

# **Catholic Schools and the Interests of the Poor in Nigeria**

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## **Declaration**

I, Maria Ugonna Rita Igbo, declare that the work presented in this thesis is entirely borne out of my research efforts. Where information is derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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Signed: Maria Ugonna Rita Igbo

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### **Abbreviations/Acronyms**

AWR: Association of Women Religious

CELAM: Latin American Catholic Bishops in Medellin

CNBB: National Conference of Bishops of Brazil

NCEC: National Catholic Education Commission

NOCE: National Office of Catholic Education, founded 1954 by the Bishops' Conference

PO: Preferential Option

SECAM: Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar

## **Abstract**

This study investigated the degree to which Catholic schools in Nigeria are serving the interests of the poor. The research design was comparative case study involving triangulation of analysis of vision and mission statements, semi-structured and focused interviews conducted among Catholic dioceses in Lagos, Abuja and Enugu States, Secretary of Catholic education in Nigeria, Principals of Catholic schools, four administrative staff, some teachers, some senior students, and four public, professional and political observers, some parents and critics of Catholic schooling in Nigeria.

The study was anchored on Liberation Theology - an attempt to liberate the poor from cycle of poverty through provision of affordable education. To liberate the poor begins with creating access to education and then, a voice, thus, possessing a sense of agency, to be able to speak for themselves. The multi-methods approach was used in answering the three research questions. Data were analysed using NVivo – ‘Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software’ (CAQDAS). Scholarships are offered by Schools A, 5%; B, 14%, C, 10% of the students on enrolment. The schools admit through entrance examination and interviews, and operate fee-paying policy. which sometimes hinders some students’ access to the schools. and stands as a barrier to the Church’s option for the poor.

Catholic schools in Nigeria allow parents to pay fees in installments and sometimes, the complete fees are waived. Based on the findings, the recommendations proposed the need for every Proprietor to revisit the policy on Catholic education for better implementation, there should be a common policy on admissions, the Church needs to find possible means of ameliorating the educational services for the benefit of all classes of people in the society, since the Government does not fund Catholic schools, and there should be constant monitoring and supervision so as to maintain the Catholic schools’ distinctive character.

## IMPACT STATEMENT

The major issue in this research is, 'Preferential Option for the Poor.' The big question is why are Catholic schools not living up to this expectation? This research provides rich data and analysis for the Catholic Community to decide on what they will do to care for the poor in the society. Thus, the study makes significant contribution to knowledge in the following five ways:

1. **Literature:** Current literature in this field is limited so far in Nigeria. Three articles bordering on the three pertinent questions raised shall be published. For instance, 'The Catholic schools and the principle of 'preferential option for the poor' in Nigeria,' and 'The funding strategy of the education of the poor by the Catholic schools in Nigeria,' shall be published in Educational Assessment and Research Network in Africa (EARNIA), while, 'The roles of Bishops and Major Superiors in addressing 'preferential option for the poor' in Nigerian Catholic schools,' shall be published in a Catholic University Journal (Veritas Journal of Educational Research and Development, VJERD).
2. **Theory:** The Liberation Theology contributed in the analysis of the finding about the true gospel of Jesus Christ, which preaches the liberating power of God. This aided the recommendations of the need of the Church to live up to its responsibility of addressing the educational needs of the poor.
3. **Broad Findings and Barriers:** The Preferential Option is not fully respected based on financial barriers because:
  - The Nigerian Government does not fund Catholic education
  - The schools have to rely on tuition fees and contributions from private or corporate organizations to pay staff salaries and provide facilities for the development of the schools.

