



How Plural is Pluralism?

An Exploration of the Approach to Religious Pluralism in the Irish Primary Education System: A perspective through the lens of ERB and Ethics.

Professional Masters of Education in Primary Teaching (PME)
2019

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Submitted to Marino Institution of Education on 11th May 2019.

Abstract

This study examines a sample of written submissions contributed by various stakeholders to the NCCA's consultation process, for the proposed implementation of a common curriculum in Education about Religion and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics. Due to results gathered from the consultation process, the implementation of this new curriculum ultimately failed. Using thematic analysis various submissions were analysed in order to gain an insight into the public's views and opinions on the attempt made by the DES and NCCA to accommodate religious diversity and promote religious pluralism in Irish primary schools. The literature review chapter examines the relevant literature that was used to support and develop the rationale behind the ERBE curriculum, and suggests that a pervasive issue exists in relation to the provision of religious education in Ireland, particularly with regard to denominational schools. Interestingly, results from the analysis of data presented in the findings and discussion chapter, revealed a contradicting response from the general public. Although some agreed with the idea behind the proposed curriculum, the majority of respondents opposed it, expressing concerns surrounding both the curriculum and the consultation process. Respondents raised questions in relation to the accuracy of the NCCA's portrayal of Irish primary schools, the plural nature of the proposed curriculum, the approach to ethics education outlined in the proposals, limitations of the consultation process and finally expectations for teachers and pupils. From this, the researcher was able to draw various conclusions and recommendations that reveal and highlight the significantly complex nature of religious pluralism.

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to everyone who gave me help, encouragement and advice while writing this research dissertation.

Firstly, I would like to give a special thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Clare Maloney for her continued support and expert advice and knowledge throughout the year.

I would also like to thank Dr. Rory McDaid and Dr. Barbara O'Toole for their guidance and knowledge throughout the year.

I am eternally thankful to my family for their constant love, support and encouragement, and I would like to specially thank my sister Sarah Conroy, for all the proofreading, advice and reassurance given throughout.

Furthermore, I would like to extend my gratitude to my friends, Ciara Gibson, Hannah Black and Roísín Rea for their continued help, support and encouragement throughout the dissertation process, as well as the past two years at Marino Institute of Education.

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Introduction

In recent years, the idea of pluralism has been at the forefront of discussion amongst educators in the global context (Faas, Darmody & Sokolowska, 2016). Literature suggests that a potential explanation for this is the rapid and radical changes that occurred at the end of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st century, including technological advances, globalisation and social change, which resulted in increased diversity of populations across Europe and indeed the world. Pluralism in the social context, refers to a social organization that accepts and mutually respects all groups of people from different races, sexual orientations, genders, religions and cultures (Jenkins & Masterson, 2013).

In the context of Ireland, religious pluralism in particular, has returned to public policy discourse in recent years. The ‘Celtic Tiger’ era, which became apparent in the mid-1990s, began Ireland’s transformation from a mono-cultural to a multicultural society and from an out-migration to an in-migration society, despite the long presence of a host of minority groups, including Muslims, who have been an established community in Ireland since the sixties, Travellers and Jews (Bryan, 2008). Bouma & Halafoff (2009) suggest that this consequently led to an increase in religious diversity, thus giving rise to the return of religion to public debate. While the majority of literature points to increased religious diversity, as the number one cause for the return of religion to public discourse, it is important to consider other influences which may have further impacted this, including religious fundamentalism and the emergence of church scandals in recent years.

Faas et al., (2016) suggests that this influx of culturally and religiously diverse migrants paired with the increasing number of people identifying as having ‘no religion’, as outlined in recent Central Statistics Office reports, presents significant challenges to schools in the Republic of Ireland, heightened by the unique structure of the Irish Education system.

According to the Central Statistics Office (2012), the number of non-Irish nationals increased by 143% from 2002-2011, resulting in a change in school student profiles in the form of cultural, linguistic, ethnic and religious diversity (Faas et al., 2018). These changes have led to increased public discourse about how to accommodate religious diversity and have resulted in some important policy changes, for example the “opt out” legislation.

Darmody & Smyth (2017); Evans & Evans (2008) take a slightly different stance on the return of religion to public discourse, suggesting that it is in fact due to two contrasting trends that have been prevalent in European Countries in recent years; secularisation and the numbers affiliated to particular religious groups. Casanova (2004) agrees with Jenkins and Masterson (2013) highlighting that these trends are in fact related to immigration, but also implying that they are a result of peoples’ changing opinions towards religion. Darmody & Smyth (2017, p.4) add to this suggesting that due to increased social tensions, emphasis has been placed on intervention in the form of new policy development, which focuses on creating “tolerant and mutually respectful societies”, where people co-exist amicably, despite diverse settings. One aspect of Ireland’s attempt to achieve a pluralistic society was the proposed implementation of a common curriculum in primary schools, aimed at teaching children about different religions and beliefs and ethics.

In 2011, the Minister for Education and Skills assigned a group of experts to consult with stakeholders in order to make recommendations on how primary schools in Ireland could be made more inclusive of different religions, traditions and beliefs. One of the Advisory group’s recommendations, among others, was that a curriculum for education about religions and beliefs (ERB) and ethics should be introduced into primary schools in Ireland, highlighting that all children should have the right to receive education in ERB and Ethics and the state has the responsibility to ensure that it is provided (Coolohan et al., 2012).

It is from this standpoint that my research will begin. This research project will explore the recent approaches taken by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) towards equality in religious education, particularly focusing on the consultation process conducted by the NCCA for the proposed implementation of a new curriculum for Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics. My research project will analyse the written submissions contributed by various educators, parents, organisations and members of the public towards the consultation process. A critical analysis of some of these documents will be conducted, aiming to gain further understanding and insight into the public's opinion on the matter of religious diversity and plurality in the Irish Education System.

Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to critically evaluate, analyse and synthesise some existing knowledge and literature relevant to this research topic. This chapter will begin by identifying and outlining the different ways in which the concept of religious pluralism has been defined and approached, in the context of education. Relevant literature on;

- (i) Ireland in the context of social change
- (ii) The Irish Education System
- (iii) The need for change
- (iv) Religious Education practises currently in place in Irish primary schools
- (v) The rationale behind the development of the ERB and Ethics curriculum

will also be reviewed, challenging and deconstructing the main arguments and opinions surrounding these topics.

Religious Pluralism

Faas, Darmody & Sokolowska (2016, p.85) suggest that across Europe and indeed in Ireland, changing attitudes towards religion and the idea of preserving national culture and traditions, “contribute to growing tensions and discourses on pluralism, religious diversity and respective religious practices”. Definitions of religious pluralism are varied and many. Garfinkel (2008, p.4) suggests that religious pluralism is defined as “respecting the otherness of others” and is closely linked with interfaith dialogue. Beneke (2007) refers to religious pluralism as toleration with regards to the different groups of religious and non-religious

beliefs co-existing in society. Silk (2007, p. 64) defines the term as a “social norm and not merely a synonym for religious diversity”, enabling a country made up of people belonging to various faith groups and none, to co-exist, without the oppression of minority groups.

Benjamin & Kuusisto (2015) highlight the contrasting perspectives regarding religious pluralism that exist. They suggest that for many, religious pluralism is seen in a positive light, contributing towards a richer and more multi-dimensional society. However, they also point out that others perceive it as a “threat to one’s worldview and way of life”, occasionally resulting in national or religious extremism. As a result, they place emphasis on education, highlighting that it contributes to the creation of a safe and secure environment in which religious plurality; the different worldviews, opinions and norms, engage and interact.

Ireland in the Context of Social Change

Faas et al., (2016) point out that population profiles have become increasingly diverse across countries on a global level in recent years. Benjamin & Kuusisto (2015, p.52) suggest that “borders between nations, cultures and ethnicities are gradually becoming porous and the ‘mixed-ness’ of people is rapidly increasing on all levels”. This diversity does not only relate to ethnicity, but also includes ideologies, worldviews and values. Social categories such as black, white, French, Hispanic, male, female, Christian, etc., have been a central part of society for a long time (Wiley & Revenson, 2012). Throughout history, it has become apparent that humans organised themselves and others around them, into categories in order to understand the complex social environment in which they existed. However, Benjamin & Kuusisto (2016) make the point that in recent years, the number of people who cannot position themselves within older social categories based on religion, ethnicity, gender and culture is growing, suggesting that these people draw their identities from a variety of sources instead.

It is interesting to note that while Benjamin & Kuusisto (2015, p.52) emphasise the increasingly fluid nature of “borders between nations, cultures and ethnicities”, we must also address the contradicting reality that exists in recent years. We must take into account the various circumstances which may have clouded the idea of borders becoming porous, such as President Trump’s intent to close the American borders, England’s decision to leave the EU, and security at borders becoming more rigid, due to the threat of terrorist attacks. It is also important to recognise that while Benjamin & Kuusisto (2016) raise valid points surrounding the suggestion that the number of people who cannot position themselves within older social categories is increasing, the same can be said for the opposite. Emerson & Hartmen (2006) point out that religious fundamentalism has risen to worldwide prominence since the 1970s, again allowing us to question Benjamin & Kuusisto’s idea that the existence of older social categories has diminished.

Until the 1960s, Christianity was the dominant religion in most European nation states and society was strongly influenced by this religion. Although this is still the case in many countries, Franken (2017) suggests that, globalisation, in addition to political, social and economic change and increased international mobility, has weakened this dominance, resulting in population profile changes in terms of cultural, linguistic and religious background. Faas, Smyth & Darmody (2018) suggest that cultural distance of some migrant groups may require receiving countries to review their education system practises, among others, to ensure that the diverse needs of the population are being engaged with.

