

PUBLIC FUNDING OF SCHOOLS IN ONTARIO: A POLICY PROPOSAL

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PUBLIC FUNDING OF SCHOOLS IN ONTARIO: A POLICY PROPOSAL

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ABSTRACT

Within the past few decades, issues of public funding for religious schools in Ontario have re-entered the policy debate and have led to discussion about the different ways in which schools could be organized in this province. Through the integration of literature available on the varying ways in which to administer a public education system along with a contextual backdrop to religion and education in Ontario, this paper will propose a policy by which to accommodate requests of various religious groups for separate schools while at the same time increasing overall accountability within Ontario's schools, public and private.

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INTRODUCTION

Policy decisions are constantly made to exclude and include specific groups of people. In Ontario, a universally funded education policy limits financing to public schools and separate schools. Separate schools are exclusively defined as Catholic schools. In recent years, various groups have attempted to expand the funding structure to include cultural minority schools, special interest schools, alternative educational philosophical schools, and alternative religious schools. These attempts have been met with both positive and negative response from the government. Religious groups spent most of the last decade in the courts arguing for funding for their schools. This lobbying provided a political opening for the Progressive Conservative government in Ontario to introduce the Equity in Education Tax Credit in 2001, guised as a response to equity, although its intention was actually to further an agenda of aligning education with the market, consistent with other policies of privatization introduced by this governing body. This legislation was repealed in 2003 by the ensuing Liberal government after a large protest, mainly from teachers' federations in Ontario. Since this repeal, new alternatives that would strengthen a diversity of schools within the public system have been discussed at length. Changing Ontario's education funding structure has proved to be a controversial undertaking and has raised much debate of educational policy.

Private schools cover a wide variety of options that exist outside of the public school system. There are five main types of private schools in Canada.

These are religious schools, independent schools, First Nations schools, charter schools, and informal school systems (Goddard, 2000, pp.2-3). Charter schools currently exist only in the province of Alberta. Although the Equity in Education Tax Credit addressed funding for all private schools, the following paper will be restricted to the inclusion of alternative religious schools within educational funding allocations of the Ontario government as it seeks to specifically address ongoing requests of *religious groups* for public support of independent religious schools in the aftermath of the repeal of the Equity in Education tax credit.

Through the integration of literature associated with the policy backdrop behind administration of all schools in Ontario as well as an analysis of the Equity in Education Tax Credit, this paper will propose new directions Ontario could take in order to address requests of independent religious schools while at the same time maintaining and strengthening its commitment to all students in Ontario. The paper will begin by discussing the ideological base of public school and private school administration. The ideological foundation in which the policy proposal will be situated upon is the idea of a continuum between a united and a divided school system. After identifying this continuum and placing Ontario within such a continuum, a new system will be proposed according to the range of each dimension included in the continuum. It will then examine special arrangements for Catholic schools in Ontario, the decline of religion in public education, claims made by religious groups in the courts in the past two decades, and subsequent failure of the response by the Progressive Conservative

government in addressing equity claims. The third chapter will discuss why religious groups should be afforded opportunity for dissent, changing demographics in Ontario that necessitate a funding adjustment, and a means by which a diversity of schools in the public system may be accommodated to support dissent. The final chapter will suggest policy implications, suggest an intervention, and offer a preliminary evaluative discussion.

CHAPTER ONE: IDEOLOGICAL BASE

Differing ways exist in which to organize a system of education. According to the literature, there is a wide continuum of options that one could employ in the formation of educational policy (Basu, Ranu, 2004; Davidson-Harden, Adam & Majhanovich, Suzanne, 2004; Ritzen et. al., 1997; White, 2003). To polarize these ideas, on one end of the spectrum there lies the concept of a *unified* system while at the opposite end of this spectrum, a *divided* system concept. Various dimensions form the different characteristics of each of these concepts. The way in which education is provided in a particular province rests upon the ideological location of policy makers and/or decision makers in relationship to either end of this spectrum or where in between such a positioning lies. If one places emphasis upon the unified end of the spectrum in relationship to its dimensions, then the educational project will see itself looking like that system; conversely, if one places emphasis upon a divided system, the educational project will look more like that divided system. In reality, most policy makers, subject to the prevailing public will, will fall somewhere in between either end of the continuum.

There are many dimensions that can be included in the definitions of a *unified system* and a *divided system*. In the *unified system* construct, dimensions include integration, common curriculum, regulation, government control, a single system of education, and open admission. In the *divided system* construct, dimensions include segregation, separate curriculum, deregulation,

community control, multiple systems of education, and exclusive admission policies. The following will discuss those dimensions and the independent constructs that are associated with each of these dimensions. Although these dimensions are not meant to be exhaustive, they touch upon many of the major dimensions of such a continuum.

Ideas of integration are prevalent, especially in the literature on special education, and lend to the discussion (Bartels, Edien, 2000; Bleich, Erik, 1998; Emanuelsson, Ingemar, 1998; Haldane, John, 1986; Russo, Charles J., 2000). Emanuelsson defines integration as “keeping or making something whole and well blended together” (1998, p. 97). He suggests that the dimension of integration has to do with making existing deviances being accepted as normal (Emanuelsson, 1998, p. 98). For Emanuelsson, an integrated school system would be a system in which all types of differences would be seen as normal and would be accepted and given attention within the system. On the contrary, a segregated school system would divide schools based upon various differences that exist, for example, along the lines of religion, ethnicity, language, ability, or special form of education. In between these two systems could find such variations as a school system divided by one means but integrated by others, such as division by religion, but inclusion by ethnicity and language. Another point along this continuum would be the option of segregated programs within an integrated school. This may include opt-out programs or enrichment activities particular to a social dimension.

Curricular issues are also important dimensions of unified and divided school systems. The idea of a common curriculum is currently being debated within consideration of multicultural policy and issues of homogeneity. In Bosnia, where civil unrest has been characterized by religious animosity, a call is being made to develop a national curriculum that will be welcomed by all Bosnians, regardless of religious affiliation (Russo, 2000, p. 125). The goal of developing such a curriculum is to ensure uniformity across the Bosnian education system. However, theorists warn that a national curriculum must be treated carefully within a multicultural state. Kymlicka (2003) discusses the shift between state policies that encouraged the passing of such dominant features such as a national culture, language, history, or religion to the current regime that emphasizes the recognition of various minority groups in society (pp. 149-150). Such a shift has repercussions for the creation of a common curriculum. White notes that “[a]ny observer of the public school system in Toronto, for example, must acknowledge the existence of segregation by class and income, and the impact it has on the ability of schools to provide a full range of programmes” (2003, p. 980). The antithesis of a common curriculum is one in which there are no guiding standards or required curriculum. In this scenario, schools are free to develop their own curriculum and there is no guarantee that students across the province will graduate from particular institutions with a similar knowledge base. This continuum includes a system in which guidelines are established governing

curricular development, required common courses, or supplementary curriculum within a common curricular strategy.