- 4. Policy and Practice:** There is need for Proprietors to revisit the policy on Catholic education for better implementation; the Church needs to find possible means of ameliorating the educational services for all classes of people; there should be constant monitoring and supervision at the grass roots to ensure that the Catholic school's distinctive character is maintained. The researcher as a Religious Sister in the Catholic Church and a Principal in one of the Catholic schools in Abuja could use the opportunity of either the Church or school events to point at the need to revisit the Church's policy on education of the poor. The researcher's existing relationship with some Catholic Bishops will afford the opportunity to advance the finding of the study, so that where necessary, amendment could be made in this regard.
- 5. Benefits outside Academic Cycle:** The researcher intends to reach out to some stakeholders such as old students association, community leaders and some state governments that are sympathetic to the cause of Catholic education to collaborate with the schools in addressing the needs of the education of the poor so as to remove many children of school age from the streets. This means success can be achieved if there is increase in the percentage of poor children who are schooling for free or at a very subsidized cost in the Catholic schools.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

The Catholic Church has been mandated to make the educational issues concerning the poor, a 'preferential option', and till today this issue has remained a challenge to the Catholic educational mission. This also includes the gap yet to be filled with more systematic and scholarly research, and so research findings indicated that many countries still contend with the issue of fees in Catholic schools. It is therefore imperative to note that first and foremost, the 'preferential option for the poor,' as affirmed by the Catholic Social Teaching has a biblical origin. This concept which was further developed as a consequence of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), created an awareness of the responsibility of the Church to the poor, which states that the "Church should offer more effective educational service to the poor as children of God".

Moreover, huge impact has already been made on the knowledge of Catholic education by notable scholars. This informed the researcher's inspiration to carry out a research that focuses on the 'preferential option for the poor.' Grace (2010) writes:

The first Catholic schools established in nearly every country were founded by Religious Congregations .... These schools were provided for students free of charge or at the lowest possible fee. This service to the poor was made possible because of the subsidies which the Congregations made available to launch this great philanthropic mission (p. 29).

Subsequent reflections therefore focused more on the idea of religious schools subsidising fees for school children. The question is that, "Is this done internationally and to what extent? How do the schools get their funding to be able to maintain the schools and to offer free education or subsidies for school children? What could be the founding principles and policies of individual Catholic schools and how do these reflect on each school's mission integrity?" These questions preoccupied the thoughts of the

researcher over the 'preferential option for the poor' in the Nigerian Catholic schools, and provided the motivation for this study.

The Catholic schools in Nigeria are categorised today as 'private' schools and are perceived to be expensive. However, people with this view can hardly understand that most Catholic schools in Nigeria do not receive subsidies from either the State or the Federal Government unlike the schools in countries like 'Belgium, Germany, New Zealand, The Netherlands, England, Scotland, and Ireland, Catholic schools receive significant support from public funds and as a consequence, are an integrated (although distinctive) sector of publicly provided education' (Grace, 2002a, p. xi). This lack of support from public funding has in one way or the other, contributed to the consistent rise in school fees, as support from Religious Congregations has weakened.

The argument for the high fees is that lay teachers have to be paid well so as to enable them function effectively and selflessly. There is also the need for the efficient supply of quality educational facilities and maintenance of the school's infrastructure. It is, however, perceived that if Catholic schools are expensive, it therefore means that only relatively wealthy people can afford the fees to gain admission into the schools. Going by this analysis, it implies that the Church will be failing in its duty to offer educational services to the poor and to those who suffer any kind of deprivation. Catholic schools are charged to fulfil their 'distinctive educational mission and make maximum contributions to the common good of the society' (Grace, 2002b, 428). These and other roles of the Catholic schools may be hampered by a high rate of school fees and other factors. This researcher was, therefore, motivated to study the issue of fees in the Catholic school system, which is contrary to the Church's stand on the issue of 'preferential option for the poor' in Nigeria.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The argument is that school fees are the main sources of the Catholic School's income in Nigeria and to maintain quality education service, the schools have to recruit