The Central Statistics Office has confirmed that Ireland’s population profile has experienced significant change over recent years. Devine (2005, p.49) suggests that this change is “typified by membership of the European Union, a rapidly changing social and economic structure, urbanisation and competition within a global economy”. However, Faas et al., (2018) remark that Ireland differs from many western European countries regarding its

migration history. Bryan (2008) agrees with this suggesting that Ireland was once perceived to be a homogeneous society, despite the presence of racialized minority groups. While emigration rates were high for most of the 20th century, the unprecedented economic growth of the 1990s transformed Ireland into a country of net immigration by 1996 (Faas et al., 2018). During the economic recession in 2008, emigration increased; however, while some migrants left, many stayed.

Although Ireland continues to be predominantly Catholic, there is evidence to suggest an increase in religious diversity among the population. Darmody, Smyth, and McCoy (2012) add that it is important to recognise that attitudes towards religion and religious observance among the native population have also changed. Faas et al., (2018) re-emphasise this notion, pointing out that in the April 2016 census, Catholic religious affiliation fell to 78.3%, compared to 84.2% in April 2011. They also highlight that the percentage of citizens identifying themselves as having “no religion” in 2016 was 9.8% of the population, increasing by 73.6% from 2011.

While these statistics, taken from the Central Statistics Office are correct, it is important to note that the way in which they are portrayed may be misleading to members of the public. Faas et al., (2018) suggest that the percentage of citizens identifying themselves as having ‘no religion’ in 2016 was 9.8% of the population, increasing from 73.6% from 2011. On first glance it may seem like a significant increase from 2011 to 2016. However, on review of the percentages and how they reflect actual figures in relation to the population, it is clear that these statistics represent an overwhelmingly small minority of the population. For example, according to the Central Statistics Office (2016), the population of Ireland in 2016 was 4,673,700. 9.8% of this figure, the number of people who identified as having no religion, is 458,022, again representing a small minority. From this we can conclude that

4,215,678, the vast majority of people, identified as having a religion, suggesting that the statistics are not as significant when examined in a closer context.

The Irish Education System

Since the foundation of the State, the majority of schools in Ireland have been religious (Rougier & Honohan, 2015). Coolahan, Hussey & Kilfeather (2012, p. 19) suggest that the reasons for this are “deeply rooted in history”. Following the inception of the national school system in 1831, the State provided financial support to local patrons for primary school provision, on the condition that the regulations of the Commissioners of National Education were considered (Coolahan et al., 2012). While the State favoured patrons of mixed denominations, what developed in practice, was that most schools came under the patronage of individual clergymen of different denominations (Coolahan et al., 2012). At that time, the majority of the population were Christian, meaning that the needs and rights of the citizens were satisfied.

Rougier & Honohan (2015) explain that the funding and administration of the Irish education system is provided by the Department of Education. However, they suggest that the provision and management of education are almost entirely controlled by private bodies, predominantly the Catholic Church, so that there is no strictly public state primary education in Ireland. “The typical Irish school is neither strictly public nor strictly private, but a hybrid” (Rougier & Honohan, 2015, p.73). Hyland & Bocking (2015) suggest that non-Irish citizens may find it difficult to understand that the Irish State funds the schools yet exercises very limited control over what goes on in them.

Darmody, Smyth, & McCoy (2012) suggest that another interesting feature of the Irish Education system is its variation of school types. This variation however, is unevenly distributed. 96% of primary schools are denominational with 89.9% having a Catholic ethos

(Faas et al., 2018). The remaining schools are interdenominational and multi-denominational. Hyland & Bocking (2015) highlight the fact that teacher training and education in Ireland is provided by four colleges of education, all of which are owned and controlled by the Catholic Church. As a result, Coolahan et al., (2012) suggest that a mismatch exists between the inherited pattern of denominational school patronage and the needs and rights of citizens in the culturally and religiously diverse modern Irish society.

On closer examination, questions can be raised in relation to how up-to-date the relevant literature is. Rougier & Honohan (2015) make various claims about there being no strictly public state primary education in Ireland, when in fact there is. In recent years the DES have introduced Community National Schools, which are owned and managed solely by the state, demonstrating that efforts have been made to tackle the patronage issue surrounding primary schools in Ireland. Other attempts to remedy the patronage issue began in June 2012, when the Minister for Education initiated a divestment process, transferring some schools run by the Catholic Church to other school patron bodies around the country, although this process has been slow (Darmody & Smyth, 2017). In addition to this, three years after the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism (2012), a new Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland was published by the Catholic Bishops. Lane (2015) suggests that this new curriculum incorporates many of the concerns outlined in the Advisory Group for the Forum's report and embodies many of the aims of the ERBE curriculum.

In addition to this, questions can be raised in relation to the accuracy of various statements made by Hyland & Bocking (2015). For example, Hyland & Bocking (2015) present the idea that the Irish State funds the primary schools yet has very restricted control over what goes on in them. Faas et al., (2016) add to this, suggesting that the majority of schools in Ireland are controlled by the Roman Catholic Church. When we look at what the state controls and what the Catholic Church controls in reality, it is clear that these statements

may be misleading. The DES has significant control over primary schools in Ireland, enforcing the rules and regulations for the Board of Management and dictating the curriculum, which in turn controls the day-to-day teaching. The Catholic Church on the other hand, outlines the ethos of the school and is represented by one member on the board of management, who in reality, exercises minimum control. Hyland & Bocking (2015) further state the fact that teacher training and education in Ireland is provided by four colleges of education, all of which are owned by the Catholic Church. However, the accuracy of such statements can also be questioned as only three of these colleges are owned by the Catholic church, after St Patrick's college amalgamated with Dublin City University. In addition to this, what is not stated is the fact that the course in Religious Education is elective in all four colleges, again, questioning the relevance of the statement.

The Need for Change

Literature suggests that many people in Ireland today do not have a choice in where they send their children to school. Hyland & Bocking (2015) outline that the majority of schools in Ireland are controlled by the Roman Catholic Church, revealing that only 6% of the school-going population attend schools controlled by Protestant churches, and there are only two schools run by the Irish Islamic community and one by the Jewish community. They also mention that 74 multi-denominational 'Educate Together primary schools exist in Ireland today, attended by just 2% of the school-going population. As a result, they suggest that there is often only one local primary school within reach and many parents have no choice but to send their children to Catholic schools.

Faas et al., (2016) also acknowledge this point stating that due to Ireland's education system structure, pupils have no choice but to attend schools that do not reflect their belief background. Faas et al., (2018) present the opinion that although parents have the right to

“opt out” of religious education on their child’s behalf, the child is unable to “opt out” of the integrated curriculum, whereby the religious ethos is incorporated into the everyday life of the school. Daly (2009, p.239) adds to this notion, suggesting that “the imperative of recognising and affirming the prevailing religious identity within a state-funded school is thus in inevitable conflict with the freedom of individuals from involuntary indoctrination”. Coolahan et al., (2012, p.12) stresses additional concerns surrounding this, suggesting that these children are not receiving education on ethics, morality and world religions, usually carried out in combination with religious education, stating that “learning about ethics is of central importance to human development” and “essential to education in citizenship and the proper functioning of democracy”. Alberts (2007) is of the opinion that Religious Education should be for all pupils of any religious background or none and should not promote any one religious over another.

What is interesting to note here is, if Daly’s (2009) suggestion that ‘inevitable involuntary indoctrination’ is in fact occurring in primary schools, would it not be correct to assume that the numbers of people in Ireland identifying as Catholic would be rising instead of falling?

Reviewing Approaches to Religious Education in Irish Primary Schools

Faas et al., (2018) highlight that although all Irish primary schools are instructed to follow the 1999 primary school curriculum set out by the NCCA, the responsibility of RE lies with school patrons and is taught through the ‘patrons’ programme’. Consequently, the way in which RE is delivered differs from school to school. Faas et al., (2018) explain that denominational schools “follow programmes rooted in their specific religious ethos”, while multi-denominational schools teach an ethics-based world religions programme. Having acknowledged the need for inclusion and change, many schools have adopted intercultural

practises and approaches, in line with the recently established intercultural education guidelines, to support the needs of increasingly diverse student profiles (Faas et al., 2018).

Franken (2017) offers interesting insight into the reality that many minority children face every day in denominational schools in Ireland by “opting out” of RE lessons. Even though the right to exemption is required in order to be in line with the human rights law of religious freedom, it is not to be overestimated. What this means is there is a fundamental difference between a state that considers religious education to be a regular subject in the curriculum and considers exemption an anomaly (opting out); and a state that allows religious education in schools, but only if children’s parents request it (opting in). In the first instance, Franken (2017, p.109) suggest that the state is not neutral: it considers confessional RE to be a “primary good or a good that is to everyone’s advantage”. However, literature suggests that confessional RE is not to everyone’s advantage in a society characterised by religious diversity. Franken (2017) mentions that in the Netherlands and Poland a more neutral policy of ‘opting in’, as outlined above is implemented, treating all students as equals within the system.

However, it must be acknowledged that, there has been significant progress and change in regard to the approaches used by teachers and the inclusion and recognition of other religions in RE lessons in Catholic Schools. Life Light (2017, p.11) suggests that the term *Religious Education* has almost universally replaced the term *Religious Instruction* in Catholic schools. Religious instruction is now deemed as, “pedagogically limiting”. Religious Education nowadays incorporates a dimension of critical thinking as opposed to the indoctrination of pupils, an issue that was widespread in the past. This change has occurred as a result of many different things including increased religious diversity of the population as well as the influence of the work of Drinkwater, Jungmann, Piaget and Fowler. Life Light (2017) also highlights the recent changes made by the Vatican II council in relation to the

approaches to teaching religion in Catholic schools, suggesting that there has been a shift from content-based RE programmes to experience-based programmes. Building on Piaget's theory that children learn best from real life experiences, RE in this way is taught from the inside-out. Teachers begin with the children's real-life experiences, integrating various religious concepts where appropriate.