Regulation and deregulation are dimensions that span numerous issues related to educational administration. These terms include financing, teacher regulation, and standardized testing. At one end of the spectrum, financing of schools is characterized by funds allocated by a governing body from a pool of income contributed to by all citizens of a particular jurisdiction. This governing body decides how much money will be given to each school and additional financing is regulated as well. At the other end of this spectrum, families whose children attend the school finance that school. The school determines the amount of tuition required for the particular school and additional funding received by the school is not regulated. Between these two poles one may find schools receiving funding from the state but unregulated additional funding or one may find schools not receiving funding from the state but having tuition fees paid by an external source. Regulation of teachers can range from those teachers regulated by their professional body and who meet requirements of the state to teach to those individuals that decide to teach without having normally required educational requirements or affiliation with a professional body. Variations include teachers with educational requirements but no professional regulation. Standardized testing spans the mandatory testing of all Ontario's students to ensure academic consistency upon graduation to no testing requirements whatsoever. Standardized testing issues may also include partially

standardized testing on specific subject areas or the opting out of standardized testing in specific subject areas or specific topics within a subject area. It also considers the sharing of test results by school with the public.

Government and community control are further dimensions on a continuum of a unified school system to a divided school system. In a system characterized by government control, overarching policies, guidelines, finance, decisions, and regulation are controlled by the governing authority. In a school system characterized by total community control, the community guiding the operation of the particular school it is involved with determines these overarching policies, guidelines, finance, decisions, and regulation. There is much room for flexibility within these particular dimensions. Critics have suggested that there is need for an approach that is “neither solely bottom-up nor entirely top-down” (Mawhinney, 1996, p. 506). Each aspect of control can be given up by either a system controlled by the governing authority or a system controlled by a community. A community may have much impact into the development of policy supervised by the state or a governing body may finance the educational project of a community without imposing regulations. School choice policy is one example of such an endeavour. A community may make some decision relating to their local context, for example, through parental advisory councils. The 1994 Royal Commission on Learning outlined in their report *‘For the Love of Learning,’* new directions that were needed in community alliances, specifically defined as promoting alliances and networks between community organizations, business,

parents, and social agencies in the education system (Basu, 2004, p. 623). Another option would be for the state to regulate academic achievement and teacher certification while not funding the community school.

Issues of regulation of private schools have been raised with a growing movement for school choice. School choice programs, in the form of government vouchers and tax credits, lend themselves to an analysis of regulation. In the United States in 2002, the Supreme Court decided that public funds may flow to educational programs that are based upon parental choice (Omand, 2003, pp. 3). After this decision, school choice programs were given opportunity to develop, encouraging a market-based style of educational administration to begin developing. However, at the same time, questions of accountability and regulation of these schools have arisen. Davies suggests that choice “asserts parents’ right to semiautonomous public schools that suit their particular curricular wants and plays down their obligations to existing public school arrangements” (1999, p. 9). The impact school choice movements will have in Ontario’s educational landscape has yet to be seen and is beyond the scope of this paper.

The number of educational systems present in a particular jurisdiction also presents itself as a dimension of a united or a divided school system model. In a united system, one school system is present and takes up the task of educating all students of the jurisdiction. In a divided system, multiple school systems are present, each system educating a particular group of students, depending upon

the nature of the school or school system. In between this continuum lies room for multiple systems to operate with an overarching system manager or perhaps a parallel system operating under a centralized system manager.

Open admission is another dimension in the continuum of a united and a divided school system. In the united school system, admission is offered to all students, regardless of their background and/or affiliations. In a divided system, schools have the option of denying admittance to students based upon their particular institutional policies and judgments concerning eligibility of students. Other options that contribute to this continuum include a divided school system with open admission policies regulated by the state, a divided system with some open admission policies and some selective admission policies, or a united system with some selective opportunity in recruiting students.

Ontario in context

Education is important to Ontarians. Ontarians hold publicly funded education as a budget priority when elections are held. In his 2005 Ontario Budget Speech, Dalton McGuinty suggested that education and healthcare are the two most important priorities to Ontarians: "...we've chosen to invest in what Ontarians value: education and health care" (Ministry of Finance, 2005). Publicly funded education in Ontario heralds as a necessary component of a democratically driven society. The Ontario Secondary Schools Teachers' Federation cites a free public education system as "The Cornerstone of our Democratic Society" (OSSTF, 1996). Goddard (2000) suggests that in Canada,

there is an overarching belief in the moral rightness of a public education system (p. 5). Universally funded public education serves to provide access to knowledge for all of Ontario's children, despite their family's ability to pay.

The Canadian backdrop to funding of religious schools is unique in that it is based upon a country founded on biculturalism. At Confederation, due to a religious dichotomy of Protestantism and Catholicism, groups were guaranteed rights to a separate school system reflective of their religious orientation when their religious views were not fitting with the dominant religion or worldview espoused in the public system of the province. In Ontario, this led to the establishment of an English and French Catholic separate school board due to the province's largely Protestant composition in addition to an English and a French public school board. Therefore, integration was never a fully desired goal in the formulation of educational policy in Ontario. The public school system was divided along lines of religion, Protestant and Catholic, as well as language, English and French. These divisions were representative of two major groups of people who inhabited the province of Ontario at the time of Confederation, French Catholics and English Protestants, not including a third major category of people living in Ontario, First Nations groups. Furthermore, Holmes (Lam, 1990, p. 238) argues that an increase of program differentiation within schools through opt-out programs allows for segregation within schools themselves, a current phenomenon in Ontario's schools. Ontario's system is further divided by the operation of private schools in addition to the aforementioned publicly funded

school boards. These private schools are further divided by type of private school.

A common curriculum in Ontario was based upon the idea of a common school in which students would be given a similar education. Currently, Ontario's publicly funded schools operate under a standardized curriculum that was designed under the auspices of "institutional effectiveness" (Basu, 2004, p. 629), borne of a neoliberal philosophy. However, it is sometimes argued that public schools are no longer able to provide a common experience for Ontario's students. Holmes (Lam, 1990, p. 238) writes that the common school in Canada is weakened by some broad generalizations. He states that there has never been a strong national tradition in Canada that would be passed along via a common school, which lessens the need for a common school. He suggests that residential segregation already fragments schools from each other based upon income, social class, ethnic origin, and type of employment available in a neighborhood. According to Holmes, despite what kind of common curriculum exists, these external factors diminish opportunity for commonality. He also suggests that the current progressive philosophy of education that caters to individual student needs is not congruent with a common curriculum for all schools/students.

Finance, teacher certification, and standardized testing guide regulation in Ontario's schools. Public education in Ontario is currently financed through school board revenue as well as federal and provincial transfers, in the form of

grants. School boards possess the power to raise their own funding through property and related taxes and such other fundraising through sales of goods and services, investment income, and other revenue generating projects (Basu, 2004, pp. 627-628). However, in 1998, the Progressive Conservative provincial government centralized financial control by taking the power away from local school boards in deciding the amount of funding they may raise from local property taxes, the largest base from which school boards raised their own revenue (Basu, 2004, p. 627). Although school boards still retained the power to collect money from property taxes, the provincial government set the rates for educational use. Statistics Canada shows that in 2003, total income of school boards amounted to 15.3 billion dollars in Ontario (Statistics Canada, 2003, Schools Boards revenue and expenditures, by provinces and territories). Of this income, most of 6.4 billion dollars was raised by revenue from own sources of school boards. The majority of this revenue was raised through property and related taxes. Transfers to school boards amounted to about 9.0 billion dollars, 8.9 billion of this transfer originating from the provincial government (Statistics Canada, 2003, School Boards revenue and expenditures, by provinces and territories).