qualified teaching and non-teaching staff. Secondly, there is no uniformity in the amount of fees charged by the Nigerian Catholic schools. Each Catholic school charges differently depending on the standard of the school. Thus, Rozario (2012, p. 137) argues that 'the fundamental commitment of the Church to the poor and the marginalized' would be contradicted when schools become too expensive, and as such Catholic schools should either be free or charge very low fees. Rozario (2012, p. 138) also opines that for the Church to justify her presence in the field of education, the Church has to find a way of accommodating both the rich and the poor in her schools. For instance, in one particular Catholic School in Nigeria admission fees into Junior Secondary School One (JSS1) for boarders is 'two hundred and seventy-five thousand Naira' (N275, 000), which is approximately equivalent to British £1,057.69. That of day students is 'one hundred and sixty-five thousand, five hundred Naira' (N165, 500), also approximately equivalent to £636.54. These fees are expected to cover school fees, boarding fees, various levies including pocket money. Meanwhile, the minimum annual income of an average Nigerian worker is presently N360, 000, which is about £812. This implies that in the Nigerian Catholic schools in today's contemporary society, people may have opportunities to choose the option that is most financially convenient for them, but this could hardly favour the poor based on the annual income of the average Nigerian worker. Based on these arguments, this research therefore examines Catholic Schools and the interests of the poor in Nigeria as a result of these current policies.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the Catholic Schools and the interests of the poor in Nigeria. In specific terms the study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do Catholic schools in Nigeria address the principle of 'preferential option for the poor'?

2. What roles do the Bishops and Major Superiors as Proprietors of Catholic schools play in this regard?
3. How do the schools cope with the intake of students in situations where there is no funding from either the government or the Church?

#### **1.4 Significance and Rationale for the Research**

The rationale that caused the researcher to embark on this study stemmed from different perspectives, as this research will be important in diverse ways. For instance, it will be of great importance to Catholic education in general, especially with respect to how Catholic school systems at the international level respond to the challenge of the poor that should be educated, as well as serving as a means to addressing how Catholic education in Nigeria shows or addresses the option for the poor in practice.

In addition, literature evidences show that the 'preferential option for the poor', has become a debatable issue in the contemporary society (Grace, 2010). This is an area of concern to the general society. Therefore, a research exploration into the theoretical basis for the 'preferential option for the poor' and how this principle is perceived and enacted in school contexts is meant for the total development of the individual, so as to create the awareness of the limited commitment to the preferential option in the Nigeria Catholic educational context, in order also, to suggest ways forward.

The finding of the research on the Catholic education systems is expected to create awareness and also serve as a source of inspiration for people and the state to sponsor the education of poor children in Catholic schools. This research will also make a contribution to the critical area of 'service to the poor,' as this will assist in removing the many teenagers who at present roam the Nigerian streets hawking items such as roasted and cooked groundnuts, loaves of bread, vegetables, biscuits, wall clocks, wrist-watches, handkerchiefs, towels and many others, when they should have been in schools. The point remains, why would these children choose to be out of school at the school times?

This research will equally assist in addressing many people's perception of Catholic schools either as expensive or judging them as serving only the rich and out of the reach of the poor because of their fee-paying policy. In other words, the research will delve into the rationale of the tuition fees policy with the understanding that for a school that is not supported financially by the government to be of reasonable standard, it has to charge fees to provide facilities for the schools, including staff salaries, students' maintenance and other infrastructure. The essence of the study is to further show how some of the Catholic schools still, in one way or the other, subsidize fees for the very poor children, especially those schools owned by richer dioceses, as sometimes, this money comes from parents and some other charitable people who donate money on certain school events. The authenticity of these perceptions will be verified to serve as knowledge gained in the long run in this research.

The research will be of academic relevance in attempts to address the issues associated with 'preferential option for the poor'. Although many researchers from different countries have written reports on the challenges facing Catholic schools in those countries, in Nigeria for instance, very little work has been done on the 'preferential option for the poor'. This has informed the originality of this research, which this researcher tends to lay claim as the pioneer on this issue, as far as research on Catholic education is concerned in Nigeria. This means future researchers in this field in Nigeria will have relevant academic materials to add to or draw from in attempt to further carry out a study on 'preferential option for the poor'.

