gate and say no student should go out, the students will push the principal and pass, especially the Upper Sixth and Lower Sixth.

Student 3: Especially with the boys; the girls are afraid but the boys... they have courage, and they push him.

While the students of GS1 thought that their principal did not have the qualities to build a personal relationship with the students, those of GS2 thought that their principal who had only just taken up her post of responsibility was the best thing that had happened to their school. A Lower Sixth student summarized the feelings of the other students when he said:

No, for now, sir, I think that we have a very good principal because she is actually behaving like a mother to the children; she has all of us at heart (student 5).

In the lay private schools, not only did the principals not command the respect of their students; they seemed to be aloof, in their own world most of the time. In both lay private and government schools the students understood that because of the numbers the principal would know only very few students, probably the very intelligent and the very stubborn ones. However, the Lower Sixth students of LPS1 were agreed that it was a tough job being the principal of so large a school and that their principal was doing the best he could under the circumstances. As for the government school principals they have very little room to take initiatives on general school improvement or the improvement of resources and infrastructure and on the quality of teaching and learning in their schools. Further, they cannot call personnel under them to account, and even if they recommend that recalcitrant or careless staff should be sanctioned by government hierarchy, it is rarely ever done. They are 'lame duck' principals in the

sense that they have neither the financial means nor the authority to lead their schools in any meaningful way.

In all the faith schools, however, the students (especially the younger ones) thought their principals were caring, friendly, fatherly and concerned about their school work. They checked to see that the teachers had done their work well and one of the schools even asked students to assess their teachers at the end of the academic year. Even the Lower Sixth students who sometimes spoke negatively of their principals tended to concede that no matter how 'bad' faith school principals were, they had a soft spot for junior students. Talking about the principal's relationship with the students, one of the Lower Sixth students in CS1 said:

I think it depends on the student's class. For instance, the Form Ones will look at him as a very caring person. He would defend the junior student in every case that goes up to him. The worst thing to do is to slap a junior student. Unfortunately, those are the cases that go up to him, because the junior students see in him their saviour. He does not seem to understand senior students when cases are brought to him that involve brutality to a junior student (Student 4).

In addition, the junior students had unfettered access to their principals. They could go to him or her any time of the day or night if they were sick or if a senior student bullied them or if they had some other problem. One Lower Sixth student in CS3 said of her principal:

He is nice...he is like a father, although he does not have... maybe children (Student 5).

In this way, the principals got to know their students pretty quickly so that in one of the schools where the principal had only been appointed at the beginning of the year, the students said he knew 'almost everybody by name'. And they were really excited when the principal called them by name. The reason, according to a Form Two student in CS1, was

...because your name is your identity. When he calls your name it means he really recognises you, he loves you... and you have a place. But if he just says YOU, then you know that he doesn't really care about you or who you are (Student 5).

In the Presbyterian school, however, the principal did not seem to know many of his students by name. In fact, the impression was given that he was a bit like the government and lay private school principals who knew either the very intelligent, very good or very wayward students. The Lower Sixth students said of him:

Student 4: In this school if the principal stands somewhere and calls your name the first thing that will come to your mind is that you have committed a crime. You will not think that it is something positive; you will know that the principal wants to invite you for some thrashing. That is the general notion in this school.

Researcher: I see. Girls, do you agree?

Student 3: Some of the times if the principal calls you it means you have done something very good and he wants to congratulate you.

In this regard he was very different to his Baptist colleague who in a school of about 930 students knew most of the students by name. Again, unlike the students of the lay private and government schools who did not want their principals to know them by name, the students of the Baptist school loved it when the principal called them by name. It made them feel happy, and made a Form Two student feel “like you are popular” (Student 4).

In addition, the principal of the Presbyterian school did not check to see if the teachers were in class and the students said it was the duty of the Vice Principal to check to see that the teachers were in class when they had lessons. In this way, he did not seem to have his eye on the ball in the same way as his Baptist counterpart, which could account for a good number of the things that went wrong in his school like brutality and students constantly breaking bounds.

Again, unlike the Baptist principal who had been in post for over ten years and had developed a very warm relationship with his teachers and students, three of the four Catholic schools in this study had newly appointed principals. One had been in post for two years but the other two were doing their first years at their schools. It was thus difficult for students to give a long term assessment of their principals. More importantly, however, the impression given by the senior students of the three Catholic schools was that they did not have a very warm relationship with their principals. Maybe because these principals had not been long in their schools, there always seemed to be a certain distance between them and their senior students. In addition, a number of them were often too quick to make changes which upset the senior students. A Lower Sixth student in CS1 said:

Immediately he came, he changed everything...in fact, we are living in a new school now (Student 4).

This shows up a weakness in Catholic school leadership in English speaking Cameroon which is the frequent turnover of school leaders and the tendency of the appointed leaders to rush changes in schools to which they are appointed. It was only in the Catholic girls' school that senior students spoke warmly about the principal.

Student 3: She is really motherly... And she is friendly.

Student 5: She is informal.

Researcher: Informal?

Student 5: Yes, the fact that she is always there for us, as my friend told you. If you have any problem or anything that bothers you, you can just walk up to her. It's not like we take her for granted or that we don't give her the respect but we can express ourselves to her.

Student 1: The point is that when she wants to be strict she is actually very strict but...I don't know...her motherliness overshadows it. When she is around you are happy and when she goes away you are down.

This principal of the girls' school had been in post for a number of years, after having worked in the same school and understudied her predecessor and so it was understandable that she had developed a bond with her students. This strengthens the argument that Catholic education authorities need to do something about the duration of principals' tenures and to encourage succession planning and continuity in their schools.

In spite of all this, students in all four Catholic schools thought that the principals and their assistants kept an eye on the teachers and ensured that the quality of teaching and learning was good. They checked on their school work and went round the classrooms during study time to make sure the students were working.

7.9 Parental interest and support

Students in lay private and government schools generally believed that their parents showed interest in their school work if they paid their school fee promptly, provided their school needs and checked on their school work from time to time. The Form Two students of LPS2 could point to signs that their parents supported them in their studies.

Student 2: My father pays my school fees, he is a driver, he works in CDC; he pays my school fees, buys my exercise books, and the text books that I need... that I ask... he provides it for me. So my father is very interested in my education.

Student 3: My father always checks if I have an assignment and whether I have done ...have done it or not.

Researcher: Yes,_____.

Student 4: Even when I'm in the house watching television he will drive me to go and read my books so that I pass in my exams.

The students thought that if some parents did not check their children's school work or help out with the homework it was because they just could not do it. As one of the Lower Sixth students in GS1 put it,

Some have the interest but since parents in the village are always... let me say they are illiterates, they don't... parents who dropped out from school... let me say Form 2, Form 3... cannot help a Form 4. So it is mainly because some of them don't know what to do (Student 5).

Furthermore, there were some students who came from polygamous families whose fathers did not really bother about their education and someone else paid their fee and provided for their needs. Some polygamous parents paid the fees and provided for school needs but could not pay individual attention to the children because of their numbers. There were very few students whose parents checked their school work or helped out with their homework, so that, overall, lay private and government school students did not enjoy enough parental support with their school work.

In the faith schools, parental interest and support for the students seemed to come naturally, probably because most of the parents were well educated themselves and knew what it means to go to boarding school, but also because many of the parents were well to do. Parents would generally go through their children's report cards and give them advice on how to improve on their school work. Some parents would even check the children's notes to see what they had been doing at school. For some of those whose parents thought they needed extra help, they got them private teachers for specific subjects during the holidays.

Maybe because the students understood that the amount they paid as school fee was very high and parents sacrificed a lot to pay, the payment of school fees was considered a great sign of interest and support in their school work. A Lower Sixth

student in the Baptist school expressed this very strongly during the focus group discussion:

One thing that I'm really grateful to my parents for is that...in fact they may have a lot of things to do...different projects, but the first thing that they always do is pay school fees for three of us...always! That's the first thing (Student 5).

Considering that all the faith schools in the study are boarding schools, students thought parents showed interest and concern for them and their school work if they came to visit them regularly at school. Students took it very badly if parents did not visit them. After the payment of fees, a Form Two student in the Baptist school thought that visiting came next in order of importance. After her classmates had spoken she said:

Also visiting... because there are some parents who don't visit their children...as if you are a burden. They just come and throw you here, then go; then when you come back for holidays, you spend the little time you have and then they come and abandon you here again (Student 2).

If parents could not visit them regularly, maybe because of other duties and responsibilities, it was important for the student that the parents called them.

Unlike students in the Baptist and Presbyterian schools as well as the recruiting Catholic school, students in the three selecting Catholic schools seemed to take it for granted that parents would pay their fees, provide for their school needs and check their school work and report cards and find out how they had been doing at school. This is how the Lower Sixth students of CS1 expressed it:

Student 1: [My parents] are naturally interested in the school and the principal. But they also want to know how I am doing in school. They care about how my life in school is going and, naturally, all parents care about your academic work.
Student 4: I am surprised that some students say their parents don't even see their report cards. My parents scrutinise my report card, and that is a sign to me that they are interested in my school work. Why would they send me to school and then not care about my progress?

Like the other faith school students, Catholic school students thought that parents showed interest in their school work if they visited them at school. They did not like the fact that most of their schools had limited visiting to once a term which meant that

they could not see their parents as often as they would have liked. But unlike the Baptist school where authorities had provided a mobile phone for parents to call their children or vice versa, Catholic schools did not have this facility. However, Catholic school parents, more than all the others, went beyond supporting their children in their academic pursuits to supporting their moral formation as well. It is remarkable that it was the Lower Sixth students who talked about their parents checking to see if the school had done a good job of moral formation since they were at the age when kids usually rebel against moral formation. In CS1, for instance, one of them said,

Apart from seeing me succeed academically...they want to see the moral values instilled in me at school (Student 5).

The same sentiments were echoed by his colleague in CS3:

Looking at my parents also, especially my father, he doesn't look at your report card from the top. He looks from the bottom, starting from your conduct and then going to your average before the marks. He tells me, 'you must not be an intellectual giant and a moral dwarf. You have to have the morals because when you have the morals you can adapt to all situations'. It makes me always want to work and want to have good morals (Student 1).

So faith school parents did better than their lay private and government school counterparts in showing interest in their children's school work and supporting them in that work, probably because more of them were educated and had the means to show their support in practical ways. In addition, Catholic school parents went a step further by showing interest in their children's moral formation and supporting the schools' efforts to give that formation.

7.10 Pupil culture

In the lay private and government schools, religious and cultural differences did not seem to matter among the students. Students made friends across religious, language and cultural divides. Sometimes the students argued about their various faiths and denominations and made fun of some tribes but that did not result in any tensions or violence. The striking thing was that even the government schools had devotion and prayer during Assembly and sometimes pastors and priests would come in to teach Moral Instruction, as they did in the lay private schools. The students gave the impression that they liked the idea of priests and pastors coming in to give Moral Instruction and to pray with them and advise them. They also liked the prayers and devotions during Assembly and thought that these influenced the behaviour of a good

number of students positively. However, because some schools had recently been rocked by occultist practices and allegations of students being initiated into occult groups, this fervour might well have been a reaction to a one-off occurrence. The discussion with the Lower Sixth students of GS1 seems to confirm this view:

Researcher: Okay, so pastors have an effect on the way students behave?

___(Name of student), you have not answered. You don't want pastors coming to your school?

Student 5: No, I want them.

All students: We need them... We really need them.

Student 1: Especially this time that occultism is rampant in schools.

That notwithstanding, the students admitted that during the devotions in government and lay private schools some of their friends would continue to talk and laugh and disturb those who wanted to pray or sing or listen to the person who was preaching. Disruption did not end with devotions but was carried into the classrooms during lessons and private study time and the students complained seriously about it. In GS2 students could walk out of class if they did not like the way a teacher was teaching and the teachers seemed powerless to do anything. In the same way the prefects seemed to have very little control over the rest of the students who sometimes fought with them if they tried to enforce discipline. It seemed clear that there was a high level of student indiscipline in both government and lay private schools. This is what the students of LPS1 had to say about student behaviour in their school:

Student 2: I like this school but I like them to improve on...from disrespecting their teachers...especially the principal, when he goes up to the stage during the Assembly he will ask us to stop noise. When he speaks students will start shouting and start making noise but when he tells them to stop noise...especially when a visitor comes into this school, they disgrace the principal. They disgrace even the proprietor because when the person comes to visit this school nah, children will just start making noise, they will not even like to get what the man is saying.

Student 1: I think what she is trying to say is that they should teach the children...they should try to improve the standard of moral behaviours for the children.

The situation in LPS2 was not different to the one in LPS1. Again, it was the Form Two students who captured pupil culture in the school.

Student 1: Their level of discipline I don't like it; it's not encouraging at all. That's why I want to go me to a different school.

Student 4: I don't like the way students talk to teachers because some of the time when a teacher corrects the student, the student will shout at the teacher as if the teacher is a baby... because some of the students... they do not respect the teachers.

Student 5: Someone even attempted to fight with the teacher.

Researcher: Someone even attempted to fight with the teacher!

Student 4: Yes, they used to fight.

Student 1: In class boys fight with teachers.

Researcher: You are in class two. How can a class two boy fight with a teacher?

Student 1: Especially with our former Maths teacher, Mrbecause the man is short.

In the government and lay private schools, boys and girls scaled the fence and went home whenever they wanted to. There was graffiti on the walls of the school and the classrooms and the sanitary conditions of the two lay private schools spoke volumes about their school culture. The Lower Sixth students of LPS1 did not mince their words when they talked about sanitary conditions in their school.

Student 3: What I don't really like in this school is...their hygienic condition is very poor. Yes, because they say cleanliness is next to godliness. If you teach in a dirty environment, it is not really conducive for us to learn. And for us in the boarding house... what the girls suffer, the consequence is just too much, because the hygienic condition is very, very poor. So that is what I hate about this school.

Student 2: I am unhappy...partially because of the sanitation...especially at the Boys' Camp. That's, the toilet is too close to the Boys' Camp and at times the stench from the toilets extends to the Boys' Camp.

It is clear that with the exception of GS1 (the rural government school), pupil culture in the government and lay private schools left a lot to be desired. Apart from disrespect for principals and teachers, students were stubborn, pupil misbehaviour was rife and sanitary conditions were appalling. It was probably for this reason that the Lower Sixth student of GS2 compared life in their school to life in a 'zoo'.

As is typical with faith boarding schools in Cameroon, the junior students complained that some of the senior students (especially the prefects) could be inconsiderate in the way they gave them work to do in the dormitories or when they sent them on errands.

Sometimes senior students shouted at them or even beat them, which was against school regulations. That notwithstanding, they all agreed that it was easy to make friends and students cared about each other. It would seem that the students who went over the top were in the minority and even the Form Two students told of senior students who would take care of them when they were sick and do their laundry for them or help out with their studies.

The students loved to be with each other and liked the fact that students took care of each other; one person's problem was everyone else's. This feeling extended even to the teachers, some of who were like mothers and fathers to the students. The Baptist school especially was like one big family with the principal at the head. One of the Lower Sixth students in the Baptist school expressed it rather emotionally when she said,

I have always wanted to have a sister but I don't have one, so while in school, that's... I feel as if everybody is my sister, so I try to relate, yes (Student 1).

Her classmate confirmed it by saying,

And I just like the love and the harmony, the way we are...that's the way we are, one person's problem is everybody's problem. That's how it is (Student 3).

The situation was not the same in the Presbyterian school and the recruiting Catholic school where the younger students thought that the older ones were not a good example to them because they broke school rules with impunity. In the Presbyterian school they put on the wrong uniform, spoke Pidgin English³ (which is against school rules), and often beat up the younger students. But more seriously, students easily stayed away from lessons and spiritual activities, and the breaking of bounds as well as stealing were widespread. This is clear from the following discussion from the Form Two focus group:

Student 5: For the students I want that they should change their habits, even though they will not like to change because the rate at which they are breaking bounds and brutalizing junior students I don't like it... One of my classmates has

³ Pidgin English is a common name used to refer to any of the many pidgin languages derived from English. Variations of the Pidgin English spoken in Cameroon are spoken across West Africa. Even though Pidgin English is generally the second language a child learns after its own tribal language, students are not permitted to speak it in school as this interferes with their ability to learn English.

a wound on his leg because of a senior student... And also they steal a lot. So I want that they should reduce the rate even if it means to stop, they should stop.
Student 4: There are some people who don't care about the Church, when it is Church time, as they close the dormitory, they scale the fence and they go outside and after Church they come back to the dormitory.

In the recruiting Catholic school (CS4) not only did the teachers and the senior students break the rules on corporal punishment with impunity, the sanitary conditions in the dormitories were not good and the girls complained that some of their friends dressed indecently. These practices were almost completely absent from the other three (selecting) Catholic schools as the students knew that there was zero tolerance for them. As one of the Lower Sixth students in CS3 said of her principal:

He hates brutality. Brutality is equivalent to dismissal. And it's nice because I would not really love to be brutalized by somebody (Student 4).

It seems clear that in the Presbyterian and recruiting Catholic schools, especially for the junior students, school was not a happy place and too many things were not going right among the students.

It was difficult, especially in the Catholic selecting schools for students from rich families to mix with students from poor families, which made the students from poor families miserable since they were in the minority. This contribution from a Form Two student in CS3 in response to what made him sad in school is very revealing:

Then sometimes...what makes me really sad is that next year most of them (his friends) will not be there because they will be going abroad. But me, I will only go abroad when I will be in Upper Sixth. That's what my father said...so that I can continue my education there because I want to be a journalist (Student 5).

A Form Two student in CS2 put it bluntly. She said:

Among the students, there are some who belong to the group of the rich...high class...bourgeois. They don't like to mix with the other students (Student 1).

This confirms the finding from the parents' questionnaire that a large number of students in Catholic schools come from families which are rich enough to be able to send their children abroad. However, the bad thing was that these students from rich families did not mix easily with students from poor families.

It might be worth noting that there were similarities in school culture between the two recruiting faith schools (that is CS4 and the Presbyterian school), and while the three selecting Catholic schools resembled the other selecting Baptist school, it was the Catholic girls' school that came closest to the Baptist school as far as the 'family feeling' was concerned. Even though some students in the Catholic schools talked about 'family spirit', it was not always evident from the way they related to each other.

7.11 Preparation for life after school

Students of lay private and government schools seemed to be at a loss when asked if they thought their schools were preparing them well for life in a democratic society. The students of GS1 said that their teachers spent five minutes of each lesson talking to them about life and preparing them for life, while their colleagues in GS2 thought that the teaching of citizenship in school was a good preparation for the future. Both government schools had clubs in school which could help inspire their pupils to enter different professions in life. They had Health clubs, Journalism clubs, Arts clubs and others. Apart from these, in government schools as well as in lay private schools, it was hard to find evidence of a conscious effort to prepare students for the future. It would seem that the only thing they consciously prepared students for was the end of course examinations which they were not doing very well considering what they had said about the quality of teaching and learning in their schools and the results at those examinations so far. Lay private school students especially are often on the back foot when it comes to competing for places in higher education or for places on the job market.

It was interesting that one of the first issues the Form Two students of the Baptist school raised was that studying and living in an all-girls environment was a weakness in the way they were being prepared for the future. They thought that the girls would check some of their bad habits if they were in a coeducational institution, but more importantly they would get to know the boys better. Following the same line of thought the Lower Sixth girls of the same school thought that the school should give them more opportunity to mix with boys from other schools, especially all-boys schools. They believed that socializing with those boys while at school would stop them going over the top and misbehaving after school just because they had not learnt how to handle relationships with boys. This was an important observation since out of the six faith schools in the study three were single sex schools.

That aside, faith school students were convinced that their schools were giving them good preparation for the future. Their schools taught them to respect time and to work

hard, attributes which Cameroon desperately needs. In addition, faith schools taught their students to work independently, and the fact that the schools taught them to depend on their 'own brains' in a country where cheating at examinations is rampant was considered good preparation for the future as well. In addition, faith school students pointed to the religious and moral formation which they received in their schools as important preparation for the future. The students of the Baptist school said the moral formation and the discipline of the school would enable them to grow up to be "responsible women and ladies in future" (Lower Sixth, Student 1). Even when the students admitted that some of the students who left their schools had been a bad example in society, they would not blame the school for it. One of the Lower Sixth students in the Baptist school put it this way:

Some of them misbehave after ____ (Name of school) but at that time who do you really blame? You will look at the majority, if most people can get out and be decent... The few who didn't want to comply are the ones who go out and misbehave (Student 4).

Catholic school students distinguished themselves from the other faith school students by emphasising that their schools gave them a holistic education. This mantra was repeated in all the Catholic schools where they seek to achieve this balance by emphasizing not only academic excellence but also spiritual, moral, social and physical formation. Students argued that the conferences and talks which they were given at school, the spiritual exercises, sports and clubs were all meant to give them this formation, if they let the school 'pass through them'. It was obvious to the faith school students that their schools prepared them very well academically; the results were there to prove it. Many of their students are admitted to the top professional schools in the country and a good number of faith schools have received officials from American and European universities who visited the schools to encourage students to apply to their universities. They were the top schools in the country and, because their schools were well known, students thought that this would give them an added advantage over students from other schools as far as employment is concerned. One of the Baptist girls decided to stay on in the school after her Ordinary Levels "because the school is well known and I can easily have a job after my university. So that's why I came back here to do the second cycle" (Student 2).

7.12 Responsibility for success of school

Lay private and government school students who thought their schools were succeeding generally attributed this success to the hard work of their teachers. In addition, since the students worked on their own most of the time, they attributed the

success of their schools to the hard work of the students as well. It was only the students of LPS1 who thought that the principal made a significant contribution. However, what was revealing for the researcher was the fact that the results of this school were comparatively good because the school authorities only registered the good students for end of course examinations, and sometimes these were only as many as a third of all the students in the class. This was noteworthy because this school had been selected on the basis of the numbers which they sent in for examinations and the good results which they obtained. Their underhand tactics were revealed by one of the Lower Sixth students:

The students also do contribute to the success of the school, because despite the population...there may be about 1000 students going in just for the Ordinary Level...so some of...about 300 will pass internally successfully and with that, depending on the papers, the parents will...because they forget about those who have failed...because here we screen students, those going for internal and those going as external candidates. And internally we may take about 350...that was the number they took for our year. So with that about 300 passed. So with that the percentage increases to an extent where they forget about the failed cases. So everything lies on the determination of the students (Student 5).

On the other hand, faith schools students were convinced their schools were successful in many ways. They attributed this success to the order and discipline that reigned in their schools, the devotion and availability of teachers and the determination of the students to excel. The students of the Baptist school especially were convinced that their school has been a great success, and few would disagree with them. There was no hesitation when they were asked what they attributed the success of their school to. The answer came in a chorus: 'God first'; then one of the girls continued:

Student 1: God first, the Administration, the discipline department, the teachers, the prefects, even the students, everybody has her own part, her own little role to play.

Researcher: Now you have enumerated those ones, can you give me some explanation? How do the students contribute, how would the Administration contribute, how does God contribute? Let's start with God first. I'm not trying to put God on the judgement seat. I'm just asking for an explanation.

Student 1: First God has given us life. If not, I will not be in school. Provision... God has provided for my parents to send me here. Then God has given me...many things that's... I really need to thank Him... wisdom, understanding,

knowledge, yes, some people they don't have the ability to read, to see, but God has given me everything, so I have to give thanks to Him first.

That answer was further proof, if any was needed, that in this Baptist school, God really did come before all else. After God, it was the care and concern of the school Administration, the dedication and love of the teachers and the docility of the students that made success possible. It was difficult not to be impressed with the students of this school. After listening to them, it was easy to understand why they are one of the top schools in the country as far as academic achievement is concerned. In addition, it was also clear that the students achieved more in their school than just good grades and first class certificates. Unlike the students of the Baptist school, however, Catholic school students did not attribute the success of their schools to God, which would seem a telling omission for Catholic school students.

7.13 Chapter Summary

This chapter had as objective to find out what students in English speaking Cameroon think about their schools and the way things are done in them. The focus group findings point to the fact that even though faith schools in Cameroon are very expensive compared to their lay private and government counterparts, faith school students and their parents are generally satisfied that they get value for money. However, while the Catholic schools included in the study have done better than the government and lay private schools, their students do not seem to be as happy with school as their Baptist counterparts. The Catholic recruiting school and the Presbyterian school seem to do especially badly by faith school standards. If this is true, these findings have grave implications for Catholic education policy in English speaking Cameroon. The next chapter considers how things are done in the same schools from the point of view of teachers and it is hoped that they will make the picture clearer.

8 CHAPTER EIGHT: FINDINGS FROM TEACHERS' INTERVIEWS

The teachers' interview schedule was prepared to elicit information on the teachers' choice of career and why they elected to work in a particular school type and not another, their training and the support which they were given in the course of their careers and teacher job satisfaction in the various school types. In addition it sought information on how student quality and size affected their work and what they did as teachers to prepare their pupils for life after school.

8.1 Reasons for choice of career

Most teachers in the lay private and government sectors chose teaching as a means of earning a living. But while government teachers described themselves as 'lucky', 'privileged' and 'fortunate' to have been chosen to train as government school teachers, lay private teachers took to teaching in that sector because it was the only employment available to them. One of them had never thought of becoming a teacher but "just stumbled on it because of the difficult economic situation in the country" (LPS1, Teacher 2). This was typical of teachers in the lay private sector and could be one of the reasons why teacher turnover in that sector is thought to be the highest among the three sectors: the teachers accept a teaching position as a last resort and abandon it as soon as they find a better job elsewhere. Given the opportunity, most lay private school teachers would teach with the government for the simple reason that government would pay them anything upwards of three times what they earn in the lay private sector. But even though government teachers were the best paid in all three sectors, there were some of them who would have preferred to teach in faith schools if the pay was good enough. They liked the faith school ethos and thought it was more rewarding to teach in these schools than in government schools. One of them who had taught in a faith school before she joined the government said:

Actually, everybody knows, to be honest, that teaching in a government school is more financially rewarding, otherwise teaching in a private school like the one I taught in... I can tell you that I enjoyed teaching in a Mission school...I enjoyed it... but it is the financial push that actually led me to go to teacher training and then to teach in a government school. So in a nutshell I think the only advantage teaching in a government school is just the financial aspect (GS2, Teacher 1).

This might imply that many teachers in the government sector are there for the money which they can make, especially since entry into government teacher training schools

is by competitive examinations. Nevertheless, there are still teachers in this sector for whom teaching is a passion, something they have always wanted to do. One of them said:

I think I am called to teach, it is implanted in me. For one thing I grew up in a teacher environment. Most early elites were all teachers and I lived with a teacher and all along I have been hoping to teach (GS2, Teacher 3).

Compared to lay private school teachers, faith school teachers were not very different. Most of them entered teaching by chance. They had taken to teaching in faith schools as a temporary stopover or a stepping stone to something higher and some had got stuck. The difference between them and the others, however, was that having accepted the offer to teach in a faith school most of the teachers were very devoted to their work. Maybe because of the faith school ethos they found teaching more fulfilling there than the others found elsewhere. Their salaries were not as good as the government teachers' but not as bad as the lay private school teachers' either, even though in many cases it was nearer to the latter than to the former. For this reason, faith schools, like lay private schools, suffered from teacher turnover as teachers who found something more lucrative to do could just abandon their jobs and move on. One of the teachers in the Presbyterian school spoke for most of them when he said,

I think I am really happy (here) but if I see an opportunity that will give me a better pay package I would not hesitate, I would leave (Teacher 5).

In the same way, very few, if any, Catholic teachers chose to teach in a Catholic school because they felt it was a vocation and they were playing their role in the evangelising mission of the Church. Most of them taught in Catholic schools because that was where they got an opportunity to earn a living and most of the younger teachers would go over to the government if they had the opportunity. In fact, a good number of Catholic teachers had come over from lay private schools because the pay was better rather than because they had found their vocation. However, those who had taught in Catholic schools for long had settled in and, while some described their work as a vocation, others had just reached a dead end. These latter had gone passed the age when government could employ them and had started their families and lost the appetite of looking for greener pastures at home or abroad. So, while the younger teachers frequently moved in and out of Catholic schools, there were some older teachers who provided a semblance of stability to Catholic school staff. In CS3, for instance, three of their teachers had been teaching there for 22, 23 and 25 years respectively. Maybe these and others like them had discovered their 'vocation' as

Catholic school teachers. If so, then they could only be described as 'late vocations' to the teaching field as very few, if any Catholic teachers joined the teaching corps because they felt called by God to do so despite the fact that they had better opportunities elsewhere.

8.2 Teacher quality

While most teachers in the government sector had received formal teacher training, very few of the lay private and faith school teachers had been trained. Some of them made use of the opportunity which the Teachers' Resource Centre and the Pedagogic Service of the Delegation of Education offered them to attend conferences and seminars, which they found very helpful. Even so, lay private school proprietors did not often take full advantage of these seminars since attendance at seminars meant spending money. As one of their teachers complained:

At times it becomes a little bit difficult, even though we have participated in some of them since there is always that part of financial contributions towards the seminar... at times the proprietor is unwilling to provide the money for the seminars (LPS1, Teacher 5).

On the other hand, government school teachers, who were already trained, attended seminars quite regularly and their schools provided funds for them to do so. This was the only form of in-service training and continuing professional development available to most teachers and many government teachers took advantage of it.

Apart from making use of the government organised seminars, the Baptist and Presbyterian school teachers had a training programme, the *In-service Training Programme* (ISTP) which they ran with experts from Germany. All newly employed teachers went on this programme before they started teaching; and every year, in August, Baptist and Presbyterian school teachers attended a four-day in-service seminar organised by the ISTP. The Catholic Education Secretaries in the various dioceses organised annual seminars for their teachers, especially at the beginning of the year since these were meant to help new teachers start off well. There was also some sort of induction for new teachers in their schools. However, the Catholic seminars were not as well organised and as professional as the ISTP programme. While Catholic Education Secretaries sometimes brought in professionals from the Delegation of Education to help, most training was done by the more experienced teachers. It was astonishing that teachers who had served over 20 years thought that training had been better organised when they started teaching. In addition, induction of new teachers in school seemed to depend on the principal in place. In the Catholic recruiting school,

for instance, heads of department complained that they had very little time to orientate the new teachers. In this school support for the new teacher and for others on the staff who needed help depended on the Head of Department and the personality of the teacher. Furthermore, some Catholic schools provided for only one member of the department to attend seminars on their subjects. After attending the seminars, these members were to report back to the rest of the members of the department. This clearly was not a very effective way of providing in-service training to the teachers and they complained about it. As far as the professional development of the teacher was concerned, Catholic schools seemed to have taken their eye off the ball at a time when their Baptist and Presbyterian counterparts were seeking new ways and means of improving on the professionalism of their teachers.

These lapses notwithstanding, there were a number of outstanding Catholic teachers who had risen to top leadership positions in their subject associations through sheer hard work and dedication. Some of them who had never been to teacher training school were even called upon from time to time to train other teachers, including their government colleagues, in some areas of their subject teaching. One of these teachers who had got into writing Mathematics books was contacted by Cambridge University Press to co-author a Mathematics book for the Cameroon GCE which they published.

Teachers in lay private and government schools confirmed what the students had said about teaching resources. Their students did not have textbooks, the schools did not provide their teachers with the main textbooks and the libraries were not good enough for students and teachers to do research. One of the teachers in GS1 said,

We buy our textbooks. At times we go into real scuffles with the Administration to get a few textbooks in the library (Teacher 2).

While their schools all had most of the basic equipment and chemicals which they needed for the science laboratories these were not sufficient for the number of students whom they had in their schools. In addition, none of their schools had Internet access for students and teachers to access information on the web. While some teachers admitted that they had resources for teaching their particular subjects, these resources were not adequate for the number of students who had to use them. In this way teaching was bound to be slow and tedious.

We have them but... very limited, very limited as compared to the number of students in front of you, because you cannot be using 10 maps with a hundred

and thirty students. It doesn't... it becomes very difficult. It means there are thirteen students on a map, which is... it doesn't go (LPS1, Teacher 5).

While government schools suffered the same fate as their lay private counterparts and their teachers were dissatisfied with the resources which they had for teaching, the rural government school again suffered more than the urban one. The resources in the rural school were not only inadequate or outdated like the ones in the urban school; they were almost absent.

Virtually there is nothing. In the government schools we don't have any didactic material; we just manage what the teacher can lay hands on. For example, didactic materials as say, a radio cassette which you can record something, listen to the voice pronunciation and all what not...we don't have. So if you are able to say get a card board and draw something there, get live material there, let's say you are teaching pollination, get a flower and you put... but for computer... nothing, radios and all those types of things that are expensive... no audio visual equipment (GS1, Teacher 5).

On the other hand, faith schools enjoyed better resources than both lay private and government schools. Their students were supplied with all their textbooks which were paid for by their parents. Principals were always ready to provide teachers with the resources which they needed as long as the money was available. The libraries were comparatively better stocked and so were the Food and Nutrition and science laboratories. In fact, during the GCE Practical a number of government schools borrowed laboratory equipment from faith schools. However, only the Catholic schools had Internet access for teachers and students even though not everyone used this facility. It was worthy of note that even though faith schools did far better than lay private and government schools as far as resources were concerned, their teachers still thought they could do better. They could update library books and make the Internet more available to students and teachers. It was sad to notice that even in Catholic schools where language labs and audiovisual equipment had been common in the 1970s these did not exist any longer, giving the impression that Catholic schools had taken steps backward as far as resources were concerned. In addition, in one of the Catholic schools, the authorities had decided not to give out textbooks to students that year on the pretext that they were too much of a burden on parents. This seemed to be a bad decision as the teachers complained that the library was not good enough and that the lack of textbooks slowed down the work of the teachers considerably. In another Catholic school, the Food and Nutrition teacher could not get a microwave which she had been asking for. There seemed to be no rules and regulations in place

for the provision of resources so that teachers depended on the goodwill of the principal to obtain what they needed.