The calculation of educational spending in Ontario rests upon three basic grant allocations given to established school boards. This "Student-focused funding model" (Basu, 2004, p. 629) was created in 1998 as a part of the Common Sense Revolution of the Progressive Conservative government. The

first grant is the Foundation Grant, consisting of a core educational amount based upon the average daily enrolment of the school board reported on two specific dates in the fall and spring. The second grant area comprises eleven different special purpose grants that take into account different circumstances faced by students and school boards. The Pupil Accommodation Grant serves as the final grant area and considers such factors as heat, lighting, maintenance, renewal and construction of new schools (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005).

In contrast, religious schools are financed through the levy of tuition fees upon families with children in attendance as well as through private donations and community support. Opportunity to attend a religious school depends upon ability to pay.

In reality, the distinction between public and private schools is not as clear as it initially appears when it comes to funding. In practice, public schools draw upon private funds, that is, funding not available through taxation revenue but available through private and corporate fundraising, in order to supplement their programming. Private schools also draw upon public funds through various avenues. According to Erika Shaker, director of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives education project, Canadians are raising more and more money fundraising for public education (Shaker, 2003). People for Education also report that in 2001, over thirty-three million dollars were fundraised in Ontario's elementary schools alone, of which 27% of this money was used for textbooks, computers, and classroom supplies, up one million dollars from the previous

year. (People for Education, 2001, p.1). Shaker also notes that in 2001, Canadian parents spent an average of \$1297 on school supplies, fees, and clothing per child while teachers spent an average of \$600 on school-related activities (Shaker, 2003). The increased need for fundraising to cover costs represents an under-funded public education system. When individuals and corporations donate money to aid struggling public schools, they are in effect perpetuating the need for funding by allowing the government to decrease its role in providing funding to public schools. When funding is given by outside sources to supplement public school allocations, the government's share in education necessarily decreases. Nevertheless, fundraising is becoming a permanent fixture in the funding structure of public schools. At the same time as public schools raise funds through private means, private religious schools also receive some public funding. A portion of tuition fees is considered a charitable donation and supporters are given tax receipts for those contributions. Religious schools are also exempt from property taxes. The blurring of private and public funding between public and private schools shows that a certain degree of mixing has already been introduced within Ontario's schools where finance is concerned.

Standardized testing is another way in which schools may be regulated. Standardized testing is required of all students that attend publicly funded schools (Basu, 2004, p. 629) in Ontario. Standardized tests are conducted at specific benchmarks, for example, the Grade 10 Literacy test that is currently in place. However, private schools, although permitted, are not required to

participate in standardized testing. Private schools, including religious schools, are not required to teach students based upon the core curriculum most of Ontario's students must participate in. Private schools may participate in the testing and submit to an inspection by the Ministry of Education in order to receive the Ontario Secondary School Diploma, but are not required to do so (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005).

Teacher certification in Ontario is governed by the Ontario College of Teachers. This College was established in 1996 (Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996) to govern teachers in Ontario's publicly funded schools through professional accountability and protection to the public. However, teachers in private schools in Ontario are not required to belong to the College and thus are regulated solely by the school in which in they are employed.

While private schools are not regulated the same way as public schools are required, many private schools have established their own bodies of accountability. For example, the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools, established in 1952, is the largest independent school organization in Canada, which provides services and guidelines for its member schools (Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools, 2004). Private schools must yearly file intent to operate a private school with the governing authority and the provincial government keeps a registry of such schools accessible to the public.

Government control and community control are also areas within Ontario's educational system that are blurred. Basu claims that "the state still owns and

funds the majority of schools,” but neoliberal practice guides this funding within the goals of efficiency, accountability, and choice (Basu, 2004, p. 627). Furthermore, Basu outlines the centralization of financial control by the state within neoliberalism in education (pp. 627-628). However, at the same time as the state increased its control over education, it also required the mandatory implementation of school councils. These school councils were made up of local volunteers that are required to provide input to principals and school boards. They were elected locally, hoped by the state to be motivated by an interest in local children (Basu, 2004, pp. 626-627). In effect, Ontario created a system of mandatory community participation, though these bodies of volunteers had no real power over decision-making and policy implementation. In contrast, private schools in Ontario are essentially not state controlled, since the state has taken no liability for regulating and governing the activities of such schools. Communities and parents create these schools and their various forms of governance are based solely on community directive.

The school system in Ontario aligns itself more closely with a divided system. Its four dominant school boards outlined earlier operate under the authority of the provincial government. These public school boards each form a part of Ontario's publicly funded school system and operate simultaneously under the edicts of the state. The fifth component of a multi-school system in Ontario includes the system of private schools operating alongside these schools, without being subject to state authority.

Admission policies within Ontario's schools also vary. Within Ontario's publicly funded schools, admission is open to all students, regardless of religious background, primary language, race, ethnicity, gender, or other distinguishing characteristic. Non-Catholic students are permitted to attend Catholic schools, provided that they agree to abide by the governance of the particular school. However, Catholic school trustees have recently expressed their concern with growing numbers of non-Catholic students in Catholic schools and the effect on the character and overall ethos of Catholic schools in Ontario (Donlevy, 2002, p. 102). Private schools are not required to have open admission policies and may discriminate in selection of students.

Having generally outlined the context of education in Ontario based upon a united and divided school system framework, the next chapter will discuss the context of religion within Ontario's educational matrix to give a background to the ensuing policy proposal.

CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND TO ISSUES OF FUNDING

Decline of religion in Ontario's schools and extension of funding to last three grades of Catholic Schools in Ontario

Although in theory, the public school system in Ontario was secular and not aligned with any type of church, in reality, it was infused with religion, particularly Protestantism and Catholicism. Egerton Ryerson, who was an architect of the public system and a devoted Mennonite, declared that “the goals and aims of public schools would be guided by a nonsectarian Protestantism” (Davies, 1999, p. 2). Until the 1960s, this Protestantism was promoted within Ontario's public schools, after which the changing culture of the province began to also change the way in which public education was provided. Ryerson also established the present Roman Catholic separate system with partial funding (Davies, 1999, pp. 2-3). These two steps taken by Ryerson in the construction of a public school system worked to create a public school system characterized by religion until the 1960s.

A decline in religion from public schools in Ontario at the same time as the entrenchment of further funding for Catholic schools has sparked legal and philosophical debates about the role of religion in education. Two major events in the 1980s contributed to a challenge of religion in public schools . First, a series of court cases contesting a dominance of Protestantism in education effectively removed all religious prayers and religious content from courses (Dickinson & Dolmage, 1996). Secularism was seen as a solution to the growing

number of religious groups represented by the public school system. Secondly, in 1984, Catholic schools in Ontario were granted full funding by the provincial legislature. The last three levels of secondary school students, grades 11, 12, and 13, which formerly did not receive provincial funding, were placed on par with the public school system in terms of funding (Davies, 1999, p.3). Premier William Davis, in an unexpected change of opinion, surprised the public with his announcement that full funding would be given. His announcement was welcomed by some and disdained by others. Mr. Davis stated that "...experience has now taught us that a limitation on public funding which confines it to the public secondary school system is no longer required to sustain the viability of public education in Ontario" (The Globe and Mail, 1984, June 13). After these two events occurred, the issue of public funding for religious schools was brought up for debate and religious groups began to mobilize around the issue of funding for alternative religious schools (Davies, 1999, p. 3).