Education about Religious Beliefs and Ethics (ERBE)

In response to the need for appropriate forms of primary school patronage for Ireland's increasingly diverse society, the Minister of Education and Skills, Ruairí Quinn launched a forum for discussion on the topic of patronage and pluralism in the Irish primary sector in 2011. Following an extensive consultation process, the forum's advisory group made recommendations on steps that could be taken to ensure that the education system provides a significantly diverse number and range of primary schools to cater for children of all religions and none (Coolahan et al., 2012). The advisory group's report made recommendations for future arrangements for the patronage of schools, recommending that there should be a more diverse range of patronage types, providing advice regarding the Irish language provision and suggesting the creation of more inclusive schools, educating children in line with the culturally and religiously diverse society in which they live.

Stemming from these recommendations the NCCA was tasked by the DES to develop a curriculum for Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics for all primary schools in Ireland. Faas et al., (2016, p.93) suggest that the report recommended that "schools should be a place where all children feel included irrespective of their beliefs". They suggested that this could be achieved by the "pluralism and ecumenism" expressed by allowing children the opportunity to learn objectively about other religions and beliefs. In

2015, the NCCA began its own consultation process to ensure a balanced approach to the development of the curriculum.

According to NCCA (2015, p.6) “ERB helps children to know about and understand the cultural heritage of the major forms of religion, belief traditions and worldviews which have been embraced by humankind”. It does not provide faith formation for any one belief; instead it fostered an awareness of the main theist, non-theist, and secular beliefs. It also explains the ethics education aspect of the curriculum stating that “the teaching of ethics includes the formation and the promotion of a personal commitment to the dignity and freedom of all human beings, the importance of human rights and responsibilities, the place of justice within society, and the service of the common good”. NCCA (2015, p.20) explain the educational vision underpinning the new curriculum suggesting that it is for an “authentic pluralism”, fostering a culture that honours religious difference and values education, which helps “children and teachers in our schools to live in, contribute positively, to our transforming, diverse society”.

Conclusion

To conclude, on review of the literature and background studies that formed the foundation upon which the rationale for the development of the ERB and Ethics curriculum was built, it is clear that the majority of the literature discussed, argues that there is a pervasive issue surrounding religious education in primary schools in the Ireland. The consultation process for the proposed implementation of the ERB and Ethics curriculum was undertaken to gain insight into how to attempt to make changes to the 1999 curriculum with respect to religious education, an attempt that was made, but ultimately failed. It is clear that although valid points have been raised in regard to both the arguments for and against changing the approach to Religious Education in the Irish Education system, many questions still remain

unanswered. This study will analyse key documentation submitted to the consultation process for the ERB and Ethics curriculum, in an attempt to gain further understanding and insight into the general public's views and opinions on this complex issue.

Research Methodology

Introduction

This chapter will address the methodologies used to analyse the written submissions contributed to the NCCA's ERBE consultation process by members of the general public.

The researcher positionality, research question, context of the study, research design, limitations of the study and ethical considerations will also be discussed.

A qualitative approach to research is concerned with the subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions and behaviour" (Kothari, 2004, p. 5). The data analysed in this research study is based on the opinions and attitudes of members of the general public, and as a result, a qualitative methodological approach felt most suited to this study.

Researcher Positionality

According to Bourke (2014) the nature of qualitative research positions the researcher as the data collection instrument. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that the researcher's beliefs, political views, gender, race, socio-economic status etc. are variables that can impact on the research process, suggesting that a review of positionality is warranted.

While conducting the research, the researcher was aware that she is a Caucasian, Irish, Catholic, middle-class female and the possible subjectivity related to this was acknowledged. Corlett & Mavin (2018) emphasise the importance of the researcher remaining reflexive throughout the research process, constantly reflecting on their own thinking, but also understanding that the way in which they approach this, is based on their own philosophical assumptions. The researcher hopes to remain reflective, understanding that her experiences could shape her interpretation.

Due to the fact that the data analysed in this study was taken from public documents, the researcher made efforts to acknowledge the subjectivity of the author and also the potential biases he or she may be bringing to the research. Bowen (2009, p.33) points out that it is important for the researcher to acknowledge that the data he/she is evaluating is not “necessarily precise, accurate or complete recordings of events that have occurred” and it should be noted whether the document was “solicited, edited or anonymous”.

Research Question

The analysis carried out in this research project uses data from the written documents submitted voluntarily by educators, organisations, parents and members of the general public, to the NCCA’s ERBE consultation process, detailing their views and opinions on the implementation of such a curriculum into Irish primary schools, as a means of accommodating religious diversity. The attempted implementation ultimately failed due to the response received from the consultation process. As a result, questions surrounding the accommodation of religious diversity in Irish primary schools remain. The analysis of the chosen data is focused on gaining a deeper understanding and insight into the general public’s opinion on the approach taken by the DES and the NCCA to accommodate religious diversity and promote religious pluralism.

Context of Study

The context within which the consultation process for the implementation of the ERBE curriculum took place, is an important consideration in the analysis of the data.

The forum for patronage and pluralism in the primary sector

In response to the need for appropriate forms of primary school patronage for Ireland's increasingly diverse society, Minister of Education and Skills, Ruairí Quinn launched a forum for discussion on the topic of patronage and pluralism in the Irish primary sector in 2011. The forum's advisory group made recommendations on steps that could be taken to ensure that the education system provides a significantly diverse number and range of primary schools to cater for children of all religions and none (Coolahan et al., 2012). The advisory group made recommendations for future arrangements for the patronage of schools, recommendations on the practicalities of achieving this and advice regarding the Irish language provision and the creation of more inclusive schools, educating children in line with the culturally and religiously diverse society in which they live.

The consultation process for the curriculum in ERBE

As a result of these recommendations, the NCCA was tasked by the DES to develop a curriculum for Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics for all primary schools in Ireland. In 2015, the NCCA began its own consultation process to ensure a balanced approach to the development of the curriculum. A broad consultation process on the proposals for a curriculum in Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics took place from the 3rd of November 2015 to the 31st of March 2016. This involved "extensive information dissemination" about the proposed curriculum, using various forms of social media, conferences and meetings with interest groups (Darmody & Smyth, 2017, p. 10). The consultation process itself involved a range of formats with the goal of gathering high quality feedback on the proposed implementation of the curriculum (NCCA, 2017). The consultation formats

included online questionnaires, written submissions, meetings with interest groups, discussion groups with teachers and parents, school case studies and participation at conferences and was targeted at teachers, parents, children, education partners, patrons, NCCA school networks, children's advocacy groups and members of the general public.

To raise awareness about the consultation process and inform stakeholders, background papers, including a consultation paper, were issued on the NCCA website, introducing the rationale and aims behind the proposed ERB and Ethics curriculum as well as various consultation materials. Consultation material included; Parent information sheets, teacher information booklets, and explanatory online video, FAQ section on the consultation webpage and templates for written submissions. Post cards and E-invites were also sent to every primary school in Ireland to encourage their participation in the process. The NCCA (2017) also highlighted that partner networks and the National Parents' Council Primary (NPC Primary) were also requested to spread awareness of the consultation process to their members. Education respondents in the national media were informed and articles, interviews and a twitter campaign were also undertaken to generate awareness. Finally the NCCA (2017) liaised with education partners such as Mary Immaculate College and the INTO, collaborating at conferences and events.

Choosing the Sample

The consultation process involved a range of formats with the goal of gathering high quality feedback on the proposed aims of the curriculum (NCCA, 2017). The consultation formats included online questionnaires, written submissions, meetings with interest groups, school-case studies, discussion groups with teachers and parents and conferences. The sample

chosen for this research project was the written submissions which “were an important part of the NCCA consultation process” (NCCA, 2017, p.15). A template was drawn up, to support stakeholders in drafting their submissions and they were encouraged to give their opinions and views on the proposed aims of the curriculum. It is important to note that respondents did not have to use the template, although it is clear that many did. NCCA (2017) received 174 submissions in total. Two authors requested that their submissions were not published and therefore only 172 submissions became public documents, available to view online at <https://www.ncca.ie/en/primary/primary-developments/education-about-religions-and-beliefs-erb-and-ethics>. An index of the submissions is presented in Appendix A.

The decision to analyse the written submissions as opposed to the quantitative data involved in the consultation process, such as questionnaires, stemmed from the idea that a qualitative study can result in data containing rich descriptions from peoples’ lived experiences, giving greater context to the study (Green & Hill, 2006). The written submissions allowed the participants to communicate their views clearly and in detail. This helped the researcher to identify similarities and differences, ultimately resulting in the emergence of themes, which helped answer the research questions.

Interestingly 73 of the authors did not use the template given by the NCCA, and wrote their submissions in the form of letters instead. These documents were subsequently scanned onto the website, resulting in blurry letters that are virtually illegible. As a result, these submissions were automatically disregarded from the sample. This meant that only 99 submissions were applicable for analysis. Although all 99 submissions were read and examined, due to time constraints only 60 submissions were analysed in detail. The sample was chosen based using a set of criteria listed below;

- The documents were legible

- The submissions presented clearly defined reasons for/against the implementation of the proposed curriculum.
- Diversity in relation to the author's religious/non-religious background

The submissions that did not provide clear reasons for/against the implementation of the curriculum could not be coded and were therefore disregarded for the purpose of this study. Although the researcher sought to analyse submissions written by stakeholders affiliated to diverse religions and none, it is important to note that on examination, the researcher became aware that the majority of contributors were Catholic. In addition to this, it must be noted that some authors did not reveal their religious/non-religious identity. It is interesting to note that there were very few responses received from minority religious and belief groups in Ireland.