Unlike the Baptist and Presbyterian schools then, Catholic schools did not prioritise the enhancement of teacher quality. They did not have a planned pre-service training for their teachers; they did not have a properly organised induction for new teachers and teacher support depended on the goodwill of the Heads of Department. In addition, while resources for teaching and learning were very good in some schools, they were not so good in others. In this way, Catholic schools did not seem to make up for lack of teacher training in the same way as the other faith schools and Catholic school standards seemed to be falling at a time when the other faith school standards were rising.

8.3 Teacher job satisfaction

Most lay private school teachers were happy that they had something to do, considering that unemployment is so very high in Cameroon (currently about 30%). When they compared themselves to their counterparts in faith and government schools, however, they thought that their salaries were very poor. They believed that because there was no minimum wage and the Labour Code allows proprietors to negotiate teacher salaries, many of them pitched teachers' salaries as low as they possibly could in order to maximise their profits which some teachers thought was the objective of lay private schools. In addition to that, teachers who did not have a permanent contract with their schools were not paid during the long (summer) holidays and lay private school teachers were not included in the national social insurance scheme. The core of the problem was the fact that the sector was not properly regulated by the government so that the proprietors had too much of a free hand in the regulation of teacher salaries. As a result, teacher turnover in lay private schools was very high. As one of the lay private teachers said,

Everybody is always looking for greener pastures. If I have the opportunity I will leave (LPS1, Teacher 2).

On the other hand, government school teachers were more stable. Most of them had been working in the same school for over ten years. However, teachers stayed longer in the urban government school (GS2) than they did in the rural government school (GS1) since most government school teachers prefer to work in urban areas where they have better access to transport and communication. Although one government teacher's salary could pay three or more lay private school teachers, they nevertheless thought that their salaries were not commensurate to the work which they did.

Pay package...money is never enough. The problem there is how you use money. But there is a barest minimum...Actually, to be frank, as per the lifestyle in ___(name of town), what we receive as salary is not commensurate. Because at the end of the day, you discover that you pay your bills and may end up not saving anything...I consider that as a poor person (GS2, Teacher 3).

As mentioned already, the salaries of faith school teachers were way below their government colleagues' but better than those of lay private school teachers. Teachers in all faith school types were convinced that something needed to be done about their salary situation, considering that they put in the most work among teachers in all the sectors. They were available to the students almost round the clock. In spite of this many teachers confirmed what their students had said of them: they had accepted their work as a vocation. A Presbyterian school teacher said:

Well, we always have that belief that serving with the Church is serving God and not man. That's what we always believe; that is what keeps us going and thinking that we are doing the work...we ought to be doing what we are doing, not depending so much on the pay package (Teacher 3).

While this might be true, there were a number of faith school teachers who undertook other activities to supplement their income, and these included petty trading, writing or part time teaching in other schools.

Lay private and government school teachers thought that some students appreciated the work which they were doing but these students were in the minority. Also, the parents who appreciated the work of the teachers were in the minority. Maybe because of student numbers it was difficult for individual students or their parents to get the attention of teachers and express their appreciation. However, judging from what the students said of their teachers in lay private and government schools, it might also be that very few teachers in these sectors deserved to be appreciated. On the other hand, faith school teachers were unambiguous about the appreciation which they received from students and parents, both current and past. Students showed appreciation by writing to them, calling them or sometimes giving them presents. Parents visited their schools often and the PTAs of faith schools voted a particular amount of money each year which they gave to the teachers as a sign of their appreciation. The PTA of one of the Catholic schools gave their teachers 3 million CFA (currently about £4,000) for the 2007/2008 school year.

The people with whom the teacher works can contribute to their job satisfaction by the way they support them and facilitate their insertion into the school community. In the lay private and government schools there was very little cooperation between the teachers at the level of their departments. Some teachers who had been in a lay private school for a whole year did not remember ever attending a departmental meeting. This is where most supervision, mentoring, coaching and information sharing takes place. In both government and lay private schools some heads of department who attended seminars did not give feedback to the other members of the department. Departments which met often did so at the initiative of the head and often had a social agenda to which the academic element was just an addition. New teachers thus did not have the help and support which they needed except they had a good relationship with a more experienced teacher who was willing to help them get a handle on their jobs. Support for teachers in departments was not planned; it happened where the heads or the senior teachers had the goodwill to make it happen. A teacher who had taught in GS2 for 16 years did not think the heads of department were much help especially to the younger teachers. He said:

I am not the head of department. What I do in my subject ...when young teachers come sometimes I take them out for a drink to welcome them here. Second thing I do is that I get the material... if I go to a seminar I come back I get the material and I give them. That is my own. I don't want to talk about the head of department. That is not my job. I do that and they can testify. It comes to marking I look at the way you mark, I look at the way you do things, I look at how bulky your notes are and in our conversation, in a lively manner or joking manner I maybe tickle you to that... So I try to encourage them; that is my own way (Teacher 4).

Nevertheless, in the government schools departmental meetings held more regularly than in lay private schools even though it was not clear that they had a more academic content. Besides, some teachers who had been in the field for long gave the impression that that the younger teachers who had just come in from training were not ready to learn from them. Thus, like in lay private schools, there was no mechanism put in place to help new teachers and teachers who needed help to get a handle on their job. These got help depending on the relationship which they had forged with the head or the senior members of the department.

Faith schools generally had an induction for new teachers during which they talked to them about the school ethos and how teachers were expected to behave. Some schools had guidelines printed out for teachers which they could refer to later on in their

teaching career. In addition, monthly departmental meetings seemed to be the norm. At these meetings, teachers shared experiences and discussed challenges which they had faced and together they sought solutions to their problems. Here too, new teachers received help from their more experienced colleagues. In addition, the heads of department kept a tag on syllabus coverage, making sure that none of the teachers in their department was lagging behind. Heads of department checked the other teachers' lesson plans and lesson notes before they taught their lessons. Even outside departmental meeting settings, older teachers made themselves available to new teachers who had difficulties teaching certain topics or adapting themselves to the school environment.

In the same way as lay private and government school teachers did not receive adequate support from their colleagues they did not receive enough support from their principals. Government school principals had very limited funds so that teachers and heads of department found it difficult to get them buy instructional material. Some teachers even bought some of their didactic materials themselves. As for lay private school principals they dragged their feet when it came to buying teaching aids and didactic materials and even when they eventually did teachers did not find them adequate. In LPS1, for instance, a teacher described what he went through to get the school administration provide equipment for his department as follows:

It is not always easy since to get that money out is always a problem. For example, I requested for maps in 2003 but finally the maps were bought this year... in 2009... 6 years! They took 6 years to buy maps for the students, not maps for the teacher but for the students. It took 6 years! (LPS1, Teacher 5).

Teachers in both the lay private and government school sectors had a rather cold relationship with their principals and hardly met them except for official business. Government school teachers especially referred to the principal as the 'boss' and while some had never been to the principal's office for anything, one teacher actually said she was 'scared' of the principal. One of the teachers who had been a classmate to the principal and lived in the same flat with her while they were at university said of their relationship:

We were close but now she is my boss. I intend to keep that official relationship and I think that she intends to do that too. And I think that if I keep the formal relationship we will not have any problems so I'm sticking to that. So I'm keeping the personal level very low (GS2, Teacher 1).

It was even more difficult for teachers to receive support for personal problems or get financial assistance from the principals. The principals simply did not have this money. In lay private schools the teachers thought this was because the principals were mere figureheads and could not do anything without the consent of the proprietor, so that a teacher who wanted an interest-free loan had to apply to the proprietor through the principal. And it was for the proprietor to decide whether or not to assist the teacher. This bred some bad blood between teachers and the administration (and proprietor) which was not good for the quality of teaching and learning. The teachers felt stuck in the sense that even though they were not satisfied with their pay and the way the administration treated them, they had nowhere else to go.

It is simply that they have something to tap from me, and it is the help they want. They want their place to grow, so I am giving them because I don't have something better. That's it (LPS1, Teacher 3).

Faith school principals were generally more accessible to their teachers. Teachers confirmed what their students had said about their relationship with the principals: they could go to them at any time for anything, whether it was to do with school and students or with their personal lives and they would react like a father or mother. They described their relationship with the principals as 'very cordial' and some of the principals as 'very simple', 'humble' and 'very receptive', so that, unlike in lay private and government schools, there was not a hierarchical barrier between teachers and principals. In addition, faith school principals developed a personal relationship with their teachers which was lacking in government and lay private schools. They congratulated them if they did things right and gave them prizes at the end of the year for any outstanding contributions which they had made to the life of the school. In this way, even if faith school teachers did not receive good enough salaries for the work which they did, they had the fulfilment that their work was valued by their immediate superiors and so were motivated to carry on with more dedication than their lay private and government school counterparts. A Baptist teacher thought that the general attitude of the principal made him happy to work even without a salary:

If you are given what you need to work I'm sure you can work even for nothing and you are happy. That's what is good and I'm really impressed with that...and I'm sure my colleagues will say so (Teacher 3).

Furthermore, because of the student population in lay private and government schools teacher workload was bound to increase. Even though government school classes were large, they were divided into streams of about 80/90 students each. In the lay private

schools, however, teachers taught classes of over 170 students in LPS2 and up to 300 students in LPS1 in large halls. In addition, in LPS2 it was possible for one teacher to teach two or three different subjects while in LPS1 some teachers who were also administrators had over 20 periods (about 13 hours) a week.

I, as the Dean of Studies... I cannot believe that the Dean of Studies has about 23 periods a week. So it is too much, so they should reduce such situations. Like if somebody is an administrator... that is they should reduce it to less than 10 periods a week so that the administrative work can be done smoothly. And if possible they should try to take in more teachers... overworking... the teachers are stressed especially with this system that we have from 7 to 5 o' clock (LPS1, Teacher 2).

This confirms what the students of lay private schools said of their teachers, which is that one teacher could be called upon to teach several subjects and that they were often overworked. For these reasons teacher job satisfaction was very low in lay private schools. Their situation did not look very good. A teacher in LPS1 expressed his frustration with the system in the following words:

With the stress you go through, you are unable to pay hospital bills... we are in difficulties...dire straits. It is just that you don't write your difficulties on your face but the difficulties are there. Year in year out you are indebted...you are indebted; at every one moment you must have a debt to settle. Well, that's not...I don't think that's really ...it's not really encouraging. I will not encourage my younger brother to come and join me in the same train because that is the train which leads to nowhere. That's the simple truth (Teacher 5).

Financially, the situation of the government school teachers was way better than that of lay private school teachers even if they too lacked support from colleagues and principals and complained about the lack of resources and the disproportionately big class sizes. Despite the fact that faith school teachers were paid less than their government colleagues they enjoyed a better work atmosphere, as well as better relations with their students, parents and principals. They had better resources to work with and their class sizes were manageable. In this way, faith school teachers enjoyed better job satisfaction than their colleagues in the other sectors.

Among faith school teachers, Catholic teachers complained most about their salary situation, even though they were not the worst paid teachers in the sector. This further casts doubts on the claim that teaching with the Catholic school is a vocation. Besides,

like other faith schools, some Catholic schools provided accommodation on campus for some of their teachers. In spite of this, some teachers thought that they were overworked just because they had shown a dedication to work. It was a case of riding a willing horse to death. It is true some of them derived satisfaction from the fact that their students were doing well and that they had good relations with parents, school leaders and their colleagues, and loved the work environment. A teacher in CS3, for instance said that he didn't have all that he wanted but that he did have "peace of mind" (Teacher 1). But while Catholic teachers appreciate the fact that schools try to create a good working atmosphere for them, they also think that their salaries should at least match the effort they put in.

We teach all through, we work all through but the salary is not commensurate to the efforts we put in and... we put in that effort...our own little effort to bring up the children. But then you cannot make an effort when your stomach is empty. We have been crying over these problems (CS2, Teacher 1).

Many Catholic teachers who depended on their salaries alone could not send their own children to the schools where they were teaching. They would not be able to pay tuition fees and other costs. This could be said of any other faith school in Cameroon. Even if it is true that government subvention to faith schools is minimal and incidental, one would have thought that with the increase in student population as well as the increase in tuition fees charged faith schools should be able to improve the salaries paid to their teachers. Job satisfaction is not all about money but money is an important element of it and an improvement on the salaries could motivate faith school teachers even more.

8.4 Student quality

Teachers in all three school types thought that they had a mixture of good and poor student academic quality. They had academically very good students, average students and weak students. Considering the quality of students at intake, many Cameroonians would conclude that government schools have the best students. This is so because when government publishes the results of the entrance examination into secondary schools (Common Entrance Examination), faith and lay private schools are not permitted to conduct interviews for their schools until government schools have done so. Government schools then select the 'List A' candidates and the faith and lay private schools are left with the 'List B' candidates or those who did not pass the examination at all. In practice, however, things do not always work that way. Some government school teachers argued that even though they conducted their selection interviews before everyone else and gave places to the 'List A' candidates, many of these

candidates whose parents could pay ended up in faith schools where their parents believed their potential would be better nurtured. However, even if that argument was accepted it would still be true that the 'List A' candidates whose parents could not pay in faith schools ended up in government schools. In addition, because the urban government schools would have more pupils seeking admission than they could admit, they usually had a good share of 'List A' candidates. A teacher in GS2 (the urban school) said:

The quality... indeed, we select the best, government selects the best, those who pass in list A. And indeed it is not all those who pass in list A who are good. And as for the Mission... well, they are doing so to keep their standards but with government... during the period we take more of list A; only a few may come with a low level behind (Teacher 3).

This teacher's contribution only confirms what the students had said and shows that government and faith schools each had their fair share of 'List A' candidates, but it also makes the point that the government-run entrance examination cannot be trusted. This is the reason why faith schools set their own examinations for all those who apply to their schools. This examination is for all those who have completed primary school, whether they passed the Common Entrance examination or not. In the end they admit pupils who passed the government examination in List A or List B or who did not pass at all. Selecting faith schools, because they are oversubscribed end up admitting most of the best candidates while the recruiting faith schools would admit lower quality candidates. Most pupils wanted to go to faith or government schools and it was only when they failed to get admission to these schools that they turned to lay private schools. In this way, the lay private schools admitted the highest number of academically weak students. In fact, admissions in the lay private schools peaked in October/November when faith and government schools had closed their admissions, confirming the perception that lay private schools picked up those students who for one reason or another could not be admitted in to those schools. This could be another reason why lay private schools consistently performed below the other two school types in end of course examinations. Further, while faith and government schools had criteria for admitting students from other schools into their schools, a teacher in LPS1 described their school as 'a fisherman's net' which brought in all kinds of fish. Anybody could come from anywhere and be admitted into any class as long as they could pay their fees. There were students who had just had their 'O' Levels and others who had left Evening Schools and come straight to Upper Sixth. Some others who had stayed out of school for years had come back and been admitted without proper checks.

The situation in lay private and government schools was not helped by the wayward behaviour of the students. Students often came late to school, left early or sometimes did not show up at all. A female teacher in GS2 who was supposed to be preparing her students for the GCE examination on the day of her interview had this to say:

For example, the class I was teaching this morning, a class of 230 students you will not find up to 50 students in class because at this time they believe that they will go elsewhere and be having classes (Teacher 5).

Another teacher thought that student behaviour in the government school did not favour learning and that sometimes class was like 'hell' with students making so much noise and distracting others who wanted to learn. But government school teachers generally thought that even if their students were wayward, they were better behaved than students of lay private schools. However, they agreed that because GS1 was in a rural environment and their class sizes were comparatively smaller, their students were better behaved than their friends in the urban government school. In addition, the teachers of GS2 believed that the distractions of town and home life further impacted negatively on their students. This made the difference between faith school students and lay private and government school students. While there were wayward students in all faith schools and students in the recruiting Catholic and Presbyterian schools who sometimes scaled the fence, their teachers thought that there was no comparison in student behaviour between faith schools and lay private and government schools.

To confound issues for lay private schools, they very easily admitted students dismissed from government and faith schools because of poor behaviour. In addition they admitted too many students into their examination classes from other schools so that they ended up with something of an inverted pyramid, very large numbers at the top and fewer and fewer as one got to the bottom.

Most of our students in the examination classes come from outside; they are mostly repeaters because we can promote... let's say 300 students or 400 or 500 to Upper Sixth. At the end we have about 1500 students in Upper Sixth. We realise that majority are from outside, not those promoted from Lower Sixth to Upper Sixth (LPS1, Teacher 2).

Admitting students who were over aged, or had been dismissed from other schools and students who were school dropouts was courting trouble. In LPS1, for instance, there were students who were caught smoking marijuana in school. The teachers of

LPS1 adopted strange ways of dealing with student misbehaviour. Asked how they managed student behaviour in their school one of them answered:

Well, here, there is a lot of human rights abuse. We are brutal. That is the only way we can intimidate them. A student wants to disturb in any way you use the whip and may be call other teachers and they just pound the student and that way the others are subdued; they are afraid of a situation where they will be brutalized so that's our own kind of discipline here (LPS1, Teacher 1).

So, poor student quality at intake was further compounded by indiscriminate admissions into all classes of the school, by poor student behaviour and by unmanageable student numbers. This made learning even more difficult for the academically weak and average students.

One of the reasons why this researcher had chosen LPS1 was the fact that they sent in hundreds of students each year for 'O' Level and 'A' Level GCE and made comparatively good results. But it was clear that the results neither showed teacher quality nor student quality. Confirming what the students said in the focus group discussion, one of the teachers said:

Whenever I get into class I always look at the students and I say 'Okay, how many of you are in this class? This is Upper Sixth in ____ (Name of school). There are about 1800 of you.' So when we select, let's say about 700... and we send them in as internal candidates or 500 and then 450 succeed, the rest who went in as external candidates, where do they belong? Maybe out of 1100 that went in as external candidates, maybe only 300 will pass indicating that about 700 still failed. So that is the first thing I always put into their minds (Teacher 5).

Selecting Catholic schools certainly had some of the best students at intake. Like the urban government schools, selecting Catholic schools were heavily oversubscribed and therefore tended to admit the best students. While the other selecting faith schools were also guilty of 'skimming the cream', this seems to weaken the claim that Catholic schools are particularly good with academically weak students. In addition, while teachers in the Baptist school attributed the good behaviour of their students to the fact that the word of God was preached constantly to them, Catholic teachers attributed theirs to rules and regulations, constant follow up of students and the fact that the students were confined. The two questions that come to mind about Catholic schools here are 1) whether Catholic schools should take the glory for producing good results if they select the best candidates at intake and into other classes in their

schools and 2) whether there is any specifically 'Catholic' input that contributes to the behaviour and success of their students?

8.5 Class sizes

Both government and lay private schools had large classes, but while the government school had average class sizes of 80/90 students, the average class size in the lay private schools was much higher. Even in the government schools, four students sat on benches originally meant for two and students were so crammed into classrooms that teachers could not move around to see what they were doing. In the lay private schools the final year classes (Forms Five and Upper Sixth) were exceptionally big and had anything between 200 and 300 students in the same hall. Since these classes were too big and students were crammed in and uncomfortable there tended to be a lot of disruptive behaviour in class. In this way, student behaviour which was already bad was made worse by the situation in which the students were placed. Effective class control and effective teaching were simply not possible in the circumstances. A teacher in LPS1 said that sometimes when he taught in class he felt as if he was 'addressing a rally'. They did not know the students as individuals and hardly ever attended to students' individual problems. In addition there was no way they could give assignments, correct them and feedback to the students in classes of 200 or more. As one of the teachers in LPS1 put it:

With 300 students...at least with a smaller class size you can pay particular attention to particular students but here it's impossible, it's virtually impossible. So your output at times also drops not out of your own making but because it's also impossible to reach out to the students (Teacher 5).

Even though the lay private teachers felt that the big class sizes were not right, there was nothing they could do and they did not think it was their business either. As one of the teachers said, "it is a purely capitalist system where all the man wants is to make his money" (LPS1, Teacher 2). It was the same feeling the government school teachers had even if for different reasons. They could not put into practice what they had learned at training school.

When I went to training, we studied our methodology basing on ideal classrooms and ideal classrooms were classrooms between forty and at most sixty. But when we came to the field, we had classes of eighty, ninety... for us in language classes, we need to have classes we can play with... we can play with sitting positions to form discussion groups in class, we can play with sitting positions to act in class, do some bit of sketches in class. But with these classes that you

enter the class you cannot even move... I mean the benches are in front of you, you can barely stand there, it is very difficult. So it plays down on the amount of learning taking place and you know we just wish we could have smaller classes to be able to perform as we were taught in school (GS2, Teacher 1).

In faith schools the class sizes were smaller than in both lay private and government schools. Generally speaking, the average class sizes were 50 in the first cycle and 40 in the second cycle. It was easier for the teachers to know their students by name and to identify those who needed help and attend to them. In addition, because the teachers knew the students as individuals and could move around the classrooms and check what they were doing, it was more difficult for faith school students to be rowdy or to disturb others during lessons. So smaller classes improved student discipline and class control and it was easier not only to correct assignments and feedback to the students but to concentrate on slow learners. In this way smaller class sizes enhanced the quality of teaching and learning in faith schools.

It would seem that average class sizes in Catholic schools have rapidly increased in recent years as financial pressures have increased on the schools. All three selecting Catholic schools had an average class size of 50 where not very long ago these would have been 40 or less. In CS4 the authorities had adopted an admissions policy akin to that of the lay private school where everyone who applied was admitted into any class. The average class size in this school was 70 and teachers revealed that the school had registered 171 candidates for the 'O' Level and 180 for the 'A' Level GCE examination, the highest ever numbers to have been registered in that school. It was clear in Catholic schools that an increase in class size led to some of the problems faced by lay private and government schools: an increase in student misbehaviour, a decrease in the quality of teaching and learning, a decrease in the amount and quality of homework and feedback and a decrease in the frequency and quality of interaction between teacher and student.

Catholic schools with manageable class sizes continued to do well. In CS1, for instance, teachers of English gave essays every Saturday to their students, corrected them and gave feedback to the students, while in CS3 students were encouraged to read and summarise novels which the teachers checked. The trend seems to be that many Catholic schools are sacrificing quality for quantity and standards are falling as indicated by the fact that other faith schools have caught up with Catholic schools and have actually overtaken them in examination performance.

8.6 Preparation for life after school

All teachers thought that they did their best to prepare their students for end of course examinations. Especially in lay private schools, teachers worked against all the odds to produce good results with their students because their job security depended on the results which they produced.

The issue here is that you can lose your job at any moment if the proprietor feels that you are not up to the task, if you cannot give the results. You can only maintain your job by giving him the results (LPS1, Teacher 1).

Faith school teachers, on the other hand, were utterly convinced that they did the best job in preparing students for the GCE examinations. The proof was the quality of results which they produced. In addition to this, faith school teachers believed that their students competed favourably with students from the other school types when it came to entry into higher education and especially professional schools, not least because they had better quality results.

I think that they do very well. Like this...I think last year or this year, we had about four of them graduate the same time from CUSS (medical school) and three of them from the same class from the National Polytechnic. And, you know there is no year that we don't have them going to Polytechnic and CUSS...So I'm sure that you know comparing them with others... they are doing very well (Baptist school, Teacher 3).

In the government and lay private schools, teachers gave the impression that if they taught students and they passed examinations their job was done. Some thought that all Cameroonian secondary schools now put an exaggerated emphasis on passing examinations and obtaining certificates, with no regard to the kind of people the schools are turning out, but there was nothing they could do. Neither the government nor government schools appeared to have any ideas for consciously preparing students for the future. On the other hand, faith schools tried to do something themselves. They believed that the moral and spiritual formation which they gave their students would inculcate in them the moral values which they would need as citizens and future leaders of their country. Of course some of their students had not been particularly good examples in the society but, like their students, faith school teachers argued that majority of them were doing well. In addition, faith school teachers believed that if their students internalised the discipline which their schools tried to impart on them they would grow up to be more disciplined and more organised than their friends in lay private and government schools. As one of the Presbyterian

teachers put it, "to succeed in life you must be a disciplined person" (Teacher 2). Part of this discipline was training students to be able to work independently. When students wrote exams they sat alone and were well spaced out and strictly supervised so that there was no cheating, unlike what went on in most government and lay private schools.

Some government and lay private school teachers thought that the difficult environment of their schools prepared kids for the future because, having gone through those difficulties, they were eventually able to cope with all kinds of situations in the future. In addition to this teachers thought that talking to students in class was a way of preparing them to face the future with confidence, even though they realised that this was not enough.

But there are some cases that actually need the intervention and the counselling of a specialist but then they are not interested in that. So there is a problem of... morality; there is a problem of moral upbringing. So we are more interested in training the child to get a grade in Geography and the rest of it...the proprietor...it's not his business (LPS1 Teacher3).

A number of government and lay private school teachers were convinced that their schools were going the wrong way and that moral and spiritual formation were vital both for keeping the students focused on their academic work and for producing the right kind of people to lead Cameroon in the future. Some of them pointed to the performance of faith schools at examinations to prove that moral and spiritual formation contribute even to academic performance.

And to tell you, dormitory schools too... one of the reasons why they pass, to me, is because of that godly attitude, where they worship in the morning and call God to intervene in their affairs during the day. This is very important; you find most of the students are wayward because they have never known that somebody exists who is Christ and where those of them who are in class and whom you know that they are godly children, their behaviour is different, and even their performance, so it is very important (GS2 Teacher 5).

This was not just the belief of a single teacher or even of a handful of them. It was significant that the motto of GS1 was: *God first, Self discipline, Success in life*, but it must be admitted that because their students spent most of their time outside of school with parents and friends, the family and society had a stronger influence on them than the school could possibly have. Faith schools were mostly boarding and

their students spent all term time in school and so it was easier for school to exert a moral influence on them.

The important difference between faith schools on the one hand and lay private and government schools on the other was the fact that while faith schools consciously thought about the lives of their students after school, the other two did not. Their focus was on getting students pass examinations which they did not do as well as faith schools anyway. While it was true that some teachers took time off to talk to the students about life and the future, this was not a school-based objective. On the other hand, faith schools placed a premium on moral and spiritual formation as a way of preparing their students for the future. As one of the teachers in CS2 put it,

Once you have the fear of God and you are well equipped academically, you are well behaved, you are well disciplined, you can survive anywhere (Teacher 1).

In addition, faith schools trained their students to work hard, to respect time, to keep their surroundings clean and to be honest and responsible, all of which values they would need as citizens and future leaders. To do this, faith schools organised regular conferences with their students and also brought in experts from time to time to help prepare their students for the future.

The selecting Catholic schools prepared students well for end of course examinations as their results demonstrate. The students easily got admitted into professional schools in the country and into foreign universities. To prove that his students would easily compete favourably with students from other school types, a teacher in CS1 gave the following example:

We have taken them out on many competitions and they come first, not only in the GCE. Just only last year, there was this Commonwealth Essay Competition, and there were five prizes. We took the 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th prizes. We sent four students and all of them got prizes. So these are some of the things that make us feel that the students are all round... and that's why we always pass well (Teacher 4).

In fact some teachers thought that Catholic schools put too much emphasis on academic preparation of their students. There were others, however, who stressed that their goal was not just to enable their student obtain brilliant results at end of course examinations but to form 'a complete human being' in their intellectual, moral, spiritual and physical aspects. To this effect, one of the principals had given his

students what the teachers called a PHD – prayer, hard work and discipline. In addition, Catholic schools had started a project (*Fight Against Corruption Through Schools* – FACTS) in their schools to campaign against bribery and corruption which is endemic in Cameroon. The idea was to form the students in integrity so that they become 'leaven' to the Cameroonian society. So, overall, Catholic schools worked consciously to prepare their students for the future. The problem was that with lack of supervision and constant evaluation of objectives as well as the increase in some school populations, it was obvious that some schools would only proclaim the principles and not put them into practice.

8.7 Chapter summary

This chapter aimed to find out what teachers in the three school types in English speaking Cameroon think about the ways things are done in their schools and how these enhance or impede the attainment of educational outcomes in those schools. To do this six broad themes were examined, namely the reason for choice of school type, teacher quality, teacher job satisfaction, student quality, class size and preparation of the students for the future. The findings show that while some faith school teachers come to the conclusion that teaching in a faith school is a vocation late in their teaching careers and some government school teachers feel that they have a passion for teaching, the initial desire to teach is determined by the quest to make a living. Secondly, although government teachers generally receive 'professional' training, lay private and faith school teachers are more dedicated to their work than government teachers, and some faith schools pay more attention to teacher development and teacher support than government schools, in this way improving significantly on the quality of their teachers. Among faith schools, Baptist and Presbyterian schools focus more on teacher induction, teacher support and teacher continuing professional development than Catholic schools do. Thirdly, government teachers receive far higher salaries than lay private and faith school teachers and both lay private and faith school teachers are unhappy with their pay. Nevertheless, teacher job satisfaction seems to be better in faith schools than in both lay private and government schools, thanks to a better work environment, better relations with students, parents, colleagues and administrators and a greater sense of fulfilment derived from a job well done. Again, as with the quality of teachers, the quality and availability of resources in Catholic schools seems to be slipping.

With regard to student quality, even though government and faith schools each have their fair share of academically good students, the student population and the high incidence of student misbehaviour in government schools impacts negatively on academic performance. On the other hand, faith schools do better with the students

whom they get at intake because of the dedication of their teachers and the good discipline that is maintained in their schools. Lay private schools receive the worst academic quality of students at intake in the sense that they have more academically weak students than government and faith schools. Fifthly, to further complicate issues for lay private schools, their class sizes are disproportionately big. Government school class sizes, though not as big, are big enough to render effective teaching and learning very difficult. It is faith school class sizes that are found to be manageable, even though some faith schools have increased average class sizes recently. In Catholic schools especially, this was seen to have a negative impact on teaching and learning.

Finally, lay private and government schools did not seem consciously to prepare their students for the future except in the sense that they prepared them for the GCE examinations. It was not one of the government's objectives or one of the school-based objectives in any of the schools. On the other hand, while faith schools prepared their students by far better than the lay private and government schools for examinations, they also had an eye on their moral and spiritual formation. In this way, they ensured that they inculcated into their students the values which they would need as citizens and future leaders of Cameroon.

After examining the views of students and teachers in the last two chapters, a clearer picture of the way things are done in the three school types in Cameroon is beginning to emerge. For instance, it is clearer why, even though faith school teachers are less well paid than their government counterparts and not trained, they still do a better job than government teachers. In the following chapter, the findings go up one more level – the level of the school head or the principal.

9 CHAPTER NINE: FINDINGS FROM PRINCIPALS' INTERVIEWS

The previous chapter sought to discover, from the teachers' perspective, what determines the quality of educational outcomes in English speaking Cameroonian schools. Accordingly, teacher quality, teacher job satisfaction, student quality, class sizes and close attention to the preparation of students for life in the future were identified as important determinants of educational outcomes in schools. This chapter seeks to discover how principal leadership either enhances or impedes the attainment of educational outcomes in these same schools. It begins by examining the quality of principals who lead schools in the three school types under study. However, an attempt is made, wherever possible, to highlight qualities that are specific to Catholic school principals.

9.1 Principal quality

The principals of lay private and government schools did not receive any training in school leadership or management. Government school principals trained as teachers just like all the other government teachers, but did not receive any training to prepare them specifically for leadership roles. Nevertheless, government and lay private school principals had risen through the ranks, moving from subject or department heads to discipline masters and deans of study, vice principal and then principal. In the same way the Presbyterian and Baptist school principals were not trained but they too had moved up the various rungs of the administrative ladder to become school principals. Catholic school principals, on the other hand, could be divided into two groups, according to the dioceses in which they worked. In one of the dioceses all principals whose schools were included in the study were trained and had understudied their predecessors before taking over as principals. In the other diocese, however, the principals had not only not been trained; they had not had any teaching or administrative experience. Some of them who were priests had been appointed straight from their parishes to school leadership positions. To make things worse for these Catholic principals, there was no in-service training for serving principals, so that while the other faith school principals who had not been trained could rely on their experience to run their schools, the Catholic ones had no experience to lean back on.

Together with government and lay private school principals, faith school principals attended conferences and seminars but these were information-sharing sessions rather than learning opportunities. It is true that in addition to the government seminars and conferences, each faith school type organised seminars for their principals to which

experts were sometimes invited to present papers on various subjects but this would not be enough to make up for the lack of training and lack of experience for some Catholic principals. Furthermore, the length of time which Catholic principals spent in their schools was on average the shortest among all the school types. For instance, of four Catholic school principals in this study, three were serving their first years in their current schools while only one was serving a sixth year. Even for those Catholic principals who were trained then, the benefits of leadership training were thus diminished by the fact that they did not last long enough at their schools to see a vision through. In Catholic schools where principals were not trained and had not had sufficient experience of school, principal leadership quality was likely to be even poorer. In addition, collaborative learning did not exist at all among principals in one diocese but even where it existed, principals were reluctant to share knowledge and information. The principal of CS3 said:

The feeling I have is that we are yet to go to that level where we really want that family spirit, because there are some schools which have been classed as elitist within the diocese or region and so sometimes it is like a little bit of letting their secret out. So you have that feeling although it is not pronounced. But then we have gradually to see how to build family spirit where we know that all the schools have opportunities of growing, with their different specificities.