Although the decade of the 1980s brought about some lobbying by religious groups, the last thirteen years have brought about significant events surrounding this issue. Most of these significant events and activity have occurred around court cases heard at various levels of government. In 1992, religious communities went to the Ontario Court of Justice, General Division, to request equal funding for religious groups in education. The court responded by saying that although Ontario's funding structure did violate religious freedom, it was justified in doing so as a result of Constitutional obligation. Two years later,

the Ontario Court of Appeals declared that it was parents' religious beliefs that created undue financial hardship upon them in the decision to send their children to religiously based schools rather than the Education Act. They ruled that the Education Act in itself was not discriminatory towards families who send their children to private religious schools. In 1996, the Supreme Court of Canada decided that Ontario may fund religious education, but that there was no requirement for it to do so (The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, 2003, p.1).

After these three major court decisions and no funding, religious groups remained dissatisfied and decided to take their grievances to the United Nations Human Rights Committee. In what became known as the Waldman case, a 1999 decision declared that Ontario must either give support for all religious groups within a public system or none at all: "The Committee was not persuaded that the fact that funding for Roman Catholic schools was enshrined in the constitution constituted 'reasonable and objective' grounds which would justify the discrimination" (Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, 2001, p. 2). The Committee declared that Ontario must make changes to be inclusive of all religious communities or deny all religious communities funding in its education infrastructure. This announcement moved the issue from a legal to a political forum. Talking about the United Nations' expression to the Ontario government to fund other denominational schools, D'Souza (2003) points out that Constitutions are human documents, subject to evolution and change according

to demographic shifts over time (p. 366). However, the government was not yet willing to act on the Waldman decision until 2001.

In 2001, under pressure from the Waldman decision, lobbying by religious groups, and within a right-wing agenda, the Harris government implemented the Equity in Education Tax Credit. However, in the spirit of cost-cutting and a dismantling welfare state, this legislation did not only provide funding to religious schools, but instead gave families tax credits for up to fifty percent of tuition costs for sending their children to any private school in Ontario, thus encouraging a move toward a neo-conservatism through privatization rather than equity. After this tax credit came into force, groups actively opposed funding of private schools. This public feedback led to the dismantling of the Equity in Education Tax Credit due to worries that it was taking away from public education, providing handouts to elite private school participants, and not subject to the same standards as public schools. The Liberal government used this feedback as a platform in their election even though Dalton McGuinty, Premier, states that he has “no ideological opposition to the extension of public support to denominational schools” and that there is “an issue of fairness to be addressed” (Vanasselt, 2003, p. 2). When Dalton McGuinty came into power in late 2003, the tax credit was repealed retroactively for the 2003 year. (Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2003) The actions of the Conservative government to extend funding to all private schools effectively undermined the issues brought forward by religious communities, using equity rhetoric to advance neoliberal goals.

The Equity in Education Tax Credit was formulated in an environment in which cuts and abrupt changes were being made to the public school system within the overall plan of the *Common Sense Revolution* of the Progressive Conservative government in power. Kits claims “[l]imited funding, increasingly centralized regulations, unthoughtful curriculum changes, and considerable critique of teachers and their unions have created acrimony within the system” (2001, *Tarnished Blessing*) which led to an atmosphere of suspicion between public and independent schools. Attempts to provide funding to private schools were immediately met with feelings of threat by the public school system due to this atmosphere. The tax credit was seen as a means to increasing competition between schools and placed an unfair burden on public schools that were already struggling to meet rigid requirements and limited funding provided them. It also gave the appearance of funding one school at the cost of the other, which further increased feelings of suspicion between public and independent schools.

The Equity in Education Tax Credit also failed in that it promoted a consumer model of education that Ontarians have never valued in the provision of public education. Giving tax credits to individual families invites an individual, market-driven solution for education to develop (Kits, 2001, *Tarnished Blessing*). These tax credits were introduced at the same time as the new funding model was proposed which linked funding to student spaces (OSSTF, 2001). Rather than acknowledging the need for diverse options under the umbrella of the public system through universal funding and allocations which Ontario's education

system is founded upon, tax credits are the first step towards school choice programs and the decline of the public school system. The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation called the plan an "insidious bribe to parents to remove their children from the public school system" (OSSTF, 2001). According to the legislation set out by the Equity in Education Tax Credit, for every student that exits the system, the overall allocation to the education system decreases because a student space is lost for the public school system and half of that money is given to the parent, while half is saved by the government. A tax credit system fails to acknowledge the need to improve the public school system and instead provides a way to lessen responsibility for the system through a systematic retrenchment of public funding.

After the period of decline in religion from public schools, years spent in court, and the granting and subsequent removal of the tax credit program, religious groups began to frame their requests based upon multicultural policies that had begun to gain credence in educational policy. Davies (1999) argues that multiculturalism has emerged as a master frame in Ontario's political culture over the past fifteen years (p. 7). He claims that Canada as a nation has based itself on multicultural policies and was the first country "officially to declare itself 'multicultural'" (Davies, 1999, p. 7). He further suggests that policy formation in Ontario is enhanced through the implementation of multicultural initiative:

Social policy initiatives in Canada, particularly in Ontario, are strengthened if they acknowledge the necessities of keeping pace

with new demographic realities and of protecting a multitude of precious heritages. Ontario government documents routinely applaud the primary good of social diversity and the promotion of minority cultures. (Davies, 1999, p. 8)

Since the removal of the tax credit program, the chances of the idea of funding for religious schools returning to the government agenda diminish continuously. Therefore, coupled with school choice policy, Davies suggests the political support offered to multicultural ideals are the most recent strategic forum by which religious groups have begun to revive the issue of public funding for religious schools.

CHAPTER THREE: WHY ATTEND TO THIS PROBLEM

Private schools in Ontario operate for a variety of different reasons. Religious schools exist to educate children based upon a particular worldview in continuance with values taught at home and at the mosque, synagogue, church, or other place of worship. D'Souza (2003) notes that Catholic education is based upon the "...knowledge that the school was one of the three agents of an integral education; parents and the Church being the other two" (p. 376). For many proponents of religious schools, the school is an extension of a life orientation. Religious schools seek to provide a "holistic educational experience" where religious communities are able to "live out their values" (Kits, 2001, p. 3). Dividing schools along religious lines cuts across the very thing that is most important to people, as it includes the way in which one looks at the world and the orientation of their approach to the rest of the world.

The tax credit solution to issues brought forward by religious groups was not reflective of the value placed upon education by most Canadians. Canadians remain committed to public education. Goddard writes about how middle class flight from public schools is actually an illusion. He states that although parents, educators, and others are apprehensive about under-funding of education in provincial budgets, difficulty in recruiting teachers for specific subjects, and large class sizes, they would like to see more funding and more opportunity for choice within the public system, rather than outside of this system (Goddard, 2000, p. 4). Furthermore, the 14th OISE/UT Survey of Public Attitudes towards Education in

Ontario 2002 reports that “the clear majority of Ontarians want to see a better funded and fully operational public educational system and are prepared to put their money where their mouth is” (Livingstone et. al, 2003, p. 58). Support for common public education does not appear to be on the decline in Ontario.

The prevalence of independent private schools in Ontario resonates most with religion. According to the Economist, over half of Ontario's 730 private schools in 2001 were associated with a church, synagogue, or mosque (OSSTF, 2001). Furthermore, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federations suggests that most parents who send their children to a private school are actually interested in an ideological bent and are not doing so out of dissatisfaction with the academia of the public school system (OSSTF, 2001). Whereas some private schools may be associated with elitism, the majority of private schools consist of independent religious schools that have been created to offer an alternative educational experience based upon a particular religious orientation.