Research Design

A Qualitative framework was employed for this study with Thematic Analysis forming the main approach. It is important to note that the remit of this study was to analyse only the data provided by the written submissions of the consultation process. This study did not analyse any of the other forms of data gathered as part of the consultation process. Bowen (2009) suggests that analysing documents incorporates coding content into themes similar to how focus group or interview transcripts are analysed. Bowen (2009) remarks that document analysis is an effective and efficient way of collecting data because documents are practical and manageable resources. Documents are an accessible and reliable source of data. Bowen (2009, p. 31) also highlights that documents are stable, “non-reactive data sources”, meaning that they can be read and evaluated multiple times and remain unchanged by the researcher's influence or research process. O'Leary (2014) outlines that before the document analysis takes place, the researcher must go through an seven step planning process.

This planning process involved;

1. Gathering relevant texts
2. Making copies of the originals for annotation
3. Assessing authenticity of the documents
4. Exploring the document's agenda, biases
5. Exploring background information (e.g. tone, style, purpose)
6. Asking questions about document (e.g. who produced it, When? Why? Etc.)
7. Exploring content

O'Leary (2014) suggests that step seven of the planning procedure refers to the process of exploring or analysing the actual content of the document, and suggests that this can be undertaken using a few different techniques. The process of data analysis involves multiple steps. This study implemented the following steps;

- Reading and re-reading the data
- Annotating the data
- Coding and categorizing
- Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a qualitative analytic method for “identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). A thematic approach to coding was implemented during this study, which resulted in the emergence of common themes. As this study aims to reveal the various participants' views and opinions, thematic analysis was deemed most suitable as it “minimally organises and describes the data in rich detail” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79).

Braun & Clarke (2006) suggest that the first stage of the process begins with the researcher familiarizing themselves with the data. In the case of this study, the researcher read and re-read the data. Next, the researcher generated initial codes by jotting down interesting features of the data and potential coding schemes. The researcher then began searching for themes, using a manual method of colour coding using various coloured markers, which helped identify and distinguish themes and categories. These themes were then checked in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set, creating a “thematic map of the analysis” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.87). The data was then cross-checked in a process of on-going analysis, resulting in the generation of clear definitions and names for each theme. Finally the researcher selected “vivid and compelling extract examples” which were related back to the research question and relevant literature, producing a report of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.87).

Limitations

As this study is a dissertation which was undertaken over a few months, time can be identified as a limitation to the study. If a longer period of time had been available, more written submissions could have been analysed, potentially yielding a broader scope of opinion. Another limitation for this research study was that the researcher did not collect the data him/herself. This could be seen as a limitation because the written submissions are not directly answering the researcher’s questions.

Ethical Considerations

There were no ethical considerations involved in accessing the documents analysed in this study, as they are public documents available to view online at;

<https://www.ncca.ie/en/primary/primary-developments/education-about-religions-and-beliefs-erb-and-ethics>.

However, confidentiality and anonymity of the authors of the documents were preserved for the ethical purposes of this research study, by ensuring all identifying information was coded or changed using pseudonyms instead of real names.

Findings and Discussion

Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of data gathered from written submissions contributed by educators, parents and members of the general public to the NCCA's consultation process for the proposed implementation of the ERB and Ethics curriculum into Irish primary schools.

Where quotes are included, individuals are not named, but their role in relation to education is included where possible. Where organisations or groups are quoted, their names are referenced. Quotes are intended to be illustrative of significant themes that emerged during the analysis of the chosen sample. It is important to note that the majority of written submissions analysed by the researcher, revealed an overwhelmingly negative response towards the NCCA's proposals, with the exception of a few submissions who supported the idea of a new common curriculum. However, it is also important to note that the majority of respondents identified as Catholic or worked for a Catholic institution. Interestingly, the extent of this negative response, particularly with regards to the written submissions, was not portrayed in the NCCA's final ERBE report.

Main Findings

This section highlights five key themes that arose across the chosen sample of written submissions contributed to the NCCA's consultation process. The themes were as followed;

1. Accuracy in representation of Irish primary schools
2. A quasi-pluralistic approach to accommodating religious diversity?
3. The question of a 'neutral' Ethics Education?
4. Limitations of the consultation process
5. Expectations for teachers and pupils

Accuracy in Representation of Irish Primary Schools

One theme that emerged consistently throughout the submissions was the NCCA's lack of acknowledgement of the work already being done in schools in Ireland, particularly with regards to Catholic schools. Some respondents suggested that the background papers behind the rationale for the ERBE curriculum, might give the impression that there are serious problems with Catholic schools in terms of promoting tolerance, mutual respect and inclusivity. One respondent highlighted that "there appears to be little acknowledgement of what is already being done in Catholic schools in this paper....The paper lacks a sufficiently clear analysis about how Catholic schools are failing in their approach to ERB and Ethics currently, in order to warrant such a change in approach" (Third level educator in Religious Education, Mary Immaculate College). Another respondent identified two main issues with the NCCA's proposals, suggesting that "it seems to be assumed that we have a significant problem with racism, prejudice and discrimination in our primary schools and that denominational religious education cannot achieve the goals of tolerance and respect for people of differing religious and other stances for living" (Third level educator in Religious Education, St Patrick's College).

The Catholic Primary Schools Management Association (CPSMA) also commented on the lack of recognition given to Catholic primary schools, suggesting that "Catholic schools are by their very nature inclusive environments....reaching out to those children and families who are the most marginalised in our society and providing them with a place where they are fully included and cherished". Similar opinions mirrored this sentiment suggesting that "Catholic primary schools build bridges towards others by opening their doors to the stranger, the poor and the disadvantaged of society" (Catholic Parish Priest).

Many of the contributions criticise Coolahan et al., (2012) report for the forum for patronage and pluralism, the report that initiated the development of the ERB curriculum, suggesting that it was misleading and inaccurate in its portrayal of denominational schools. Responses echoed Tuohy's (2015) detailed critique of the forum, where questions were raised surrounding the forum's lack of empathy with denominational patronage, especially Catholic patronage. Tuohy (2015) implies that the forum's report depicts denominational patronage as a serious problem that needs to be solved, rather than a resource that a democratic society could use in new ways to meet the needs of all citizens. Tuohy (2015) questions why so much attention has been devoted to this one educational initiative above all others, and this view is reiterated in the written submissions. CPSMA make the point that "inclusion cannot be reduced to the single issue of religion within a school. Inclusion must also take nationality, ethnicity, socio-economic background and ability into consideration".

Many of the contributors including teachers, school leaders, patrons, organisations and indeed parents, questioned the need for such a curriculum, highlighting that the aims of the ERB and Ethics curriculum were already being fulfilled in Irish primary schools. Multiple respondents reported concerns surrounding the lack of acknowledgement from the NCCA, for the introduction of the new Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland (CPPREC) in 2015, suggesting that the aims of this curriculum are directly related to the general and specific aims of the ERBE curriculum, as outlined in the consultation paper.

Some respondents mirrored LifeLight's (2012) reference to the second Vatican Council's *Declaration on Christian Education*, which published many important documents on Catholic education. One of these, entitled *Education to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic schools* (2013) is cited multiple times throughout the submissions,

suggesting that in recent years “a renewed emphasis on human dignity, religious freedom, respect for conscience, dialogue with the modern world, inter-church and inter-religious dialogue” has been implemented in Catholic schools (Commission for Education and Formation of the Irish Episcopal Conference). This again, reflects LifeLight’s (2013) recognition of the progress made in Catholic schools in recent years, in regard to the inclusion and recognition of other religions in RE lessons.

Many respondents specifically outlined and compared the aims of both curriculums, demonstrating their similarities. The response from the Community National Schools Management Group (CMG) echoed this notion suggesting that the aims of the proposed curriculum also mirrored that of the ‘Goodness Me Goodness You’ programme, stating that “the CMG believes that greater cognisance should be taken of the nature and contents of the Patron’s programme before introducing the programme into schools under different patrons. Failure to do so will lead to unnecessary overlap”. Again, reference was made by a principal in a multi-denominational school setting, about the overlap of the ERBE curriculum and that of the ‘Learn Together’ Curriculum, in place in Educate Together schools in Ireland.

A Quasi-Pluralistic Approach to Accommodating Religious Diversity?

A common response from school leaders, educators and various patron bodies was that the NCCA’s proposed ‘objective’ curriculum could in fact, prohibit real pluralism from existing in Irish primary schools. “The NCCA’s proposal seems to assume that active-pluralist, non-confessional religious education is the only way the goals of tolerance inclusion and social justice can be achieved in Irish society” (Educator, St Patrick’s College). The above sentiment was echoed by many across the chosen sample of written submissions. Multiple respondents had concerns surrounding the NCCA’s (2015, p.20)

definition of Pluralism which states that “Pluralism places value on a range of views rather than a single approach or method of interpretation of life”. Participants suggested that, “such an approach to religious education is relativistic and fails to respect or engage with religious difference in any significant way, because it presents all religious and philosophical truth claims as being equal in value” (Dublin Diocese Education Secretariat).