Despite this, Catholic school principals were better than their lay private school colleagues in the area of collaborative learning as these did not have any opportunities for collaborative learning at all. One of the lay private school principals said:

My experience is that most Cameroonians see [school] as a business so that schools compete. And so a neighbouring school will try to compete with you... so cooperation is not there. We as principals of schools are supposed to have something like an association where we meet and discuss what is happening in these schools; those situations are not peculiar to one school. But when those things are not there you start working as an individual, you start looking only at your own environment (Principal, LPS2).

Having said that, it could also be safely concluded that Catholic principal quality was not as good as it could have been. Not only were many of them not trained; many had no experience of school when they were appointed to lead their schools and there was no systematic in-service training for serving principals. In addition, principals were not willing to share their knowledge with their colleagues for fear of competition and there

was high principal turnover in Catholic schools, all of which factors impacted negatively on the quality of principal leadership in Catholic schools.

9.2 Principal leadership style

One of the areas where principal leadership can easily be judged in schools is the way staff meetings are run. All school types held administrative (Senior Management Team) and general staff meetings. Government schools held general staff meetings at the beginning and at the end of each school term but lay private schools did not have any calendar for staff meetings. Asked how often general staff meetings held at his school, the principal of LPS1 answered rather unconvincingly, "I can say once a month but when something crops up we can just assemble".

In this same school administrative staff meetings were supposed to hold fortnightly but it was not clear that this happened on a regular basis. In fact, lay private school principals did not seem to understand the roles of the administrative and general staff meetings as this distinction made by the principal of LPS2 shows:

Administrative staff meetings are meetings where we plan. Each time we are having a staff meeting we plan; we hold the administrative staff meeting and plan the agenda. And once in a while we look at the situation of the school and we hold a staff meeting... an administrative staff meeting before we hold a general staff meeting. Like mostly after recommendations from departmental meetings... when the heads of departments send recommendations, when we see that it is necessary we hold an administrative staff meeting and after that we pass information on to the general staff meeting where everybody takes part.

His colleague in LPS1 made a better distinction which seemed to point to the leadership style of lay private school principals in Cameroon. He said,

During our administrative staff meetings we take decisions. When we come (to staff meetings) then we inform them and they implement.

Unlike in lay private schools, administrative staff meetings were held on a weekly basis in GS1 and fortnightly in GS2 but like in lay private schools, the leadership team took the decisions and presented them to the teachers for implementation. As the vice principal of GS1 put it,

The staff meeting is usually in the form of a dialogue but at the same time, from the administrative bench, we give information. We would say this is what we want the school to look like; this is what we want you to do.

As there were no regular staff meetings, the principal either called the teachers who were in school that day and briefed them or put the decisions from the administrative staff meeting on the notice board and expected the teachers to act as they had been directed. Further, government school principals could not assure the regularity of these administrative meetings as other things often took precedence over school meetings. They were often involved with political meetings and activities which meant that they could not be present for administrative staff meetings. In fact, this researcher only met the principal of GS1 outside school after completing research in that school and did not meet the principal of GS2 at all. So in both schools vice principals helped out with the research and did the interviews in place of the principals.

Administrative staff in faith schools met on a weekly basis but also when some urgent business arose which they had to treat. Faith school administrative staff met regularly because they needed to share ideas, discuss how the school was going and together seek solutions to any problems that might have arisen. In this way they embraced a very different kind of leadership style from their lay private and government school colleagues. For instance, the Presbyterian school principal said,

What I have adopted here is a kind of participatory approach in terms of administration. The principal is not seen here as a dictator.

Getting teachers involved in the decision-making processes of their schools ensured that they identified with and owned the vision of the principal. Asked if it was his belief that his teachers shared his vision for the school, the Baptist principal answered:

I strongly believe that it is so because if I leave here now, if I go out I am not sure that what the other vice principals will tell you will be something different from what I would have said. And I believe that you know, because we sort of give out the mission at the beginning, the teachers also know. We discuss that freely in our staff meetings you know; whatever we have we discuss it freely. Everyone is free to give an input into that; it is not like just coming to give instructions. We discuss, we exchange ideas, we exchange views.

Like the other faith schools, Catholic schools had administrative and general staff meetings but there were considerable variations in the regularity of these meetings

and their composition. Staff meetings generally held once a month. Some schools held administrative staff meetings on a weekly basis while others held them on a fortnightly basis but CS4 (the recruiting school) held them only once a month and called them 'executive' rather than administrative staff meetings. Unlike the other faith school principals, however, Catholic school principals did not give much voice to the general staff meetings. They resembled the government and lay private school principals in that important issues were discussed in administrative staff meetings and communicated to the others in general staff meetings. Catholic principals argued that matters to do with Catholic school policy or decisions received from Catholic school hierarchy were not open to debate. Only issues concerning the day to day running of their school were debated in general staff meetings. One such decision communicated to CS4 was that they should increase the school population and admit whoever applied to their school no matter the class they sought to enrol in. While teachers were unhappy with this decision, it was not open to debate and there was nothing they could do about it.

On the other hand, it was clear that the administrative staff were indispensable to the running of Catholic schools. Especially because of the frequent movement of Catholic principals, new principals tended to rely very heavily on the administrative staff, many of who had wider experience in teaching and learning and in school leadership than the principals. It was therefore not surprising that the principal of CS3 described the administrative staff as "the engine of the school" with whom he enjoyed a "very harmonious" working relationship. The principals of the three selecting Catholic schools acknowledged the availability of the administrative staff, the good communication that existed between them and the school principals and the tremendous work which they did as a leadership team in planning, executing and following up projects and events. As the principal of CS2 put it:

Truly, I always count myself the luckiest person because I have always enjoyed the cooperation and collaboration of my colleagues...the administrative staff is wonderful...I have never failed to express my gratitude to God and to them for the spirit that we have built in _____ (Name of school).

So while it might be true that Catholic school principals had the backing of their leadership teams, it is equally true that teachers who were not in leadership positions were not as involved in the decision making processes of their schools as their colleagues in the other faith schools.

9.3 Relation with teachers/Team building

Some principals tried to build solidarity among their teachers by instituting staff socials. These differed according to school type. In the government schools teachers met once a month and contributed an amount of money to assist the hosting department provide food and drinks for the social get together. If teachers were bereaved or had just had a baby they all went to their homes and spent time with them. The difficulty was that in some schools the principal was not always present with the other teachers and since there was no obligation on teachers to belong, some of them opted out. The lay private school principals recognised that they needed to work closely with teachers in order to succeed. As the principal of LPS2 put it:

Talking about the other members of staff, there is no way in which a school can function without teachers. So I cannot be here without teachers and if there are teachers I must work with them. The whole thing is a synergy, a synergy of interaction.

It is one thing to know that one has to work with teachers as a principal; it is another thing altogether to enable that working relationship. Lay private school principals did not facilitate bonding between teachers. Unlike government school principals, they did not have a mechanism for bringing teachers together and trying to build solidarity among them. Staff socials existed in LPS2 but they only came together for a death or a birth celebration which was rare and did not do much to help the teachers work together with the principal. The one area where teachers of LPS1 seemed to work together with their principal was when students threatened to undermine the authority of teachers by their misbehaviour. Confirming what one of his teachers had said about school order and discipline, the vice principal said:

It is not easy but the thing is that we have about eight discipline masters to put them in place...Whenever there is a problem all the teachers come out and pounce on the students. So we are one...that makes them to be afraid of us. We are not divided.

Faith school teachers were more united to their principals and their colleagues than government and lay private school teachers. For one thing most faith school teachers and all faith school principals lived together on campus. In addition they too all had staff socials at which the principals made an effort to be present. They worshipped together, played games together and sometimes arranged games and socials with neighbouring or other faith schools. In this way teachers developed a relationship with

their principals in a way that was not possible in lay private and government schools. Moreover, in the same way as faith school principals had a personal relationship with their students, they had a personal relationship with most of their teachers. They knew each of them and their families and their problems and difficulties. The principal of the Presbyterian school said:

The students and the teachers are free to see me at any time. Even in the evening when I come to school and they have problems, you just see them coming in. And when they come in I ask them to relax and discuss their problems. So in a Mission school like this the only thing we are doing here that I think is very important is to make them your friends. They should feel at ease, the atmosphere should be very conducive and the children and the teachers should be happy working in an environment like this.

Catholic school principals seemed to go out of their way to make their teachers comfortable. Teachers went freely to their principals to present both personal and financial problems and, even though principals were aware that they could not solve all financial problems, they were allowed to give teachers interest-free loans up to a certain amount which they paid back in instalments. The principal of CS1 said:

They come to me with their problems and I think they come very freely. It is my belief that if they work here, their place of work should also help them when they have problems. ..Because, as a whole, teachers have been very dedicated and I see they make a lot of sacrifices, so I always try to go out of my way to make sure that they feel at home and whatever is possible we do for them.

On the whole then, the 'family spirit' which was lacking between Catholic schools was very evident between Catholic school principals and their teachers. Principals mixed freely with their teachers and shared their joys and their pains. In return teachers sacrificed their time, talent and energy for their schools since they felt valued and supported by their principals. Again, in CS4 (the recruiting school) this spirit was not very evident. Some teachers in this school insisted they would not take their problems to the principal even though they would not say why. The principal confirmed this by saying that teachers would feel relaxed coming to him to ask for financial assistance but

...to talk of their private life, they have hardly felt at ease with that. You see, even though I am a priest they are afraid; they see more of an administrator sitting there than a priest. They are afraid that they might come and expose

their lives and maybe that could be used against them which I don't think that is really true.

It would appear that this was a personality issue rather than a systemic weakness in Catholic schools. Having said that, it is strange that a priest-principal who is supposed to be more pastorally minded than his lay Baptist and Presbyterian colleagues would scare teachers away from him.

9.4 Recognizing and rewarding teachers

Apart from building solidarity among their teachers, government school principals tried to motivate teachers by recognising and rewarding excellence in teaching. They gave out prizes at the end of the year to conscientious teachers and teachers who had produced outstanding results in the GCE examinations. The vice principal of GS2 said:

...And what we do now is that at the end of each year we look at outstanding teachers and make an award publicly and sometimes it could even be a department...History department is outstanding...they give them an envelope...and then individual teachers. We do that.

In addition, government principals had 'confidential marks sheets' which they completed at the end of the year for each teacher and teachers who scored good marks would be given a pay rise by the government. Lay private schools also recognised excellence in their teachers but the approach was different for the 2 lay private schools. LPS1, for instance, gave cash prizes to teachers who produced very good results in the GCE but LPS2 did not. The principal of LPS2 said:

Our resources are not very good to do what may happen in other places but at least encouragement...we encourage and at times even just a 'thank you'...and people appreciate that...just thanking and saying that your lesson was one of the best I ever heard. At least I say that, and some feel very happy to hear that.

Faith school principals also recognised teachers who worked hard and produced good results. Like their lay private school colleagues they acknowledged the good work of their teachers when it happened, but they also celebrated the success of teachers during morning devotion or at school assembly. As the Presbyterian principal said,

"If a teacher has worked very well, that teacher's name is advertised and by so doing other teachers too can copy the teacher's example and the whole community will benefit.

In addition to this, faith school principals awarded certificates to teachers who worked hard or who produced very good results in their subject areas. For instance, the Baptist school principal had instituted a 'Best Teacher Award' which took into account not only their academic performance but also all that they had done for the school and the students. One clear difference between faith and government schools, however, was that the students rather than the administrative staff decided which teachers merited which prizes. This is important especially in a nepotistic and corrupt country where marks and prizes awarded to teachers could easily be determined by considerations other than hard work and merit.

In Catholic schools, recognition of hard work and excellence among teachers was a tradition but the manner in which a teacher's performance was recognised differed from school to school. In addition to the cash rewards which the PTA of each school gave their teachers at the beginning of each year, Catholic school principals encouraged their teachers who worked hard by verbally appreciating what they were doing, sharing special meals and offering cash prizes. Even though some principals gave the impression that their ability to appreciate and reward teachers was limited by their resources, it was clear that the differences in the way principals treated hard working teachers depended on the priorities of the principal. For instance, while the principal of CS4 had discontinued the practice of automatically awarding prizes to teachers who produced outstanding results in the GCE examinations, the principal of CS2 had laid down an elaborate plan for celebrating hard work and success in her school. To begin with, after the GCE examination results were proclaimed, the staff would come together and congratulate each other on a job well done,

...and in that meeting plan for an outing where we can gather to celebrate the success. We share a meal in a place that they choose. The next thing we try to do is we get down to departments because some departments may have performed better than others, like last year a few departments had 100% both at A and at O Levels. We recognise them and get them just a token...a token to celebrate in the department. Of course Mass...we don't take that for granted; we always offer a 'Thanksgiving Mass' at the beginning of the year where all of us gather as a family to thank God for the success ...we can't have it without God.

There are two issues at stake here for Catholic schools. As one of the principals pointed out already, it would seem that best practice was not shared across Catholic schools for fear that sister schools would learn their 'secrets' and then perform as well as them, thus the huge variation in the schools' recognition and reward of hard work

and excellence. The second issue arises from the fact that the school which had an established procedure for recognising success was the one which had had the same principal for six years running, and who had understudied her predecessor before taking up the post. This seems to strengthen the view that Catholic education authorities need to give their principals enough time in their schools to build up school cultures which promote and celebrate success.

9.5 Control over teachers

If principals rewarded hard work and excellence in their teachers it was logical that they punished or at least flagged up lack of duty consciousness and mediocrity. This was not always the case. Government school principals had a mechanism for rewarding teachers who excelled in their work even if this mechanism was flawed but they did not have one for calling them to order if they failed to live up to expectation. If they had one, it was not workable. As a result, government school principals had virtually no control over wayward or lazy teachers or those who performed poorly. Some of them did their best to persuade teachers to be regular in school and do their job well. The vice principal of GS1 said:

We even say it in staff meetings, that when an administrator is telling a teacher that they are irregular let other colleagues meet the colleague and find out from him or her why he or she is irregular, talk it out with them.

His colleague in GS2 could not hide his frustration at the inability of government school principals to control teachers and get them do the work for which they are paid.

And what I have noticed is that the government teachers... most are not conscious or most are not serious with their work because I cannot see a situation where a teacher is away for two months, they are calling him over the radio, and he continues taking his salary. His conscience should judge him... There are situations where a teacher can go to class and victimize the students or does not even teach well, tell aimless stories and the period is going, the work is not covered... So there are certain things in a government school... you cannot do anything and if you want to follow the procedure to say you want to stop it (salary) you might not, and they can even ridicule you. The person can pick up what you have written and come say look at what you wrote. You become a fool. So sometimes you just need to call the teacher, talk to him; sometimes you have to plead, you awaken the conscience of the person because if you want to use but the administration you might end up being the loser in a government school.

On the other hand, principals of lay private and faith schools had the kind of control over their teachers which government school principals could not have. Since lay private school teachers could be recruited and dismissed at will and their job security depended on the quality of results which they produced, it was easy for their principals to call them to order and get them toe the line if they were getting lazy or wayward or unproductive. Faith school principals were closer to their teachers than all the other principals and so could easily influence their behaviour and their attitude to work. In addition, faith school principals could recommend for a teacher to be punished, transferred from their school or have their contract terminated. So while the figure of the faith school principal as the father or mother of the family helped to strengthen their grip on their teachers, the fact that they had the power to recommend disciplinary action if teachers strayed strengthened that grip even further. This seemed to be the case across all three faith school types.

9.6 Preparation of students for life after school

Even though principals of lay private and government schools would not admit it, their schools did not consciously prepare students for the future. While they sometimes told their students that certificates were not the all important thing in life, they did not give students any alternatives. They knew that sport was important and that Information and Communications Technology (ICT), for instance, was important but they did not have the facilities to enable students acquire skills in these areas or in any other areas which they thought were important. In the same way the schools had clubs – Health Clubs, Journalism Clubs, UNESCO Clubs, etc – but did not have the resources to run them properly and help students benefit from them. It was not only in the area of sports and clubs that government school principals lacked resources. They did not have the funds to buy material that would facilitate teaching and learning or to build classrooms or stock the libraries. They depended on the PTA of the school sometimes even to carry out repairs on existing infrastructure. It would seem that as academic institutions, government schools did not give their students proper preparation for higher education since they did not introduce them to independent work, ICT and libraries which are the backbone of academic work.

It was the same for lay private school principals. The proprietors who disbursed the money for resources and the improvement of infrastructure were often not willing to do so but the principals did the best they could, which was not good enough. The words of the principal of LPS2 show that lay private school principals did not think that it was their duty to prepare students for life in the future in any other areas apart from enabling them to pass the GCE even though their results showed that on average they performed below government and faith schools. He said:

If I meet one of my students who is one of the best taxi drivers in town I will be very happy; if I meet one who is a minister I will be happy. They are all performing responsible functions in the society.

It was obvious in faith schools that principals took the preparation of students more seriously than their counterparts in lay private and government schools. As places of evangelisation it was obvious that principals and schools would think about the future of their students. Principals confirmed what the teachers had said. They gave conferences/talks to the students on a weekly or fortnightly basis on various subjects. The priests and pastors had devotions in the mornings and in the evenings during which they talked to the students and tried to form their character. They invited professionals to talk to the students from time to time and even brought in successful ex-students to inspire the current students. Above all, the values of hard work, honesty and integrity were inculcated in students to undergird whatever gains they might make in their intellectual and professional lives. The principal of the Presbyterian school pointed to a conspicuous example when asked if spiritual and moral formation actually had an impact on the lives of the students after school.

They have...they have. Even after leaving school, they have. If you look around most of the ministers who passed through the Mission schools, they behave differently. Let me refer you to the former Prime Minister, Peter Musonge. He went to a Mission school and of course from my own reading, my own findings, he is one of the best that we have got as a Prime Minister because he wanted to put things in a way that Cameroonians will love it. So I'm just saying that children who leave the Mission school... for some, I cannot say all. For some, what they learn in terms of spirituality in the Mission school affected their academics and also their behaviour.

So, apart from the fact that faith school principals prepared their students well for end of course examinations which was proved by the results which they produced, they gave them sound character formation which also prepared them for life in the future. In addition, they taught the students to work independently and introduced them to ICT, and research in the library which were all going to come in handy in their future academic endeavours.

Catholic school principals, like their teachers, were convinced that because of the very good results which most of their students made at the GCE their future academic careers were assured, all being well. In addition, because many of the past students

from these schools had taken up prominent positions in public life and principals were constantly in touch with the alumni of their schools, they could say with confidence that their schools prepared students well for life in the future. Like the principal of the Presbyterian school, the principal of CS3 said:

The children from this school, the ex-students...they have potentials of very bright careers. And many of the ex students...they have gone quite far... in public administration, in the private sector, out of the country...because of the brilliant results they obtain. In fact, foreign universities... they do send brochures here so that students can go there... So I think that in terms of the economy, in terms of the working population of the country, in terms of ideas, in terms of morals this school and Catholic education...they are contributing quite a lot. You may have a few cases that fall by the way and that is to be understood but on the whole I think the vast majority of those who have gone through this school... if you can call people successful, you would say they have been successful in life, in settling and setting up their families, in getting jobs and contributing to the economy, to morals and also even to religion and they are still doing it.

That notwithstanding, the principal of CS1 warned that if Catholic schools followed the trend of other schools and increased student numbers just to make money, that would compromise the preparation which the schools gave to the students. According to him,

We must guarantee that the physical, intellectual, social, moral and spiritual development of the students is adequately taken care of...we must maintain the Catholic identity [and not] just go the way of the other people.

Considering the numbers in CS4 this warning is timely. Catholic education authorities must consider whether it is possible to follow the trend in government and lay private schools with regard to student numbers and still keep the quality of education which Catholic schools have been proud of for so long. To borrow the words of the principal cited above, Catholic education authorities must consider whether they can guarantee the physical, intellectual, social, moral and spiritual development of students if they double or treble their intake.

9.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has reported the findings regarding the role of the school principal in facilitating the achievement of school outcomes in English speaking Cameroon. Considering that none of the principals of the other schools received any specific training to become school principals, Catholic education authorities are ahead of all

the others as far as the academic preparation of principals is concerned. They have the largest number of professionally trained principals even though these were concentrated in one diocese. Even so, Catholic principal turnover is highest among all the school types which means that even the trained principals do not have enough time to put into practice what they learned about school leadership and management. In addition, Catholic school principals do not climb up the ladder of school administration as systematically as the others do; most of them were appointed straight from their parishes to schools, without any prior school experience. Moreover, unlike principals in the other school types, Catholic school principals do not enjoy systematic continuing professional development and those who are trained are reluctant to share best practice. This might be the reason why they find it more difficult to involve the staff in the decision making processes of their schools than do the other faith school principals. Apart from that, Catholic school principals are no worse than their other faith school colleagues at building solidarity among their teachers, exerting control over them, motivating them and helping them prepare their students for examinations and for life after school.

10 CHAPTER TEN: FINDINGS FROM POLICY MAKERS' INTERVIEWS

In attempting to find out what the outcomes of Catholic education in English speaking Cameroon are and what determines the quality of those outcomes, we have sought explanations from students, teachers and principals of schools. In this chapter the education authorities in the government, lay private and faith school sectors say the last word on what the desired outcomes of education in their various sectors are and how they ensure these outcomes.

10.1 School mission

Government policy in Cameroon has been to open as many schools as possible and to bring schools as close to the people as possible. The government Regional Delegate for Secondary Education¹ who participated in this study gave as reason for opening these schools that “it is the responsibility of government to ensure the education of its citizens”. That is the mission of the government school. For the lay private education secretary², proprietors in his sector run schools as a business endeavour. Their priority is “to earn a living” and then only after that “also to fulfil a need”, which arises because government can not possibly educate all her citizens.

As for the education secretaries of the three faith school types³, their primary purpose of running schools is evangelisation. The Presbyterian education secretary called school “a nursery for Christians” and his Baptist colleague held that the mission of the Baptist school is “to bring the children to the saving knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”. In the second instance, faith schools aim to form good citizens for the country. They do this by the spiritual and moral formation which gives to their students both spiritual and civic values and thus prepares them for the future and for leadership roles in the country. While they admit that some people who passed through their schools had not shown these virtues in later life, they argue that only those who did not let the school ‘pass through them’ had betrayed their formation. Most of their past students have done well in public life and taken up leadership positions in society. As the Catholic education secretary said:

¹ The Regional Delegate for Secondary Education is the highest authority for secondary education in the region and there are two of these delegates in the two English speaking regions of Cameroon.

² The lay private education secretary is the highest authority for lay private education in the region and there are two of them in the two English speaking regions.

³ There are four Catholic education secretaries in English speaking Cameroon (one each for the four dioceses) but there is only one education secretary each for Baptist and Presbyterian schools.

It is a long time since we started...since the Church started formal education in this part of the country and so far I can say without fear of contradiction that most of the civil servants in this country...passed through our Mission schools...and by that you know, they will include our Catholic schools.

The Catholic bishop who participated in this study did so in his capacity as chairperson of the Education Commission of the National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon. He confirmed that Catholic education has as objective to “form the minds of young people and prepare them for various situations in life, whether into professional life or to take up administrative duties.” In addition, Catholic schools contribute to nation building by the quality of education which they provide but also by the fact that “our presence in the remotest parts of our country where the Church has been present has given a lot of opportunities for children who would never have made it in life if the Church was not present where they are”.

In this way, faith schools set out to do more than lay private and government schools in the area of education of the young. Government schools only aim to give as many young people as possible the opportunity to be literate. Lay private schools aim first to do business and then only in the second instance to enable young people become literate. It is faith schools which excel in the area of literacy but which, in addition, also give students the kind of spiritual and moral formation which enables them to excel in later life.

However, the Catholic Church is different from the other Churches in its educational mission in the sense that it is supposed to have a preferential option for the poor. According to the Catholic bishop,

It is the mission of the Church to be present and particularly give an opportunity to the poor...giving the poor in our community a chance to make it in life.

While this might be one of the distinctive characteristics of Catholic education in the literature, it is not clear that “the option for the poor” is even discussed in Catholic educational circles in English speaking Cameroon. Focus group discussions with students and the responses from the parents' questionnaire show that for a Cameroonian to send their child to a Catholic secondary school they have either to be very rich, be helped by a rich member of the family or make tremendous sacrifices. Even Catholic teachers cannot send their children to Catholic schools because they cannot afford the tuition fees. This seems to be a betrayal of one of the key missions

of the Catholic school, but it should soon be clear why the Catholic school is failing in this part of her mission.

10.2 Funding

Government school students do not pay tuition fees and government provides personnel, infrastructure and instructional resources for its schools. Even so, the delegate for secondary education admitted that it is difficult for government to build, furnish and provide educational resources for all its schools. This is especially so for schools in the suburbs where student population is low and so the PTA dues and registration fees are not enough to cater for the needs of the school. In this way he confirmed the findings from students, teachers and principals about lower student numbers and the non-availability of personnel and teaching resources in the rural government school. Furthermore, as a result of the fact that government cannot even adequately take care of its own schools and faith and lay private schools have multiplied, government cannot pay lay private and faith schools the amount of subvention they used to pay when the economy was good and schools were few. There seems to be little or nothing the government can do to help these schools in the circumstances and the delegate even suggested that the schools could charge a bit more for tuition in order to be able to break even.

This difficulty arises because all lay private and faith schools are funded from the tuition fees which their students pay and without government subvention schools would have to charge very high tuition fees to be able to run. In principle, government pays subvention to lay private and faith schools but it is incidental and almost insignificant. According to the lay private education secretary,

The subvention is very, very insignificant because most of it cannot even pay salaries for one month for most of the institutions.

Even before the government drastically reduced subventions and made their payment incidental, the foreign missionary bodies which had been providing educational grants to their churches had withdrawn these grants. For this reason, faith schools, which are mostly boarding, are forced to charge higher fees in order to cope with the demands of paying staff, taking care of infrastructure, looking after students and providing the educational resources which their schools need. For all three faith school types, therefore, the funding of schools is a great difficulty, and sometimes teachers go for months without their salaries. To remedy the situation the Baptist education secretary encouraged their schools to grow food and so cut down on the food budget so that the money could be channelled elsewhere. Also, they tried to get the Baptist Medical Board

support the Education Board even though the suggestion was not been enthusiastically received. The Presbyterians instituted 'Education Week Collections' in their churches and with the money they supplement what they had collected from the students. In addition, they have devised a policy by which the financially strong schools (the Big Eight) give help to the financially weak. By working on a 'consolidated budget' they ensure that all their secondary school teachers are paid their salaries at the end of the year.

While the fact that tuition fees had to be increased in order to run faith schools properly is a headache to all three faith school types, it is a particular problem for Catholic schools. The Catholic education secretary wondered:

What about the option for the poor which the Church has? We opt to educate the children of the poor; there is always the option for the poor. So the government is forcing us to increase fees and then we will end up educating only the children of the people who are capable of paying the fees. That's a big problem...We would want to try to see that we give education for everybody...So, without wanting to do it, we are automatically eliminating some poor parents from our schools...without wanting to do it, because we are...as I said, we are victims of circumstances.

However, unlike their Baptist and Presbyterian colleagues the Catholic education authorities do not seem to be exploring ways and means by which a more productive missionary activity could support education or even ways by which financially stronger schools could support weaker ones. On the contrary, they seem to think that there is nothing they can do. The bishop said, for instance, that it was a 'really frustrating dilemma' that he didn't 'know how to get out of'.

One of the bishops was able, as an individual, to canvass for funds from overseas funding bodies to sponsor children in the really desperate areas of his diocese who cannot afford to pay school fees, but even he admitted that the numbers they are taking care of with external funding are still very limited. This explains why Catholic schools are failing in their mission to provide upward social mobility for the poor, but it does not provide an answer to why Catholic education authorities have not done anything to remedy the situation and ensure the achievement of their mission to the poor.

In addition to the fact that the lack of funding makes it impossible for Catholic schools to fulfil their mission to the poor, it is also clear that the lack of funding compromises

the quality of education which Catholic schools give to their students. While it is true that their infrastructure and resources are among the best in the country and their teachers are absolutely dedicated to their work, they are acutely aware that things could be better. Better salaries for teachers would definitely increase their motivation to work and better resources would improve the quality of teaching and learning. Talking about the impact of the lack of funding on the quality of Catholic education the bishop said:

It has definitely compromised the quality of education...it has indeed. I would say that. Because of the meagre financial resources we can no longer provide educational facilities that maybe obtained in the past...but it is still better than what you get elsewhere.

It would seem that this comparison with what happens in other schools helps to drag down rather than sustain or raise the standards of the Catholic school. The impression is given that Catholic schools can afford to be complacent as long as they are seen to be doing better than other schools.

10.3 Academic quality of students

The delegate for secondary education confirmed what everyone else had said about the quality of students in schools. The objective of the government has always been to get the 'List A' students into government schools and that is why these schools conduct their interviews before all other school types. However, faith schools have become the students' schools of choice so that even those who are selected into government schools often end up going to faith schools if their parents can afford it. On the other hand lay private schools are the last option which most students consider. According to the delegate, because of the lack of infrastructure and personnel and educational resources,

Young people would not like to go to such schools except they cannot help it. So if they were not taken in confessional schools they would try state schools next. If they cannot then their parents would say you are left with no other option than to go to these lay private schools.

The lay private education secretary confirmed what the delegate had said. He agreed that government schools go for the 'List A' candidates, faith schools set their own entrance examinations and lay private schools get the students who can not get into faith or government schools. "So technically we get the worst crop, the 'remains' or the students who do not do very well", he concluded.

Nevertheless, it is not possible to say that faith schools get the best academic quality students while government schools get second best and lay private schools get the worst quality of students. Instead, in proportion to their populations, it is possible to say that faith schools have more good quality students than government schools which in turn have more good quality students than lay private schools. This could be a major reason why, overall, faith schools do better than government schools in end of course examinations while government schools in turn do better than lay private schools. Remarkably, both the lay private education secretary and the government delegate of education agreed that there is more to examination results than just the selection at intake. After painting the picture of selection into various school types, the lay private education secretary added,

But actually, I seem to think that it is the teaching in these schools which eventually determines how well students perform in the final examinations in Form five...because the follow up in confessional schools is very strong...So I think that the difference lies in the follow up and attachment to one's job.

The delegate of education admitted that this follow up and discipline are sometimes completely absent in government schools where there is a lot of laissez faire and absenteeism among teachers.

When you have a public school which is made up of very young teachers who may not master the syllabus well...usually you may have problems. And if discipline is porous a lot of students may come in and go out and the teachers themselves...because apart from students some teachers can be indisciplined so you need to check them...some of them will skip their classes. Some very indisciplined ones may overstretch their [part time] classes in private schools where they get money and then their main schools would suffer...I think that public schools have every reason to make good results. All that they need is to manage the personnel well.

In addition, he agreed with the government school principals that even though there are rules laid down to discipline wayward teachers these are rarely made use of, which makes it even more difficult for government schools to get a grip on their teachers and focus their energies towards producing good results at end of course examinations. Further, he recognised that there is more order in faith schools where teachers either deliver the goods or are let go. Accordingly, he concluded that "as far as discipline is concerned, the private sector has a lot to teach public schools".

Furthermore, it was significant that the delegate for secondary education was full of praise for faith schools. According to him, in English speaking Cameroon "it is almost normal that people who are in high positions and well to do have their children in Mission schools". He himself had sent all his children to faith schools even though he had been a government school teacher and principal of a government school for long. This was because he could testify that they were doing a great job.

They are doing a marvellous job for us...The thing is that they are succeeding because whether the schools are in a semi-urban area or suburb, because they are boarding, people don't mind sending their children there. They know that they will be well cared for...so the confessional schools are doing a fantastic job for us.

Like the delegate, the lay private education secretary thought that it is the fact that most faith schools are boarding that gives them an edge over the other schools. In his words,

Even when they take mediocre students and put in that kind of environment, with time the change is dramatic. I think this also accounts for their performances in the GCE. This is what makes for the difference in performance.

The important point which both of them make, therefore, is that faith schools provide an enabling environment where students of different academic abilities can thrive and be successful.

Faith school education secretaries were unanimous in their belief that apart from the follow up which the lay private education secretary highlighted, the faith and moral formation which they give to their students enables them to be more focused than students in other school types and to be more disciplined. All this helps their students to perform better at examinations than students from other school types. Their secret, according to the Presbyterian Education Secretary, is that as soon as the students and teachers come to school, they are made to understand that they are different to students and teachers elsewhere. Retreats are organised at the beginning of the year for students and teachers and the chaplains, priests and pastors reinforce spiritual and moral formation. Once they recognise that God is in control of their lives and give their lives to God, everything else goes well for them and they can produce good results with both top quality and average students. That faith schools produce very good

results with both good and average quality students seems clear from the contribution of the bishop:

In some of our Catholic schools there is definitely an elitist climate where the best students want to go, and because the best students go there, those schools which are well run have a very high profile of success. That's clear; there's no doubt about that. But I also want to acknowledge the fact that there are situations in which very mediocre students in some of our Catholic schools go in and they also excel because of the great dedication of the staff...good administration...I want to make the point that we have both kinds of students.

The lay private education secretary was positive that spiritual and moral training enhance discipline which "is a cardinal factor in life totally, not just in education" and that formation gives students

...values of justice, perseverance and so on, which make for the good life...It is important for schools and that's why even in the lay private schools we have devotions just like in the confessional schools.

So it is not just because faith schools have good quality students that they produce good results. There is better control of staff and students, better discipline and a shared faith in God which help focus the work of students and call forth dedication in teachers.