In view of the fact that a blurring of what funds may be given a public or a private school already exists, that we live in an increasingly multi-cultural, multi-faith society, and building on the strong support for publicly provided education, we may now rethink the way in which funding is disbursed to our education system. Religious communities ought to be able to introduce their own ideology and worldview to their children in all curricular areas with public support. Religious schools should be subject to basic regulations that ensure a quality

education is being given to the student and that a basic degree of commonality exists within Ontario's schools when it comes to civic education and basic tolerance for difference in others. The state must protect the student at the same time as it allows opportunity for dissent from a mainstream system that does not reflect minority or alternative religious communities. This accommodation for minority groups is reflective of the constitutional principle that allowed funding for Catholic schools in Ontario at the time of Confederation.

Within the current system of lax regulation in regard to most aspects of private schools in Ontario, students are left without safeguards to protect them from schools that are less than satisfactory, teachers that may be less than accountable, and curriculum that may not be academically sound. Although it does not follow that schools will perform poorly along these lines, the opportunity for such a situation to arise is present. Necessary reforms to the overall educational policy in Ontario can accommodate religious groups that wish to secede from the mainstream system in a manner that responsibly looks after all of Ontario's children.

Changing demographics in Ontario

This issue affects all citizens of Ontario, as its response would change the structure of education allocations for the entire province; however, it directly affects those citizens who are of a particular religious background and wish to send their children to alternative religious schools. According to Statistics Canada (2004), the 2001 census religious affiliation reported Ontario's

11,285,550 population as 3,935,745 Protestant; 3,911,760 Catholic; 352,530 Muslim; 301,935 Other Christian; 264,055 Orthodox Christian; 217,555 Hindu; 190,795 Jewish; 128,320 Buddhist; 104,785 Sikh; 18,985 Other; and 17,780 Eastern religions. Only 1,841,290 or 16% of Ontario's population reported not having a religious affiliation. Within each religious grouping, minority sects also exist. The currently funded Catholic religious group only accounted for about 35% of the total religious affiliation in Ontario. Although all religiously affiliated citizens do not desire a religiously based education for their children, the statistics show that Ontario is no longer one in which biculturalism remains a reality. Statistics Canada also reports that since the 1970 and ongoing, most immigrants have originated from Asia or the Middle East, which is a change from past immigration patterns from European countries in which Protestantism and Catholicism are the majority religions. Since Ontario is the home for the majority of immigrants that come to Canada, this will result in an increasingly diversified population by religion (Statistics Canada, 2001, p. 1).

Public funding of Catholic religious schools exclusively does not reflect the diversity of religious groups apparent in this census data. When Ontario began to offer education to its citizens, the dominant religions were Protestantism and Roman Catholicism and thus schools were provided to reflect these two religious groups. However, this demographic has changed over time without appropriate change in the system. The education funding structure needs to be adapted so that it may accommodate the various religious groups that make up

contemporary Ontarian society. Ontario must bring its education funding up to date with the religious make-up of its population. Ontario has the most multicultural population in Canada and thus the greatest demand for alternative religious schools. Furthermore, Vanasselt (2003) reports that according to Statistics Canada, “most families choosing independent schooling are from low- and middle-income brackets” (p. 2). The exclusion of religious schools from public funding is not an equity issue because religious communities are permitted to set up religious alternative schools under the current legislation, but it is a political issue because cost makes it difficult and sometimes impossible for families to take part in an alternative education. Religious communities are not being discriminated against in the fact that they cannot attend these schools, but in the fact that they often face substantial financial barriers in order to do so.

The issue of funding for religious schools is also a pertinent and pressing matter given that Ontario continues to grow in religious diversity at the same time that the gap between its rich and poor classes broadens. Minority religious groups are often associated with newcomers to Canada who often do not hold financial affluence in comparison to the rest of society and thus are forced to assimilate into a mainstream education system that is not fitting with their religious worldview. In Ontario, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Protestant, and other religious groups do not have such an opportunity within the publicly funded system. The categories of public and separate Catholic schools are no longer sufficient within the context of Ontario's pluralist and multi-religious society.

CHAPTER FOUR: PROPOSAL AND BEGINNING EVALUATION

There are a number of policy implications that can be drawn from precedents that have been set regarding educational policy in Canada and in Ontario. The first standard shows that arrangements for minority groups were made possible in the constitutional documents regarding education. Since Protestantism dominated public schools and was reflective of the orientation of the majority of citizens in Ontario, Catholic education was assured an alternative system where Catholic values could be integrated with the educational program. Equally, in other parts of the country such as Quebec, Protestant schools were permitted to have funding for their own schools, since Catholicism was the dominant religion in that area of the country. Continuing this pattern of providing funding to groups that wish to opt out of the normative worldview or faith orientation of the era, funds may be granted to dissenting religious groups. Providing funding for religious groups that wish to opt out of the mainstream system ensures that the political precedent of funding for minority groups continues to be realized.

In 1984, this constitutional precedent was strengthened when the Ontario government acted to extend funding to the last grades of Catholic secondary schools. This action showed that funding of Catholic education was not only an historical provision, but was also a provision with continuity that remained applicable in the present political backdrop. Further court involvement ensured that Catholic education was to be guaranteed by Constitutional arrangement and

that minority rights would be protected in the question of educational entitlements. This decision paved the way for non-Catholic religious groups to begin to request funding for their own schools and to begin looking at changes that needed to be made to a school system that was not reflective of the current religious demographics of the Ontario population. The United Nations committee declared that Ontario could either fund all religious schools or none at all. Funding all religious schools does not appear to be an idea so far removed from Canadian values, based upon the inception of a dissenting system from the beginning of confederation. However, the consequences of such a decision requires careful planning and deliberation so as not to create a policy that would work to dismantle but to build a stronger overall system of publicly funded education in Ontario.

By providing funding to accredited schools and basic regulatory standards to ensure academic stringency is met, the government will reclaim its role as overseer in education. This role is one that has changed throughout Ontario's history in which the government supervises a public system but has relinquished most control over any private systems. All of Ontario's students would benefit from core curricular standards as well as a common curriculum that teaches basic civic responsibility and knowledge. The Ontario government must work to provide an environment in which managed dissent from an adequately administered public system is accepted and supported.

Any funding that will be given to alternative schools must not undermine the integrity of public schools as they currently exist for those who wish to attend a secular school, both religious and non-religious. Public schools have been part of Canada's social fabric since its inception as a country and must not be quickly or rashly discarded for a new system. Public schools serve the common good and are necessary and proper in a democratic country. Ontario's schools must not be set up to compete with each other but must remain a project of collective social responsibility. Attempts to promote a consumerist model of education or promote competition between schools works to harm rather than build a cohesive citizenry, accepting of each others' differences and cognizant of each others' different needs. Policy proposals must work to allow room for a diversity of schools in such a way that the idea of a core curriculum and regulatory commonality are not threatened, so that this diversity may be rooted in a form of cohesion for schools in Ontario.

It is based upon these precedents and considerations that a policy proposal intervention of funding alternative religious schools concurrently with the initiation of a core curriculum, common standards, common teacher certification, standardized testing, community involvement, and open admission rather than providing tax credits is now suggested. The failure of the Equity in Education Tax Credit to provide equity for religious communities who seek an alternative educational experience or in recognizing the strength of Ontario's public schools requires an alternative solution. The government must remain committed to

public education but at the same time allow for diversity in the public school system that recognizes the plurality of worldviews that are present within the province. This proposal, rather than giving individual tax credits, is a way in which these worldviews can be recognized and affirmed without contributing to competition between public and independent schools. Supporting accredited schools rather than tax credits decreases consumerism in education and creates a strong public education system that accepts dissent and acknowledges differences among Ontarians.