## **1.6 Thesis Structure**

Chapter 1 introduces the research generally. This addresses the Catholic Church's idea of 'preferential option for the poor (PO)', the purpose of the research, significance and rationale for the study, as well as setting the objectives of the study and giving an outline of the research questions. Chapter 2 addresses the literature review on the 'preferential option for the poor' in theology and philosophy, and then

looks at it both historically and critically. Chapter 3 examines the empirical evidence for the implementation of the PO internationally in Catholic education. Another aspect of this research is the evidence for the implementation of the PO specifically in the Nigerian context, and the apparent barriers and resources that have either inhibited or enabled its expression, in practice. Chapter 4 considers the methodology of the research. Chapter 5 considers data findings on how Catholic schools in Nigeria deal with the principle of 'preferential option for the poor'. Chapter 6 presents the findings of the roles of the Bishops and Major Superiors as Proprietors of Catholic schools. Chapter 7 discusses the findings of the PO on how the schools cope with the intake of students where there is no funding from either the government or the Church. Chapter 8 discusses the findings of the PO. Chapter 9 summarizes the research and makes recommendations, as well as commenting on the limitations of the study. Suggestions are proffered for future research ideas on PO, in the field of Catholic Education Studies.

### **1.7 Operational Definitions of Terms**

The following definitions were used in this research.

**Catholic Schools:** These refer to the schools that are founded and funded by the Catholic Church in Nigeria.

**Interests of the Poor in Nigeria:** This refers to the idea of the Church attempting to reach the poor and vulnerable in the society by providing its educational services.

**Preferential Option for the Poor:** This refers to an awareness of the responsibility of the Church to the poor to have access to education at little or no fee. Simply put, it is 'a priority in love, care and service for the poor', a principle to which the Church is committed.

**Education** is seen as the 'aggregate of skills, values, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for the self-perpetuation of the poor in the society' (Chukwunta, 1978, p. 67)

or an individual. The Department for International Development (DFID) Departmental Report of 2006 highlights that education ...enables people to transform their own lives and the society in which they live'. In addition to this, the EFA Global Monitoring Report of year 2002, equally states that 'education is also an indispensable means of unlocking and protecting other human rights by providing the scaffolding that is required to secure good health, liberty, security, economic well-being, and participation in social and political activity. Where the right to education is guaranteed, people's access to and enjoyment of other rights is enhanced', (Education For All, GMR 2002).

**Bishops and Major Religious Superiors:** These are bodies that serve as Proprietors of the Catholic Schools on behalf of the Dioceses and Religious Congregations of the Catholic Church in Nigeria.

**Theology** is from two Greek words '*theo*, God + *-logia* knowledge' (Hardon, S.J. 1985, p. 432). Simply put, theology means 'the study of God and His relation to the world' (Gratsch *et al.*, 1981, p. 17).

**To liberate** is to be set free, and liberation is the act of liberating. These ideas are at the center of Liberation Theology which has become a powerful influence in the Catholic Church after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter treats the theoretical perspectives and the literature review on the 'preferential option (PO) for the poor' in theology and philosophy. The concepts are reviewed historically and critically.

#### **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

This research is anchored on Paulo Freire's writing of the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in 1968 (first edition in Portuguese). This framework provides the road-map that directs the reader to how the researcher conceptualized this study from the theory and approach of Paulo Freire's 'education as a practice of freedom' (Freire, 1993, p. 74). From the researcher's point of view, Freire's 'education as a practice of freedom', is expected to serve as a model of education to the Nigerian Catholic schools' services of the poor (Giroux, 2010). The framework also demonstrates how people can be liberated from their 'culture of silence' (Freire, 1993, p. 12) through Freire's dialogical theory of actions, against the anti-dialogical banking education (p. 74). Freire's approach, as well as the concept of Liberation Theology are discussed and their interconnectivity to the conceptual framework. Figure 1 illustrates the various aspects of the thoughts of Paulo Freire's approach – the Catholic Social Teaching and Liberation Theology, up to the link with the Nigerian educational system and the Nigerian Catholic schools in particular.