It was no surprise when the Catholic education secretary confirmed the perception among the Catholic hierarchy and many Catholics in Cameroon that they do the best job with their students and teachers and so produce the best academic results. Asked whether it was his impression that Catholic schools outperformed other faith schools he said:

Yes, I get that impression...and it's not only an impression. We can actually prove that year in year out when you put...let me say if you go by academic work and you put the end of course examination results, you know, they speak for themselves. It's not just a matter of going back five years or ten years; it's going back about twenty years. If you do a comparative study you would see that that is the case...Without taking anything away from the other denominations – I suppose that they are also making great strides in their educational formation – but I would say I am happy we are at the forefront of education in this country.

The Catholic education authorities believe that their schools do better than all the others because of the way they treat their teachers and students. They treat their teachers, not just as employees, but as 'partners in education'; they try to bring the teachers as close to the Church as possible and to make them see their work as a vocation, a call from God rather than just a means of making a living. In this way, the teachers see their work as doing their bit to bring up the children entrusted to their care by God through the Church. The Catholic ethic, the Catholic doctrine further enables students to focus on their studies and perform well. While the bishop agreed that all faith schools share a Christian spirituality which enhances academic achievement, he also thought that Catholic spirituality is different as it presents a sacramental and spiritual atmosphere which is definitely distinct from the others. According to him,

It is clear that we promote a Catholic ethos that ...a climate that definitely favours and enhances quality education in many ways. I think I will probably say that Catholic education, with all its values and all the structures put in place, and the atmosphere that we create enhances, provides and encourages excellence. And it comes with the spirit of dedication, the spirit of hard work, success...because of hard work, not success because of dubious means, but success because of hard work. One thing is clear: that the Catholic spirit requires sacrifice and dedication, and you find that in the staff and you build it up in the students as well.

It seems clear, from the focus group discussions with faith school students and from interviews with their teachers and principals, that they find it very difficult to say how different their schools are from other faith schools. In fact most of them think that because they all have priests, pastors and chaplains, all encourage prayer and spiritual exercises, there is very little difference between them. The question for Catholic education authorities might be to find out whether the success of their schools is based on the fact that they are boarding, on the fact that they have a Christian ethos or on the fact that they have a distinctively Catholic ethos.

10.4 Preparing students for life after school

The delegate considered the question as to how government schools were preparing Cameroonian children for the future to be 'a timely one'. There has been a boom in education in Cameroon and the government is opening new schools and upgrading secondary schools to high schools but the education has not been 'adapted to the needs of the society'. Currently, the government is only enabling students to pass examinations, and in areas where they would not easily find employment after school.

The delegate enumerated some plans to reverse this trend in the future but it was not clear whether these were just thoughts which arose in his mind or whether this was firm policy which the government had discussed and adopted for schools in the future.

So what the state is beginning to think and what the Ministry of Secondary Education is thinking is that we should begin to have specialised schools even within the system. Very soon...we tried to acquire land recently where there would be some institute of agriculture, which will be different from technical schools....Maybe we delayed, but better late than never.

The delegate's contribution seems to confirm the impression which the students, teachers and principals of government schools had given that government does not give enough thought to the kind of students their schools are turning out and to what is going to happen to these students after they leave school. As an individual, the delegate knew what he wanted and so sent his children to faith schools. As he said, "we would all like the children to come out disciplined, morally upright, for the betterment of the country". The problem is that policy makers seem unable to muster the will and the resources to make this happen in government schools.

The lay private education secretary agreed that it was one of the important roles of school to prepare students for life in the future but laid the blame for the lack of preparation squarely on the government's doorstep. According to him, educational policy as well as school curricula are formulated by the government and all that government has been doing so far is get students to do general education and pass examinations which do not lead them anywhere. Secondly, the people who determine educational policy in Cameroon are the politicians rather than the educationists which he believes is clearly wrong. His advice:

We need to do a serious thing...about aligning the educational policies to the requirements of the country. I think it is a serious thing to look at else we would just be wasting our time...We should start from the needs of the country to the educational system and not the reverse.

Since most lay private school proprietors are in the school business to make money, they put in the minimum demanded by the government which is to enable students pass examinations. Government and lay private schools therefore put in the minimum they can to prepare students pass examinations which, as has been demonstrated, is not even as good as what faith schools do.

Faith school authorities agreed with the lay private education secretary that the Cameroonian education system focuses too much on general education without giving thought to the needs of the country. However, they considered the products of their schools from the perspective of their mission since the way they prepare students for the future is intrinsically linked to their mission. For the Presbyterian education secretary their schools are achieving their mission in the sense that they prepare both Christians and pastors for their Church. One of their schools has produced more than half the number of pastors serving the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. Thus, even though their schools excel in academic pursuits and produce some of the finest brains in Cameroon, they also give priority to the 'education of the heart', producing both dedicated Christians and 'ministers of the Word and Sacraments'. According to him,

Once you come in and you are a committed student of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, your future is always assured...it is always assured.

His Baptist colleague took this point further by asserting that their schools train leaders not only for the Church, but also for communities and for the nation. They do not only train leaders for the Baptist Church because some of their former students have become priests and nuns in the Catholic Church. Catholic school leaders emphasised what the other faith school leaders had said, namely that they prepare their students intellectually for the future but also give them moral and spiritual formation which enables them to play responsible roles in society.

Though faith schools do not have statistics to justify the claims they make with regard to the success of their pupils in society, they have certain indicators which point to that success. Their former pupils are always proud of their schools and, unlike government and lay private school students who hardly form themselves into associations, the alumni of faith schools have popular associations at home and abroad which do all they can to support their schools. This means to their school authorities that they appreciate the kind of formation which they received at these schools and want the schools to continue to do the same or even better. Another indicator, articulated by the Baptist education secretary was the attitude of parents:

Most parents whose children pass out of our schools bring their children to the same schools. That means they found something good in them. Their friends insist that their children must go to those schools because they see something good in those friends. That is a measure that we have used.

The delegate of education is one of these parents and who have tasted the fruit of faith schools and come back to them again and again. He said:

My children, for instance, have all passed through Mission schools, so...even though I have been a principal of a public school, because I went through a Mission school and I think the values are there...morally and so on and we believe in that.

In addition to bringing their children and their friend's children to faith schools, parents try to support faith schools as best they can. The bishop said:

Parents have been remarkable...very cooperative and very instrumental in the infrastructural growth of our schools. They have done an excellent job. But also, the new element is that more and more parents, in addition to giving infrastructures and help [are also] participating in the formation of the moral and spiritual lives and in the cultural formation of our children. That is coming on more and more.

This also confirms what Catholic school students said about their parents supporting the school to make the students both intellectual and moral giants.

Some government and lay private teachers and students and even some faith school teachers and students had presented the argument against faith schools that, because they are mostly boarding and some of them are single sex, they run the risk of producing social misfits, people who would not know how to mix with others after school. This would seem to impact negatively on the social outcomes of school. Faith school authorities disagreed, arguing that they do not lock up their students all year round. They have holidays when they can mix freely with friends and family. In addition, most single sex schools provide opportunities for their students to come together in safe and supervised settings with students of the opposite sex during term time. However, the main argument of faith boarding schools, according to the Catholic bishop is that

There is an added value to students living in boarding schools in that they are able to live and to interact with students from other cultures, other families...they make friends and are open to a society that is welcoming everyone. And later on it helps...their adaptation to the world, their outlook on life.

Especially in a country like Cameroon which is divided along tribal, faith, language and cultural lines, faith schools do much to help their students know and accept each other and, as the students themselves pointed out, they live in faith schools like brothers and sisters.

Another criticism of some products of faith schools came from the delegate who, in admitting the failure of government schools to prepare their students morally for the future said,

I don't know whether even the Church has succeeded (in producing morally upright citizens) because people who leave from there, sometimes you just wonder whether the system passed through them.

Among other things, this criticism shows that the delegate is aware that faith schools aim to turn out morally upright citizens. That is why he and other well-placed and capable English speaking Cameroonians choose the faith school over and above the government school for their children. However, it also recognises that not all pupils who go through faith schools end up being the kind of examples their schools can be proud of. To be sure, the Catholic education secretary realised that while Catholic school formation is doing well, it is definitely not perfect. The Church has been criticised for some weaknesses in the Catholic school system or for the bad example of some of those who passed through Catholic schools.

And there is nothing wrong with the criticism. We are not claiming that we are all perfect. When we are criticised we learn and we try to change, to do better.

The assertion that Catholic schools are receptive to criticism and willing to do better will be borne out when the Catholic education authorities in English speaking Cameroon show a willingness to do something about the mission of the Catholic school to help poor Cameroonian children achieve upward social mobility. In addition, they will need to convince sceptical Cameroonians that they do not only work with the best students but, as the literature on Catholic schools elsewhere shows, are able to take even weak students and enable them do well. Thirdly, it will have to be clear to observers that Catholic schools consciously work to prepare hardworking, honest and morally upright citizens and leaders for the Cameroon of tomorrow. In brief, Catholic education authorities and policy makers in English speaking Cameroon would have to demonstrate that there is something distinctively Catholic in their schools which enables them to produce desirable outcomes and to be pacesetters of education in English speaking Cameroon.

10.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has reported findings from interviews with policy makers in all the school types in English speaking Cameroon. It has examined their reasons for founding schools, the difficulties of faith and lay private schools with regard to funding, and the reasons they think their schools are either doing well or not so well. In particular, it has confirmed the contribution which Catholic (and other faith) schools are making to academic quality in Cameroon and toward the preparation of young Cameroonians for life in the future, even though it is clear they work with proportionally better quality students than the others. In addition, Catholic policy makers claim that their schools achieve these outcomes thanks to a distinctively Catholic ethos. The frustration for these Catholic policy makers, however, remains their inability to provide upward social mobility for poor and disadvantaged children.

In general, Chapters Five to Ten have presented the findings of the research from examination results, from a survey of parents, from focus group discussions with students, and from interviews with teachers, headteachers and policy makers, summarised below in Table 14. The data from each of the instruments used provides a perspective on the research questions which the study set out to answer. The following chapter brings the various perspectives together and discusses them in a systematic and critical manner in an attempt to find fuller answers to the research questions which were posed at the beginning of the study.

Measure	Government	Catholic	Presbyterian	Baptist	Lay Private
Examination Results	Performance worse than all three faith school types but better than lay private schools	Started as best performers but currently outperformed by Presbyterian schools at O and A Levels	Started worse than Catholic and Baptist schools but now best performers at O and A Levels	Started out better than Presbyterian schools but now third best at both Levels	Have been worst performers throughout the 10 year period
Parents' socio-economic background	Have most disadvantaged pupils of all school types	Better than government and lay private schools but worse than Baptist and Presbyterian school pupils	Better than all school types except Baptist schools	Enjoy best socio-economic status among all school types	Have many disadvantaged pupils but better than government schools
Parents' involvement with school	Better than lay private schools but worse than all three faith schools	Better than government and lay private schools but worse than other faith schools though parental support quite good	Better than all other school types including other faith schools	Better than all school types except Presbyterian schools. Parental support very good	Worse than all other school types. Parental support poorest in lay private schools
Student quality	Academic quality of pupils very good especially in the urban schools where majority of students would be List A candidates	Quality of students very good. Even though pupils are not all List A candidates they have to pass a selection examination	Quality of students very good. Even though pupils are not all List A candidates they have to pass a selection examination	Quality of students very good. Even though pupils are not all List A candidates they have to pass a selection examination	Poorest student quality as they recruit from those who can neither go to faith nor government schools

Quality of teaching and learning	Teachers trained but lacking in dedication and impeded by large classes and student misbehaviour	Untrained, dedicated teachers but quality compromised by large class sizes, lack of CPD for teachers and lack of resources	Untrained, dedicated teachers; quality compromised by lack of resources and student misbehaviour	Untrained, dedicated teachers; CPD provided for teachers; quality enhanced by great 'family spirit'.	Untrained , overworked teachers; unreasonably large classes and poor pupil behaviour
Learning Resources	No textbooks for pupils; no Internet access; poorly equipped libraries and science labs.	Textbooks for all pupils in 3 of 4 schools; Internet access ; good libraries and labs, playgrounds, but standards falling	Basic textbooks for all pupils; library, labs, but no Internet access and dilapidating infrastructure.	Textbooks available to pupils, good reading spaces, library but no Internet access.	No textbooks for pupils; no Internet access; poorly equipped or no libraries and labs.
Pastoral Care	Counsellors found in urban school only; no services for student care (pupils sent home when sick), unchecked teacher and pupil brutality	No counsellors but part time chaplains available. School nurses; teachers supporting pupils academically, morally and socially	No counsellors but have full time chaplains, not enough school nurses. Pupils not quite sure where to go when in need and not feeling fully supported by staff.	No counsellors but have full time chaplains, school nurses, class/house masters/mistresses acting as parents. Pupils aware of what to do when in need and enjoying support of staff and peers.	Pastoral care not taken seriously. No counsellors or nurses, and teachers are violent to pupils. Pupils do not feel cared for by school.

Pupil culture	Pupils very disruptive; leave school when they want to; fighting with prefects common and pupils are stubborn and easily misbehave	Family spirit preached but senior pupils could sometimes be inconsiderate. Good spirit between the pupils especially in CS2.	Senior pupils break school rules with impunity and often beat up junior pupils. Pupils skip church and breaking of bound and stealing are common.	School is like one big family and pupils live like sisters. Pupils are encouraged to support each other especially those in need.	Widespread disrespect for teachers and principal; students fight with teachers and break bounds; sanitation leaves much to be desired
Recognition and reward of Excellence	Reward especially academic excellence in teachers and students but rewards are less frequent and less attractive than in faith schools.	Recognition of excellence, hard work and good behaviour happened as occasion arose but differed between schools. End of year prizes covered all areas of school life and were appreciated	Recognition and reward were ongoing but not as well done as in the other two faith schools. Prize for 'most religious student' given by Moderator of Presbyterian Church.	Recognition and reward was an ongoing activity but there was an end of year prize giving ceremony in which students and staff are recognized for hard work and good behaviour.	Rarely reward academic excellence, hard work and good behaviour in students and staff.
Teacher job satisfaction	Teachers are mostly happy with their salaries but do not seem to like the working conditions.	Teachers complain about their salaries but love the Catholic school ethos and some take teaching as a vocation	.Salaries are an issue but teachers like the ethos of school and think that is what they are called to do by God.	Teachers complain about their salaries but are happy with the ethos and some are happy to make the sacrifice	Teacher job satisfaction is very low because the pay is very low and work conditions are poor as well

Class Sizes	Officially classes of 80/90 pupils but numbers easily go above this in big towns	Class sizes of 50 but 70 in recruiting school.	Class sizes of 50	Class sizes of 50	No limit to class size. Students sometimes taught in halls of up to 300.
Principal leadership	Principal is the 'boss'; does not connect to staff or students; often away from school; rarely checks students' work and has very little control over teachers. Lack resources to make changes or to improve on school processes and infrastructure	Principals untrained, lack experience of school and move frequently but work collaboratively with teachers on daily tasks and available to staff and students. Supports staff in time of need. Especially loved by junior students	Principal aloof from students and does not know many by name; students scared of principal. Works collaboratively with staff. State of discipline and infrastructure does not speak well of leadership.	Principals untrained but have experience of school; very close to students and staff and available to them. Work very closely with staff and well loved by students. Check work of staff and students and goes round classrooms to ensure they work	Principal often regarded as 'proprietor's man'; exerts little control over teachers; knows very few students by name; often disrespected by pupils and disliked by staff.
Preparation for life after school	Do not seem to prepare their pupils well for life after school and even their exam results are not always very good.	Make a conscious effort to prepare pupils academically, spiritually and morally.	Make a conscious effort to prepare pupils academically, spiritually and morally.	Make a conscious effort to prepare pupils academically, spiritually and morally.	Seem to be concerned only with enabling pupils pass end of course examinations, which they do with limited success

Community Cohesion	Admit pupils from all backgrounds but make no conscious effort to help build understanding and solidarity among them	Admit pupils from all backgrounds and help them to live together and see each other as brothers and sisters. Alumni associations are strong and contribute to their schools and society	Admit pupils from all backgrounds and help them to live together and see each other as brothers and sisters. Alumni associations are strong and contribute to their schools and society	Admit pupils from all backgrounds and help them to live together and see each other as brothers and sisters. Alumni associations are strong and contribute to their schools and society	Admit pupils from all backgrounds but make no conscious effort to help build understanding and solidarity among them
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Table 14: Summary table of findings

11 CHAPTER ELEVEN: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This research project is premised on the belief that school types have independent effects on student outcomes (Morris, 1997) so that many differences between secondary schools can be attributed to school type. There seems to be broad agreement in the literature that Catholic schools in many societies have established an ever growing reputation for achieving relatively high levels of academic success for their students (Grace, 2002), but there is a lack of consensus on the reasons for this Catholic school 'success story'. While some Catholic writers hold that this success can be attributed to the distinctive nature of the Catholic school, that is, its catholicity, others think that it can be explained by other factors. The main claims made about Catholic schools in the literature are as follows:

1. Catholic schools have higher levels of achievement as measured by public tests
2. Catholic schools are more successful with disadvantaged pupils
3. Catholic schools have a distinctive educational philosophy which is responsible for their success with educational outcomes.

These claims seem to confirm that Catholic schools are achieving the aims of Catholic education which state that Catholic education seeks the integral formation of 'the whole person' and concerns itself with the development of the physical, social, moral, spiritual and intellectual endowment. In this way, Catholic education has an eye on the common good of society and seeks to prepare young people for life in a democratic society but also for their final end or eternity.

This chapter sets out to discuss the findings presented in chapters Five to Ten in the light of the literature on Catholic schools. In doing so, it will seek answers to these research questions:

1. Do Catholic school students in English speaking Cameroon achieve relatively high academic results?
2. Is the Catholic school academic success the result of its distinctive Catholic ethos?
3. What are the other educational outcomes of Catholic schooling and how do these contribute to build up a democratic Cameroon?

As a mixed methods approach was adopted to answer these questions, this section shall integrate findings from all the instruments used in the research, and compare and contrast them in an attempt to harness the different perspectives on each question since the instruments were used as different lenses to investigate the same

phenomenon. The questions shall now be tackled in the order in which they have been presented above.

11.1 Research Question One: Catholic Schools and Academic Achievement

Both the literature from the industrialised countries and from Cameroon point to the superior academic achievement of Catholic schools and the findings show that the perception among Catholic school pupils, their teachers and their principals is that Catholic schools are among the best in the country. Catholic policy makers (the Education Secretary and the Bishop) were in no doubt that Catholic schools are academically superior to all other schools in English speaking Cameroon, including other faith schools. This is probably because Catholic schools are seen to dominate the top end of examination league tables and league tables are considered in Cameroon as an indicator of academic quality. This is understandable. Harris (1999) holds that examination results have been viewed even by some school effectiveness researchers as the most important outcome of schooling. Of course, other researchers have argued that there are other equally important school outcomes not so easily measured. For instance, Nhlanhla (2005) decried the public profiling of schools in South Africa as 'effective schools' based solely on Grade 12 (university entry certificate) results. That argument aside, the findings show that from 1999 – 2008 Presbyterian schools clearly outperformed Catholic schools at the Ordinary Level GCE examinations. Catholic schools, on average, achieved better examination results than all the other schools at the Advanced Level, but even there Presbyterian schools not only closed the performance gap on Catholic schools but actually outperformed them in the last two years of the study. So, while the literature on Catholic schools in Cameroon shows that Catholic schools dominated the top of examination league tables for a long time (and into the first few years of our study), it would seem that Presbyterian schools have now taken over that position.

11.1.1 Examination league tables

The short answer therefore to the first research question as to whether Catholic school students in English speaking Cameroon obtain, on average, higher levels of academic achievement than those attending all other school types is "No", because, based on the annual league table results published by the Cameroon GCE Board in the last ten years, they do not. The difficulty with examination league tables in Cameroon, however, is that they rank schools based on raw data, that is, the percentages of pupils who pass the school-leaving examinations at the Ordinary or Advanced Levels, and do not include any adjustments to take account of pupils' progress in school or pupils' socio-economic background. Since a good secondary

school education is still a rare purchase and an increasingly important as well as expensive decision in one's life, students and their families are seeking information that will help them make informed choices in the selection of a good school and these league tables purport to satisfy an increasing national demand for information on academic quality. To be sure, the provision of information to assist parents in their choice of schools is not an official objective of the Cameroon GCE Board nor is it the objective of the government. However, the implicit assumption is that the position in the rankings can be treated as a measure of the quality of the schools' educational provision.

While these rankings may not be an acceptable measure of schools' academic quality, Cameroon is not the only country where examination league tables have been used as an indicator of the quality of schools. Educational performance tables were a feature of the educational landscape in a number of countries in the 1990s (Karsten et al., 2001). In England, for instance, one of the main reasons for the publication of examination results was that it would help parents in the selection of a secondary school for their child and, in particular, that it would enable parents to discriminate between schools on the basis of their results in public examinations (West and Pennell, 2000). In fact, Harris (1999) held that the publication of comparative tables informs parents and other stakeholders about schools' achievement as well as allowing success and inadequacy to be identified. So examination league tables have been used and are being used as an indicator of school quality and therefore as a guide for parents choosing between schools (Gibson and Asthana, 1998) as well as for accountability purposes in education (Foskett and Lumby, 2003; Dill and Soo, 2005; Gorard, 2006a).

However, while there is an increasing trend internationally to publish and feed back information to schools and teachers on their performance (Goldstein and Spiegelhalter, 1996; Visscher and Coe, 2003), researchers in the area of school effectiveness have vigorously opposed the use of 'raw' school results on the grounds that they provide little contextual information on which to judge the performance of schools (West and Pennell, 2000). According to Thomas (1998), it has been strongly argued by many educational practitioners as well as academic researchers that, taken on its own, information about schools' raw examination results will always be a very inadequate measure of performance and, without any knowledge of the context of that school, can be misleading. Furthermore, Easen and Bolden (2005) have argued that, by failing to capture adequately the important background characteristics of pupils attending a school that may influence pupil performance, they present a simplistic, even potentially misleading, picture of schools. There seems to be

consensus among educational researchers and practitioners that unadjusted examination results do not constitute valid measures of educational quality, especially because they fail to take account of intake differences and so fail to provide any indication of the value added by the school (Sammons et al., 1997).

Accordingly, critics of unadjusted examination league tables have advanced a number of arguments in support of their stance. First, they argue that, despite the claim by the proponents of 'standardised' or 'centralised' tests in education that their separation from the sources of instruction lend them an 'objectivity' that, for example, teacher constructed tests do not have, it is not possible to achieve complete objectivity in standardized or centralized tests. According to Goldstein (2000: 434), to insist that these tests are objective

...is to place such tests on the same basis as commonly used physical measuring instruments, such as a stadiometer for measuring height, which are accepted as providing valid and interpretable comparisons among individuals, and in particular to avoid the introduction of personal characteristics of the measurer into the process.

Secondly, there is now a large body of evidence which demonstrates that the differences in achievement are related to prior attainment, cognitive ability and socio-economic background of the students (Goldstein and Spielgelhalter, 1996; Gorard, 2006b). Thus, a school with a student intake with high prior attainment, high cognitive ability and low levels of family poverty (for example) will generally produce higher outcome scores than a school with an intake having low prior attainment, low cognitive ability or high levels of poverty (Gorard, 2006a). Research in Higher Education also demonstrates that measures of the quality of graduates tend to be highly correlated with their ability at entrance (Dill and Soo, 2005). In view of this, Gorard and Smith (2004) hold that these league tables are labelled school 'performance' tables incorrectly, because there is a very high correlation between the nature of the student intake to any school and their subsequent public test scores. This correlation can be expressed in several ways, including in terms of prior attainment or indicators of socio-economic disadvantage (Gorard, 2006b). To publish the examination results of fully or partially selective schools side by side with the results of schools that have a comprehensive intake, for instance, is therefore sleight of hand. In addition, the examination results of the 'poor performing school' may also be additionally affected by neighbouring selective schools that 'cream off' the brightest pupils (West and Pennell, 2000). The truth which league tables mask is that the majority of the variation in school examination outcomes can be explained by

the intake to the school - prior attainment, socio-economic background, and educational need (Gorard, 2006b). In order to show that a good school is differentially effective we have to establish that exactly equivalent students would achieve lower test scores after education at another school.

At some point, Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon produced the best academic results. They still produce good results but, overall, Presbyterian schools are producing better results, based on the examination league tables produced each year by the Cameroon GCE Board. According to these league tables, therefore, Presbyterian schools, on average, achieve the best academic results followed by Catholic schools, Baptist schools, government schools and lay private schools, in that order. However, as stated above, external determinants such as prior attainment and socio-economic status make it very difficult, if not impossible, to rank schools according to unadjusted league table performances. An examination of parent demographic data as well as focus group and interview data points to vast differences between schools regarding quality of students at intake and students' socio-economic background. A discussion of these two important determinants of academic achievement might throw more light on the answer to the first research question.

11.1.2 Positive selection at intake

Faith schools more than all the others are in a privileged position with regard to the selection of students by ability at intake. This is so because they are often oversubscribed and, because the demand for places exceeds the supply, they 'cream skim' those pupils who would be likely to maximise their examination 'league table' position or, conversely, not select those who are likely to have a negative impact on their school's examination results. While some researchers think that the effect of selection on test scores has been overestimated (Clark, 2010) school effectiveness research points to strong evidence of differential school effects and departmental effects by prior attainment for end of course examinations (Thomas et al. 1997; Harris, 1999; West and Hind, 2003). In addition, a recent study in China firmly established the link between peer performance and student achievement. Ding and Lehrer (2007) found strong evidence that peer effects exist and operate in a positive and nonlinear manner; reducing the variation of peer performance increases achievement. In other words, the higher the concentration of high ability students in a class, the better their achievement as a class and vice versa. Given the links between prior attainment and a high concentration of high ability students and later examination performance, these practices enable many Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon to obtain higher positions in examination league tables than

others. In this way, positive selection could be playing a greater role in producing good results at end of course examinations in Catholic schools than these schools are ready to admit. In fact, in his study of Catholic schools, Sander (2001: 50) found that “the positive correlation between parochial school attendance and high school graduation rates was a result of positive selection rather than superior parochial schooling”.

According to the literature, Catholic schools are good with pupils with low initial achievement and, in some countries, the Catholic school population resembles that of the common school, with pupils coming from different backgrounds, and yet achieve promising academic outcomes. It would seem that the selective nature of Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon drives selective admissions practices that marginalise this class of students. Even though Catholic schools do have low ability students, the general tendency is to ‘select out’ students of low ability with whom Catholic schools are said to be good. Research on the effect of Catholic schools on academic achievement has not been conclusive. However, even in industrialised countries, the possibility that the observed differences between Catholic schools and other school types are more a function of the type of students who enrol in each, rather than anything to do with the school, can never be completely eliminated (Convey, 1992).

11.1.3 Socio-economic background of parents

Catholic school students, like their Presbyterian and Baptist counterparts, generally come from families which enjoy a high socio-economic status. This seemed to be evident from the parent questionnaire, the focus group discussions and from the interviews, especially interviews with Catholic education policy makers. Catholic school parents are comparatively better educated, earn more and have a higher standard of life than parents of government and lay private school students. Thus, although Catholic schools were never designed to serve an economic elite, Catholic school students are the products of families with higher levels of educational attainment and income (Sander, 2001). This is an important observation since the influence of family background on academic achievement is huge (Harris, 1999) and student social capital has a significant influence on student achievement (Huang, 2009). In the USA, multiple studies have shown that low-income Black and Latino students are over-represented in special education classes and as high school drop outs and push outs (Anyon et al., 2008). So, apart from prior attainment, home background (including parents’ education, social status and family income) is an important factor that influences learning and has been linked to examination performance at school level (Morris, 1998; Gibson et al., 1998; Davies, 2006). This

does not mean that children from poor families cannot do well at examinations, and there is consensus among social scientists that social class inequalities are notoriously difficult to measure. However, using currently available indicators, it is possible to see the connections between higher social class and higher educational attainment (Davies, 2006).

It is therefore possible to conclude that the more socially disadvantaged the community served by the school, the very much more likely it is that the school will appear to underachieve (Gibson et al., 1998). Woods and Levacic (2002: 228) found that in England and Wales “schools low down the hierarchy, which are therefore characterised by a high concentration of socially disadvantaged students relative to other schools, have particular difficulties in improving examination results”. On the basis of these findings it is possible to conclude that Catholic (and other faith) schools’ academic achievement in English speaking Cameroon is very likely enhanced by the fact that they recruit most of their students from the country’s economic elite. So, while the literature showed that Catholic schools benefit the economically disadvantaged and their relative superior academic productivity seems to be more apparent the greater the level of pupil deprivation, the findings of this study show that Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon almost completely exclude them.

The discussion of these two determinants of academic achievement shows that it is not possible to compare schools in English speaking Cameroon based on league table rankings alone. Catholic schools are a world away from lay private and government schools but even when they are compared with other faith schools, differences in family background and prior attainment still show up. School effectiveness research (SER) shows that what leaders and teachers do in schools is necessarily heavily influenced by the socio-economic and discursive environments within which they are located. ‘Internal’, school-based determinants of ‘success’ do not operate independently of ‘external’, context-based determinants (Gerwitz, 1998, Saunders, 1999). This realisation has led school effectiveness and school improvement (SESI) scholars to turn to value added measures when making comparisons between schools.

11.1.4 Value - Added

It is now generally accepted that institutional comparisons based on ‘league-tables’ which are themselves based on ‘raw’ examination results are crude and tell us little about their true effectiveness (Goldstein and Spiegelhalter, 1996; Morris, 1998). Comparative tables based on examination results simply do not compare like with

like and, as such, cannot measure school performance in any meaningful way (Gibson and Asthana, 1998). Schools do not operate in the same context and different schools have different missions. The discussion above points to the fact that to make judgments about an individual school's performance, a range of information is needed in addition to the raw examination results (Thomas, 1998). Information about the value added by a school to individual pupils' progress is one such source. Many researchers argue that value-added measures which consider process factors are more valid indicators of organizational effectiveness than raw measures. According to Demie (2003: 448),

Value-added in education concerns the relative progress pupils make in school from one stage of education to another, compared with the progress of other pupils with similar attainment at the start of the period.

She explains that to undertake value-added analysis it is essential to have a measure of a pupil's prior attainment (i.e. their starting point) and a measure of pupil outcome (their finishing point), large individual pupil pooled data from a number of schools and a statistical technique to derive a regression line, representing average progress.

There has been an increasing emphasis, especially in British education, during recent years on the use of value-added data in school improvement and school self-evaluation. This practice has been underpinned by the conviction that

Raw results describe the grades or levels that pupils have obtained. They do not describe how well a school has performed. Through the use of value-added results it is possible to demonstrate how effective a school is in promoting pupils' academic attainment (MacGilchrist et al., 2004:21).

Clearly, one of the initial intended functions of the value-added approach was to render public information about schools' performance more accurate for parents (Saunders, 1999). Since value-added measures are intended to take the prior attainment of each student into account they produce scores that are "a measure of the progress students make between different stages of education" (Gorard, 2006b: 237).

As a result of the contextual information which value-added results provide, they are very useful for grouping schools into families of schools with similar characteristics and so for identifying those schools that are successful and which can serve as

beacons of best practice to other schools. According to Demie (2003), the value-added feedback is also valuable for monitoring factors influencing performance, to identify underperforming groups, to assess individual pupil progress and to provide evidence of whether a school is performing above or below expectation in terms of a specific outcome over a period of time. Moreover, it has considerable value for monitoring progress and tracking the performance of individual pupils. Value-added seems to give a more comprehensive picture of overall performance and that is the reason why 'value-added' measures on performance are now a major feature on the educational landscape (Saunders, 2000).

However, in spite of the popularity of value-added measures on performance, some writers still do not think that the introduction of value-added moves us forward from where we were with 'raw' scores. Gorard (2006b), for instance, holds that the DfES value-added figures and the raw scores for absolute attainment are actually measuring the same thing (like Centigrade and Fahrenheit they merely use different scales to portray the same underlying variable). As far as he is concerned, it would be much simpler to use the raw-score values than to bother with the computation of 'value-added' figures that tell exactly the same story. However, since these raw-score values have already been rejected by most commentators as being unrelated to school performance, he concludes that this means, ironically, that the value-added scores have to be rejected on the same grounds (Gorard, 2006b). Goldstein and Spiegelhalter (1996) hold that the aim of value-added measures, although worthy and an improvement on unadjusted 'raw' league tables, is generally unrealizable as adjusted league tables inherit many of the deficiencies of unadjusted ones.

These criticisms notwithstanding, it is fair to say that it is now generally recognised that in order to obtain fair comparisons of achievement standards among schools, the minimum requirement is a 'value added' analysis which adjusts for intake achievements. It is true that value-added analysis on its own cannot tease out all aspects of the unique contribution made by particular schools from all other influences. It needs to be supplemented by other contextual information, detailed monitoring and review in schools by headteachers and classroom teachers (Demie, 2003). That said, value-added measures represent a significant advance on the current practice of reporting uncontextualised examination data as a measure of school performance.