Policy Proposal

The following proposal will be outlined according to the united/divided school system continuum. Funding independent religious schools will encourage the continuance of a school system divided by religious lines, rather than implementing an integrated school system. However, the goal of this policy proposal is to address needs of religious communities as outlined in this paper and provide public support for a diversity of schools. The current system in Ontario allows a school system segregated along religious lines, although not publicly funded (with the exception of Catholic schools). Although this proposal does not attempt to integrate schools, it affirms through public funding the need, as stated by parents, to provide an alternative educational setting based upon religion. Coupled with basic curricular, regulatory, and funding commonality, this proposal seeks to provide a model by which pluralism of religion can be supported within Ontario's educational system. Support for funding for groups

that wish to opt out of the normative worldview or faith orientation of the era strengthens the social fabric of a multicultural state. In this manner, inclusion is also achieved because all religious groups are given a forum in which to live out their values and establish institutions fitting with their worldview.

In this proposal, base core curricular requirements will be mandatory for all of Ontario's students, despite their school of attendance. These basic curricular requirements will include compulsory civic education and a minimum doctrine of tolerance for others within a pluralist, multicultural society. After these basic curricular requirements are met, guidelines will be established governing the development of all other curricula. Schools will be required to adhere to these guidelines in the formation of their curriculum and standardized testing will be put into place to ensure a basic level of academic competency upon graduation, despite school of attendance. Requiring all schools to conform to a basic common curriculum as well as participation in standardized testing will encourage a stronger sense of unity and cohesion within the system and will put Ontario's students on more of a level playing field than they currently are on. Although a common curriculum will be influenced by socioeconomic demographics and regional issues, the flexibility to develop most curriculum while maintaining basic academic requirements through standardized testing will allow room for variance.

Regulation within the proposed policy will be accomplished through financing, teacher regulation, and the standardized testing mentioned previously.

Financing will be centralized and school boards will no longer be required to raise their own revenue. School boards will still be in control of managing their area schools, but the province will take full responsibility for funding education and distribute funds to established school boards and independent schools in an equitable manner. Independent schools will be eligible for the Foundation Grant, special purpose grants, and the Pupil Accommodation Grant in the same way as currently funded public schools are eligible; however, the funding will not be given to a specific school board, but will instead be given to the school itself. Additional financing through alternative sources such as sponsorship and fundraising will not be regulated. Independent religious schools will not be permitted to charge tuition fees to families at their institutions.

All new teachers intending to work within any of Ontario's publicly funded schools, including independent religious schools, will be required to register with the Ontario College of Teachers to ensure professional consistency and accountability to the public. All existing teachers within each respective system will be required to register with the College. All schools will also be required to report standardized testing scores and make them publicly accessible. If schools consistently fall below average scores, an investigation will be conducted by the Ministry to determine barriers that are in place at a particular school that are preventing students from achieving an acceptable level of academic performance in comparison to the rest of the province. The Ministry will have the power to revoke funding to a school that has not worked sufficiently enough to provide a

proper and adequate educational experience for its students and which does not seek to improve.

In the proposed policy, government will control overarching policy, guidelines, finance, and regulation, with flexibility for school boards and independent religious schools to develop curricula based upon their local circumstances, under the guidelines of curricular formation. These local circumstances include the integration for independent religious schools of religion within the character and institutional culture of the school, hiring policies, and curricular issues. School councils will not be mandatory, but will be encouraged for each school. These councils will report to the board upon consultation with the community about local circumstances that should be reflected upon and which should be recognized in the development of schools within the school boards' jurisdiction. In the situation that funding is given to independent religious schools, school councils will also be encouraged to report back to the elected governing structure of the school. By providing funding attached to schools rather than attached to families through such means as tax credits, this proposal attempts to protect the universality of financing for Ontario's schools. Financing of education and a certain degree of regulatory continuity must be a project of the state. Public support for a diversity of schools and proper funding to all of Ontario's schools strengthens this mandate and ensures that all students are able to access education that does not compromise their value system. This particular structure of governance also allows room for both a "top-down" and a

“bottom-up” approach (Mawhinney, 1996, p. 506). This strategy does not implement a school choice approach but allows independent religious schools to become part of a publicly funded school system.

The number of education systems will continue to be based upon a divided school system model. This policy proposal in effect adds another school system to the already divided publicly funded school system and at the same time requires schools not accepting public funds, i.e. schools that continue to operate in the private sphere, to conform to its policies in regard to curricular development and requirements, standardized testing, and teacher certification. The state acts as a centralized system manager as it did before with respect to the inclusion of independent religious schools and also extends its reach to all of Ontario's schools.

In order to allow independent religious schools to be included in the publicly funded structure, it is important that open admission policies be a part of this policy proposal. Admission must be offered to all students, regardless of their background and/or affiliations. Schools will be required to permit open attendance policies that would accept any student into the school. An exception to this is when a student does not agree to follow the code of conduct as outlined by the local policy of the school in regard to their policies built upon local circumstances. The Ministry of Education must approve any policies of exclusion. For example, students will not be denied admittance based on such

differences as religion, unless students refuse to honor the integrity of the school's mission.

Although this policy attempts to redress concerns of independent religious schools in particular, its solution need not be limited to those schools. A future addition to this proposal could seek the inclusion of other families that could benefit from this arrangement such as those that choose an alternative school not based on a religious preference but on other factors such as alternative educational instruction patterns, an alternative school based on a cultural preference, or an alternative school based on a particular specialization. The particular nature of each school could be seen as local circumstances.

This intervention must also take into account what schools would be eligible to qualify as a religious alternative school and what religious alternative schools would be entitled to receive funding. This is a challenging issues as it involves a definition of religion, that in itself a subjective and value-laden process. I propose that judgment be suspended of which religions should be included unless it appears that a child is in danger as a result of the actions of such a religious community. I suggest that a registry of all religious alternative schools receiving public funding be created and available to the public. Furthermore, these schools must have a minimum pupil enrollment of twenty students in order to be recognized as a school requiring public funding. The schools must offer educational instruction at either the elementary or secondary level. The schools must report upon request to the public the status of their teachers within the

Ontario College of Teachers, staff professional credentials, the curricular program, progress reports of children, and all funding received by the school. Students must be between the ages of 4 and 20 in order to attend such a school.

There are some positive and negative latent consequences of this intervention that must be addressed in the discussion of the implementation of such a policy proposal. A policy that attaches funding to schools rather than families can be seen as a positive solution for a number of reasons. It provides more commonality and regulation than currently exists within Ontario's schools and works to bring together an education system formerly divided by competition, animosity, and differing standards. Families of all income levels will be able to benefit from this policy, as it does not favour any specific class status. The policy removes barriers that have previously existed to prevent lower income citizens from exercising their right to attend an independent religious school. By placing funding with schools rather than individuals, religious schools become more of an option within the publicly funded system and will result in overall gains in equality between all schools. However, the policy will increase the overall cost of education in Ontario and is a more intrusive means of reform than a tax credit solution, which will make it more difficult to implement and administer. This policy also does not address factors associated with an education system that is currently under-funded. Furthermore, regulations imposed upon religious schools may be seen as a threat and as an unacceptable compromise to receive funding. Schools may refuse to accept money with strings attached, which would

undermine the purpose of the policy. Since inherent in the definition of an alternative school is the idea that the school attempts to leave the mainstream system, there must remain some room for independence and freedom in decision making associated with the individual school when it comes to the implementation of a worldview and associated policies, issues which separate a religious school from a public school.