Figure 1: Paulo Freire's Approach

Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (figure 1) proposes a pedagogy that encourages teacher-student relationship, that is, the voice of the student is proposed in a way that both the student and the teacher become 'co-creators' in the learning

process. For Freire, pedagogy is 'a political and moral practice that provides the knowledge, skills and social relations that enable students to expand the possibilities of what it means to be critical citizens, while expanding and deepening their participation in the promise of a substantive democracy' (Giroux, 2010, p. 716; 2011, p. 155). Freire (1993, p. 50) emphasizes 'a humanizing pedagogy in which the revolutionary leadership establishes a permanent relationship of dialogue with the oppressed'.

As noted earlier, Freire's approach is very relevant to this research because his methodology of 'antidialogical/banking education' that is characterised by 'conquest, divide and rule, manipulation, and cultural invasion' (Freire, 1993, pp. 119-48) can still be found in many schools in Nigeria. This needs to be thoroughly understood and analysed for the purpose of encouraging a more relevant educational approach like Freire's dialogical/problem-posing education. In 'problem-posing,' Freire wants the poor to be able to be at home with their challenges. In other words, the poor can understand their condition and consciously and critically seek any possible ways of transforming themselves (Freire, 1976, p. 16; in Crotty, 1998, pp. 155-6).

Freire's approach demonstrates that people should be able to confront their situation and to consciously work to solve their problems. This can be linked to the theme of poverty in the Latin American Liberation Theology which portrays poverty as 'scandalous' and that 'one must engage in 'solidarity with the poor as a protest against poverty' (Brown, 1990, p. 36). The Black African liberation theology concentrates on how one could be liberated from 'various forms of oppression' (Zalot, 2002, p. xiv). Following the 'First General Assembly of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) held in 1969, it was mentioned that the 'colonial oppressors did not destroy black Africans physically, rather, they deprived Africans of both their dignity and personality by systematically destroying the political, economic, and cultural structures of traditional African society' (Zalot, p. 93).

However, it might also be relevant to note that an African child and specifically Nigerian child, born and brought up in a Nigerian village background, with little

exposure, might not have the courage or the wherewithal to confront his or her situation in order to come out of poverty or oppression. Freire's approach can also be linked to the thoughts and reflections of the SECAM Bishops that 'true Christian evangelization demands practical action in the temporal world' (Zalot, 2002, p. 148). At the same time, 'the ultimate purpose of Catholic Social Teaching' for the Bishops, as Zalot (2002) carefully observed is:

The creation of a just person, one who recognizes the necessity or respecting the freedom, ideas, property, and culture of others, one who appreciates the 'general social measures' that bring improvement to people's lives, and one who is able to distribute both 'benefits and sanctions' with fairness and impartiality (p. 152).

It is important to notice the SECAM Bishops' direct reference to the African people on economic development 'that human promotion encompasses both development and liberation, and that people must be given the opportunity to "fix their own objectives" and decide for themselves how they will work to improve their own welfare' (Zalot, 2002, p. 155). This can be seen to share the same link with the Freirean 'praxis' (reflection and action) and conscientization through which people who are oppressed can critically assess their condition and work towards their liberation.

It is important to note that at various points in the life of a particular group or country or persons, the struggle for better life, in peace and tranquility, continues from one generation to another. It 'keeps the spotlight on power relationships within society so as to expose the forces of hegemony and injustice' as well as illuminate 'the relationship between power and culture' (Crotty, 1998, pp. 157 and 158). This tool disposed me to an in-depth search for knowledge and understanding of the objects of my investigation that will eventually lead to practical 'reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed' (Freire, 1993, p. 107). Freire called this praxis, and that through praxis the oppressed 'must acquire a critical awareness of oppression, [their condition, and] with those who show true solidarity' (p. 33), struggle for liberation.