Writing about examination league tables, Goldstein (2001) takes the view that published league tables lead ultimately to attempts to 'play the system' whereby every effort is made to improve a school's position, often in conflict with desirable

educational practice. Such effects would be expected to occur whether raw *or* value-added results were being used. The upshot would be results that would, at least partly, reflect the ability of schools to manipulate the system, rather than just reflecting the quality of education. This is because league tables enforce concentration on examination results and sanction the expectation of many that schools and colleges teach learners how to pass examinations. Foskett and Lumby (2003) agree with this view and point out that in Japan, Singapore and South Korea, even primary age children work additional hours after school in an effort to help them pass examinations which will give entry into a prestigious school and then a prestigious university.

Research on school choice has also identified actions being taken by schools to attract pupils who will enhance the school's league table position (West and Pennell, 2000). Conversely, at school level, concentration on examination results fails to create adequate incentives for schools to target lower achieving pupils and those at risk of social exclusion (Gorard, 2005). In Cameroon this has led not only to strategies by which selective schools 'regulate intake' (Karsten et al., 2001), but also to mass dismissals of academically weak students at the end of the year and frequent dismissals of students with challenging behaviour. This is another downside to the publication of examination league tables as schools strive to improve their reputation or position in the rankings.

For these sorts of reasons, some countries (New South Wales in Australia, Denmark, Scotland and Ireland) have deliberately decided not to publish school performance indicators (Karsten et al. 2001). On the other hand, Pike et al. (2003) assert that in the United States each year as many as 400,000 prospective students consult institutional rankings when deciding which college to attend. In fact, Karsten et al. (2001) hold that the publication of data on the quality of schools seems to be an irreversible trend worldwide. Therefore, given that league tables will continue to be published, improved 'value-added' indicators are needed. For the time being, if we must make comparisons between schools, we must strive to achieve better adjustments to the results in order to obtain more accurate comparisons. For Cameroon, that is a tall order, given that the concept of 'value-added' has not yet been mentioned in national educational literature. However, MacGilchrist et al. (2004: 23) caution that in such circumstances, "it is necessary to look at results over several years to make a more reliable judgment about the stability and continuity of the trends emerging". And that is exactly what this research tried to do by collecting school results over a ten year period. Even so, it is not clear that these results tell the whole story about school quality in English speaking Cameroon.

It would come as a surprise to policy makers in the Catholic education system in English speaking Cameroon that the answer to the first research question is in the negative. As it was clear in the analysis of interview data, the perception of policy makers is that Catholic schools outperform all other schools, including other faith schools, in public examinations. Examination data in the first few years of this study confirms this but it also shows that, over time, Catholic schools have fallen behind Presbyterian schools in overall performance. It might be useful to examine some of the reasons why this has been so.

11.2 Reasons for the drop in Catholic school academic performance

Whatever has been said about variables that influence school performance and the suitability or otherwise of value-added measures in the comparison of school examination results, one question remains unanswered. Why did Catholic schools lose their place as overall best performers to Presbyterian schools? Again, considering the fact that the factors which influence academic performance in school are many and varied, it is not possible to give a straightforward answer to this question. However, the research findings suggest that the following factors might have been at the root of the Catholic school slide from the top position:

- stinting on teaching resources
- increase in school population and class sizes
- principal quality and high turnover
- less focus on teacher preparation, induction and CPD

11.2.1 Catholic schools and teaching resources

School resources include infrastructure, teachers and teaching assistants, science, cookery and language labs and computer rooms. However, the focus here is on instructional materials, which could be defined as all the written, visual, audio or other materials used by the teacher to facilitate effective learning. The term “media” is also used to refer to these, including all teaching and learning aids (Zhou and Botha, 2007). Research in this area suggests that in schools where appropriate teaching resources are made available to teachers and students, academic attainment is higher than in schools where these resources are not available (Robinson et al., 2008). Perhaps because of the lack of funding from government and the consequent financial squeeze in which Catholic schools have found themselves, there has been a tendency to stint on teaching resources. In some Catholic schools, resources which were available to students in the 1970s and 1980s are no longer

available and infrastructure is not as adequate as it used to be. The mind of the Church itself on such things is clear. *The Religious Dimension of Education in the Catholic School* (1988, §28) prescribes the provision of an adequate physical environment, one that includes sufficient space for classrooms, sports and recreation, and also such things as a staff room and rooms for group work and so on. In addition to these lapses, libraries are not being as regularly updated as they used to be and some schools even make the possession of textbooks optional for students. This is bound to impact negatively on the teaching and learning process because, “the Intelligent School is up to date with recent literature about learning and knows how to create contexts for learning” (MacGilchrist et al., 2004:69). In fact, Hurd et al. (2005) argue that book expenditure has a significant positive effect on examination performance. While research in the area of teaching resources is not conclusive on the effect of any one resource variable, it is clear that taken together these teaching resources represent sizeable effects on student outcomes (Willms and Somer, 2001; Steyn, 2004). So stinting on the provision of instructional material could easily be one reason why Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon are dropping in their academic performance.

11.2.2 Increase in school population and class sizes

Probably because government subvention is minimal and incidental, Catholic schools are under pressure to increase their school sizes in order to break even. This has led to bigger class sizes which, even though more economical, seem to have a negative effect on student achievement. Most studies on the effect of school and class size have been undertaken in the industrialised world where a class of 20 pupils would be considered the norm. In Cameroon, for instance, the government-prescribed class size would be 60 but even in government schools classes often exceed 100 pupils. It is true that research results in this area have been controversial and researchers have found it impossible to prescribe an optimal class or school size as size affects students differently (Corak and Lauzon, 2009). Researchers have argued that “no school or cohort size will optimise outcomes for all students” (Weiss et al., 2010: 173) but, like with other things in life, researchers agree that virtue lies in the middle. It is now generally recognised that reducing school and class size increases student achievement (Kuziemko, 2006; Bressoux et al., 2009), but it is also agreed that disproportionately small schools and classes equally have an adverse effect on student achievement (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2009). In a recent review of 57 post-1990 empirical studies of school size effects on a variety of student and organizational outcomes, Leithwood and Jantzi (2009), found that the weight of evidence provided by this research clearly favours smaller schools. However, what

makes smaller schools successful is not just their size but the resources of the parents and the communities in which they are located.

As far as class size is concerned, it has been argued that smaller classes have an observable beneficial effect on student achievement only in countries where teachers' salaries are relatively low and the average capability of the teaching force appears to be low (Wößmann and West, 2006), and the Cameroonian situation fits this description. Apart from that, there is agreement that class and school size are important determinants of student achievement, especially when considered in combination with other factors (Blasé et al., 2010). Taylor and Ryan (2005:18) argue that "a focus on achievement for every pupil is probably the most valuable attribute of a high performing school". Large classes make this focus on individual learning impossible. In addition, they make classroom discipline, class control and management very difficult and discourage teachers from regularly giving students homework and feeding back to them, all of which impede effective teaching and learning. Large classes constrain teacher support for learning and affect pupil concentration adversely (Blatchford et al., 2003) and reduce interaction between teacher and student which is a crucial aspect of successful teaching and learning (Muijs and Reynolds, 2001).

Increasing the Catholic school population has also had an adverse effect on the pastoral care for students in Catholic schools. Kyriacou (1997) argues that in essence, pastoral care focuses on the concern for the individual well-being of each pupil. It comprises concern for academic progress, general behaviour and attitudes, personal and social development and individual needs, and this concern facilitates academic achievement. It is clear that it is very difficult to maintain the quality of pastoral care in Catholic schools where the teacher/student ratio is very high. It would seem, therefore, that while Catholic school populations and class sizes are smaller than those of government and lay private schools, the recent tendency to increase school and class sizes has had an adverse effect on both pastoral care and academic performance in a good number of Catholic schools.

11.2.3 Principal quality and high turnover rate

It is now widely accepted that managers in education require specific preparation if they are to be successful in leading schools and colleges. Gonzalez et al. (2002) assert that the preparation of school principals has, as one of several other factors, and however indirectly, an impact on student achievement in schools. Across many Western countries, there has been a renewed emphasis upon improving leadership

capacity and capability in the drive towards higher standards (Harris, 2003) as there is now

...an explicit recognition that training and development are essential if school leaders are to carry out their onerous responsibilities successfully. Just as teachers need training to be effective in the classroom, so leaders need preparation for their specialist roles (Bush, 2003: x).

Therefore it is strange to discover that only one of the four Catholic dioceses in English speaking Cameroon make an effort to give their principals any form of professional training. It seems that the others hardly give the appointment of principals adequate thought which has resulted in a very high rate of principal turnover. Normore (2004:119) argues that “identifying, attracting, recruiting, selecting and socializing aspiring school administrators is an important part of leadership preparation”. Failure to do this leaves the principal vulnerable to leadership challenges that doom all but the most heroic and talented leaders to failure.

As Bush says in his foreword to Foskett and Lumby (2003: ix),

The development of effective leaders and managers requires a range of strategies, including high quality courses and tuition, mentoring by experienced and successful principals, opportunities to practice management at appropriate stages in professional careers and an appreciation of research methods.

It is true that some education practitioners are dismissive of theories and concepts because they are thought to be remote from the realities of schools and classrooms. However, Bush (2003: 24) argues that

Theory serves to provide a rationale for decision making [and that] management activity is enhanced by an explicit awareness of the theoretical framework underpinning practice in educational institutions.

Seen in this way, on-the-job experience and theoretical understanding complement each other, and most candidates who were appointed to lead Catholic schools did not have either. To give Catholic school principals the responsibility of leading schools without any prior preparation or experience in the hope that they will ‘learn along the way’ is too big a risk to take. This is one reason why most university

leadership programmes are run in partnership with schools or school districts where students can learn to marry theory and practice (Whitaker, 2002). In fact, in their recent research of high-performing principals, Jo Blasé et al. (2010) found that while these principals derived most of what they knew about leadership from published research and other empirically-based professional resources, they also attributed much of their effectiveness to disciplined reflection throughout their careers as teachers, assistant principals, and principals on experiences with both positive (i.e. effective) and negative (i.e. ineffective) principals.

Considering that the rate of principal turnover in Catholic schools is very high, it is possible that a lack of professional training and hands-on experience for principals is further compounded by high principal turnover. If principal leadership training is complemented by on-the-job experience, it is crucial that principals be given time to gather experience in their roles. A high principal turnover makes effective leadership impossible, even for principals who have had professional training. It is possible that frequent movement of principals may be as detrimental to their commitment to student learning as is frequent movement of teachers (Danetta, 2002). In addition, the fact that principals had the tendency to make changes as soon as they arrived at a new school was more likely to have a negative impact on school culture and student outcomes. In many cases, students and teachers resented this. It is possible, therefore, that some Catholic schools are doing well in examination league tables in spite of poor leadership. Morris (2005) reports a study carried out in England from 1993 to 1998 which showed that even though Catholic schools did better than others as far as examination results and other school outcomes were concerned, they were not better led. It is thus likely that if the quality of school leaders is improved and the duration of their appointments extended, Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon would improve both their academic performance and other educational outcomes. Principals provide support for teaching and learning which is at the heart of school policies and development planning (MacBeath, 1999).

11.2.4 Teacher preparation, induction and continuing professional development

The teacher's task in the 21st Century classroom is becoming increasingly complex and sophisticated (MacGilchrist et al., 2004). For this reason, the kind of teachers who produced great results for Cameroonian Catholic schools ten years ago will find themselves out of their depth in today's classroom. It has been pointed out that certified teachers are not necessarily high quality teachers (Sharkey and Goldhaber, 2008) but research has also shown that teacher training substantially increases student test scores, at least in some subjects (Bressoux et al., 2009). A solid body of research demonstrates that teacher behaviours top the list in terms of effects on

student learning (Blasé et al., 2010) and all the evidence that has been generated in the school effectiveness research community shows that classrooms are far more important than schools in determining how students perform at school (Muijs and Reynolds, 2001). Considering that most Catholic school teachers are not trained, it is even more important that these teachers receive solid pre-service preparation, a good induction and good quality continuing professional development (CPD) once they have started teaching. This preparation was rather sloppily done, even in comparison to the preparation which the Baptist and Presbyterian school teachers received. As Steyn (2004) argues, beginner educators cannot produce their best work and achieve the objectives of the schools that employed them until they have adjusted to the work they are required to do, the environment in which they are to work and the colleagues and learners with whom they have to work. The best way of supporting and developing novice educators is through a clear understanding of their problems and constructive induction programmes that train and sustain them by addressing these issues since effective teaching requires high quality initial education and training, induction and in-service support (Aldrich, 1996), and stronger teacher skills and qualifications lead to greater student learning (Sadker and Sadker, 2000).

There is a growing body of research suggesting that the measures of what teachers know and can do have important implications for the performance gains of students (Ehrenberg, 1994). It is for this reason that MacGilchrist et al. (2004) insist that teachers need to keep up to date with their area of expertise, subject or focus. They need to know about recent research on pedagogy and learning and about scientific discoveries that are relevant to their role as teachers. In fact, because the 21st Century classroom is becoming increasingly complex and sophisticated, teachers are now being encouraged to become the lead learners in their schools (Harris, 2003; MacGilchrist et al., 2004). If they are truly to be on top of their jobs their focus must be on learning, building their professional knowledge through observation, inquiry, discussion with colleagues, reading theoretical texts and keeping up to date with developments in the field, not just in their subject matter but with an interest in the art and science of teaching (MacBeath, 2009). While the Baptist and Presbyterian teachers enjoyed a well organised and systematic pre-service preparation, induction and continuous professional development, Catholic teachers did not. As Aldrich (1996: 73) asserts,

Effective teaching naturally depends not only upon the recruitment and retention of persons of high quality, it also requires high quality initial education and training, induction, and in-service support.

The older teachers reported that teacher continuing professional development was a higher priority when they started their teaching careers in Catholic schools. Over time it seems to have taken the back seat and Catholic school students seem to be paying an academic price for this. Catholic education authorities do not seem to understand that “teachers are central to education, and good quality teachers are central to good quality education” (Aldrich, 1996:58). The ultimate goal of CPD, therefore, is not merely to satisfy the professional needs of teachers but to improve educational quality in schools (Ho Ming Ng, 2003) and its neglect seems to have impacted negatively on the educational quality of Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon. Research on the quality of teaching and learning has shown that student achievement and wellbeing is improved when a school’s leadership focuses not only on the quality of learning but also on the quality of teacher learning (Robinson et al., 2008). In fact, according to Macbeth (2009) professional learning (teacher learning) is an even higher priority than children’s learning, as ignorance of how children learn may be worse than no teaching at all.

Moreover, a high rate of teacher turnover in Catholic schools did not help the quality of teaching and learning as some very good teachers were inevitably lost to better-paying schools and jobs. This is not good for Catholic school students and their academic achievement. In a study that examined factors that influence a teacher’s commitment to student learning, Danetta (2002) found that the frequent movement of teachers may be detrimental to a teacher’s commitment to student learning. Further, Taylor and Ryan (2005) hold that one of the indicators of a great school is its ability to attract and retain good teachers especially in key subjects. One of the main reasons why Catholic schools could not retain teachers was inability to pay good enough salaries. It is clear that for teachers to be able to meet the challenges of the 21st Century education system ‘ruthless reskilling’ and training is inevitable (Nhlanhla, 2005) but the effects of training and re-skilling teachers would still be dwarfed in Catholic schools by a high rate of teacher turnover.

School effectiveness and school improvement (SESI) forms an entire field of research and policy endeavour. It is based on the dual premise that schools are differentially effective with equivalent students, and that it is possible to transfer good practice from the more successful schools to the less successful ones (Gorard, 2006a). This is the purpose that has driven this research endeavour. However, proponents of Catholic education contend that what drives the success of Catholic schools is not just good pedagogical practice but its catholicity. The second research question

seeks to discover if there is any truth in this claim for Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon.

11.3 Research Question Two: The Role of catholicity in academic achievement

Even though the discussion of the first research question came to the conclusion that Presbyterian schools have overtaken Catholic schools as the best overall performers in English speaking Cameroon, a comparatively large pool of Catholic schools still dominates the top end of league table rankings. The findings show that while overall Catholic school performance has slipped, a significant number of these schools are still very successful in their academic mission. Such visible success has generated a debate in Cameroon (as it has elsewhere) about why this should be so. Is the success of Catholic schools the result of its catholicity or does it relate to more generic features of faith-based schools as contexts of learning (Grace, 2002)? Bryk et al. (1993) assert that successful academic outcomes in Catholic schools cannot be explained in any one-dimensional way. It is important to take into account a whole series of variables including the prior achievement of students, the academic leadership of headteachers, the quality and commitment of teachers, strong parental support, a structured environment and the influence of catholicity. Grace (2002) has argued that the conjunction of these variables in a given school situation creates a context and culture for achievement which can overcome *some* of the impediments to scholastic progress arising from poverty and disorganisation in local communities. A discussion of some of these variables might highlight what role they play in the success of the Catholic school in English speaking Cameroon.

11.3.1 Parental involvement and interest

The parent questionnaire probed both parent-initiated and school-initiated parental involvement because both have been found to influence the cognitive and social development of children (Driessen et al., 2005; Blasé et al., 2010). Over and above the general effect of home background, there is strong evidence that the level of parental involvement or non-involvement in the schooling of their children can impact upon their progress and achievement. It has long been established that the lack of parental interest and involvement in children's education can hinder children's progress and achievement while high levels of parental involvement have been shown to have a positive benefit for the pupils' engagement with their school and consequent levels of attainment. It has even been suggested that such support has a greater impact than social class, family size or the educational attainment of parents on levels of achievement (Morris, 2010b; Lemmer and Van Wyk, 2004; Every

Child Matters, 2003). Even though parental involvement in Cameroonian schools in general needs to be given more thought, parents of Catholic school students, as well as those of the other faith schools, are more involved in the education of their children as shown by their attendance at PTA meetings, engagement with teachers and headteachers of their children and their support for the work which their schools are doing. In addition, faith school parents show more interest in their children's school work and are more likely to employ private tutors to support their children's education. This involvement seems to bring major benefits to their children as there is compelling evidence that parental aspirations, expectations and involvement have a major impact on children's attainment (Vision 2020; Fan and Williams, 2010). Feinstein and Symons (1999: 316) found that "the major influence on attainment is parental interest, presumably through motivation, discipline and support". Macbeth (1989) asserts that not only do parents create the nature of a child's out-of-school education, they seem to influence the extent to which their child benefits from in-school education. For these reasons, in many countries and across many different school systems the issue of engaging parents in schooling is a shared aspiration and goal (Harris and Goodall, 2008). Catholic parents do not only support their children's academic work but go further than all the others to support their moral formation in school. So it is likely that a greater involvement of Catholic school parents in the education of their children would be one of the factors that enhance academic achievement in Catholic schools.

11.3.2 Pastoral care

Another strong point of Catholic education in English speaking Cameroon is the quality of pastoral care and discipline. Discipline was listed as the second most important reason why Catholic parents send their children to a Catholic school. This feature of the Catholic school plays an important role in academic achievement because, however good the quality of teaching and learning in a school, students are complex beings and good quality teaching and learning needs to be supported by a strong discipline structure and a strong pastoral team (Davies, 2006). The good discipline in Catholic schools created a safe and orderly environment for effective teaching and learning, which is one of the conditions of a high-performing school (Blasé et al., 2010). As research shows, "establishing effective discipline practices is critical to ensure academic success and to provide a safe learning environment" (Luiselli et al., 2005:183). Over the years, increasing attention has been paid to the importance of pastoral care in schools. In essence, pastoral care focuses on the concern for the individual wellbeing of each pupil and involves four aspects of schooling: academic progress, general behaviour and attitudes, personal and social development and individual needs (Kyriacou, 1997). Catholic schools in English

speaking Cameroon were characterised by a concern for the wellbeing of each student. Students enjoyed unfettered, round the clock access to their teachers (who live on campus), chaplains and principals who are mostly priests and religious men and women. In this way their health, academic, social, psychological and even family needs were taken care of and their cognitive, affective, spiritual and moral development encouraged. Earl (2003) holds that good pastoral care supports students through a crucial, if sometimes difficult phase of their psychological, emotional and cognitive development. She contends that this, if well done, is part of the whole complex process by which schooling should enable young people to enter the increasingly complex world of adult community with as many cognitive and affective strengths, and as few liabilities as possible. The good quality of pastoral care in Catholic schools would be a good support for teaching and learning and very likely lead to good academic performance. As Marland (2001) argues, true caring for pupils is the heart of schooling, for enabling the child to develop as a person is essential for happiness in school, the best chance of success across the curriculum, and as preparation for adult life in all its aspects.

11.3.3 School culture

Effective schooling apparently requires more than technically proficient teachers, a professionally appropriate curriculum and adequate facilities (Newmann et al., 1989). The culture of a school is also an important determinant of the academic output of its students. According to Sergiovanni (2003), culture is generally thought of as the normative glue that holds a particular school together. With shared visions, values, and beliefs at its heart, culture serves as a compass setting, steering people in a common direction. It provides norms that govern the way people interact with each other. It is a synthesis of a group's aims that is summed up as 'the way we do things around here' (Prosser, 1999: 14). School culture is most clearly 'seen' in the way people relate to and work together; the management of school structures, systems and physical environment; and the extent to which there is a learning focus for both pupils and adults, and the nature of that focus (Stoll, 1999). Catholic schools in our study can be described as having a positive school culture as far as the management of the physical environment and the relationships are concerned. There is zero tolerance for bullying or violent behaviour and students frequently referred to the 'family spirit' that reigns in Catholic schools. The point is that students who enjoy a more favourable school culture generally do better than their peers who do not (Mok and Flynn, 1998) and reciprocated friendships enhance a sense of school belonging and academic outcomes (Vaquera and Kao, 2008). The relationship between teachers and principals and their students was friendly and supportive and enhanced students' self-esteem which is known to contribute positively towards both academic

achievement and towards personal and social development (Lawrence, 1996). Friendship, support and care of principals and teachers increase students' attraction to school, and research has shown that students who like school have higher academic achievement and a lower incidence of disciplinary problems, absenteeism, truancy and dropping out of school (Hallinan, 2008). In addition, Catholic schools were generally clean and the buildings well kept which helped enhance student behaviour and achievement since appropriate, attractive and well cared for physical conditions have an important influence on attitudes and behaviour (Dempster and Bagakis, 2009) and support and facilitate learning (MacGilchrist et al., 2004). Further, ceremonies in school assemblies and other informal gatherings where the real joy of achievement was shared by students and teachers added to the satisfaction of students and teachers and so reinforced this important aspect of a learning culture.

Catholic schools thus provided an orderly and disciplined school environment where students could learn properly (Taylor and Ryan, 2005). This kind of atmosphere creates meaningfulness which leads to an elevated level of commitment to the school, greater effort, tighter connections for everyone, and more intensive academic engagement for students – all of which are virtues in themselves but which have the added value of resulting in heightened levels of student development and increased academic performance (Sergiovanni, 2003). Research on school and educational effectiveness has identified school culture as an important school characteristic that can enhance or impede a school's academic achievement (McLaughlin, 2005; Opdenakker and Van Damme, 2006). With specific reference to Catholic schools in the USA, Bryk et al. (1993) found that a strong internal sense of community appeared to support the academic structure and culture. In England, Morris (2002) found that the 'tribalistic solidarity' of the Catholic school enhances effective learning. These findings point to the fact that internal dynamics of Catholic school provide the potential for a more conducive learning environment.

11.3.4 Quality of teaching and learning

In reality the most important aspect of any school is the quality of teaching and learning that goes on there (Davies, 2006). The quality of teaching and learning in Catholic schools was enhanced by the commitment and availability of teachers and the fact that their work was valued by all other stakeholders. Teachers are likely to be more effective if they have a positive self-image and belief that their work is valued (Morris, 2002). In addition, their work was made easier by the keenness of the students to excel but more importantly by the friendly and caring relationship between teachers and students. Pomeroy (1999) asserts that student-teacher

relationships are a key feature of school life and one of the most salient features of educational experience. Teachers who are perceived as being understanding, helpful and friendly and show leadership without being too strict have been found to enhance students' achievement and their affective outcomes (Muijs and Reynolds, 2001). Moreover, teachers who are concerned about their students' emotional and social, as well as academic needs, as Catholic teachers are, have been found to engender the students' ability to engage in work and learn (Pomeroy, 1999; Muijs and Reynolds, 2001).

In addition to the good relationship between teachers and students in Catholic schools, teaching resources which have been shown to improve student performance (Robinson et al., 2008) are more readily available than in lay private and government schools. This gives Catholic school teachers and students an edge over their counterparts in the other schools. According to MacBeath (1999), to have the right resources to hand can be liberating for both teacher and pupil. He argues further that it would be incomprehensible in an age of technology if the availability and effective use of resources were not related to how, and how well, young people learn. Further, Catholic schools are smaller and have comparatively smaller class sizes than these other schools which enables teachers to identify slow learners and offer them help on a one-to-one basis. This further enhances student performance for, as Pomeroy (1999) argues, equally important to teaching ability is the willingness to provide students with the help and attention they need in order to learn. The Catholic school aims at improving educational outcomes for each student and the commitment of teachers, the motivation of students to perform well and the availability of instructional materials facilitates the achievement of this aim.

11.3.5 Class sizes

Even though the findings showed that class sizes in Catholic schools have increased over time for economic and other reasons, it is still true to say that Catholic schools have by far smaller class sizes than government and lay private schools. The last three and a half decades have spawned a vast number of studies on the relationship between smaller class sizes and learning (Dustmann et al., 2003) and the class size debate can easily be considered 'one of the most important issues of the day' (Blatchford et al., 2003) for educational research. On the one side of the debate there are those who feel very strongly that smaller class sizes lead to better teaching and effective learning. On the other side are those who argue that the efficacy of class size reduction is in doubt and that there are likely to be other cost-effective strategies for improving educational standards. So whether class size reductions have a notable impact on outcomes is heavily disputed in the academic profession

(Goldstein and Blatchford, 1998; Dustmann et al., 2003). However, there seems to be consensus among researchers that a small class size, taken in conjunction with other conditions, is an important characteristic of the high-performing school (Blasé et al., 2010). On the other hand, researchers generally agree that students in smaller schools learn more, are more likely to pass their courses, are less prone to resort to violence, and are more likely to attend school than those attending large schools (Sadker and Sadker, 1988). In fact Mertens et al. (2001: 1) state that “recent studies addressing the issue of school size conclusively report that ‘smaller is better’”.

Thus, although research on class size is less powerful than research on school size, studies indicate that smaller classes are associated with increased student learning, especially in the early years (Sadker and Sadker, 1988; Nye et al., 1999, Blatchford et al., 2002; Kantabutra and Tang, 2006). Teachers get to know each student more intimately in small classes and students are more highly engaged in such classes (Finn & Pannozzo, 2003). Smaller class sizes encourage aspects of effective teaching such as immediate feedback and sustained and purposeful interactions which are linked with the promotion of pupil achievement (Blatchford et al., 2003). In addition, pupil behaviour is better and classroom management of behaviour is easier in smaller classes (Dustmann et al., 2003). For these reasons, Blatchford et al. (2001: 284) argue that

It is probably true to say that the overwhelming professional judgment is that, other things being equal, smaller classes will enable teachers to provide a better quality educational experience for pupils.

On the other hand, large classes inevitably constrain pedagogy and individualisation of learning (Foskett and Lumby, 2003) and adversely affect pupil concentration as children are more distracted from work and more often off-task (Blatchford et al., 2003).

Recent research evidence from secondary school classrooms calls into question simple one-way relationships between class size and pupils’ learning (Pedder, 2006). However, whatever educational researchers think about the class size debate, it seems true that Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon combine the benefits of small class sizes with those of small schools which are generally thought to be better than bigger ones. If it is true, as research suggests, that smaller schools are more effective at every educational level (Sadker and Sadker, 1988) it would seem logical to conclude that comparatively smaller schools and smaller class sizes would

contribute to the academic success of the Catholic school in English speaking Cameroon.

11.3.6 Principal leadership

There is unprecedented international interest in the question of how educational leaders influence a range of student outcomes (Robinson et al., 2008). The reason for this interest is because the prime purpose of school leadership is to maximise student learning (Dempster, 2009) and supporting learning is the purpose of all leadership and management activities, either directly or indirectly (Foskett and Lumby, 2003). However, while some studies have pointed to leadership as a key factor in the achievement of outstanding educational outcomes (Dinham, 2004), others have suggested that there is very little data to suggest that leaders have a transformational impact on school effectiveness as measured by student outcomes (Barker, 2007). It would seem that qualitative research and case studies have shown that school leaders make a considerable impact on student outcomes while the typical conclusion drawn by quantitative researchers is that school leaders have small and indirect effects on student outcomes that are essentially mediated by teachers. Robinson et al. (2008) threw light on this research conundrum by focusing their research on different types of leadership rather than on leadership as a unitary construct. They discovered that the leader's impact on student outcomes will depend on the particular leadership practices in which they engage. For instance, they discovered that "the mean effect size estimates for the impact of instructional leadership on student outcomes is three to four times greater than that of transformational leadership" (p. 665).

The Catholic school leadership style seems to contribute quite considerably to the academic success of the schools. Perhaps because of the high rate of principal turnover, leaders tend to depend heavily on the administrative staff and department heads to help them run their schools. It is still true that one of the most important requirements of a good school is an inspiring, highly respected leader (Taylor and Ryan, 2005) but no longer in the sense of a 'hero head' battling to succeed against everybody else in the school. Scholars have challenged the pervasive view that equates school leadership with principalship and gravitated towards leadership as a shared or distributed process (Foster, 2004). Good leadership can be driven by an inspiring individual but it is vital that they be backed up by a strong team of deputies and department heads. This realisation has led to the notion of distributed leadership which is fast gaining currency among educational leadership scholars. According to MacBeath (2006) the concept of distributed leadership is in one sense a pragmatic response to the impossibility of individualistic, or heroic leadership, but

also a recognition that schools cannot build capacity, sustainability, or plan for succession without seeing opportunities for leadership be dispersed through the school community.

It could be said that Catholic school heads in English speaking Cameroon adopt a distributed leadership style in the sense that they consider their leadership teams (Administrative Staff) as the “engine of the school”. Except for CS4 these teams meet weekly and take most decisions about the day to day running of the school. It is true that teachers who do not belong to the leadership team seem to be at the receiving end of decisions and that most policy decisions are communicated to the schools by Catholic Church hierarchy, but it is also true that, unlike their lay private and government counterparts, principals do not try to run schools single-handedly. It could therefore be said that relatively better principal leadership style in Catholic schools enhances student academic achievement. This conclusion is consistent with current research on the role of school leadership in the academic achievement of pupils. Day et al. (2008) assert that the research base regarding the impact of leadership in schools is particularly robust. As part of the International Successful School Principal Project (ISSPP) Gurr et al. (2005: 551) highlighted the importance and contribution of the principal to the quality of education in a school and argued that “from an Australian perspective the principal remains an important and significant figure in determining the success of a school”. In addition, the fact that Catholic school principals are generally perceived by their staff and students to be fatherly, friendly, and caring increases teacher effectiveness. Blasé et al. (2010) hold that visibility at school-related events is a mark of high-performing principals and running an open-door policy provides timely opportunities to respond to teachers’ concerns. This is important because, “when administrators offer teachers help, support, recognition, the staff apparently develops a greater sense of unity and cooperation in the total enterprise” (Newmann et al., 1989: 236).

11.3.7 Boarding facilities

With very few exceptions, Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon are all boarding. This means that students spend term time in school and only return home for holidays. This arrangement has two important consequences: firstly, it results in far more time for study and more contact time with teachers than their peers in government and lay private schools have. While government and lay private school teachers attributed the average performance of their students to distractions from noisy neighbourhoods, household chores, television and video clubs, faith school students complained that they did not have enough time to themselves. Most of their time after classes is taken up by extra classes, supervised study and homework

assignments. In this way, Catholic schools maximise learning time which research shows is one of the components that matter most for school improvement (Blasé et al., 2010), since more study results in more learning and more efficient use of time (Sadker and Sadker, 1998). Secondly, more 'contact time' with students and teachers facilitates the building of a strong school culture. It is easier in a boarding school to create an environment for both staff and students that makes it possible for important academic and social goals to be achieved. This is probably one of the reasons why even non-Catholic and Muslim parents seek admission for their children in Catholic boarding schools: they create an environment that is conducive to both academic and social development of children. In addition, most studies have found graded homework to be an effective way of improving students' achievement, (Dettmers et al., 2009) and the effect of homework seems to be strongest in the latter years of secondary school (Muijs and Reynolds, 2001). Eren and Henderson (2008) found that homework is an important determinant of student achievement, and that additional homework is most effective for high and low achievers. So more contact time and more graded homework which is corrected and fed back to the students is possibly one of the reasons Catholic school students perform well, and the Delegate of Education as well as the secretary of lay private education seemed to recognise this.

11.3.8 The influence of catholicity

The foregoing discussion on the different variables which have enhanced the academic performance of Catholic schools at end of course examinations could as well apply to Baptist and Presbyterian schools. This is consistent with the research of Morris (1998c) who argued that some or many of the same benefits of Catholic schooling seem to apply to schools provided by other religious groups. In a meta-analysis of 41 studies to determine the influence of Catholic and Protestant elementary and secondary schools, Jeynes (2008) found that both Catholic and Protestant students do better than their public school counterparts. Jeynes (2002) explains that this is so because all these schools base their educational philosophy on the Bible which emphasizes love of God and neighbour and personal holiness. These promote love and discipline which are important for properly raising children so that their students benefit academically and behaviourally. Nevertheless, the discovery that within-school practices which promote academic achievement are very similar for Catholic and the other faith schools makes it very difficult not only to separate pedagogical factors which promote academic success from religious factors, but also to separate "Catholic" from "Christian" factors.