A shadow policy that could be employed to address funding for religious schools would be to associate religious schools with the existing public school boards in a particular region. In this manner, a religious school would be the joint project of a religious community and the broader local community it is situated in, in effect bringing together citizens from both of these communities to work out a plan for these alternative schools that would be desirable to both communities and work to provide further unity within the project of an educational system. This model would diminish feelings of competition and work to integrate school systems while still allowing for alternative arrangements. The downside of this alternative is that religious communities and local school boards may not agree on the amount and means of funding that should be given to the alternative religious schools, which may lead to discord between groups and download responsibility from the provincial to the local level in handling funding allocations. On the other hand, this offloading of responsibility may make the provincial government more apt to respond to such a policy proposal because it would

result in less work at the provincial level while still satisfying requests for funding for alternative religious schools.

Fully funding a religious alternative school also has bearings on the unification and capacity of the religious community itself. Once a school is fully funded, it no longer becomes a project of the religious community, but a project of the state, which is likely to result in less investment and involvement by the community. Parents and community members would not need to come together to support the continuance of their school. Although this proposal allows more citizens to benefit from a dissenting education rather than only those who are able to afford it, it could potentially harm the school overall through a decline in interest by community members in the life of the school.

Beginning Evaluation

In Sabatier's *Theories of the Policy Process* (1999), Ostrom suggests six criteria for evaluation of outcomes in the institutional rational choice model. These six criteria will form the structure for beginning evaluation of the proposed policy intervention and implementation discussed in this paper. These six evaluative criteria consist of economic efficiency, fiscal equivalence, redistributive equity, accountability, conformance to general morality, and adaptability. Indicators that determine whether or not the intervention is working to solve the original problem will also be discussed as well as evaluative criteria that act in conjunction with the shadow policy.

Economic efficiency refers to the degree of change that occurs in terms of benefits after resource allocation changes. Efficiency is an important component of whether or not the policy will be desirable to a decision maker and is closely related to rates of return on money being put into the system. For this proposal, economic efficiency is a complex issue. The intervention will cost the Ministry of Education more than it costs currently. Presently, alternative religious schools function without public funds, which saves money for taxpayers. The current educational system operates on the assumption that education is universally funded and all tax-paying citizens contribute to the system although all do not seek benefits associated with this contribution. However, indirectly, all citizens benefit from public education by having an educated citizenry. The implementation of this intervention would introduce a new expense that did not previously exist. The introduction of funding for religious schools could also result in something of an exodus from the mainstream public system, which would decrease the efficiency of the public school system through decentralization of schools in general in that there would be more schools and more administrative and operational costs associated with education funding in Ontario based on an increase in the number of schools operating. Although the funding of schools rather than individual families would be efficient in delivery as funding allotments would fall into a pre-established method or formula of disbursement already present in the public school system, it does not necessarily reflect economic efficiency overall.

Economic efficiency would be increased, however, in the centralization of taxation within the province rather than a combination of provincial and local funding. Funding would be collected through provincial taxation and would be disbursed from this centralized fund. This would create a more efficient means of distribution as well and the calculation of the funding formula would be more efficient.

Redistributional equity occurs when policies redistribute funds to poorer individuals in the recognition that particularly needy groups should receive funds before those of higher income levels. This proposal does not seek to enhance redistributional equity because it does not target recipients of its benefit to a particular income level. Although it removes barriers that are in place for those who would like to send their children to an alternative religious school but face significant barriers in doing so, it also removes barriers to those that are in a position to provide a privately funded religious education for their children as well. The primary objective of this intervention is to ensure the ability of all families to send their children to a school that reflects their religious worldview without facing financial hardship at the same time as it encourages the development of a healthy, sustainable, and market-free educational system. This objective does not necessarily require redistributional equity based upon particularly needy groups.

The centralization of funding would ensure consistency across school boards in the amount of funding raised by municipalities and would prevent

constituencies with higher income levels from generating higher income for education than constituencies with lower income levels, thus ensuring a level playing field for students in Ontario.

Fiscal equivalence more accurately characterizes this intervention than economic efficiency or redistributive equity. Fiscal equivalence proves to be a strength of the policy proposal. Fiscal equivalence deals with the idea that the contribution of an individual is equated with an ability to receive benefits. Ostrom suggests that an inequity in this area will decrease the willingness of individuals to develop and maintain the system of resource allocation. In the current funding formula, families who send their children to alternative religious schools contribute to the system but do not receive benefits of this participation. There will be less dissatisfaction among these families that benefits are not being accrued from payment into a system, which currently contribute to a public system as well as a private system. Although all citizens in Canada benefit indirectly from having an education citizenry, families who contribute to a public and a private system do not benefit directly from the system. However, opponents of this proposal will cite a reduction in fiscal equivalence based upon the belief that public funds should not be given to support religious causes. Furthermore, those citizens in Ontario who dispute a universally funded education system and who would rather see a market-based form of education develop will not see an overall increase in fiscal equivalence.

Accountability also proves to be an asset of the policy proposal outlined in this paper. Accountability in evaluative criteria insinuates that publicly funded institutions and officials must be answerable to citizens. Information about institutions must be readily available and accessible to citizens since the resources for these institutions come from taxes paid by these citizens. The achievement of accountability also increases efficiency through that process. This intervention requires that religious schools provide public information such as standardized test scores of the school, information about the teaching staff, common curricular guidelines, and a common civic education. Schools that do not conform to these requirements will be subject to inspection, which could lead to school closure; therefore, accountability will be encouraged through the consequences of noncompliance. Accountability is further enhanced by this proposal because it requires all schools in Ontario, including private schools not receiving public funding, to adhere to these basic regulations. This proposal makes all schools in Ontario accountable to the state. In doing so, it works to protect children.

Conformance to general morality proposes that policies must take into account the level of morality that is promoted within an intervention. It looks at the feasibility of cheating and gains that would be made from cheating as well as various other possibilities for deviance from general morality that might be made possibly through the policy design. This intervention allows little room for cheating because funding is given to a school directly rather than to individuals.

The school, through mechanisms of accountability, will be unable to receive the funding and may even be forced to close if it is not in compliance with regulations. As well, the rule that a school shall not receive funding unless it has a minimum enrollment of twenty students will further decrease the likelihood of schools being created under the ruse of a religious orientation. However, the ambiguity of what shall be considered a religious school present in this policy proposal provides an avenue for manipulation of the system. For example, a school created out of a philosophical positioning may be considered a religion in that it promotes a particular worldview, which leaves room for a wide range of educational experiments being funded by the state.

Another possibility in relation to conformance to general morality is the possibility that religious schools may top up funding provided to them by the state, thus increasing elitism and making religious schools attractive not based on their religious stance but on their elitism. This phenomenon currently exists within the public school system as well between different class level neighborhoods where higher levels of fundraising are possible from one school to the next. In relative terms, high supplementation by religious schools to their own communities as well as wealthy neighborhoods to their own public schools would seek to weaken public schools that are not able to secure the same amount of funding. This unequal supplementation would serve to create an imbalance in educational funding by geographic area or religion, disrupting equality for students in Ontario.