In many written submissions, reservation was expressed concerning the objective nature of the ERB and Ethics curriculum, suggesting that “to study religions and beliefs from a so called ‘objective’ viewpoint is to favour a secularist approach.- which in itself is neither good nor bad, but it’s not objective” (3rd level Educator in Religious Education, Mary Immaculate College). Another written submission reiterated this point further, suggesting that “ERBE’s perspective is secularist: either atheistic or agnostic. Therefore, it will be impossible for ERBE to give objective or adequate treatment to any particular religion or religions in general, and ERBE cannot validly claim to be ‘objective and pluralist” (PHD student). This echoes D’Costa’s (2013, p.115) argument that no starting point is free of bias, suggesting that there is always “some privileging of some epistemic and ontological presuppositions”.

Merrigan (2013, p.58) recognises a subtle shift that has occurred from epistemological pluralism, an acceptance of the existence of differing religions, beliefs and world-views, to an ideological pluralism, that has, at its centre, the goal of neutralising of all real difference by the “imposition of one hegemonic understanding of truth: the truth of pluralistic relativism”. This sentiment is reflected consistently throughout the submissions by various educators and organisations. In this case, the contributors suggest that the ERBE curriculum has the potential to be a ‘hegemonic understanding of truths’, as children are invited to view their religion as one among many standpoints which have

equal validity. Multiple educators and diocesan advisors agreed with this, proposing that promoting religious relativism and presenting religious truth as a social construction, completely undermines the “transcendental meaning in religion, the normativity of religious beliefs and the sense of community that is engendered by religion” (Educator, Denominational setting).

One respondent argued that “any *real* respect for pluralism in a liberal democratic society must take plurality seriously, acknowledging clear differences between religions and world-views, recognising that respect for pluralism is possible while being committed to a particular religious tradition or other stance for living” (Primary School Teacher). Another respondent added to this idea suggesting that “those who are most committed to their own tradition of conviction may be best placed to dialogue with those who are equally committed to their own life stance” (Principal, Catholic School). This point was re-emphasized throughout many submissions, suggesting that “a truly pluralist society must surely learn to live with, and respect difference while fostering loyalty to the nation and support for democratic structures of government” (Commission for Education and Formation of the Irish Episcopal Conference).

The Church of Ireland General Synod Board of Education expressed concern surrounding “the introduction of a pluralist approach at such a young age” suggesting that it would not allow for the child to develop his/her own religious identity and beliefs. Parents also expressed anxiety over this, suggesting that “while it is beneficial for all pupils to learn about the different world religions, children in a Catholic school should be taught that their Catholic faith is the one true faith and that all religions are not equal.” (Catholic Father). Atheist Ireland further questioned the objective nature of the curriculum, outlining that they had been informed by the NCCA in writing that they have

no control over how any course is delivered. As a result, in their written submission, they sought an exemption from the programme for children with secular beliefs.

The Question of a ‘Neutral’ Ethics Education?

While many contributors agreed with the NCCA’s statements regarding the importance of an ethics education for primary school children, reservations were communicated throughout the submissions regarding the ‘philosophical underpinnings’ of the ethical element of the curriculum. For some respondents, ethical learning could not be separated from a particular religious perspective. One respondent suggested that to teach ethics education discretely, and not as an integral element to any religion or worldview, is a “fatal flaw”. Stemming from this he suggested that, “it is very strange to teach children about beliefs and customs and rituals in different religions and worldviews, but without any explicit reference as to what these beliefs might require of their adherents in regard to their responsibility to themselves, others, God (for those who are theist) and creation” (Educator, Mary Immaculate College).

The debate surrounding the neutrality or objective nature of the curriculum was again questioned and challenged. “The ethics component endorses the morality of secular liberalism wherein individual moral autonomy is considered an ultimate end in itself. Such an approach is incompatible with the emphasis Christian moral theology places on theocentric personalism, objective moral goods and norms, the virtues, and harmony between individual’s good and the common good” (6 teacher educators from theology and/or psychology backgrounds).

Many contributors questioned what sort of ethics the NCCA were proposing, outlining that there were various different approaches, for example, libertarian, communitarian or utilitarian. Various teachers and educators suggested that the ethics

outlined in the proposal was “too broad” and not “very clear”, highlighting that they did not make reference to the different types of ethics, social, virtue, bio-ethics, sexual ethics etc., they were intending to implement. This then, inevitably led to additional queries on the compatibility of the proposed ethics curriculum and the ethos of various denominational schools.

Limitations of the NCCA’s Consultation Process

Limitations of the NCCA’s consultation process were identified and highlighted repeatedly throughout the written submissions. Concerns surrounding different aspects of the consultation process were recognised, revealing two sub-themes. These included;

- Lack of research undertaken by the NCCA
- Limitations of the consultation approach

Lack of research undertaken by the NCCA

Much of the concerns surrounding the limitations of the consultation process portrayed in the written submissions, questioned whether the NCCA undertook sufficient research prior to developing the proposed curriculum. A large proportion of the sample referred to the aims of the ERB and Ethics curriculum, suggesting that they were already being fulfilled by various curricular programmes already in place in Irish primary schools. Similarities between various Patron programmes, the SESE curriculum and the SPHE curriculum were identified and highlighted. This led to questions regarding the need of new discrete curriculum, suggesting that it would only add to the current issues surrounding curriculum overload and time allocation in primary schools. The SPHE network commented on the aims of the ERBE curriculum and the SPHE curriculum, suggesting that they were so alike, they questioned whether

“sufficient comparative analysis was undertaken with the SPHE curriculum in advance of publication of the consultation paper”.

Limitations of the consultation approach

Reservations were also expressed among a large percentage of the chosen sample, surrounding the NCCA’s consultation approach. Concern was mainly expressed regarding the online questionnaire, highlighting that attitudinal questions were strongly skewed towards positive responses, potentially leading to response bias. “I am shocked to say the least. The questions are all totally leading. On the first page alone it would be impossible not to tick "strongly agree" to all of the questions. Who could possibly disagree with any these statements? It appears that these questions were phrased in such a way to convince us all that this course is a good idea.” (Principal, Catholic school). CPSMA agreed that it was “poorly devised and does not allow for in-depth or real consultation with the proposals by parents, teachers or other interested parties”.

On analysis of the consultation documents, further limitations were identified by the researcher, the most significant being the representativeness of the sample. Because much of the awareness about the consultation process was raised online, this automatically resulted in potential sample bias, as access to the internet is not evenly distributed throughout the population (Darmody & Smyth, 2017). It is also suggested that there is likely to be biases associated with “differential digital literacy in the population”, as the consultation material was only available in English and Irish (Darmody & Smyth, 2017, p.12). In addition to this, because there is no way of telling how many people were aware of the consultation process, and the fact participation

was voluntary, means that the written submissions have potential to be biased towards the respondents who felt strongly about the proposed curriculum.

Expectations for Teachers and Pupils

Expectations regarding teachers and pupils were questioned repeatedly throughout the written submissions, particularly in relation to matters such as curriculum overload, time, CPD and confusion for children. It is important to note that some teachers and parents welcomed the idea behind the ERBE curriculum, suggesting that it would be beneficial for the children of Ireland. However, many expressed concerns surrounding the implementation of a new discrete curriculum into the “already overloaded primary school curriculum” (Parent, Catholic school). The INTO agreed with this stating that the proposed curriculum’s biggest challenge relates to “time constraint” and “curriculum overload”, suggesting that before the curriculum is introduced, teachers request clarification regarding “time allocation, planning and resources” (INTO). These observations made by participants, reflect conclusions reached by the NCCA, in their report *‘Curriculum Overload in Primary Schools’* (2010). In this report, curriculum expansion was identified as being one of the main factors leading to curriculum overload. As a result many suggested that the ERBE content should be integrated across the current curriculum.

Another prominent thread that ran through the written submissions was questions surrounding the expectations set for teachers in relation to teaching the ERBE curriculum. One parent directly quoted the NCCA’s (2015, p.23) reference to teachers being ‘facilitators’ in relation to the ERBE curriculum, outlining that they “do not need to be experts” on the curricular content. He then questioned if such a phrase would be used in relation to English or Maths. As a result continued professional development (CPD) was

advised throughout submissions in order to increase teachers' confidence in the area of ERBE. However, the counter-perspective was also evident outlining the benefits of such an approach, suggesting that children should be constructors of their own knowledge and learning.

Further questions regarding the expectations of teachers when teaching ERB were raised. "Will teachers be expected to shift from teaching that one particular religion is 'truth' during one part of the day, and then move to an objective stance later in the same day, whereby children are taught that many belief systems and worldviews are possible?" (Third level Educator, Marino Institute of Education). Another respondent suggested that these expectations were "deeply disrespectful to teachers as professionals and as persons with clear life commitments, whether they are religious or not" (Educator, Mary Immaculate College).

Leading on from this, was the emergence of another sub-theme that appeared often throughout the submissions, that is, confusion for children. Concerns were expressed surrounding the introduction of ERBE at primary school level, suggesting that children at this age were still in the initial stages of their own faith formation. "How could a 4 or 5 year old child, being at a stage of initial faith formation in their own faith, engage in critical analysis of another faith?" (Teacher). "The idea that a 6 year old child can simply discern about religious matters as proposed by the NCCA model is not substantiated and conflicts with the concept of the child learning from within their own tradition or community, and then moving to evaluate or critique in the later years" (Education Secretariat of the Dublin Diocese). As a result, many contributors including the organisation EQUATE, suggested that the curriculum may be more suitable for second level students, who are past the initial stages of faith formation (Primary Diocesan Advisors).

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear that although some respondents welcomed the idea of a new discrete common curriculum, the majority opposed its implementation into Irish primary schools. The reservations that were expressed among participants fall into five categories that were identified and explained by the researcher.

Respondents felt that denominational schools in Ireland, particularly those with Catholic patronage had been unfairly represented and underacknowledged by the NCCA, in terms of providing inclusive environments for their students. Questions were also raised among participants, regarding the need for a new discrete curriculum, suggesting that the aims of the ERBE curriculum were already being fulfilled by Irish primary schools.