It was remarkable that even government and lay private school teachers and students insisted that religion played a part in the academic success of faith schools. Such a view is given support by recent empirical research which suggests that religiosity, defined as frequency of church attendance and personal prayer, is a significant predictor of positive attitudes towards school in general, individual academic lessons and overall academic achievement (Morris, 1998). In support of this, Jeynes (2002) has argued that the factors that researchers point to as possibly explaining the advantages of attending a religious school explain part of, but not all of, the academic advantage of attending a religious school. For this reason it would be important to find out what role catholicity plays in the academic achievement of Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon. It is important for Catholic schools to show how different they are from other faith schools, if only to substantiate the claim that their academic achievement is down to their catholicity. In fact, McLaughlin (1999: 66) contends that “of the critical questions posed to Catholic schools today, perhaps the most fundamental, and the most difficult, concern the distinctiveness of Catholic schools”.

Proponents of Church schools claim they have a distinctive educational philosophy based on a religious understanding of the nature of humanity (Morris, 1998c). However, even among Church schools, Catholic schools claim to be guided by an educational philosophy that is distinct from all the others and that the Catholic school effect is due to something unique to them. The Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference wrote in the 2008 Pastoral Letter, ‘Vision 08’:

While they share many characteristics with other schools in offering a public service, Catholic schools seek to reflect a distinctive vision of life and a corresponding philosophy of education.

This is the catholicity of the school, the distinctive ethos rooted in Catholic religious belief since an understanding of the nature and purpose of Catholic education is intimately connected with an understanding of the church’s mission (Sullivan, 2001). It would also seem to follow logically that one would expect to find a range of distinctive values, attitudes and practices within a Catholic school that are rooted in the Catholic faith and reflect its world view to a greater or lesser extent (Morris, 1995).

According to the literature there are three models of Catholic school: the dualistic, pluralistic and holistic models. Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon seem to have adopted the holistic model which is that of the confessional school which

seeks a synthesis of faith and culture and looks to sustain and develop the faith community, together with the home and parish, to transmit a Catholic vision of life (Arthur, 1995). The holistic model of Catholic education seems to be what gives Catholic education its distinctive nature and sets it apart from other faith schools in Cameroon. Meehan (2002) found that Catholic principals emphasise the importance of holistic education in their understanding of 'distinctiveness'. This holistic model includes the concept of 'permeation' (Joseph, 2004), the notion that the Catholic faith should permeate every facet of the school. The idea of permeation is for the Catholic religion to be diffused through the disciplines represented in the curriculum so that its influence would ultimately be felt in every circumstance of life. In this way, even though Catholic schools follow the same curriculum prescribed by government for all schools, it is taught within a specifically religious context which permeates all aspects of the school's day-to-day activities (Morris, 1998). As the Alberta Conference of Catholic Bishops put it,

In a Catholic school, there is no separation between religious education and non-religious learning. The curriculum, the teaching and learning process, and the total school environment, all reflect the values of faith, hope, charity, forgiveness and justice. These values are foundational to the Gospel message of Jesus Christ, and taught by the Catholic Church.

While this integration of the Catholic faith and the curriculum and indeed every activity of the school is the basis of the Catholic school ethos in English speaking Cameroon, it seems clear that integration is a work in progress. The celebration of the Mass is definitely central to school life and Catholic faith and practice is tangible from the time students wake in the morning to the time they go to bed. This is achieved for students through Catholic prayers and devotions, retreats, spiritual conferences and talks from priests, religious men and women and chaplains. In addition, copies of the school mission statement are included in the prospectus; every school has a motto for the year (for instance, CS1 had as motto for 2008/2009: Prayer, hard work and discipline) and teachers' witness to the Gospel in and outside of the classroom ensures that school life is permeated by the Catholic faith. This, however, did not necessarily guarantee serious take-up by students as it was clear that students sometimes resisted this permeation and displayed apathy towards religious activities and devotion. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily diminish the catholicity of the school since it is accepted that the level of the individual pupils' commitment to Catholicism may vary and they may have differing levels of personal faith (Morris, 1995).

That said, the holistic model adopted by Cameroonian Catholic schools appears to have greater potential for achieving the academic, religious and social goals of the Catholic Church than the dualistic and pluralistic models. According to Morris (1997), the clear, agreed and focused mission of the holistic model would seem to help facilitate high levels of academic effectiveness to be achieved precisely because it provides the social cement which holds organisations and communities together, makes the notion of a distinctive ethos real rather than rhetorical and gives an emotional security to pupils in which they can thrive religiously, socially and intellectually. Mok and Flynn (1998) examined the effect of Catholic school culture on student achievement in a public examination. They identified both direct and indirect influences of Catholic school culture on academic achievement, after controlling for student, home and school characteristics. Morgan (2001) argued that there is evidence that there is a Catholic school effect on achievement for those who choose or who are chosen to attend Catholic schools. This is supported by evidence from Morris (1995: 80) whose study of Catholic school pupils in England who moved to a non-Catholic school at age 16 found that “a marked change in institutional ethos at 16+ has a detrimental effect on Catholic student achievement at 18 +” . He also found that the more marked the difference the greater is likely to be the 'culture shock' involved and the consequent disruption of established patterns of working and behaviour. This might be one reason why lay private and government school teachers complained that Catholic (and other faith) school students underachieved when they transferred to lay private and government schools and sometimes even when they went to university. However, while the evidence points to the fact that students in Catholic schools make greater academic gains in comparison to their counterparts in lay private and government schools because of religiosity, it does not answer the question whether this is the effect of a Catholic or Christian ethos.

11.4 Distinctive features of Catholic education

Since the three faiths involved in this research (Baptist, Catholic and Presbyterian) all lay claim to distinctive traditions and particular charisms, the Catholic Church has been concerned to clarify and emphasize the distinctiveness of its educational vision (McLaughlin et al., 1996). The Church insists that the Catholic school is an integral agent of its mission and so cannot become a generic Christian school any more than a Christian Reform school or a Mennonite school would become generic Christian schools (Mulligan, 2006). The ecclesial nature of the Catholic school is therefore at the heart of its identity (Engebretson, 2008). To explain the achievement differences between Catholic and other faith schools and therefore highlight the Catholic effect, authors have identified several features distinctive to the Catholic school. These include a greater emphasis on a core curriculum, a strong communal structure,

strong discipline, a decentralized system of governance, and a well established mission and value set (Sander, 2001; Manno and Graham, 2004). In addition, there are a number of Church documents which provide a central guide to the distinguishing characteristics of Catholic education. These include: The Declaration on Catholic Education (1965), The Catholic School (1977), Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith (1982), The Religious Dimension of Education in the Catholic School (1988) and The Catholic School at the Threshold of the Third Millennium (1997). Even then, the Church makes it clear that distinctiveness in this context does not necessarily mean uniqueness. Sullivan (2001: 63) refers to two senses of distinctiveness. The first is concerned to stress the specific nature and source of a belief or practice: it clearly belongs integrally to and plays a special role in a particular tradition. The second refers to the uniqueness of a belief or practice, being concerned to stress that it belongs exclusively to that tradition, that it is not shared with others. So when Catholic commentators talk about the distinctiveness of Catholic education they do not always imply picking out elements that are not shared with other Christian denominations.

It is beyond the ambient of this research to examine all the distinctive characteristics of Catholic education listed in the literature and in Church documents. However, the findings show that three characteristics of Catholic education were particularly stressed by Cameroonian Catholic school students, their leaders and policy makers. These include a focus on academic excellence, a strong sense of community and an emphasis on the formation of the whole person. These three characteristics resonate with some of the characteristics listed by researchers, but also with characteristics listed in Church documents. For instance, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (1988, §103) stipulates that “every student be challenged to strive for the highest possible level of formation, both human and Christian”. In addition, *The Catholic School* (1977) states that one of the distinctive characteristics of the Catholic school is its commitment to the development of the whole person (§ 35) in a community setting which recognises the centrality of Christ as guide and inspiration (§§ 53-55). It is on these three features that the discussion will now focus: a strong focus on academic achievement, a strong sense of community and an emphasis on the formation of the whole person.

11.4.1 Focus on academic achievement

Sander (2001: 19) claims that “academic achievement is not a key objective for many Catholics who send their children to Catholic schools” and that many Catholics send their children to Catholic schools because they want them to have a Catholic education. This may well be true of Catholic schools elsewhere but the findings show

that the top reason for Cameroonian parents sending their children to Catholic schools is so that they can make a good pass in the GCE. While Catholic parents, more than all other faith school parents, send their children to Catholic schools because they want a Catholic faith formation for them, this is only the third most important reason after academic results and discipline. In fact, on the whole, Catholic students, teachers and principals seem more concerned about the academic performance of their students than they are about the Catholic ethos of their schools. In this way, Catholic school practice in English speaking Cameroon is consistent with previous findings regarding academic emphasis in Catholic education. According to the literature, “an emphasis on academic pursuits, with a school and classroom environment that is structured toward these ends, is a common characteristic of Catholic secondary schools” (McLaughlin, 1999: 132).

Academic excellence is a requirement of the Catholic school by ecclesiastical law. Canon 806 (§ 2) of the Code of Canon Law stipulates that:

Those who are in charge of Catholic schools are to ensure, under the supervision of the local Ordinary, that the formation given in them is, in academic standards, at least as outstanding as that in other schools in the area.

Furthermore, according to Grace (2002: 178),

In their overall academic success, Catholic schools can claim, in the main, to be fulfilling the imperatives of the parable of the talents: that human potentiality should be developed to the highest possible degree.

That is why *The Religious Dimension of the Catholic School* (1988) demands that every student be challenged to strive for the highest possible formation.

For this reason the Catholic school “ensures that all students are held to high academic standards of achievement” (Manno and Graham, 2004: 292). Students are strongly prohibited from cutting classes and are required to be present and working hard during study time in the afternoons and in the evenings and teachers are assigned to supervise them. In addition, teachers are expected to give assignments, correct them and feed back to students. Many of the teachers gladly do this and, in some instances, students reported that a good number of teachers embraced their work as a vocation. There is a Catholic ideology that drives the work of the teachers. As Morris (1998c: 101) argues:

If Catholic teachers acknowledge, accept and respond appropriately to the specific religious character of what the Church regards as a God-given vocation, their commitment is likely to be greater than others less ideologically driven, or those with different conceptions of the nature of humanity.

The time spent on study and assignments has been proven to benefit Catholic school students academically. For instance, Bryk et al. (1993) argue that one of the factors which accounted for the superior performance of Catholic schools in the USA was demanding requirements for the amount of study undertaken and for homework assignments. In addition, Sander (2001) found that Catholic high schools in the USA have a relatively large positive effect on the amount of time spent doing homework.

11.4.2 Sense of community

The complex concept of community is currently used to describe both a physical grouping and, in some circumstances, the sense of commonly held values, attitudes and practices of particular people without necessarily implying close physical proximity. The usual and traditional model of Catholic school aims to be a community in both senses (Morris, 1997). The Alberta Conference of Catholic Bishops (1999) asserts that what makes a Catholic school distinctive is its attempt to generate a community climate in the school that is permeated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and love. Moreover, *Sharing the Light of Faith*¹ (1979 §9) says:

It is...widely recognized that Catholic schools are to be communities of faith in which the Christian message, the experience of community, worship, and social concern are integrated in the total experience of students, their parents, and members of the faculty.

Catholic scholars hold that for Catholic education to flourish there must be a proper integration of climate and community (Arthur, 1993). The point has been made that schools that communicate high levels of care and concern create a genuine basis for engaging parents, teachers and students since individuals experience a network of relationships that bind them to the school. There is a genuine effort among Catholic schools to forge a community bound together by common values, attitudes and practices. Catholic school parents are very involved with their children's schools and learning and Catholic school teachers show a high level of commitment in spite of their relatively low salaries. There is a visible engagement of Catholic school

¹ This is also called the National Catechetical Directory and was written by the United States Catholic Conference for the American Bishops and approved by Rome in 1978.

students with their studies, school work and school activities. The claim that Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon seek to create a “family spirit” – the idea of building and nurturing a school community is a major concern. Beck and Murphy (1999: 93) argue that the family metaphor is grounded in “experiences of belonging and a profound sense of mutual care”.

Bryk et al. (1993) contend that communal school organisation has three critical components: shared values, shared activities, and an ethic of caring which elicit strong teacher commitment and student engagement. This is so because when these organisational features join together, far reaching effects accrue:

Faculty are encouraged to commit their best efforts to their uncertain and taxing profession; students are motivated to engage in academic study even if its immediate value is not obvious (p.127).

The sense of shared purpose and of community which characterises most Catholic schools appears to be a crucial factor in helping the ordinary pedagogy of Catholic schools to be effective in learning outcomes. According to Vieno et al. (2005), several studies have demonstrated students’ sense of community in school as being associated with greater happiness, coping efficacy, social skills, social supports, tangible assistance, intrinsic motivation, self-esteem, academic self-efficacy, interest in academic activities and adherence to democratic norms and values. In fact Morris (1998a) holds that Catholic schools’ effectiveness in achieving higher general standards has less to do with the quality of teaching than with their functioning as a community and the effects it exerts on pupils’ personal development and behaviour. Expressed as social capital, this is seen as one of the elements in the Catholic matrix of achievement (Grace, 2002).

11.4.3 The education of the whole person

Academic success is not the primary aim of a Catholic school nor is examination success the measure of a child in a Catholic school (Arthur, 2005). To focus on examination success is to view only one element of schooling that may lead many to take this one measurement as evidence of the overall standard of performance in the wider process of Catholic schooling. It is for this reason that Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon emphasize that they aim to offer their students a holistic education. The notion of a holistic education is first mentioned in *The Declaration on Christian Education* (1965, §1, 35) but Catholic education was holistic long before the term became popular in educational jargon (Arthur, 1995). The Sacred

Congregation for Catholic Education comes back to this theme in *The Catholic School* (1977, §29) where it says:

The school must begin from the principle that its educational programme is intentionally directed to the growth of the whole person...since in Christ...all human values find their fulfilment and unity. Herein lies the specifically Catholic character of the school.

Thus, the Church emphasizes often the Catholic school's complete Christian formation of the human person as a totality, in his intellectual, affective, moral and physical dimensions (Buetow, 1988).

Catholic school teachers, principals and policy makers in English speaking Cameroon understand that this is one of the elements that constitute the Catholic 'matrix of success' but also one of the distinguishing characteristics of Catholic education. They came back to it over and over in their interviews. For instance, the principal of CS1 said:

We must guarantee that the physical, intellectual, social, moral and spiritual development of the students is adequately taken care of...we must maintain the Catholic identity [and not] just go the way of the other people.

Moreover, it is enshrined in the mission statements of all the Catholic schools in the study. For this reason Catholic schools try to provide their students not only with the resources which they need for their intellectual development but also for the spiritual, social and physical development. For instance, there is no comparison between Catholic schools in this study and the others (including faith schools) as far as sports facilities are concerned. Policy makers and principals understand that "the Church gives no sanction to an education in which the spiritual aspect is cultivated and the mind, body and senses neglected, for the formation of the human person is seen in its totality" (Arthur, 1995: 53).

This emphasis on the education of the whole person is important not only in giving explicit expression to the Catholic identity of the school (Johnson and Castelli, 2000) but also because it is one of Catholic education's greatest strengths (O'Keefe, 1999). Today, holistic education is a popular trend in the midst of various educational reforms (Chiu, 2009). In Australia particularly, but also in other Western countries, there has been a realisation that an emphasis on the cognitive dimension of learning has meant that the affective and the spiritual dimension of students' lives have often

been understated (Fisher, 2007; Buchanan and Hyde, 2008). In view of this it has been argued that the holistic approach is “a vital and complementary factor for the mental, physical and emotional well-being of young people” (De Souza et al., 2004: 172). In fact educational researchers seem to have come to the conclusion that the separation of mind, body and spirit has had an adverse effect on the education of the young (Buchanan and Hyde, 2008) and many now think that “schools must endorse holistic programs that focus on the development of the whole child and the interconnectedness among mind, body, and soul” (Bosacki, 1999: 95). In this way, research in education has not only vindicated the Catholic philosophy of education as involving the whole person but also highlighted the benefits of such an education to the individual. Such an education does not only produce a rounded personality at the end of the educational process; it enhances the process itself. As Buchanan and Hyde (2008: 311) argue, “holistic learning which takes into account the cognitive, affective and spiritual dimensions has the potential to enable students to gain real knowledge and understanding in the learning and teaching process”. In the experience of Burn (2001: 46), “...if the focus is on the spiritual, moral, physical, mental and academic development of each individual child in the school, then examination results can almost take care of themselves”.

It is possible that other faith schools in Cameroon emphasize academic excellence, a sense of community and the education of the whole person, but Catholic writers insist that these are traditional Catholic characteristics of education. Since Catholic schools are like the other Christian schools which claim a distinctive philosophy of education based on a religious understanding of the nature of humanity, it is difficult to separate from the ‘Catholic matrix of achievement’ what is Catholic and what is Christian. From a review of a number of studies on Catholic education, Grace (2002: 177) holds that

This matrix is constituted by a host of variables including the prior achievement of students, the academic leadership of headteachers, the quality and vocational commitment of teachers, the influence of strong community and parental support (social capital), Catholicity as a form of cultural capital, demanding and focused academic programmes, the influence of structured environments, student engagement with the aims of the school and an inspirational ideology and clear sense of an educational mission.

As stated earlier, it is clear that Baptist and Presbyterian schools in Cameroon would easily lay claim to most, if not all, of these variables. This is not unique to Cameroon, of course. In announcing the Year of Catholic Education for England and Wales in

September 2010, Bishop Malcolm McMahon (2010) admitted that many schools which are not Catholic also exhibit the same characteristics as Catholic schools. In spite of this, Catholic writers continue to insist that a Catholic matrix of achievement does exist. Catholic schools are fundamentally different from other Christian schools and, though they may all use the same or similar building blocks, they build in different ways. As Sullivan (2001) argues, the distinctiveness of Catholic education is not premised upon special building blocks, each of which is peculiar to Catholicism, as upon a particular “configuration of characteristics, which mesh and interlock with one another” (p. 63). As with previous studies it is difficult to determine which aspects of Catholic education lead to these higher rates of success. However, while it continues to remain unclear what precisely is responsible for the large effects there is an increasing body of evidence in support of their existence (Vella, 1999). Meanwhile, Catholic scholars continue to argue that favourable Catholic school effects on academic achievement are at least partly the result of the specific nature of Catholic education (Bryk et al., 1993; Morris, 1997; Sander and Krautmann, 1995; Vella, 1999; Grace, 2002). Besides, “there appears to be a persistent and positive association between Catholic schooling and academic achievement on an international level” (Arthur, 2005: 154). It seems “legitimate to speculate that the interpretations of Catholic principles may have an influence on the school’s level of academic achievement without being able to determine or demonstrate an exact causal relationship” (Morris, 1997: 390). In fact, whatever conclusions are drawn with regard to the effects of catholicity on the academic performance of Catholic school students in English speaking Cameroon can only be speculative as there is no hard evidence to identify causal factors with any certainty.

11.5 Research Question Three: Catholic Schools and Other Educational Outcomes

Even though the first two research questions focused on the academic achievement of Catholic school students in English speaking Cameroon, that should not be interpreted to mean that academic achievement is the be all and end all of Catholic education. The Vatican document, *The Religious Dimension of the Catholic School* (1988, §104) warns against an excessive concern for academic achievement. Quite simply, the dignity and worth of persons cannot be measured by academic results (Brick, 1999), nor can academic achievement and the development of vocational and technical skills constitute the totality of education. In keeping with its philosophy of the education of the whole person, Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon claim to prepare their students not only intellectually but also morally, spiritually, socially and physically. This claim was repeated over and over by students, teachers, principals and Catholic education policy makers. As the discussion in the preceding

section made clear, holistic education is one of the hallmarks of Catholic education worldwide. In fact, Grace (2002) contends that it can be argued that the prime purpose for the existence of Catholic schools is the spiritual, moral and social formation of young people within the specificities of Catholic religious culture. This formation, according to Catholic educators in English speaking Cameroon, benefits not only the individual but also contributes to the building of a democratic Cameroon since education also entails forming of the basic disposition for citizenship in a democratic and pluralistic society (Bryk et al., 1993). Hargreaves and Fullan (1998: 17) argue that schools need to develop more 'social capital' or 'civic community' "to help produce citizens who have the commitment, skills and dispositions to foster norms of civility, compassion, fairness, justice, sharing, trust, collaborative engagement, and constructive critiques in conditions of great social diversity". Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon claim to be doing this, not only by providing spiritual, moral and social formation to their students but also by fostering the common good of society and preparing their students for a democratic Cameroon.

11.5.1 Catholic schools and spiritual development

It should be clear from the previous section that Catholic education in English speaking Cameroon is more than the transmission of knowledge. It has a wider purpose that is concerned with the development of the whole person. This includes spiritual well-being and development. For this reason, Catholic schools seek to promote the spiritual development of their students by providing chapels and prayers spaces, chaplains, priests and religious, and connecting the students to their work, their environment, their friends and to God through catechesis, prayer, retreats, meditation and the celebration of the sacraments. In fact, Watson (2000) argues that education begins with the premise that *everyone* has a spiritual nature that can be developed. Spiritual well-being has been conceptualised as harmonious relationships - with self, others, God, and the world. It is a fundamental dimension of people's overall health and well-being, permeating and integrating all the other dimensions of health (Fisher, 2001: 100). Education, therefore, has assumed both that spirituality is a universal, naturalistic human attribute, which is experientially based, and that this inherent spirituality can be developed by general, naturalistic (classroom) methods (Watson, 2000). In this way, education for spiritual development currently favours a naturalistic, or secular humanist model of spirituality based in shared human experience. The spiritual focuses on contemplation about ourselves, our place in the cosmos, our responsibilities and the meaning we give to our lives and experiences (Bigger, 1999).

However, although spirituality can be identified in an unrestricted context, the possession of those of declared religious beliefs and those of none, it is predicated on some sort of distinct culture and special context (Johnson and Castelli, 2000: 77). In other words, spirituality can only be developed by buying into one of those cognitive understandings - that is, a particular belief system or world-view" (Watson, 2000: 96). The nature of spirituality in a Catholic school is supported by the centrality of religious education and by collective worship, the regular celebration of the sacraments, the prayer life and, crucially, by generating 'spaces for reflection' against the environmental press of constant busyness (Grace, 2002). The question for this research was not so much whether Catholic faith and practice is apparent in Catholic schools (because it certainly is) but whether this has any effect on the lives of the students. All those involved in the research agree that Catholic school efforts at spiritual development have an impact on the lives of a great number of students even if some resist it. The Catholic Bishop, for instance, said:

There are significant ways in which I would say the spiritual and religious formation stays on in the lives of those who go through the Catholic school... there are obviously very clear signs that there are students who have gone through because of the spiritual and the moral formation that they received. They have been an example; they have stood out in society and they are men (sic) of courage and a real witness to convince us that it is important to keep on with those schools.

Greeley (1998) has argued that the outcomes of Catholic spiritual, moral and social formation in schooling will only become fully apparent in the mature adult lives and behaviours of Catholic men and women. The ideal way, therefore, to assess and evaluate these outcomes of Catholic education would be by the oral historical accounts of those who attended these schools. For the moment, Catholic students, teachers, principals, and policy makers all seem convinced that Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon nurture the spiritual development of those who go through these schools and that this has a positive effect on most of them in later life. However, as Catholic schools seek to foster the spiritual development of their students, they must watch that students do not become disaffected by religious practices perceived as boring impositions from which they look forward to breaking loose at the end of their school life.

11.5.2 Catholic schools and the common good

From the point of view of the academic contribution which Catholic schools make, it could be argued that these schools serve the general interest of the state. Asked

what contribution Catholic education had made to the building up of the Cameroonian nation, the Bishop answered:

I think one of the major ways which Catholic schools are contributing has been the quality of education...the quality of education. Numbers, maybe...but the good quality of education and also its presence in the areas where public education was not and would not even be readily available.

The claim about the provision of quality education was corroborated by all Catholic school stakeholders involved in this study. It is their conviction that the quality of education received at Catholic schools does not only serve the individual recipient but also serves the whole nation since the individual would contribute positively to national development. In this regard, MacMullen (2007: 16) argues that the delivery of top quality education to one child is “primarily a boon not to the individual recipient but rather to all other persons in the state: the existence of an appropriately educated citizenry is a kind of public good, which is of value to all”.

In addition, it is clear that Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon offer their educational services not only to Catholics but to students of other faiths and none. In this way, “it can be said that the academic achievements of such schools are making an important contribution to the common good and well-being of society and not simply to the advancement of the Catholic community” (Grace, 2002: 178). The Catholic school contribution to the common good is not limited to the academic domain, since schools are concerned with more than just the acquisition of knowledge (Bigger, 1999). The values which the Catholic school inculcates in its students are an important contribution as well. As the Alberta Conference of Catholic Bishops said:

The goal of Catholic education is nothing less than a truly holistic formation of persons who will be living witnesses to the faith, grounded in values that will inspire them to live as contributing members of society for the common good of all.

What those outside the Catholic educational community do not understand is how significant a social justice and common good mission has become in modern Catholic educational practice (Grace, 2003:155).

11.5.3 Catholic schools and preparation of students for life after school

Claxton (2008: vi) has argued that the purpose of education is to prepare young people for the future and that schools should be helping young people to develop the capacities they will need to thrive. Catholic education has always understood this. One of the important aims of every Catholic school is to prepare young people for adult life – as good neighbours in their local communities, as responsible citizens of their country and as active contributors to a wider world community (O’Keeffe and Zipfel, 2007). *The Religious Dimension of a Catholic School* (§100) stipulates that Catholic schools must prepare students for the responsibilities of an adult member of society. Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon, like the other faith schools in this study, teach their students to work hard, to respect time, to keep their surroundings clean and to be honest and responsible, all of which values they would need as citizens and future leaders. The values of hard work, honesty and integrity are inculcated in students to underpin whatever gains they might make in their intellectual and professional lives. In fact, Catholic education has generally emphasised the value of a secondary education for successful participation in society and promoted the training of pupils as moral, patriotic citizens (Collins, 2005). In a country like Cameroon which has topped Transparency International’s list of the world’s most corrupt countries twice (1998, 1999), the Catholic schools’ *Fight Against Corruption Through Schools (FACTS)* project is a very practical way of preparing citizens and future leaders to help rid the country of this canker. In this light Polite (1992) argues that a Catholic school in a plight-stricken community is more than a mere bright spot, it prepares its students by providing the tools needed to attack social injustices intellectually, economically, and spiritually.

Following this line of thought, it could be said that Catholic schools provide their students with an ‘education with character’. This ‘education with character’, according to Arthur (2003: 2) “has as its goal to instil certain virtues so that they become internal principles guiding both the pupil’s behaviour and decision-making for operation within a democracy”. In the study of Catholic schools in the US, Bryk et al. (1993) also found that Catholic schools sought to shape the kind of people students would become. They engaged in “character building” (p. 134). In Cameroon, this is the part of ‘citizenship education’ normally referred to as ‘moral education’ and “moral education is generally accepted as a critical objective of education in Cameroon” (Tambo, 2000: 243). It is therefore clear that in a young democracy like Cameroon, the virtues which Catholic schools are seeking to instil in their students are absolutely crucial in preparing them to work and lead in the future. Hard work, honesty, integrity and responsibility all foster justice, and the work for justice is an essential expression of the evangelising mission of the Church and Catholic

education (Gutierrez, 2009). In the present circumstances it can only be welcome in the Cameroonian education system.

11.5.4 Catholic schools and community cohesion

Cameroon is a nation of about 18 million inhabitants who come from over 250 tribes and speak as many languages. In addition to that there is a mixture of Christian, Muslim and indigenous religions. It is understandable then that the government has made national unity one of its main priorities. Like in many other multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies around the world it is the contention that society is fragile, constantly in danger of splintering along ethnic, social class, and religious lines. Recently, opponents of faith-based schools have argued that only the common public school can create a basis for national unity and mutual tolerance and that faith-based schools are a constant threat to the national project, undermining it in the innocent minds of youth and sowing the seeds of mutual antipathy or at least unbridgeable miscommunication (Glenn, 2009).

The findings from this study do not corroborate this view of faith schools and of the Catholic school. As already noted, most Catholic schools are boarding and the students spend most of the year at school with friends who come from different tribal, cultural and religious backgrounds. In spite of that the students live like brothers and sisters. One of the girls in CS2 said:

And we are taught to live in a sisterly manner...that's one thing I have learned here. You are taught to live in this school and to know that everybody is your sister. You see a Form One student passing...she has a dirty gown, you stop her not to shout at her but to ask her why she is like that. You try to follow her and to find out how you can help her better (L6, Student 3).

In most of these schools the only way of knowing what tribe a student comes from is from their name. This, according to the Bishop, is an important contribution which Catholic and other faith schools are making to national unity in Cameroon. He said:

To learn to live with others from different backgrounds...various backgrounds, rich and poor, tribally and socially...a great variety of students that you live with in the same environment, it does impact on their lives. I think that is the most striking experience of those in boarding schools...that they can live in that way. And later on it helps...their adaptation to the world, their outlook on life.

Schools are probably the most fertile sites in contemporary society for helping students move through ‘puberty’ (a state in which they are unmindful of the commonwealth) to citizenship (Parker, 2008). However, if schools “are to teach children how they should live in common, they must themselves be communities. The school must be a microcosm of society – not as it is, but as it *should be*” (Bryk et al., 1993: 289). It has been noted earlier that the idea of community and the quality of relationships within the schools is clearly of central importance to the religious and educational goals of Catholic schools. The social skills which students learn in a Catholic school environment have a great impact on their lives later on and on the lives of their families and communities. As Muijs and Reynolds (2005: 130) argue,

Social skills are not just important in and of themselves, but are also linked to other desirable outcomes. For example, among adolescents a lack of social skills has been found to be related to depression and anxiety...and to low academic achievement.

Later on, in their adult working lives, these students have been seen to work together in their ex-students’ Associations for the good of their schools and on charitable projects. The evidence from students, head teachers and policy makers in Catholic and other faith schools points to the fact that, instead of sowing seeds of divisiveness in the community and in the country, Catholic schools actually help to build bridges across tribal, cultural and religious divides. Thus the findings agree with the view that “the concern that children and youth who attend confessional schools will as a result be antisocial, intolerant, or disloyal has no serious empirical basis; it is a sort of ‘urban legend’ that is repeated over and over” (Glenn, 2009: 251-2). Moreover, it is part of the philosophy of Catholic education that Catholic schools should build bridges in a pluralistic, multi-cultural society. *The Catholic School* (1977, §57) says,

A Catholic school in itself is far from being divisive or presumptuous. It does not exacerbate differences, but rather aids cooperation and contact with others. It opens itself to others and respects their ways of thinking and living.

Grace (2003) argues that much of the current political and public debate about faith-based schooling has been conducted at the level of prejudiced and generalised assertion and counter-assertion with little reference to research. He argues further that modern forms of Catholic education are, at their best, providing religious, moral and social formation which is respectful of the spiritual and intellectual autonomy of students, open to debate, dialogue and scepticism and sensitive to the

responsibilities of good citizenship and to the traditions of other faiths. Thus, instruction in Catholic schools is not narrow, divisive, or sectarian, but rather is informed by a generous conception of democratic life in a post-modern society (Bryk, 1996).

11.5.5 Catholic schools and upward social mobility

One of the ways in which Catholic schools have contributed to the common good in many countries has been by providing good quality education to poor and underprivileged young men and women who would otherwise not have been able to have a decent education and make it in life. As Grace (2003) contends, many studies on Catholic schools show that Catholic educational provision appears to have good outcomes for poor and disadvantaged students. Writing from an international perspective, Grace (2009) asserts that Catholic schools provide considerable educational, moral and social benefits for poor and marginalised students and thereby make important contributions to the common good of the societies in which they are located. The main reason why Catholic schools focus on the poor and disadvantaged of society is that “the preferential option for the poor” is a defining characteristic of Catholic social educational activity (Grace, 2002). *The Catholic School* (1977, §58) makes it crystal clear that the first beneficiaries of Catholic education are the poor.

Faithful to the teaching of the Church, Catholic schools in the industrialised world have provided upward social mobility to poor and disadvantaged children for centuries. In the US, for instance, Bryk et al. (1993) have shown empirically the substantial contribution made by Catholic schools to community resourcing and educational progress in American inner-cities. It has also been shown that such provision has been at the service of students who are not Catholic, especially from Black and Hispanic disadvantaged groups. However, Gutierrez (2009: 146) has argued that while Catholic education may provide social mobility to the poor and disadvantaged in the industrialised world, this hardly applies to Third World countries where its reputable high quality education is barely accessible to the poor.

What Gutierrez (2009) says of the Philippines is true of Cameroon where, due to the expensive cost of Catholic educational institutions, the majority of the students come from middle to high-income families. Grace (2009) acknowledges that financing the Catholic educational mission in changing circumstances emerges as a major problem for Catholic schooling internationally. One reason for these difficult financial circumstances is the withdrawal of the ‘strategic subsidy’ by many religious Congregations and teaching brotherhoods. This strategic subsidy consisted of

providing the physical plant, the personnel, the cultural, spiritual and financial capital to facilitate the mission, and above all, the inspirational ideology and vocational role models which constituted a distinctive Catholic educational *habitus*. In New Zealand, for instance, the low fees of the Christian and Marist Brothers and the Mercy and Josephite schools gave access to secondary education and upward social mobility to the sons and daughters of the working-class who constituted the majority of New Zealand Catholics (Collins, 2005). But, as this 'strategic subsidy' has declined over time, and as many secular governments will not fund faith-based schools, there has been an inevitable increase in the costs of providing Catholic schooling as more lay people have to be employed at higher salary levels (Grace, 2009).