Finally, Ostrom uses adaptability as an evaluative standard of policy interventions. Adaptability evaluation argues that policies must be able to respond to constantly changing environments in society and to specialized circumstances that require unique responses. Adaptability is enhanced through this policy intervention because it provides room within the publicly funded education system for religious groups who wish to dissent from a mainstream system. It recognizes that new religious groups may emerge through such possibilities as new ideologies or immigration of citizens with different religious views. It provides a mechanism for inclusion of these schools in the future framework of Ontario's schools. The intervention is a response to changing environments and cultural groups entering into Ontario's citizenry and allows room for the creation of religious alternative schools as religious diversity grows and alternative schools are needed. In a multicultural state such as Ontario, this type of adaptability reflects the many different groups that are part of the province in terms of religious affiliation.

Ostrom's criteria for evaluation show that this policy proposal resonates most with fiscal equivalence, accountability, and adaptability. Room for improvement on the intervention exists in terms of economic efficiency, redistributive equity, and conformance to general morality; however, overall, the intervention does more good than it does harm, which can be considered a success.

Indicators that the intervention is working to actually solve the problem must also be addressed in an evaluative discussion. Kingdon (1995) suggests that indicators come from both governmental and nongovernmental agencies and are a change in the state of a system (pp. 90-93). Indicators that would prove the proposed intervention of funding schools rather than individuals is working would involve positive feedback from families involved with alternative religious schools, an increase in the number of religious alternative schools, and the compliance of private religious schools with proposed regulations. Indicators would also include the amount of funding that both remains and becomes available to public and religious alternative schools, the continuing vitality of public schools, and public attitudes towards dissenting schools that would not be consistent with a sense of animosity and competition.

Evaluative criteria in relationship to the shadow policy would improve economic efficiency slightly because it would attach schools to public school boards and by doing so, promote less disruption and administrative bureaucracy within the system. It would simply add more schools to the existing school boards. Fiscal equivalence would remain the same in either policy intervention. Redistributive equity would remain a minor concern of the shadow policy because it would dispense funding not based on income but based on universal availability. Accountability would be minimally increased due to the communal efforts of local school boards and religious communities working together. Conformance to general morality would come under closer scrutiny because of

the fact that school boards and religious communities would have to come to an agreement about funding for each school. Adaptability would be decreased in the shadow policy because opportunities for religious schools would be limited by the specific context of the local community.

The evaluation of this intervention must also take into consideration the capacity of a religious community. This solution should be considered successful when it considerably reduces financial barriers for families choosing alternative religious schools while not weakening the religious community or the public school system as well as the relationship between either entity. Alternative religious schools must not be forced to relinquish complete control over their schools or have to give up that which distinguishes themselves as religious schools in order to receive funding. This solution assumes that religious communities have the capacity and right to educate their children in a religious context under the supervision of the state and should be considered successful based on those merits. The shadow policy does more to relinquish control of religious communities over their schools and as such, should be considered a weaker proposal. This requirement must be a fundamental evaluative factor in the intervention recommended. Conversely, public schools must not have to give up funding in order to allow room for these alternative schools and should not be set up in a manner in which they will have to compete with religious schools. In other words, funding will need to be increased by the provincial government in order to accommodate an addition to the publicly funded system; otherwise,

more schools will have to share the same amount of money, resulting in an overall decrease in education spending.

Future Suggestions and Inquiry

With this policy proposal, room for future study has been created. There are four major areas that a later study could address in relationship to the addition of independent religious schools to the publicly funded school system in Ontario. These areas include the definition of religion, inclusion of other types of schools within this proposal, regulation of fundraising and supplementary funding, and additional grants for geographic areas or school communities with overall lower than average income levels.

The lack of a definition of religion in this proposal was left ambiguous due to the fact that this process requires a separate analysis of its own. Since the definition of religion itself will be a subjective and value-laden process, it is a task that must be completed with respect and thoughtfulness. The definition of religion must be undertaken in a manner that seeks to protect children from harm while at the same time allowing freedom and equality rights.

Inclusion of other types of schools within this policy structure may be another direction that a future study could address. Using the united and divided continuum, one may make an argument that would include a variety of educational philosophies and pedagogical experiments within the publicly funded school structure within Ontario, all within the regulatory structure outlined within this policy proposal. One could suggest that all schools meeting the guidelines

outlined in the proposal should be eligible for public funding, rather than restricting it to schools affiliated with a particular religious worldview.

The use of supplementary funding in all of Ontario's publicly funded schools is an issue that could benefit from extensive further study. Some of the dimensions that may be included in such a study would be analysis of why there is a need for additional funding in schools, where additional funding is coming from, long-term consequences of supplementary funding, and the disparity created by additional funding between wealthier and poorer school districts. These issues are interrelated and reflect a growing phenomenon within Ontario's schools and as such, should be properly reflected upon.

Finally, additional grants for geographic areas or school communities with overall lower than average income levels may be an area of consideration. These grants could combat supplementary funding or simply work to address affirmatively the need for children of low-income families and/or neighborhoods to reduce a cycle of poverty. This additional funding could be put towards such programs as breakfast programs, clothing allowances, or waivers on extra fees for additional activities and supplies.

Further studies could include empirical inquiry into the voices of educational participants, such as children in the system, parents currently involved in the system, teachers, other school trustees, school board members, and other stakeholders in addressing these issues.

CONCLUSION

A restructuring of Ontario's educational system along a continuum of a united and a divided school system serves to address issues brought forward by religious communities in relationship to education and strengthen educational policy for all of Ontario's students. The decline of Ryerson's religious model of education, equity claims in the courts, and the decision of the United Nations committee served to mobilize religious communities to revive the issue of state assisted independent religious schools. The Equity in Education Tax credit and other reforms by the Progressive Conservative government in Ontario served to gloss over issues brought forward by religious communities and instead worked to further a neoliberal agenda that did not work in the best interest of all children in Ontario's schools. After the failure of this tax credit program, there existed need for a policy that would properly address concerns of religious communities in regard to education while at the same time increase accountability for all of Ontario's schools, both public and private.

This policy proposal is one way in which to administer education in the province of Ontario and rests upon a continuum of school organization. It seeks to enhance commonality across all schools in Ontario, provide opportunity for dissent from a mainstream system, increase accountability and regulation, centralize funding sources and allocations, and create more flexibility for dealing with local circumstances. The evaluative strengths of this policy proposal are fiscal equivalence, accountability, and adaptability.

As a profession, social workers are called to work for social justice and social change. Social workers are to act as advocates and are responsible for improving social policy so that it is inclusive and responsive to a diverse society. It is in this mandate that an analysis of the social policy of education has been conducted in this paper. Social workers must work to ensure that all of Ontario's children are protected and are properly educated, for the interest of the children and for the interest of broader society, who benefit from an educated and tolerant citizenry.

As citizens, we must work together to ensure that all of Ontario's children are able to receive a proper education, including accommodation and regulation of those communities that wish to provide an alternative education for their children. Regulations need to be in place to shield children from academic institutions that may not put them on par with the rest of the province. More importantly, however, some commonality must exist across the schools in Ontario so that there can be cohesion across educational institutions, and some unity among the citizenry. Furthermore, increasing commonality concurrently with opportunity for dissent models a pluralism that recognizes and encourages the need for groups to form institutions of their own in order to live out their values. A school system that allows room for alternative religious schools seeks to provide such an atmosphere.

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