While the overall aim of the ERBE curriculum was to accommodate religious diversity and promote pluralism in Irish society, concerns were expressed, suggesting that what the NCCA were proposing was in reality, prohibiting real pluralism from existing in Irish primary schools. This was expressed with regards to the nature of the programme presented by the NCCA, arguing that teaching about religions from an ‘objective’ and secular viewpoint encourages religious relativism, which contradicts and undermines faith in denominational schools. Respondents suggested that this resulted in a quasi-pluralistic approach to accommodating religious diversity.

The third theme that was discussed continues the train of thought outlined in the previous theme, suggesting that the idea of a neutral ethics education is more complex than that outlined by the NCCA. Respondents agreed with the statements the NCCA had made regarding the importance of an ethics education, but outlined that they failed to address the more complex issues surrounding the type of ethics and approach to ethics that would be implemented. Respondents highlighted that the NCCA’s suggestion of an ‘objective’ ethics

contradicted their previous statement that “no subject or teaching is value-free” (NCCA, 2015, p.22).

Further questions were raised in relation to the limitations of the consultation process and concerns were expressed regarding whether the NCCA had undertaken sufficient research prior to the development of the proposed curriculum and the existence of potential response bias relating to the online questionnaire.

Finally, confusion surrounding the expectations set out for teachers with regards to the proposed curriculum was also evident in the sample of submissions analysed, and many teachers and educators were opposed to the idea that teachers would have to take on a contradicting role with regards to teaching ERBE alongside the Patron’s programme. Many suggested CPD would be needed to ensure that the teachers were confident in their approach.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

This study has analysed a sample of written submissions contributed by various stakeholders to the NCCA's consultation process, for the proposed implementation of a curriculum in ERB and Ethics. Due to results gathered from the consultation process, the implementation of this new common curriculum ultimately failed. Questions remain surrounding the accommodation of religious diversity in Irish primary schools.

This research paper sought to examine the various opinions and attitudes of educators, parents, organisations and members of the general public in relation to the proposed curriculum, in order to gain an insight into their views surrounding the attempt made by the DES and NCCA, to accommodate religious diversity in Irish primary schools. Through analysis of the data, the researcher was able to draw conclusions and recommendations in relation to;

- Policy making in Ireland
- Parental choice
- Creating the Social Cohesion Model
- Written submissions: A Catholic Response

Policy Making in Ireland

The research undertaken in this study identified the existence of fundamental flaws inherent in the NCCA's consultation process, which leads us to raise questions regarding the reliability of the educational public policy making in Ireland. Written submission respondents expressed concern surrounding the level of research undertaken by the NCCA prior to the development of the proposed curriculum,

outlining that many of the aims were already being fulfilled in Irish primary schools. The SPHE network questioned whether sufficient comparative analysis had taken place between the new curriculum and existing curricular programmes such as SESE, SPHE and various Patron's programmes, suggesting that implementation would result in significant overlap of curriculum content, inevitably adding to the existing problem of curriculum overload. Some respondents referenced the NCCA's previous report on curriculum overload, '*Curriculum Overload in Primary Schools; An overview of national and international experiences*' (2010), highlighting that the NCCA were in fact aware of this problem while developing the new curriculum.

In addition to this, limitations were identified regarding the consultation approach including the representativeness of the sample, potential response bias in relation to the questions involved in the online questionnaire, the extent of awareness amongst the general public due to the online layout of the consultation material and the fact that the consultation material and formats were only available in English or Irish. This leads us to question whether sufficient time and care was taken whilst devising and developing the curriculum and consultation process, taking into account the extent of the complexity of issues involved.

Another question that can be raised in relation to the consultation process is, whether the lack of response received from minority religious and belief groups in Ireland had anything to do with the fact that the consultation materials and formats were only available in English and Irish. This has the potential to send indirect messages regarding the status of respondents 'welcomed' by the State, to participate in public policy making. As a result, re-evaluation of public policy making in relation to education in Ireland, may be considered in terms of accuracy and equality of access.

Parental Choice

One theme that emerged strongly throughout the sample of written submissions analysed in the findings and discussion chapter, was the portrayal of denominational schools presented in the consultation material and documents. Teacher, educators, parents and organisations all commented on the inclusive practises already in place in schools in Ireland. This leads us to question; do the issues relating to religious diversity exist in Irish primary schools to the extent portrayed by Coolohan et al., (2012) and the NCCA, or is it a matter of parental choice?

Tuohy (2015) considers the recommendations advised by the Coolohan et al., (2012) report on the forum for Patronage and Pluralism, suggesting that it is not the inherited system of denominational patronage that undermines the rights of parents, as the report states, but rather, a mismatch exists between the patronage system and the interests of some parents. He states that the matter is more political than legal, suggesting that changing patron will only solve some of the problems some parents will raise with a particular patron. Tuohy (2015) argues that every school must negotiate its approach to real issues of diversity present in its individual community. He brings up the ‘margin of appreciation’ that exists in each State as part of the “negotiated approach to the organisation of its society, based on historical, cultural, social and economic realities” (Tuohy, 2015, p.266). He suggests that “whatever the source of tension, the response of the school is to negotiate with the parents, aimed at finding a way to have parents re-evaluate their demands within the ‘ethos’ statement of the school” (Tuohy, 2015, p.266).

As a result, rather than implementing a common curriculum into all schools in Ireland to accommodate religious diversity, would it be more accurate to suggest an alternative approach aimed at implementing an individualistic outlook on religious diversity, where schools focus solely on catering for the specific diverse needs of their own school and community? Regardless of the approach taken, recognition of the child's age and stage of development and other elements, such as nationality, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background and ability should be considered.

Creating the Social Cohesion Model.

Many of the written submission respondents commented on the 'objective' nature of the proposed curriculum, suggesting that it would be taught from a secular perspective, treating all religious and non-religious truth claims as equal. This leads back to Merrigan's (2013) idea that there has been a shift in society, from epistemological pluralism to ideological pluralism, which raises questions regarding the intentions, either direct or indirect, of the State. Tuohy (2015, p.267) also recognises this shift, suggesting that "a common temptation today is to equate pluralism with secular humanism rather than acknowledging that the latter is one worldview among many others sincerely held among citizens in a democratic society". He emphasises that religious freedom is both a negative freedom 'from' religion and a positive freedom 'for' religion. In his report, he acknowledges the attempts the Church and State in different European countries have made to balance the inevitable tension that arises between freedom 'for' and 'from' religion. However, he notes that a pluralist society must live with this tension, rather than ignoring it or attempting to get rid of it.

This allows us to question; could the implementation of an ‘objective’ ERB and Ethics curriculum be an indirect attempt to eradicate the tension of religious diversity in schools? Is this attempt to achieve pluralism in Irish society an indirect attempt to neutralise difference? And could this be the State’s attempt at responding to the increased threat of religious fundamentalism and identity-based violence prevalent in recent years? Many respondents agreed that this ‘one size fits all’ approach to religious diversity, as proposed by the NCCA is the opposite of equality and embracing difference.

As a result, we can conclude that moving forward, emphasis should be placed on the recognition and acknowledgment of the inevitable tension that exists as a result of religious and non-religious difference, welcoming its presence in society, instead of trying to neutralise it, in order to allow genuine pluralism to exist in Irish primary schools.

Written Submissions: A Catholic Response

One aspect of this study that must be acknowledged in relation to the results presented in chapter four, was the overwhelmingly large proportion of respondents who identified as Catholic or worked for Catholic institutions. As a result, questions can be raised in relation to the outcome of the consultation process. For example, is the failed implementation of the curriculum closely aligned with the fact that the majority of respondents were Catholic?

It is worth noting that the researcher hoped to gain a broader range of opinion and views on the implementation of the ERB and Ethics curriculum, but it was soon apparent that diverse opinion did not exist in the materials surveyed. As a result, further questions can be raised; Is this lack of response from those affiliated to diverse

religious beliefs and none due to limitations regarding access to the consultation process as outlined in chapter 4? Or is it a question of indifference?

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is evident that the nature of religious pluralism and pluralism in general, is hugely complex. Although the NCCA's proposed curriculum did not materialize, the consultation brought to light many interesting insights regarding religious diversity, pluralism and religious education, which will offer invaluable guidance for future educational policy making in Ireland.

The NCCA presented a 'one size fits all' approach to accommodating religious diversity in Irish primary schools. However, it is clear from public response that achieving plurality is not as simple as it is presented in the NCCA consultation documents. Pluralism cannot be boiled down to religion alone. Other factors such as socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity, ability and race must, together with religion, must be considered. In order for genuine pluralism to exist, the tensions that are created due to difference, be it religious, non-religious, ethnic, racial, gender etc., must be welcomed in primary schools and indeed society, allowing and encouraging difference in the general sense to engage and interact.

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Appendix A: Index of Written Submissions from the NCCA (2015) ‘*Consultation on the Proposals for a curriculum in Education about Religions and Beliefs and Ethics: Final Report*’.