Catholic education authorities in English speaking Cameroon find this a very frustrating situation as some of their teachers can not afford to send their own children to the schools in which they are teaching. The Catholic Education Secretary expressed this dilemma as follows:

Without wanting to do it, we are automatically eliminating some poor parents from our schools... without wanting to do it, because we are...as I said, we are victims of circumstances.

It could be said that one of the cherished outcomes of Catholic education could not be verified in Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon. While neither the schools nor the Church is responsible for the failure to achieve this outcome, it is nevertheless a situation which demands much creative and revolutionary thinking if the Catholic school is not going to become an instrument for the widening of the gap between rich and poor.

Fortunately, the Congregation for Catholic Education realises that this situation makes the achievement of one of the cherished outcomes of Catholic education impossible and that something needs to be done. *The Catholic School* (1977, §58) says:

This situation is of great concern to those responsible for Catholic education...Since education is an important means of improving the social and economic condition of the individual and of peoples, if the Catholic school were to turn its attention exclusively or predominantly to those of the wealthier social classes, it could be contributing towards maintaining their privileged position, and could thereby continue to favour a society which is unjust.

The philosophical principles of Catholic education are not narrowly confessional; they are broadly pedagogical and therefore can be of wide interest to a multicultural and pluralist country (D'Souza, 2003). In addition, Catholic education has over the years increasingly emphasised the values of education for 'moral citizenship' and successful participation in society (Collins, 2005). Far from being seen as anti-democratic, Catholic schools are now being viewed in many quarters as making a valuable contribution to the development of citizens and to the common good in a pluralist and democratic society, but also to be in certain respects succeeding in achieving these aims more effectively than their public school counterparts (Bryk et al., 1993). The National Catholic Education Association (NCEA: 2010)² chose as theme for the celebration of Catholic Schools Week 2010, *Catholic Schools: Dividends for Life*. According to Karen Ristau, NCEA president, this theme is meant to remind parents

...that the dividends of a Catholic school education – students prepared in faith, knowledge, morals and discipline – last a lifetime. There is no better way to invest in a child's future – or the future of the world.

This is the kind of education which Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon purport to be providing for Cameroonian children of all tribes and cultures and faiths. The problem with the educational mission of Catholic schools is that it is easier to judge their effectiveness with regard to test scores and examination results than it is to judge the invisible processes of personal formation. Grace (2002: 51) describes this situation beautifully when he says:

While the production of test scores and examination results has a degree of visibility and concreteness, the formation of 'good Catholics' and of young people with greater spiritual, moral and civic maturity is less visible and tangible. The ultimate judgement of the effectiveness of Catholic schooling in this dimension can only be found in the subsequent lives, beliefs and practices of those adults who experienced a Catholic education. The invisible pedagogy is only made visible in the long term.

It is for this reason that Catholic school students and educators point to their ex-students' associations, to ex-students who bring their children as well as those of

² NCEA is the largest private, professional education association in the world. Founded in 1904, the association's membership represents more than 200,000 educators serving more than 7 million students at all levels of Catholic education in the USA.

their relatives and friends to be educated in their former schools, and to Catholic school ex-students in positions of responsibility in the Church and in the nation as evidence that even the invisible pedagogy of Catholic schools (though impossible to measure) bears dividends that last a lifetime. Catholic schools realise that a school might be getting excellent academic results but not developing responsible young adults ready to play their part in the wider community (Bigger, 1999), and that is why so much effort is expended to develop students who are both democratically enlightened and democratically engaged. Considering the academic gains that accrue to Catholic school students and all the other non-academic outcomes discussed above, it would seem these schools are doing a great job and that Catholic education is really a great way to invest in a child's future and in the future of the Cameroonian nation.

11.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed the findings which the research on the educational outcomes of Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon threw up. These findings point to the fact that even though Catholic schools are no longer academic best performers, a good number of Catholic schools are still doing very well. Socio-economic background and prior attainment can explain some of the achievement of these schools but not all and a value-added approach to comparing schools (even though not without limitations) would be better than the current practice of ranking schools according to raw scores. There are certain practices that appear to be responsible for the Catholic schools dip in academic performance, chief among which are a relative lack of teaching resources, an increase in class and school populations, poor principal quality and high turnover of principals and less focus on teacher preparation, induction and continuing professional development. What appears to be helping the Catholic school success is relatively better parental involvement and interest, pastoral care, better quality of teaching and learning, boarding facilities and above all the catholicity of the schools. In addition to academic achievement Catholic schools appear to be better at other educational outcomes like nurturing the spiritual development of pupils, promoting the common good of society, enhancing community cohesion and preparing pupils for life after school. However, they do not seem to be providing upward social mobility to their pupils as is the case with Catholic schools in the industrialised world. The next chapter presents the conclusions which have been drawn from these findings on Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon.

12 CHAPTER TWELVE: CONCLUSIONS

This study set out to investigate the educational outcomes of Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon. In the foregoing chapter, these outcomes have been shown to be both academic and non-academic as well as tangible and intangible (Grace, 2002), and achieved through visible and invisible pedagogies (Bernstein, 1997). The intangible outcomes are very difficult or even impossible to measure while the tangible ones (academic performance) can only be measured by the crude means of examination league tables. Nevertheless, it is possible to draw some conclusions as to how far Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon have been able to achieve their declared outcomes and how the achievement of some of these outcomes can be better guaranteed for the future. The presentation of these conclusions follows the same structure as the discussion of research questions, namely it addresses the academic achievement of Catholic schools, the reasons for the achievement or lack of achievement in this area, the role of catholicity in this achievement and the non-academic outcomes of Catholic education respectively.

12.1 Academic achievement of Catholic schools

The research literature that looks at Catholic school outcomes has been largely positive (Guerra, 2000). However, while the perception among many Catholic educators is that Catholic schools achieve better academic results than all other school types, this perception was not verified in the findings of this study. It is true that Catholic schools do better than all other school types in the first few years of the ten years for which the examination results were collected for this study. After that Presbyterian schools perform better at examinations and are currently the overall best performers in academic achievement, following GCE results at the Ordinary and Advanced Levels. However, that does not necessarily imply that Catholic schools are not achieving their academic goals, only that they do not seem to be achieving these goals to the same degree in every school. The reason for the slump in Catholic schools' average performance is that while a cluster of Catholic schools continues to achieve relatively superior academic outcomes, some others have performed quite poorly so that Catholic schools' overall performance has been dragged down by the poorly performing schools. It would seem that as Catholic schools have increased and their populations doubled in some instances, the quality of teaching and learning has slipped. According to the findings, teacher training and morale, the unavailability of teaching resources, the increase in school and class sizes, and lack of principal preparation and stability all seem to be the culprits.

12.1.1 Teacher training and morale

Most Catholic teachers are hardworking and dedicated to their work but, like their Baptist and Presbyterian colleagues, most have not undergone professional teacher training. Unlike them, however, they receive little or no pre-service preparation, and induction and continuing professional development are poor while in some schools, teacher support depends on the heads of department. It is clear that even though Presbyterian and Baptist school teachers are not trained, they receive better pre-service preparation, induction, and continuing professional development than Catholic school teachers. Apart from that, Catholic teachers and parents all complained about the paltry salaries which Catholic school teachers are paid and which teachers think is not good for their morale. MacBeath (1999) argues that for a long time now, school effectiveness researchers have been edging closer to the discovery that the single most important ingredient of the good school is the good teacher. The teacher's behaviour in the classroom impinges directly on the experiences of pupils and on their attainment. That is why "the quality and morale of teachers is absolutely central to the well-being of pupils and their learning" (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1998: 4). The fact that Catholic education authorities have lowered their focus on the preparation, induction and continuing professional development of their teachers has a direct negative effect on the quality of teaching and learning in the schools. If, as research shows, teaching and learning are the main determinants of enhanced educational outcomes and achievement (Harris, 1999; Blasé et al., 2010) then ensuring a high quality of teachers in schools has to be a top priority of any educational authority. As Lawrence (1999) argues, it is clear from all the research that teachers are in a powerful position to influence children's self-esteem and in turn influence their achievements and behaviour. It would therefore seem logical to conclude that lower teacher morale and a lack of attention to the quality of the teacher has jeopardized the academic achievement of students in the Catholic school. Ristau and Reif (2000) argue that preparing effective teachers for Catholic schools should be a priority in Catholic education circles. This research agrees with that position especially with regards to Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon.

12.1.2 Non-availability of teaching resources

To make matters worse for Catholic schools, teaching resources are not available to the same degree as they used to be in the days when these schools enjoyed a 'strategic subsidy' from foreign missionary bodies and substantial government subventions. Students still enjoy the advantage over lay private and government school students of being provided with all their textbooks but some schools have begun to change policy and provide only books they consider essential. In addition,

language rooms have ceased to exist and libraries are not as regularly updated as they were some years back, probably because the schools lack the finances to fund these projects. This, too, obviously has had a negative impact on the quality of teaching and learning since, “in developing teaching and learning the availability of resources is key” (Foskett and Lumby, 2003: 29). It cannot be argued that computers and the Internet have been introduced into the schools and have thus rendered the other resources superfluous. Some of these resources (like language labs and libraries) cannot be completely replaced by computers and the Internet. Besides, even where computers and Internet access are available, it is clear that students do not always make use of these for their homework and research. Educational research has established that teaching resources are indispensable for enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. According to MacBeath (1999), to have the right resources to hand can be liberating for both teacher and pupil. It would be incomprehensible in an age of technology if the availability and effective use of resources were not related to how, and how well, young people learn. Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon need to re-think their policies towards teaching resources.

12.1.3 Bigger schools and larger class sizes

Hargreaves and Fullan (1998) argue that the bigger schools get, the more impersonal they become. This seems to be the case for Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon where the tendency recently has been to increase both school and class sizes. Teachers are finding it more and more difficult to pay attention to individual students, to give them assignments, correct them and give feedback to students. Focus group discussions made it clear that Catholic school students felt valued when teachers called them by name. This is a basic but often overlooked element in creating good classroom relations; not knowing students’ names can create the impression that the teacher does not care about his or her students as people (Muijs and Reynolds, 2001). Besides, a focus on achievement for every student is vital to their academic achievement. When Catholic schools increase school and class sizes as has been the recent trend, they make this focus on achievement for individual students impossible and thus compromise the quality of teaching and learning in schools. Furthermore, bigger schools and larger class sizes compromise the quality of pastoral care in Catholic schools especially because the increase in school and class size invariably leads to an increase in the teacher/student ratio. If, as research shows, true caring for students is the heart of schooling, for enhancing happiness in school and providing the best chance of success across the curriculum (Marland, 2001), it would seem that sacrificing pastoral care for economic reasons can only be detrimental to students’ academic achievement and their development into mature and responsible adults.

It is true that research on school and class size has shown that the relationship between school size and positive outcomes for students and staff is very complex. Very small secondary schools may not always be favourable places for adolescents to develop, either intellectually or socially. However, Lee (2000) suggests that there is a good balance point between schools that are too big and schools that are too small. In her view, schools should be large enough to offer a solid curriculum and small enough that each child is known well, and “this balance point fell into the 600 to 900 student range” (p.340). It is for this reason that education policymakers in the industrialised world are now insisting on smaller class sizes (Witte et al., 2000) and creating ‘schools within schools’ where such schools are thought to be too large (Lee, 2000). As far as smaller class sizes are concerned, most educators agree that more overall time is spent on instruction in smaller classes, that more individuation occurs in smaller classes, and that less time is spent on disciplining and other non-instructional activities, so that smaller classes beneficially increase time-on-task (Witte and LaFollette, 2000). This confirms the conclusion of this research that bigger schools and class sizes compromises quality education for Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon.

12.1.4 The quality of principals

The fact that most Catholic principals are not prepared for the jobs and do not receive adequate in-service training is not good for the quality of teaching and learning in their schools. Harris (2003: 9) states that “it has been consistently argued that the quality of headship matters in determining the motivation of teachers and the quality of teaching which takes place in the classroom.” For this reason, it has been an educational axiom for the last three decades in England that the quality of leadership is a critical factor in determining a school’s effectiveness (Morris, 2010; Holligan et al., 2006). Further, “the issue of adequate, timely, effective, and ongoing professional development is critical not only for principals currently in the position, but also for those aspiring to the principalship as a way of preparing them for the multi-faceted demands of the role” (Cranston et al., 2003: 186). In view of all this, appointing priests or religious with very little or no experience of school to head schools seems to be a recipe for failure and not even the lay private schools take such a leap in the dark. To confound issues for Catholic school heads, they are moved around too frequently so that learning on the job is also rendered very difficult. In short, the quality of the head is so compromised it is surprising how students continue to do well in some of the schools since “the potential of leadership to influence pupil and school performance remains unequivocal” (Harris, 2003: 9). In his recent research on Catholic school leadership in England Morris (2010) found

that conventional wisdom and school effectiveness research connecting high quality school leadership with high standards of education does not seem to have applied to the Catholic school sector in the way one might expect, but could not say why this is so. It might be that the Catholic school ethos makes up in some cases for the lack of high quality leadership. Until this puzzle is solved, it can only be argued, in the light of school effectiveness research, that a lack of attention to the quality of leadership in Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon is one of the factors that have led to a drop in the academic achievement of the students. It is only in one of the dioceses in English speaking Cameroon that adequate consideration is being given to the quality of the school head, and this appears to be bearing fruit as most of the best performing Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon come from this diocese. Consequently, this research agrees with Guerra (2000) that there seems little doubt that the quality of leadership will have a decisive influence on the future of Catholic schools but it will be the responsibility of the Catholic leadership to find, encourage, train and support those who show competence and commitment to the Catholic school vision.

It is for the reasons given above that Catholic schools have lost their position as overall best academic performers to Presbyterian schools. However, it is clear from the research that a number of Catholic schools continue to perform consistently well at both the Ordinary and Advanced levels of the GCE. These are the schools that perpetuate the perception that Catholic schools are the best in the country even though proportionate data on school examination performance shows they are not. The next task is to find out what drives the success of these high flying Catholic schools. To begin with, the findings point to the conclusion that both 'within school' and 'beyond school' factors are responsible for the success of the schools. Beyond school factors include the socio-economic background of students, their prior achievement and strong parental support. On the other hand, within school factors include the quality of teaching and learning, the academic leadership of principals, the relative availability of teaching resources, pastoral care of pupils, a boarding environment and a positive school culture. Above all, Catholic school authorities attribute their schools' academic success to a distinctive Catholic ethos.

12.2 Factors responsible for the success of Catholic schools

12.2.1 Beyond school factors

Regarding the socio-economic background of Catholic school students, the findings agree with Sander (2001) that Catholic school students are the products of families with higher levels of educational attainment and income. This is true also of the

Baptist and Presbyterian school students because all three faith school types provide boarding facilities and their tuition is very high. There is consensus among education researchers that home background is a crucial determinant of academic achievement (Harris, 1999; Macbeth, 1989; Gibson et al., 1998; Woods and Levacic, 2002; Anyon et al., 2008). Parents' income, social class and levels of education influence educational experience and outcomes between children from various backgrounds. In the case of faith schools in English speaking Cameroon, and especially of Catholic schools, the fact that most of their students come from families with higher levels of income and educational attainment gives them an edge over schools whose composition is predominantly children from disadvantaged backgrounds. While there is nothing deterministic about this link between context and examination performance, and individual pupils can do well whatever their circumstances, nonetheless it is a simple fact that the more socially disadvantaged the community served by a school, the very much more likely it is that the school will appear to underachieve (Gibson et al., 1998). It is now generally agreed in educational circles that school-level poverty has a deleterious effect on student achievement (Hallinan and Kubitschek, 2010).

Secondly, because schools in Cameroon are not restricted to recruit from particular catchment areas, Catholic schools can admit students from all over the country and beyond. As a result, it is not only students who enjoy a high socio-economic background who get admitted to Catholic schools, it is also those who distinguish themselves in the entrance examinations set by these schools. The fact of the matter is that the top performing Catholic schools are also very highly selective schools. These schools have established such a strong reputation for academic excellence that they are always oversubscribed and therefore have the flexibility to select not only the best brains but also those whose parents are capable of paying the tuition fees. School effectiveness research shows that positive selection at intake and prior attainment have a huge influence on results at the end of course examinations (Thomas et al. 1997; Harris, 1999; West & Hind, 2003). The selection at intake into Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon which focuses on their prior attainment definitely contributes to the academic success of these schools at end of course examinations. This is not to deny or belittle the work which these schools do, only to acknowledge that positive selection plays a role in their achievement. This is consistent with the educational theory that schools do better at raising student test scores when the school has a sufficiently large number of students who serve as academic role models to their peers and who set positive norms of achievement (Hallinan and Kubitschek, 2010).

Finally, because Catholic school parents are generally more educated and earn more than lay private and government school parents, they are more likely to have the know-how and the means to support their children's educational careers. This is important as both school-initiated and parent-initiated parental involvement and support have been found to influence the cognitive and social development of children (Lemmer and Van Wyk, 2004; Driessen et al., 2005). This is the reason why educators in many countries and across many educational systems are now seeking to involve parents in the education of their children and to get them support these children (Harris and Goodall, 2008). Some education writers believe that parental interest and support are even more important for academic outcomes than poverty, school environment and the influence of peers (Every Child Matters, 2003). Parental interest and support is thus a major influence on the attainment of Catholic school students in English speaking Cameroon, a finding which is consistent with research in education (Feinstein and Symons, 1999).

Even though 'beyond school' factors are important for the academic achievement of students, they do not operate alone. There now exists a wealth of research from the school effectiveness research field to confirm that schools do matter and do have major effects upon children's development (Harris, 1999; Harris and Bennett, 2001; Easen and Bolden, 2005). It is clear that the outcomes of schooling are not totally determined by their intakes (Thomas, 1998). So the fact that Catholic school students enjoy a higher socio-economic status, have better prior attainment and enjoy better parental support gives them an advantage especially over students in the government and lay private sectors, but does not dispense those schools of the work which they are supposed to be doing. 'Beyond school' factors have to combine with 'within school' factors to produce the desired educational outcomes. It is to these within school factors that the discussion now turns.

12.2.2 Within school factors

School effectiveness and school improvement researchers have insisted that the most important aspect of any school is the quality of teaching and learning that goes on there (Davies, 2006). Even though Catholic teachers are not trained and continuing professional development does not seem to be a priority, there is a good number of teachers in Catholic schools who are very dedicated to their work and their students. Their students describe their teachers' dedication and commitment in terms of vocation, and some of them are so good they are sometimes called upon to assist their colleagues in lay private and government schools. Especially in the selecting Catholic schools, teaching and learning are enhanced by a good relationship between teachers and students, an ability to focus on individual

students and their needs (thanks to manageable school and class sizes), and the relative availability of teaching resources. In CS2, for instance, where the quality and availability of teaching resources is the envy of neighbouring non-Catholic schools, the principal is working hard to improve on what is already available. On the other hand, while it is possible in CS3 for teachers to ask students to read and summarise novels and hand in the summaries for correction and feedback, it is practically impossible to do this in CS4 because of the numbers. So the quality of teaching and learning, especially in the selecting schools is enhanced by the commitment of teachers, the availability of teaching resources, the willingness of students to learn and to excel and a comparatively lower teacher/student ratio.

Furthermore, teaching and learning is supported by a strong discipline structure and good pastoral care. Education writers seem to agree that even where the quality of teaching and learning is very good, if this is not supported by good discipline and good pastoral care academic achievement would be compromised (Luiselli et al., 2005; Davies, 2006). Discipline and pastoral care are in turn enhanced by manageable numbers in the classroom and in school, and this is probably why it is easier to create a safe and orderly learning environment in the smaller schools than in the bigger ones. The care and attention given to students as individuals ensures that their health, academic, social, psychological and even family needs are taken care of, and their cognitive, affective, spiritual and moral development encouraged. This plays a great role in the students' performance, for true caring is the heart of education and enabling the holistic development of a child gives them the best chance of success across the curriculum (Marland, 2001).

Thirdly, unlike their counterparts in lay private and government schools, Catholic school students have a supportive school culture. Principals and teachers are friendly and supportive and there is zero tolerance for violent behaviour and bullying. Students who enjoy a more favourable school culture achieve better academic outcomes than those who do not (Mok and Flynn, 1998). In addition, Catholic schools provided an orderly and disciplined environment where students could learn properly. Watkins (1999) argues that the extent to which schools achieve their goals (including academic goals) depends on many features of school style, culture, structure, approach to learning and learners. Secondary schools differ significantly in these features and this influences which goals are achieved and to what extent. The concept of the family which Catholic schools use to describe their culture shows that they have adopted a personal-communal model (Watkins, 1999) of schooling which is an effective model of schooling as it enhances the degree of connectedness felt by the members of the school organisation. This sense of community in Catholic

schools supports academic culture and enhances effective learning (Bryk et al., 1993; Morris, 2002).

Fourthly, even though the effect of boarding facilities on all students has not featured prominently in Catholic school literature, it is clear that boarding plays a great role in the academic success of Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon. Living together for nine months of each year like one big family does not only help to foster the sense of community in Catholic schools; it provides students with a more conducive study environment, away from the distractions of town and home and provides more contact time with teachers and more time for personal study. More contact time with teachers, more homework, more learning and more efficient use of time have been shown to result in better student performance (Sadker and Sadker, 1988; Blasé et al., 2010). In fact, the best performing Catholic schools and indeed most of the best performing schools in English speaking Cameroon are boarding.

The point has been made that the majority of Catholic school principals are ill-prepared for their jobs, do not enjoy access to good quality CPD and are moved around too frequently. While this arrangement does have disastrous consequences in some schools, in others it is a blessing in disguise. It empowers the Senior Management Team and distributed leadership in a way that might not have been possible if the principals were confident enough to go it alone. It is true that schools with trained and stable leaders often do better than those with untrained and frequently moving ones. Even so, schools in both cases tend to do better when principals work more collaboratively with the Senior Management Team or Administrative Staff. Compared to their counterparts in lay private and government schools, Catholic school principals generally adopt a more distributed leadership style and are more supportive towards staff and students. These attributes of the Catholic school principal are more likely to enhance the sense of community but they are also likely to promote teacher effectiveness and student academic achievement (Newmann et al., 1989; Gurr et al., 2005). In addition, the fact that they recognized and rewarded the contributions of individuals and groups, even when it was only by verbally acknowledging this contribution created a motivational climate, which is a quality of high-performing principals (Blasé et al., 2010).

The 'beyond school' and 'within school' variables work together to produce the good academic results which have become the pride of Catholic schools. However, these variables do not tell the whole story. Proponents of Catholic schools argue that their academic success is driven not only by these variables but also by the catholicity of

the schools. While Catholic schools have many characteristics in common with Presbyterian and Baptist schools, they claim that they have a distinctive philosophy of education which is intimately connected to the mission of the Catholic Church. Among Catholic schools there are different models of Catholic schooling but Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon have adopted the holistic model of Catholic schooling which seeks to integrate the Catholic faith with the curriculum and every activity in school (Morris, 1998). This holistic model helps facilitate high levels of academic achievement as it gives an emotional security to pupils in which they can thrive religiously, socially and intellectually (Morris, 1997). The three central characteristics of Catholic education in English speaking Cameroon are an emphasis on academic achievement, a strong sense of community and an emphasis on the formation of the whole person.

Academic achievement is a major preoccupation of Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon. Parents and students choose Catholic schools because of their academic performance more than for any other reason. Catholic schools do not only produce good results because their clients want it so; the very philosophy of Catholic education requires it. This attitude of Catholic schools in Cameroon towards academic pursuits reflects a common characteristic of Catholic schools worldwide (McLaughlin, 1999). Secondly, Catholic schools seek to create a strong sense of community and exhort students and teachers to adopt a 'family spirit' by which everyone is the other's keeper. This sense of shared purpose and of community which characterises most Catholic schools appears to be a crucial factor in helping the ordinary pedagogy of Catholic schools to be effective in learning outcomes (Morris, 1998a, Vieno et al., 2005). Finally, the third element of the Catholic matrix of success is the emphasis on the education of the whole person. Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon hold that the formation of the human person has to be in its totality (Arthur, 1995). This is in line with current trends in education reform as schools endorse holistic programmes that focus on the development of the whole child and the interconnectedness among mind, body, and soul (Bosacki, 1999). There has been a realisation among education researchers that if the focus is on the spiritual, moral, physical, mental and academic development of each individual child in the school, then examination results can almost take care of themselves (Burn, 2001).

Thus, the academic achievement of Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon is facilitated by a mix of 'beyond school' and 'within school' variables but also by the specifically Catholic nature of the schools. It was evident that while Catholic schools seek to achieve other objectives, the overriding objective in each school seems to be

a top spot on the examination league tables. Considering the fact that these schools have adopted the holistic model of Catholic schooling, this over emphasis on examination results is likely to lead to the neglect of other important objectives of the Catholic school. This was one of the fears expressed at the Sixth Catholic Convention of the Ecclesiastical Province of Bamenda (1991). Delegates at the Convention were concerned that in a bid to attract students, Catholic schools were laying too much emphasis on academic achievement to the detriment of other values. Therefore, while there is cause for celebration among the Catholic community for the present achievements of the Catholic school,

The paradox is that this very evident success generates its own contemporary threats to the integrity of the holistic mission caused by undue emphasis upon part of the mission; the potential to become preoccupied by the visible and measurable in education to the detriment of the invisible and the intangible outcomes of schooling; the potential for Catholic schools to be incorporated into a secular marketplace for education which may weaken their relation with the sacred and the spiritual and the distinctive culture of catholicity itself (Grace, 2002:50 -51).

It is absolutely important to sound this note of caution. While it is important that Catholic schools achieve academic success, what makes a school Catholic is not its academic success. In fact, *The Religious Dimension of Education in the Catholic School* (1988, §104) warns against an excessive concern for academic achievement. Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon give their students a holistic formation which contributes to the building of a democratic Cameroon since this kind of education also entails forming of the basic dispositions for citizenship in a democratic and pluralistic society. Apart from the academic contribution which Catholic schools make to the Cameroonian patrimony, this holistic formation also prepares the students to contribute positively to life in a democratic and pluralistic Cameroon. This contribution, while non-academic is no less important than the academic contribution which these schools make.

12.3 Catholic education and non-academic outcomes

Even though it could be argued that Catholic schools emphasise the spiritual development of their students for religious reasons, it is now generally accepted that education begins with the premise that everyone has a spiritual dimension which can and should be developed (Watson, 2000). Spiritual well-being enhances a harmonious relationship with the self, others, God and the world and is a fundamental dimension of people's overall health and well-being, permeating and

integrating all the other dimensions of health (Fisher, 2001). For this reason, the Catholic school's emphasis on the spiritual well-being of students can only be good for the personal well-being of the students themselves, for their relationship with others, and for the general health situation of the nation. While this outcome of Catholic education cannot be measured while students are in school, Catholic education authorities are convinced that, with a few exceptions, they become apparent later in the adult life of the students, and there is some research to support the claim that Catholic schools make a measurable difference in the adult lives of their graduates (Guerra, 2000).

In addition, it is evident that the quality of education provided to the students is an asset not only to these students in later life, but to the nation as a whole since the existence of an appropriately educated citizenry is of value to the whole nation. In the same way, since Catholic education is open to students of other faiths and none, it is of benefit not only to the Catholic community but is making an important contribution to the common good of the nation. This contribution to the common good is not limited to the academic domain. Catholic schools insist on the moral formation of their students. While this moral formation may be tied to Catholic religious beliefs, the term 'moral' is used here to mean norms of socially accepted behaviour (Bigger and Brown, 2000). The moral values which Catholic schools inculcate in their students, especially the values of justice and integrity, hard work and responsibility all help to shape the Cameroonian society where corruption is rife and the work ethic is appalling. Whatever it does, education must help students understand themselves and their world and enable them to make an informed and responsible contribution to their community and to the society.

Finally, contrary to the argument that faith schools (including Catholic schools) are divisive and that they have no place in a pluralistic society, Catholic schools in Cameroon admit students from all tribes, all cultures, as well as those of all religions and none and teach them to live 'as brothers and sisters'. The fact that Catholic schools emphasise the concept of community does not only help their academic achievement; it also helps build understanding and solidarity among students from various social, cultural and economic backgrounds. This is consistent with the Catholic philosophy of education which emphasises that Catholic schools must never emphasise differences but must aid cooperation and contact with others and respect their ways of thinking and living (*The Catholic School*, 1977: §57). Education is meant to provide a sense of cohesion and unity for the citizenry (D'Souza, 2003) and Catholic education has played that role manifestly well in English speaking Cameroon.

Another major contribution which Catholic schools around the world have made to the common good of the countries in which they are located has been to provide social mobility to students from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds. The 'preferential option for the poor' is a defining characteristic of the Catholic school. Unfortunately, this is not the case in English speaking Cameroon where Catholic schools are among the most expensive and where only the children of the elite can go. This situation has been caused by the loss of the 'strategic subsidy' which Catholic schools used to receive from foreign missionary bodies but also by the loss of the subventions which the Cameroonian government used to give faith schools. The latter has become insignificant and incidental. This is a painful situation both to Catholic hierarchy and laity as was made clear in the Sixth Catholic Convention for the Ecclesiastical Province of Bamenda (1991) and something needs to be done about it if Catholic schools are not to become an instrument for widening the gap between rich and poor.

That said, it would seem that broadly speaking, Catholic schools in Cameroon are achieving their educational goals. In the academic domain they do not seem to be achieving as well as they could largely because educational policies in the recent past have been dictated by economic rather than academic considerations. There are definitely a good number of Catholic schools which have consistently performed well over the ten year period under study, but some schools have performed rather poorly and brought down the average performance of Catholic schools. However, apart from the academic outcomes of which most Catholic schools can be proud, these schools are contributing significantly to the common good of the nation by the holistic education which they offer. They are providing an 'education with character' which is crucial to the moral and economic well-being of the Cameroonian nation and to the advancement of a democratic Cameroon. While it is not very clear whether Catholic schools have achieved these outcomes better than the other faith schools in the study, it seems clear that Catholic schools have achieved them far better than their government and lay private school counterparts. The dividends of a Catholic school education in English speaking Cameroon appear to be really significant and to last a lifetime.

12.4 Reflections on the implications for future research, policy and practice

According to the Cameroon Country Report for 2009, a level of education acceptable by African standards could not be maintained in Cameroon without church-

supported schools¹. The contribution of these schools has been in terms of the quality of examination results which they produce, but also in terms of the preparation of their students for life after school. In addition, faith schools appear to be making a greater contribution to community cohesion and to the common good of society than government and lay private schools. Considering all this, it would seem sensible for government to throw its weight behind the efforts of these faith schools. Supporting these schools by providing teacher training or by giving them financial assistance would not only help to improve the educational outcomes of these schools but would also help to raise the standard of education in the country, to promote the common good and enhance community cohesion. This might appear a logical and mutually beneficial policy to adopt, but in the current political and economic climate, this is unlikely to happen. In the mean time, as the church waits for a change of heart on the part of government and a change in the economic fortunes of the nation, it might be worthwhile to consider how Catholic school outcomes could be improved with the currently available resources. It is in this light that the findings of this study have implications for future research, policy and practice in Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon.

Firstly, research on schools and school outcomes has demonstrated that the teacher is the linchpin of all that happens in the classroom and what happens in the classroom is of utmost importance in determining the educational outcomes of pupils. While teacher training for Catholic teachers might not be a viable option at the moment, Catholic schools stand to benefit from pre-service preparation, induction and continuing professional development of their teachers. In addition, a review of the Catholic teacher's salary situation would be a great boost to their morale and job satisfaction and so further improve on the great work which they already do. Taking care of these two areas of the teacher's work life should also reduce high teacher turnover in Catholic schools.

Secondly, while it is true that government subventions are now insignificant and incidental and Catholic schools no longer enjoy the 'strategic subsidy' which foreign missionary bodies used to provide, it is equally true that some Catholic schools have kept up the provision of quality teaching resources and it has paid off. However, in the area of teaching resources as in other areas, Catholic schools seem unwilling to share best practice. Given that in developing teaching and learning the quality of resources is key, it is absolutely important that Catholic schools prioritise the provision of teaching resources. To expect teachers to achieve the goals of Catholic

¹ Bertelsmann Stiftung, *BTI 2010 — Cameroon Country Report*. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2009.

education without providing them with the basic 'tools' which they need seems unreasonable.

Furthermore, probably because of the financial pressures under which Catholic schools now find themselves, there has been a disturbing trend to increase school and class sizes. This is understandable as schools have to break even if they are to continue to exist. However, it would appear that enough thought has not been given to how this affects pupil learning and behaviour. As a result the quality of teaching and learning as well as pastoral care has been compromised. Research on how an increase in school and class size affects the quality of teaching and learning as well as the other non-academic outcomes of school would be a beneficial exercise for Catholic education authorities in English speaking Cameroon.

As far as headship is concerned, school effectiveness research has demonstrated that the quality of headship is a critical factor in determining the effectiveness of a school. Catholic education authorities in English speaking Cameroon will need to wake up to this fact. They will need to give adequate thought to the processes of identifying, developing, nurturing and sustaining leadership talent through systematic, coherent and research-driven continuing professional development.