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Appendix E: Written submissions

No.	Title	Name	Date	Position	Personal/Organisation
1	Faith Formation: The Role of Home, Parish and School	Aidan Hart	29/03/2016	Retired Inspector Northern Ireland	Personal
2	Submission ERB and Ethics	Aine O'Connell	30/03/2016	Primary teacher	Personal
3	ERB and Ethics Consultation	Alice O'Connor, Bernadette O'Connor	19/03/2016	Parent and grandparent	Personal
4	Submission ERB and Ethics	Alma Leonard, Majella McCarthy, Theilma Gileran, Colum Hammond, Barry Tierney	11/03/2016	Primary school principals	Personal
5	Ceisteanna agus Moltai an Fhorais Pátrúnachta	An Forás Pátrúnachta	15/03/2016	Patron body	Organisation
6	Submission ERB and Ethics	Ann Moran	26/01/2016	Primary teacher	Personal
7	Response to the Consultation Paper on Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics	Anne Cunningham	22/03/2016	Member of board of management Middleton CBS Primary School	Personal
8	Submission ERB and Ethics	Anne Hession	07/03/2016	Lecturer in Religious Education, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra	Personal
9	Submission ERB and Ethics	Scoil Mhuire Lourdes	30/03/2016	Principal	Organisation

10	Submission ERB and Ethics	Anne Marie Kavanagh, Niamh McGuirk	31/03/2016	Lecturers in Ethical and Intercultural Education	Personal
11	Submission ERB and Ethics	Anne O'Brien	25/03/2016	Retired primary teacher	Personal
12	Submission ERB and Ethics	Anonymous	16/03/2016	Teacher and parent	Personal
13	Association of Trustees of Catholic Schools (ACTS) Submission to the NCCA ERB and Ethics Consultation Process	Association of Trustees of Catholic Schools	29/03/2016		Organisation
14	Catholic Ethos Schools will not Objectively Teach New ERBE course – 2nd Submission to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment on Proposed New Course	Atheist Ireland	23/03/2016		Organisation
15	Submission ERB and Ethics	Ballinasloe & District Council Knights of St. Columbanus	31/03/2016		Organisation
16	Submission ERB and Ethics	Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan	24/03/2016	Bishop (RC)	Organisation
17	Response to NCCA consultation on ERB and Ethics	Bishop Denis Nulty	22/03/2016	Bishop (RC)	Organisation
18	Comment on NCCA Consultation Paper on Education about Religions, Beliefs and Ethics.	Breandán Ó Bric	30/03/2016		Personal

19	Submission ERB and Ethics	Breda Holmes, Helen Leacy, Sr Maureen Mathews SP	16/03/2016	Education Secretariat Archdiocese of Dublin	Personal
20	Submission ERB and Ethics	Brian Caball	31/03/2016		Personal
21	Submission ERB and Ethics	Brigid Bennet, Collette Hyland, Mairread Johnston	11/03/2016	Primary school principals	Personal
22	Submission ERB and Ethics	Callystown NS	19/04/2016	Board of management	Organisation
23	Response to ERB and Ethics Consultation	Carmel Magee	30/03/2016	Primary teacher	Personal
24	Submission ERB and Ethics	Carmel Magner	01/04/2016		Personal
25	Submission ERB and Ethics	Caroline Tully	07/03/2016	Principal	Personal
26	Submission on Behalf of the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association	Catholic Primary Schools Management Association	30/03/2016	Patron body	Organisation
27	Response to ERB and Ethics Consultation	Cathy Burke	31/04/2016	Principal	Personal
28	Submission ERB and Ethics	Cecelia Gavigan	00/02/2016		Personal
29	Response to ERB and Ethics Consultation	Celine Lynch	16/03/2016	Teacher	Personal
30	Submission ERB and Ethics	Church Of Ireland General Synod Board of Education	11/08/2016	Patron body	Organisation

31	Response to ERB and Ethics Consultation	Ciaran Burke	31/03/2016	Primary teacher	Personal
32	Submission ERB and Ethics	Claire (Surname not provided)	29/02/2016	Diocesan advisor	Personal
33	Submission ERB and Ethics	Clare O'Callaghan	30/03/2016	Primary teacher	Personal
34	Submission ERB and Ethics	Clooneyquinn NS	10/05/2016	Board of management	Organisation
35	Submission ERB and Ethics	Cloontagh NS	24/03/2016	Board of management	Organisation
36	Response to ERB and Ethics Consultation	Colette Savage	27/01/2016	Self-employed	Personal
37	Submission ERB and Ethics	Colin J.A. O'Brien	16/03/2016		Personal
38	ERB and Ethics Consultation	Commission for Education and Formation of the Irish Episcopal Conference	30/03/2016		Organisation
39	Response from the Community National Schools Management Group (CMG) to the Consultation Paper on ERB and Ethics (ERBE)	Community National School Management Groups	03/03/2016		Organisation
40	Response to ERB and Ethics Consultation	David Bracken, Maeabh Enright	01/04/2016	Parents	Personal
41	Response to ERB and Ethics Consultation	Deirdre Fahey	22/03/2016	Board of management member Middleton CBS Primary School	Personal

42	Submission ERB and Ethics	Derry Diocesan Catechetical Centre	30/03/2016	Diocesan advisor: primary schools	Organisation
43	Submission ERB and Ethics	Desmond Sutton, Anne Buggy, Enda Hickey	14/03/2016	Principals	Personal
44	Response to ERB and Ethics Consultation	Diocese of Elephin	26/03/2016	Education secretariat representative	Organisation
45	Submission ERB and Ethics	Dr Barbara O'Toole	11/03/2016	Senior lecturer in Education, Marino Institute of Education	Personal
46	Response to ERB and Ethics Consultation	Dr Daniel O'Connell	30/03/2016	Lecturer in Religious Education, Mary Immaculate Limerick	Personal
47	Response to ERB and Ethics Consultation	Dr Dermot A Lane PP	31/03/2016	Parish Priest	Personal
48	Submission ERB and Ethics	Dr Eugene Duffy	10/03/2016	Lecturer in Theology and Religious Studies M.I Limerick	Personal
49	Submission ERB and Ethics	Dromindooora NS	15/04/2016	Board of management	Organisation
50	Submission ERB and Ethics	Dublin Diocese Education Secretariat	31/03/2016	Education secretariat	Organisation
51	Submission ERB and Ethics	Éamonn Mac Localainn	30/03/2016	Retired teacher	Personal
52	Submission ERB and Ethics	Éanna Johnson Phd	30/03/2016		Personal
53	Response to ERB and Ethics Consultation	Education Secretariat for the Archdioceses of Cashel & Emily and Dioceses of Kerry	31/03/2016	Education secretariat	Organisation
54	Submission ERB and Ethics	Elizabeth Byrt	30/03/2016	Parent	Personal
55	Submission ERB and Ethics	Enda Burke	30/03/2016	Parent/Second-level teacher	Personal

56	Submission ERB and Ethics	EQUATE	20/05/2016		Organisation
57	Submission ERB and Ethics	Fr Brendan Kyne	22/03/2016	Parish Priest /Board of management (Castleconnell NS Lisnogy NS Ahane NS St Vincents NS)	Unclear
58	ERB and Ethics Consultation	Fr Daniel Reynolds LC	30/03/2016	Priest Legionaries of Christ	Personal
59	Submission ERB and Ethics	Fr Francis Nolan	31/03/2016	Priest	Personal
60	ERB and Ethics Consultation	Fr Gerard Kenny	30/03/2016	Priest /Board of management member	Personal
61	Response to ERB and Ethics Consultation	Fr Jim Kileen	22/03/2016	Board of management member Middleton CBS Primary School	Personal
62	Submission ERB and Ethics	Fr John Bane	30/03/2016	Board of management Broadford and Kilbane NS	Personal
63	Submission ERB and Ethics	Fr John O'Keefe	08/03/2016	Parish Priest	Personal
64	Submission ERB and Ethics	Fr Malachy Conlon	03/02/2016	Education Sec. Archdiocese of Armagh	Personal
65	Submission ERB and Ethics	Fr Michael Kennedy	30/03/2016	Priest and diocesan advisor	Personal
66	Submission ERB and Ethics	Frank Harrington	30/03/2016		Personal
67	Submission ERB and Ethics	Frank Murphy	30/03/2016		Personal
68	Submission ERB and Ethics	Gillian Crowley	16/11/2015	Principal Dromore NS	Personal
69	Submission to NCCA re ERB & Ethics from	Global Citizenship School	22/03/2016		Organisation

	Global Citizenship School				
70	ERB and Ethics Consultation	Global Schools: Primary Education for a Just World	20/03/2016		Organisation
71	Submission ERB and Ethics	Gwen O'Connell	30/03/2016	Parent	Personal
72	ERB and Ethics Consultation	Helen Leacy	31/03/2016		Personal
73	Submission ERB and Ethics	Holy Family G.N.S	29/03/2016	Principal	Organisation
74	ERB and Ethics Consultation	Holy Family Junior Primary School	11/03/2016	Board of management	Organisation
75	Submission to the NCCA: ERB and Ethics	INTO	11/04/2016		Organisation
76	ERB and Ethics Consultation	Irish Centre for Religious Education (ICRE)	31/03/2016		Organisation
77	Submission ERB and Ethics	James Walsh	12/01/2016	Parent	Personal
78	ERB and Ethics Consultation	Jim and Breda Holmes	31/03/2016	Parents	Personal
79	Submission ERB and Ethics	Jim O'Connell	08/03/2016	Holy Family Parish Administrator	Personal
80	Submission ERB and Ethics	Jim Boyle	29/03/2016		Personal
81	Submission ERB and Ethics	Joan King	22/02/2016	Principal Creevagh NS	Organisation
82	ERB and Ethics Consultation	Joan Whelehan	25/01/2016	Principal R.M.D.S. Educate Together NS	Personal
83	ERB and Ethics Consultation	Joe Humphreys	05/01/2016	Journalist/author	Personal

84	Submission ERB and Ethics	Joe Searson	04/03/2016	Chairperson of board of management Quilty NS	Personal
85	Submission ERB and Ethics	John and Margaret Mallon	30/03/2016	Parents	Personal
86	Submission ERB and Ethics	John Cloghan	23/03/2016	Parent and grandparent	Personal
87	ERB and Ethics Consultation	John Murphy	22/03/2016	Board of management member Middleton CBS Primary School	Personal
88	Submission ERB and Ethics	John (surname unclear)	05/04/2016		Personal
89	ERB and Ethics Consultation	Jones Irwin	30/03/2016	Lecturer in Philosophy of Education in St. Patrick's College, Project Officer GMGY	Personal
90	Submission ERB and Ethics	Joseph Wouffe	30/03/2016		Personal
91	Submission ERB and Ethics	Josephine Ryan	22/03/2016	Parent	Personal
92	Submission ERB and Ethics	Kathleen O'Dowd	30/03/2016	NAPDA member	Personal
93	Submission on ERB and Ethics Module	Kieran Allen	23/03/2016	Education Equality member	Personal
94	ERB and Ethics Consultation	Kikishen NS	31/03/2016	Principal and board of management	Organisation
95	Submission ERB and Ethics	Kilmagner NS	01/06/2016	Board of management	Organisation
96	Submission ERB and Ethics	Kilmore Diocesan Education Office	25/03/2016		Organisation
97	Submission ERB and Ethics	Laurence Cassells	30/03/2016	Retired teacher	Personal
98	ERB and Ethics Consultation	Linda O'Shea	24/03/2016	Board of management member Middleton CBS Primary School	Personal

99	ERB and Ethics Consultation	Linda Kinch	15/03/2016	Student teacher	Personal
100	Submission ERB and Ethics	M O'Sullivan	04/11/2015		Personal
101	Submission ERB and Ethics	Maeye Mahon	31/03/2016	Diocesan advisor	Personal
102	Submission ERB and Ethics	Maire Corrigan	31/03/2016		Personal
103	ERB and Ethics Consultation	Maire Fitzgerald	31/03/2013	Teacher	Personal
104	Submission ERB and Ethics	Maire Sheehy, Eamonn Power	30/03/2016	Teachers	Personal
105	Submission ERB and Ethics	Mairead Harman	31/03/2016		Personal
106	Submission ERB and Ethics	Margaret Buckley	30/03/2016		Personal
107	Submission ERB and Ethics	Sr Maria Comerford	04/03/2016	Coordinator Primary School Diocesan Advisors, Diocese of Osory	Organisation
108	ERB and Ethics Consultation	Maria McSwiney	03/03/2016	Principal teacher	Personal
109	Submission ERB and Ethics	Marie Porter	31/03/2016	Parent	Personal
110	ERB and Ethics Consultation	Martina Mallen	31/03/2016	Teaching principal	Personal
111	Submission ERB and Ethics	Mary Ann Collins	30/03/2016	Teacher	Personal
112	ERB and Ethics Consultation	Mary Cosgrove	20/05/2016		Personal
113	Submission ERB and Ethics	Mary Whelehan	30/03/2016		Personal

114	Submission ERB and Ethics	Maureen Hamilton	30/03/2016	Parent	Personal
115	Submission ERB and Ethics	Maureen Matthews	20/05/2016	Teacher	Personal
116	Submission ERB and Ethics	Michael Quinn	31/03/2016	Parent	Personal
117	ERB and Ethics Consultation	Middleton CBS Primary School	31/03/2016	Board of management	Organisation
118	ERB and Ethics Consultation	Middleton CBS Primary School	31/03/2016	Principal teacher	Organisation
119	ERB and Ethics Consultation	Miriam O'Sullivan Long	30/03/2016	Teacher	Personal
120	Submission ERB and Ethics	Moyasta NS	16/03/2016	Board of management	Organisation
121	Submission ERB and Ethics	Naomi McCormick	16/03/2016	Teacher	Personal
122	Re: Consultation on Proposals for a Curriculum in Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics	Ombudsman for Children	27/05/2016		Organisation
123	ERB and Ethics Consultation	Our Lady of Mercy Senior Primary School	21/03/2016	Board of management	Organisation
124	Submission ERB and Ethics	Owen Keogh, Jim Hannon	30/03/2016	Teachers and members of boards of management	Personal
125	Submission ERB and Ethics	Pádraic Mac Lochlainn	31/03/2016		Personal
126	Submission ERB and Ethics	Patricia & John McGonagle	31/03/2016	Parents	Personal
127	Submission ERB and Ethics	Patrician Primary School Newbridge	30/03/2016	Board of management	Organisation

128	Submission ERB and Ethics	Patrick Griffin	31/03/2016	Parent	Personal
129	Submission ERB and Ethics	Patrick J. McCabe	31/03/2016		Personal
130	Submission ERB and Ethics	PJ Bracken	10/11/2015	Retired teacher	Personal
131	Submission ERB and Ethics	Regina Lydon	30/03/2016	Retired principal	Personal
132	Submission ERB and Ethics	Rev Christopher Hayden PhD STL	30/03/2016	Chairperson of two boards of management	Personal
133	Submission ERB and Ethics	Rev Prof Eamon Conway, Dr Kerry Greer, Dr John Murray, Dr. Rik Van Nieuwenhove, Anne Hession, Dr Thomas Finegan	22/03/2016	Third-level educators	Personal
134	Submission ERB and Ethics	Rev Thomas O'Byrne	20/05/2016	Priest and former member of board of management	Personal
135	Submission ERB and Ethics	Rose Burke	21/03/2016	Teacher	Personal
136	Submission ERB and Ethics	Sacred Heart NS Monaleen	11/03/2016	Board of management	Organisation
137	ERB and Ethics Consultation	Scoil Bhride, Athgarvan	01/04/2016	Principal, board of management	Organisation
138	Submission ERB and Ethics	Scoil Bhride, Middleton	20/05/2016	Board of management	Organisation
139	Submission ERB and Ethics	Scoil Mhuire Lourdes, Tullow	30/03/2016	Principal	Organisation
140	Submission ERB and Ethics	Scoil Mhuire Senior Primary School, Newbridge	24/03/2016	Board of management	Organisation
141	Submission ERB and Ethics	Scoil Mhuire Sóisearach Newbridge	29/03/2016	Board of management	Organisation
142	Submission ERB and Ethics	Scoil Mhuire, Birr	29/03/2016	Board of management	Organisation

143	Submission ERB and Ethics	Scoil na Naomh Uiliagh	23/03/2016	Board of management	Organisation
144	Submission ERB and Ethics	Scoil Náisiúnta Muire gan Smál	16/03/2016	Board of management	Organisation
145	ERB and Ethics Consultation	Seán Corkery	21/03/2016	Diocesan advisor, Diocese of Cloyne	Organisation
146	Submission ERB and Ethics	Seán Ó Loingsigh	19/03/2016		Personal
147	Secular Schools Ireland LTD (SSI) Submission to NCCA	Secular Schools Ireland Ltd	31/03/2016		Organisation
148	Submission ERB and Ethics	Sharon Delaney	30/03/2016	Parent	Personal
149	Submission ERB and Ethics	Simon Lewis	30/03/2016	Editor of Anseo.net	Personal
150	ERB and Ethics Consultation	Sinéad McMahon	31/03/2016	Teacher	Personal
151	ERB and Ethics Consultation	Sonia Murray	30/03/2016	Teacher	Personal
152	ERB and Ethics Consultation	SPHE Network	31/03/2016	Third-level educators	Organisation
153	Submission ERB and Ethics	Spiritan Education Trust Board	30/03/2016	Patron of three schools	Organisation
154	Submission ERB and Ethics	St Anne's Special School	29/03/2016	Board of management	Organisation
155	Submission ERB and Ethics	St Conleth & Mary's Primary School	29/03/2016	Board of management	Organisation
156	Submission ERB and Ethics	St Bride's NS	30/03/2016	School staff	Personal
157	Submission ERB and Ethics	St John's NS, Kenmare	31/03/2016	Board of management	Organisation

158	Submission ERB and Ethics	St Mary's Convent Primary School	10/03/2016	Principal, and chairperson of the ethos committee	Organisation
159	Submission ERB and Ethics	St Michael's NS (Parents), Newtown (x13)	30/03/2016	Parents	Personal
160	Submission ERB and Ethics	St Michael's NS, Newtown	30/03/2016	Principal	Organisation
161	Submission ERB and Ethics	St Michael's NS, Newtown	30/03/2016	Chairperson board of management	Organisation
162	Submission ERB and Ethics	St Mochu's Rathcoffey	31/03/2016	Board of management	Organisation
163	Submission ERB and Ethics	St Oliver Plunkett NS, Ballina	30/03/2016	Board of management	Organisation
164	Submission ERB and Ethics	St Peter's NS	07/03/2016	Board of management	Organisation
165	Submission ERB and Ethics	St Vincent's GNS	20/03/2016	Board of management	Organisation
166	Submission ERB and Ethics	Teresa McQuillan	28/03/2016	Grandmother	Personal
167	Submission ERB and Ethics	Terry Leddy, Sr Anna Smith	16/03/2016	Retired teachers and diocesan advisors	Personal
168	Submission to NCCA Education in Religion and Beliefs and Ethics	The Humanist Association	30/03/2016		Organisation
169	Submission ERB and Ethics	Tomás Ó hóistín, John Phelan, Timothy Kelly	27/03/2016	Parent and board of management members	Personal
170	Submission ERB and Ethics	Tony Kealy	12/02/2016	Parent	Personal
171	Submission ERB and Ethics	Trócaire	30/03/2016		Organisation
172	Submission ERB and Ethics	Una Mullowney	30/11/2015	Mother and grandmother	Personal
173	Reflection on ERB	Una Purcell	20/05/2016		Personal

174	Submission ERB and Ethics	Whitegate NS Middleton	30/03/2016	Board of management	Organisation
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