Finally, Catholic school pupils might come from well-to-do families but their parents are not as involved with their children's schools as are Baptist and Presbyterian parents. As pointed out earlier in this study, research shows that parental involvement in children's education has a major influence on the cognitive and social development of children as well as the extent to which children benefit from in-school education. Although this study suggests that parental involvement is not a culture in Cameroonian schools, Catholic schools stand to benefit from a policy of actively encouraging parents to get more involved in their children's education. This is the current trend in many countries and across many school systems and it has been shown to improve educational outcomes immensely.

This study set out to investigate the perception that Catholic schools in English speaking Cameroon are the best academic performers among all the school types in the country. The results show that while Catholic schools are still doing very well in terms of academic achievement and other educational outcomes, Presbyterian schools now produce superior examination results on average. The finding that they are not currently the best academic performers and have not been for some time might just shock stakeholders in the Catholic education sector out of their complacency and lead them to question what has gone wrong. If this were to

happen, it would possibly be the best thing that has happened to Catholic education in English speaking Cameroon in a long time.

13 APPENDICES

13.1 Appendix 1: GCE ranking according to school type (1999 – 2008)

Ordinary Level

Year	Government Schools			Faith Schools			Lay Private Schools			External Candidates			National %		
	No Sat	No Passed	% Pass	No. Sat	No Passed	% Pass	No Sat	No Passed	% Pass	No Sat	No Passed	% Pass	No Sat	No Passed	% Pass
1998	6,763	2,722	41.39	1,408	1,098	77.98	2,653	828	31.21	6,394	866	13.54	17,218	5,591	32.47
1999	7,194	4,567	63.48	1,598	1,362	85.23	3,197	1,677	52.46	7,183	2,166	30.14	19,176	9,772	50.96
2000	6,831	4,124	60.37	1,730	1,498	86.59	3,587	1,524	42.29	6,579	1,617	24.58	18,727	8,763	46.79
2001	7,383	5,024	68.05	1,937	1,747	90.19	3,635	1,870	51.44	7,949	2,425	30.51	20,904	11,066	52.91
2002	8,718	5,186	59.49	2,101	1,819	86.58	3,683	1,549	42.06	7,658	1,936	25.28	22,160	10,490	47.34
2003	9,614	5,415	56.32	2,165	1,867	86.24	4,642	1,880	40.50	9,035	2,021	22.37	25,455	11,183	43.93
2004	10,799	7,203	66.70	2,344	2,143	91.42	4,629	2,534	54.74	10,731	3,346	31.18	28,503	15,226	53.42
2005	11,724	6,793	57.94	2,403	2,126	88.47	4,478	1,957	50.36	11,524	2,793	24.24	30,129	13,669	45.37
2006	13,619	8,636	63.41	2,582	2,374	91.94	5,205	2,800	53.79	13,487	4,108	30.46	34,893	17,918	51.35
2007	15,041	10,083	64.04	3,108	2,783	89.54	5,485	3,170	57.85	14,316	5,024	30.09	37,950	21,060	55.49
2008	18,534	9,879	53.30	3,371	2,745	81.42	6,595	2,953	44.77	21,386	4,520	21.12	41,335	20,097	48.56

Advanced Level

Year	Government Schools			Faith Schools			Lay Private Schools			External Candidates			National		
	No Sat	No Passed	% Pass	No Sat	No Passed	% Pass	No Sat	No Passed	% Pass	No Sat	No Passed	% Pass	No Sat	No Passed	% Pass
1998	4,307	2,345	54.45	870	532	84.14	1,455	763	52.44	4,997	1,359	27.20	11,629	5,199	44.71
1999	5,010	3,280	65.47	1,080	882	81.67	1,782	989	55.50	5,314	1,880	35.00	13,186	7,011	53.17
2000	3,826	2,482	64.87	926	809	87.37	1,658	1,022	61.64	5,001	1,589	31.77	11,411	5,902	51.72
2001	4,834	2,902	60.03	1,151	905	78.63	2,000	815	40.75	5,507	1,297	23.55	13,492	5,919	43.87
2002	5,393	3,275	60.73	1,183	1,006	85.40	1,882	1,010	53.67	6,626	2,119	31.98	18,084	7,410	49.12
2003	6,155	3,520	57.19	1,189	1,011	85.03	2,297	1,006	43.80	7,248	1,983	27.53	16,889	7,520	44.53
2004	6,561	3,748	57.13	1,288	1,109	86.10	2,322	1,136	48.92	7,760	2,081	26.82	17,931	8,074	45.03
2005	6,871	4,823	70.19	1,344	1,232	91.67	2,293	1,427	62.23	8,797	3,665	41.66	19,305	11,147	57.74
2006	7,860	5,160	65.65	1,498	1,336	89.19	2,446	1,388	56.75	8,894	3,207	36.06	20,698	11,091	53.58
2007	8,021	5,497	68.53	1,616	1,465	90.66	2,603	1,549	59.51	9,730	3,700	38.03	21,970	12,211	55.58
2008	9,525	6,597	69.25	1,861	1,701	91.40	2,899	1,910	65.88	12,162	5,075	41.72	26,445	15,283	57.79

13.1.1 Catholic Schools' Performance (1999 - 2008)**Ordinary Level**

S/N	School Name	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	School Average %
1	SBC Ashing	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
2	SH C Mankon	100	100	100	100	100	100	98.73	100	100	100	99.87
3	SWC Fontem	100	98.00	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	99.80
4	SJCCC Mbengwi						100	100	98.61	100	100	99.72
5	OLLSS Mankon	98.84	100	100	98.80	96.25	100	100	100	98.84	98.77	99.15
6	SPXCC Tatum								100	100	95.83	98.61
7	SAMS Kitiwum	96.15	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	89.29	98.54
8	BRC Soppo	93.75	94.23	91.49	100	100	100	100	100	97.83	98.11	97.54
9	SJC Sasse	82.46	93.33	98.72	100	97.17	98.81	97.73	100	98.95	100	96.71
10	SAC Nso	92.19	79.37	98.55	100	95.05	98.21	91.30	83.46	92.68	82.55	91.33
11	OLMCC Muea					78.57	100	82.61	96.55	91.30	87.50	89.42
12	SPCCC Kumbo	88.00	91.43	87.18	87.18	58.97	93.55	80.65	85.00	90.00	89.29	85.13
13	CKC Tiko	81.25	78.05	76.19	92.00	74.51	92.86	97.67	76.47	95.45	81.13	84.56
14	QRC Okoyong	90.91	96.88	86.27	82.61	72.41	95.08	66.04	97.50	85.00	70.37	84.31
15	SFC Fiango	62.30	80.70	93.98	74.74	85.58	77.05	85.53	93.67	89.74	82.62	82.59
16	SPBCC Nkwen	66.67	88.10	86.67	78.95	69.57	84.13	71.25	87.88	88.33	79.69	80.12
17	RPHTCC Mutengene	75.00	83.33									79.17

18	REPACOL Nkar					42.86	100	72.73	76.19	93.18	84.62	78.26
19	SJTCC Nchang	89.47	78.57	46.15	81.82	88.24	85.71	69.23	87.50	53.33	100	78.00
20	SSCCC Sop	81.03	51.43	85.71	74.67	65.48	78.82	82.98	72.97	90.91	80.52	76.45
21	SMCCHS Ndop								85.71	50.00	85.71	73.80
22	SPHTCC Bonjongo						56.00	62.16	76.92	77.08	69.39	68.31
	Annual Percentages	87.37	88.38	90.06	91.38	83.80	92.64	87.29	91.25	90.12	89.30	

Advanced Level

S/N	School Name	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Average %
1	SHC Mankon	97.87	97.73	100	95.56	100	100	100	98.21	100	100	98.93
2	SBC Ashing	98.68	100	91.67	95.24	97.56	98.77	98.90	100	100	100	98.02
3	OLLSS Mankon									95.77	97.06	96.41
4	SWC Fontem	90.48	90.00	94.44	100	96.25	97.83	97.62	96.00	100	100	96.26
5	BRC Soppo	100	90.48	100	91.30	85.19	100	100	96.43	100	93.94	95.73
6	SJC Sasse	91.49	85.71	96.36	90.16	89.29	98.36	98.28	94.59	98.46	97.56	94.02
7	SAMS Kitiwum		86.36	85.00	100	82.35	94.74	100	95.00	84.62	100	92.00
8	CKC Tiko					76.92	80.95	94.44	88.89	93.02	92.68	87.81
9	SAC Nso	90.63	86.96	79.69	87.50	93.51	86.81	92.24	78.43	86.00	90.00	87.17
10	SFC Fiango	93.55	81.25	76.92	81.82	79.59	84.31	85.07	94.74	85.92	85.37	84.85
11	QRC Okoyong	80.00	84.62	60.00	87.10	70.97	91.67	77.14	95.00	100	96.88	84.33
12	SPCCC Kumbo	85.00	100	72.22	92.00	82.35	52.17	84.21	88.24	84.62	100	84.08
13	SPHTCC Bonjongo								66.67	75.86	88.46	76.99
14	SPBCC Nkwen	80.65	94.74	74.19	71.17	61.11	63.41	79.25	78.95	80.00	80.00	76.34
15	SSCCC Sop	71.88	68.97	91.67	75.00	60.00	77.19	83.93	81.16	69.57	57.50	73.68
16	Annual Average %	89.11	94.93	85.18	88.90	82.69	86.63	91.62	89.45	90.25	91.96	

13.1.2 Baptist schools' performance (1999-2008)**Ordinary Level**

S/N	School Name	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	School Average %
1	SBC Limbe	90.48	92.31	95.59	86.90	90.41	93.59	98.63	98.59	98.57	97.56	94.26
2	BHS Buea	97.09	87.04	80.00	84.40	86.11	87.72	96.81	93.62	97.17	100	90.99
3	BHS Mankon		85.00	69.81	89.29	93.02	83.82	98.36	96.49	95.51	96.34	89.73
4	BHS Barombi Kang								79.71	70.45	88.31	79.49
5	JMBC Ndu	66.67	72.00	48.65	60.98	54.29	72.79	79.49	72.22	82.93	64.10	67.41
6	BCHS Njinikijem	69.23	100	60.00	57.14	33.33	75.00	55.56	42.86	93.33	55.56	64.20
7	BSS Ndop										66.67	
8	Annual Average %	80.86	87.27	70.81	75.74	71.43	82.58	85.77	80.58	89.66	81.22	

Advanced Level

S/N	School Name	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	School Average %
1	SBC Limbe	95.92	95.83	100	100	98.92	98.96	100	100	100	100	98.96
2	BHS Buea	91.78	88.17	67.10	87.50	66.02	92.71	95.95	96.43	96.67	98.36	88.07
3	BHS Barombi Kang					100	94.25	94.52	94.67	83.33	89.25	92.67
4	BHS Mankon	91.67	77.42	98.51	97.18	93.33	89.53	97.83	100	90.98	93.81	93.02
5	BCHS Njinikijem	86.36	43.48	54.17	57.89	50.00	55.56	56.41	58.82	64.00	27.78	55.44
6	BSS Ndop	71.88	44.90	81.48	80.77	77.14	86.36	61.54	82.98	64.00	81.25	73.23
7	JMBC Ndu	82.50	73.53	77.50	76.47	52.83	87.80	72.50	76.00	61.43	88.89	74.94
8	Annual Average %	86.68	70.55	79.79	83.30	76.89	86.45	82.67	86.98	80.05	82.76	

13.1.3 Presbyterian schools' performance (1999-2008)**Ordinary Level**

S/N	School Name	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	School Average %
1	PSS Mankon	100	99.19	99.08	100	100	100	99.15	100	98.53	100	99.59
	PSS Bafut	86.67	98.00	100	97.12	100	100	94.51	98.89	97.92	98.95	97.20
2	PCSS Buea	87.34	100	90.53	82.83	98.92	98.90	100	98.11	97.46	100	95.40
3	CPC Bali	79.55	94.87	91.43	94.00	94.94	86.30	80.95	96.92	85.51	92.75	89.72
4	PCHS Kumbo	90.91	97.50	74.58	83.33	82.35	61.82	86.67	100	93.94	92.00	86.31
5	PSS Bes'abang	97.56	88.24	92.59	87.80	67.86	100	80.00	80.00	94.29	74.51	86.28
6	PHS Batibo	63.64	84.21	87.72	81.25	70.45	95.65	95.56	100	84.29	87.30	85.00
7	PHS Kumba	44.59	82.61	85.14	96.55	98.31	100	96.67	98.36	90.48	91.57	88.42
8	PSS Andek-NGie	66.67	78.26	80.00	51.95	76.92	89.29	90.48	80.95	100	88.00	80.25
9	PSS Nkambe	75.76	64.71	51.72	89.66	78.26	100	80.00	100	100	88.24	82.83
10	PSS Nkwen								100	96.21	97.96	98.05
11	PGSS Limbe								98.11	100	98.99	99.03
12	PSS Wum								95.35	95.65	92.86	94.62
13		79.26	88.75	85.27	86.44	86.80	93.19	90.39	95.89	94.94	92.54	

Advanced Level

S/N	School Name	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	School Average %
1	PSS Mankon	100	97.67	98.55	98.68	98.69	100	100	100	100	99.16	99.27
	CPC Bali	59.71	96.05	70.45	98.75	90.12	89.90	86.40	98.15	88.73	95.19	87.34
2	PCHS Kumbo	87.88	RW	61.54	72.86	79.29	68.18	93.33	92.00	91.30	76.92	80.36
3	PHS Kumba	57.84	92.16	72.00	89.86	92.86	84.54	85.11	81.32	93.06	92.13	84.08
4	PHS Batibo	70.59	63.33	71.43	77.19	81.69	78.00	88.89	87.88	95.92	87.50	80.24
5	PSS Bes'gabang		66.67	49.18	63.16	63.41	52.00	100	67.74	83.87	95.12	71.23
6	PSS Bafut								95.51	98.78	97.89	97.39
7	PSS Nkwen										91.38	
8	PSS Andek-Ngie										76.92	
		75.20	83.17	70.52	83.41	84.34	78.77	92.28	88.94	93.09	90.24	

13.2 Appendix 2: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS OF STUDENTS IN ENGLISH-SPEAKING CAMEROONIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS ¹	
<p><u>Instructions:</u></p> <p>Please write your answers in the spaces provided. Place a tick (✓) against the answer which applies to you, and rank (1), (2), (3), etc., where (1) is the most important.</p>	
SECTION ONE	
(A)	<u>DEMOGRAPHICS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND</u>
	<p>1. Where do you and your family live?</p> <p>Village/Town</p> <p>Part of Town (Quartier)</p>
	<p>2. How many children do you have? □</p> <p>3. What is your marital status?</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced</p>
	<p>4. What is your profession/occupation?</p> <p>Mother</p> <p>Father</p>
	<p>5. What is your highest academic qualification?</p> <p>Mother</p> <p>Father</p>

¹ Questionnaires administered in the three school types were basically the same, except that question 24 was altered to suit the school type in which the questionnaire was being administered.

6. About how much do you earn a month? (Please tick (✓) the nearest amount. All figures in FCFA).			
Mother's Salary Range		Father's Salary Range	
↓		↓	
Less than 50.000	<input type="checkbox"/>	Less than 50.000	<input type="checkbox"/>
50.000 to 100.000	<input type="checkbox"/>	50.000 to 100.000	<input type="checkbox"/>
101.000 to 150.000	<input type="checkbox"/>	101.000 to 150.000	<input type="checkbox"/>
201.000 to 250.000	<input type="checkbox"/>	201.000 to 250.000	<input type="checkbox"/>
251.000 to 300.000	<input type="checkbox"/>	251.000 to 300.000	<input type="checkbox"/>
301.000 to 350.000	<input type="checkbox"/>	301.000 to 350.000	<input type="checkbox"/>
351.000 to 400.000	<input type="checkbox"/>	351.000 to 400.000	<input type="checkbox"/>
More than 400.000	<input type="checkbox"/>	More than 400.000	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Are there any other earners who supplement family income? <div style="text-align: center;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No </div> If YES, how much do they contribute each month?.....			
8. How many TV sets, if any, do you have in your home?			
9. How many computers, if any, do you have in your home?			
10. How many of your children currently attend secondary school?.....			
11. Of these, how many share a bedroom?			

(B)	<u>INVOLVEMENT WITH SCHOOL</u>			
	12. How often do you attend PTA meetings in this school?			
	Always <input type="checkbox"/>	Quite often <input type="checkbox"/>	Rarely <input type="checkbox"/>	Never <input type="checkbox"/>
	13. On average, how many times does the school contact you, either by letter or by telephone each year?			
	Always <input type="checkbox"/>	Quite often <input type="checkbox"/>	Rarely <input type="checkbox"/>	Never <input type="checkbox"/>
	14. How many times have you met the school principal in the last two years concerning your child?			
	Initiated by you		
	Initiated by the principal		
	15. How many times have you met your child's teacher in the last two years?			
	Initiated by you		
	Initiated by the teacher		
	16. Are you satisfied with the level of communication between you and your child's school?			
	Very satisfied <input type="checkbox"/>	Satisfied <input type="checkbox"/>	Fairly satisfied <input type="checkbox"/>	Not satisfied <input type="checkbox"/>
	17. In your opinion, are parents' views taken into account in the decision-making processes of your school?			
	Always <input type="checkbox"/>	Quite often <input type="checkbox"/>	Rarely <input type="checkbox"/>	Never <input type="checkbox"/>

<u>SECTION TWO</u>				
	18. Religion of parent(s): Mother Father			
	19. Who was mostly responsible for choosing this school for your child?			
	Father <input type="checkbox"/>	Mother <input type="checkbox"/>	Child <input type="checkbox"/>	Grandparent <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>
	20. Was the child consulted?			
	YES <input type="checkbox"/>		NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
	21. Please rank the following reasons for choosing the school, where 1 = Most important and 6 = Least important:			
	<u>Reason for choosing school</u>			<u>Rank</u>
	It belongs to my Church			
	It has good examination results			
	It has a supportive school climate			
	It has good discipline			
	It is near our home			
	Other			

	22. Does your child enjoy being at this school, do you think?	
	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
	If YES, why?	If NO, why not?
	↓	↓

	23. Has your child had any problems in school with children of other faiths or none?	
	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
	If yes, what kind of problem was it?	

	24. Do any of your other children attend the following types of school?	
	SCHOOL TYPE	NO. OF CHILDREN
	Schools run by other faith groups or Churches	
	Government schools	
	Lay private schools	
	<p>If so, what were your reasons for NOT choosing your own faith/Church school?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	
	<p>25. Is there anything you would have liked me to ask or that you would like to tell me that you feel is important for me to know as part of my research into faith schooling in our country?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	

THANK YOU

13.3 Appendix 3: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION SCHEDULE

Introduction

I would like to welcome all of you to this group discussion. My name is Joseph Awoh, a research student from the University of Southampton in the UK. I am conducting these discussion groups as part of my research project on Catholic schools and their educational outcomes. I would like to get your views on life and study in your school and how this school prepares you for the future in a democratic Cameroon. As you all know, most Cameroonians are poor but they spend a lot of their hard-earned money on the education of their children. So it is important that their children get the best that school can offer.

I would like to say that there are no right and wrong answers in this discussion, we will simply be discussing your views, opinions and experiences on a range of topics, so please feel comfortable to say what you honestly feel. You are free to disagree with a friend's views but please respect their views as well.

Use of Tape-recorder

So that I do not worry about getting every word down on paper, we would like to tape-record the whole session. However, the recording will remain completely confidential and will only be used for this research project. It will be securely stored so that it is only available to the researcher and his supervisor. This data will be destroyed at the end of the research. Is it ok with everyone to tape record this discussion?

Freedom of participants

Your participation in this discussion is completely voluntary. So if you prefer not to be part of this discussion you are completely free to leave. However, we value everyone's views on this topic and so hope you can stay and share your views.

Assurances of confidentiality and anonymity

There will be strict privacy in gathering, storing and handling data. All data will be anonymized by ensuring participants do not use their names during interview. All references to particular schools will be removed (No school names!)

Ground Rules

(Say the rules)

1. *The moderator will ask questions and seek elaboration but will remain neutral*
2. *There will be no repercussions on anyone for expressing their opinion*
3. *The discussion will last about one hour*

Purpose of the Discussion

To elicit the views of the students on their schools and how "things are done" there. (Quality of students at intake, quality of teaching and learning, quality of relationships/school culture/ethos, pastoral care, parental support; preparation for the future)

MODERATOR/DISCUSSION GUIDE**Introduction questions**

As an introduction let us go around so that you can introduce yourselves. Please say just your first name, and maybe say who your favourite Cameroonian musician is.

In your opinion, why is it important for young Cameroonians to go to school?

Admission Policies

1. What influenced/attracted you to come to this school?

(probes: school type, faith, faith of parents, Common Entrance results)

2. To be admitted to this school does it matter whether your parents are rich or poor?

(probes: fees charged, parents' professions, etc)

Distinctiveness of School (Catholicity)

3. What do you think makes your school different to other schools?

(probes: faith and practice, school culture, any difference with schools within your agency?)

4. How does faith and practice inform school culture?

(probe: What is the difference between your school and Baptist or Presbyterian school?)

Quality of Teaching and Learning

5. What is your opinion about the quality of teachers you have in this school?

(probes: their training (L6), dedication to work, classroom discipline, homework and feedback)

Relationship with teachers

6. What is your relationship with your teachers like? (Warm or Cold)

(probes: caring, friendly, supportive, challenge you to do better or opposites?)

Resources

7. Do you think that as students in this school you have adequate educational resources at your disposal for good quality learning?

(probes: class sizes; textbooks, Library, Internet access, science and language labs)

Pastoral Care (a unique attribute of Catholic schools?)

8. In your opinion, does the school take adequate care of all students?
(probes: counseling and advisory services; students with personal problems; listened to?, helpful, fair, interested, encouraging, understanding, etc)
9. What do you think about the school's system of reward and punishment?
(probes: Fairness at classroom and school levels, fairness in meting out punishment, reward for success and good behaviour).
10. How would you describe the way the school principal relates with the students?
(fatherly/motherly, knows you by name, cares about your work, checks your school work) ➡ Warm/cold?
11. Are your parents interested that you succeed in this school?
- Prompt payment of school fees and acquisition of school needs
 - Showing interest in what you are doing
 - Helping out with homework

Pupil Culture

12. What are some of the things that make you happy/ not happy to be a student in this class/school?
(probes: Easy to make friends?/rejection and isolation; help from peers/seniors with school work, bullying in your class/school, disruptive students?)
13. In your opinion is there harmony among the students of this school?
(probes: different faiths, tribes, regions, language). If yes, why? If not, why not?

Preparation for Life after School

14. How well do you think your school prepares you for the future?
(religious/spiritual, civic and moral virtues; further education, employability)

General

15. What would you attribute your school's success (or lack of it) to? What's right/wrong with your school?
15. Any other thing you would like to say about your school?

Thank you very much for participating in this discussion. It has been very interesting.

13.4 Appendix 4: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TEACHERS

QUALITY OF TEACHING

1. How long have you been teaching at this school?
2. Can you tell me what led you to choose the teaching profession?
 - To make a living
 - Like working with children/helping others
3. Why did you choose this school type?
4. Did you receive any specific teacher training?
 - What qualification(s)/specialties
5. Have you had any opportunities for in-service training/teacher professional development?
 - Nature of training or CPD

RESOURCES

6. What resources do you have for teaching your subject or what resources do you access as part of your teaching?
 - Language lab
 - Science lab
 - Good library?
 - Teaching aids
 - Internet
 - Text books

TEACHER SELF-ESTEEM AND JOB SATISFACTION

7. Are you happy working at this school? If so, why? If not, why not?
 - adequate salary/pay
 - workload
 - extra curricular activities
8. Do you feel that your work is valued in this school?
 - parents
 - students
 - school leadership
 - community/church

STAFF COLLABORATION

9. What kind of support do you receive from colleagues?

- Regular departmental meetings
- Mentoring
- Any support from other schools in your agency?

10. How much support do you receive from your school principal and those in Senior Management positions?

- Academic
- Non-academic/personal

PUPIL QUALITY AND CULTURE

11. How would you describe the academic quality of students you have in this school?

- At intake
- How much has the school 'added value'?

12. What do you think about student behaviour in your school?

- In your opinion, what is responsible for this?

13. What do you think about your school/class size?

- Any effect on behaviour?
- Any effect on achievement?

PERCEIVED SOCIAL AND MORAL EFFECT OF SCHOOL

14. In your opinion, how well does this school prepare pupils for life in a democratic Cameroon?

- Better behaved
- Civic values
- Access to higher education
- Easier to gain employment
- Respect for others (faith, tribe, region)
-

15. Do you think that your pupils' moral/spiritual formation affects their academic performances in any way?

16. Is there any other thing you would like to tell me about your work in this school?

Thank you very much for your time.

13.5 Appendix 5: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SCHOOL HEADS

LEADERSHIP PREPARATION

1. How long have you been principal at this school?
2. If you had the freedom would you have chosen to be a principal or not?
3. Did you receive any specific leadership/management training?
 - What qualifications/specialties?
4. Before taking up principalship what other leadership position(s) had you occupied?
 - For how long?
 - Did this help/impede your accession to principalship?
4. Have you had any opportunities for in-service training or CPD since taking up mentoring? Collaborative learning? this post?
 - Leadership
 - How often?
 - How helpful has this been?

RESOURCES

5. Are you satisfied with your school infrastructure?
 - Number and quality of buildings, playgrounds, etc
 - Capacity of buildings for academic and other activities
6. Do your teachers have enough resources to do a good job?
 - Language labs
 - Science labs
 - Internet Access
 - Good Library
 - Text books and didactic materials
7. Is there provision for staff development?
 - School-based
 - Within agency
 - Government provided

COLLABORATION WITH SMT AND STAFF

8. What are the typical issues you would discuss in a General Staff Meeting?
 - How often do they hold
 - What is the role of the GSM
 - How binding are the decisions?
9. How would you describe your relationship with the SMT (if you have one)?
 - How often do you meet?
 - What is their role?

10. Would a teacher come to you if they had a personal problem?

- Family problem
- Financial problems
- Problems related to teaching and learning

11. Do you feel that your leadership team and teachers share your vision and are dedicated to it?

- Individual teachers
- Departments ➡ How do you know?
- SMT

12. Do you have any mechanism for recognising best performance in staff?

- Certificates
- Prizes

STUDENT DISCIPLINE AND PASTORAL CARE

13. How would you describe student behaviour in your school?

- Violence, Vandalism, Bullying, etc
- In your opinion, what is responsible for this?

14. What mechanisms do you have for the maintenance of order and discipline?

- Punishment – what kind?
- Warnings,
- Suspensions
- Dismissals
- Others

15. Does the school provide any other forms of pastoral care?

- Counselling/advisory services
- Class Tutors
- Housemasters
- Care for students with personal problems

PERCEIVED SOCIAL AND MORAL EFFECT OF SCHOOL

16. How does your school prepare its students for life in a democratic Cameroon?

- Moral and civic virtues
- Spiritual virtues
- Respect and understanding between religious/ethnic groups

PERCEIVED SPIRITUAL EFFECT

17. Is there any provision in your school for the spiritual development of its pupils?
- How does this affect student behaviour and performance?

GENERAL

18. Is there any other thing you would like to tell me about school leadership in this country which I have not asked you?

Thank you very much for your time.

13.6 Appendix 6: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR EDUCATION SECRETARIES

(Catholic, Protestant and Lay private)

Objectives:

Mission of education agencies

Admission Policies

Funding

Perceived effect of School on pupils

MISSION

1. Why does your agency/Church engage in opening schools?
 - Educational and other aims
 - How often is mission revised?
2. Is it your opinion that your agency has been faithful to this mission?

FUNDING

3. How are your schools funded?
 - Tuition fees
 - Government subventions
 - Missionary bodies
4. Does the amount of fees you charge determine the quality of students who come to your school?
 - Good/poor SES
 - Top quality poor students

QUALITY OF STUDENTS AT ENTRY

5. What would you say to the claim that faith schools perform better because they select the best students at entry?
 - List A pupils
 - Only very good students are allowed to transfer to their schools
6. What would you say is responsible for the good exam performance of your schools?
 - Catholicity/protestant faith/secularism
 - Teaching to the test
 - Tough criteria for promotion into exam classes
7. There seems to be broad consensus among researchers that Catholic school perform better than all other school types. What's your take on that?

SPIRITUAL/MORAL DEVELOPMENT OF PUPILS

8. How important is the spiritual and/or moral formation of your pupils?

9. How is this assured?

- Celebration and practice of faith
- Retreats, conferences, etc

SCHOOL ETHOS

10. What do you do to maintain the Catholic/Protestant/secular character of your school?

- Recruitment of teachers and principals
- Worship/celebration of sacraments
- School Assemblies
- Doctrine
- Principal's conferences

11. How do you handle students who are do not belong to your faith group or who have no faith at all?

- Selective admissions
- Overlooked minority?

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

12. Is there a recruitment procedure for your principals?

- Qualifications
- Experience
- Faith

13. Are there any basic requirements for persons who wish to teach in your schools?

- Qualifications
- Teaching experience
- Teacher's faith/ character reference

14. Is there adequate provision for the CPD of your teachers and principals?

- How often
- quality

EFFECT OF SCHOOLS ON PUPILS

15. Does the fact that your schools are faith schools affect/influence the pupils' school outcomes?

- Academic
- Social/non-cognitive

16. How do you think your schools compare with others in preparing students for a democratic Cameroon?

- Democratic values
- Moral values

- Family Values
- Employability

GENERAL

17. Is there any other thing you would like to tell me about your schools which I have not asked you?

Thank you very much for your time.

13.7 Appendix 7: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR REGIONAL DELEGATE OF EDUCATION

(He is one of two government-appointed persons responsible for secondary education in English speaking Cameroon)

1. Why is the government opening schools all over the country?

- Raising literacy
- Preparing youth for future
- Economic development Cameroon – nation building

2. What would you say to those who say that this government policy does not work out in practice because these schools do not have the resources and personnel they need to function properly?

- Schools created with no buildings
- No teachers
- No infrastructure – not even benches sometimes

3. What do you think about the work the other agencies are doing in education?

- Churches
- Lay private education

4. Some people have suggested that government schools admit at least their fair share of good students but don't do as well with them as Church schools. What is your opinion?

- List A students for urban schools
- Rural schools

5. Government schools have professionals leading them – trained principals and trained teachers. Why do you think they are not higher up in examination league tables?

- Absenteeism and lack of dedication on part of teachers
- Lack of control over teachers by principal
- Student misbehaviour

6. Apart from academic outcomes, would you think that government schools do better with other school outcomes?

- Self-confidence
- Employability
- Behaviour

7. There is a perception that even high government officials send their children to Church/private schools. What is responsible for this, in your opinion?

8. In your opinion, do state schools better prepare our young people for life in a democratic Cameroon?

- Hard work
- Respect for the other
- Family values
- Individual values

9. Do you think that there is anything government schools can learn from Church/lay private schools?

10. Faith schooling in Cameroon is very expensive and the reason is that government funding is almost non-existent. What is your opinion about government funding of faith schools?

11. Some Cameroonian educationists have pointed out that it costs the taxpayer more to educate a child in a government school than it does to educate him in a Church school. In your opinion, what is responsible for this?

- Do you have any suggestions for improvement?

12. Is there anything you would like to tell me about secondary school education in our country that I have not asked you?

Thank you very much for your time.

13.8 Appendix 8: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PRESIDENT OF EDUCATION COMMISSION, NATIONAL EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF CAMEROON.

Objectives of Interview

To find out:

Mission of Catholic schools

What constitutes the distinctiveness of a Catholic school?

Training and recruitment of teachers and heads

Nature of Funding & Resources

Reasons for perceived success

MISSION OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

1. Why does the Catholic Church in Cameroon run its own schools?

- Propagation of faith
- Contribution to nation-building (better than government schools?)

DISTINCTIVENESS OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

2. How well do you think Catholic schools prepare their students for life in a democratic society?

- Spiritually
- morally
- socially
- and academically

3. In your opinion, what makes the Catholic school different from all other schools (i.e. what constitutes its distinctiveness)?

- Differences with lay private and government schools
- Differences with other denominational schools?

TRAINING AND RECRUITMENT OF TEACHERS AND SCHOOL HEADS

4. Would you like to talk me through the recruitment procedure of your principals?

- Academic requirements
- Experience – as teachers or members of SMT
- Personal beliefs of the recruits

5. What are the minimum qualifications a person needs to be able to teach in your secondary schools?

- Academic
- Faith
- Character

6. Do you provide your teachers and principals with any in-service training once they are on the job?

- Seminars,
- mentoring,
- peer networking
- conferences,

7. Is there training in Seminaries and religious houses for a role in education later on?

- Reasons why/why not

8. Does lack of training for teachers and heads impact on the achievement of educational goals in your schools, do you think?

- How do you know?

FUNDING OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

9. How are Catholic schools funded?

- Government subventions
- Tuition fees
- Missionary bodies

10. Do you think that the Catholic school in Cameroon is achieving its aim of providing upward social mobility to pupils from poor and deprived backgrounds?

- Only rich can pay
- Children from poor backgrounds as well

11. In this age of technological advancement and ICT how would you describe your schools' academic resources?

- Could be better

REASONS FOR PERCEIVED SUCCESS OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

12. What would be your answer to those who believe that Catholic schools skim the cream?

- List A pupils
- Special entrance exams

13. Do you think that the Catholicity of your schools is responsible for the educational outcomes they achieve?

- How so?

14. Are there any other factors to which you could attribute the success of your schools?

- Dedication of teachers and principals
- Parental support

GENERAL

15. Is there anything else you would like to say about this topic that I have not asked you?

Thank you very much for your time.

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