Secondly, the researcher as a pioneer on the study of 'PO' so far in Nigeria, takes into cognizance the culture of education in Nigeria in the colonial and post-colonial times in order to deal with the concept better in the contemporary reality. The implication is that attempt has been made to answer some questions that came up during the analysis process such as: How effective is Freire's approach of action and reflection in the Nigerian situation? What forms of oppression are identifiable in the Nigerian Catholic schools today, for instance, in the classrooms, hostels, parents-school relationships, teacher-student relationships? In what ways can the poor and the oppressed in Nigeria come out of their 'culture of silence' given the political situation in the country? How feasible can this be? How similar is Freire's culture to that of Nigeria to be able to bring about the expected transformation? On the other hand, in what ways could Freirean approach be ineffective in the Nigerian educational system? What likely challenges could emerge from this approach? Are there possible solutions? A look at the Liberation Theology next will provide the missing link.

### **2.2.1 Liberation Theology and the Catholic Context**

Anselm of Canterbury's view of theology as partly given in chapter one gives a relevant meaning of theology as it relates to the study of the 'preferential option for the poor', a 'faith experience of committed believers ... [to] contribute to a living, growing faith that makes a difference in [the] life' of the poor (cited in Omonokhua, 2011, p. 35; from Mueller, 2004, pp. 829-830. See also Gratsch *et al.*, 1981, p. 18). 'Preferential option for the poor' becomes a vision, through which one sees things from the perspectives of the poor and thus, is able to make life more meaningful by first liberating the less privileged.

According to Rowland (1999, pp. 3-4), Liberation Theology is 'a new way of *doing* theology' (Phan, 2000, p. 43; Dorr, 2012, p. 10) which leads to a 'rediscovery' of "the commitment to the poor and marginalised as a determining moment for theology rather than the agenda of detachment and reflection within the academy' (p. 4). This

'discovery', he argues, 'may involve a disorientation of life, a conversion indeed. The commitment to, and solidarity with, the poor and vulnerable are the necessary environment for stimulating the intellectual activity which enables liberation theology to begin' (p. 4. See also Dorr 1992, p. 10). It is also expedient to discuss poverty and commitment to justice and charity within the context of this research.

## **Poverty**

The Catholic School document, published by the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1977, para. 58) stated explicitly: 'First and foremost, the Church offers its educational service to the poor, or those who are deprived of family help and affection, or those who are far from the faith'. This added more meaning to this reflection. It is important to acknowledge that through the initial founding principles and policies of individual schools; the schools had the privileges of the presence and inspirations of both Religious men and women. These individuals managed the schools, as well as serving as motivating personnel for the maintenance of the Catholic mission's integrity and observance of the founding policy of the schools. Then, Catholic schools were 'perceived as a privileged sector' (Grace, 2002b p. 427), compared to their counterparts in public or non-faith schools.

Poverty can be absolute or can be destitution, that is, severe lack of the necessities of life. There is relative poverty when people suffer inequality in their wages or income, or when people are not given equal amount of benefit in their place of work. Total exploitation and unemployment lead to severe deprivation. In other words, poverty prevents individuals or groups of people from attaining required life's goals such as education, food, shelter, clothing, and family development. It also means that their God-given talents are likely to remain undeveloped because of a basic struggle for existence. This brings us to discussion on commitment to justice.

## **Commitment to Justice**

This has to do with the practical responses to the issues of deprivation, oppression and dejection. The Church is committed to ensuring adequate distribution of goods and treatment of people. The Church consistently issues documents that guide and advise people on their responsibilities to justice, the importance of justice and other issues relating to it. Such documents as Pope Leo XIII's encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* ('On Capital and Labor', 1891) and Pope Pius XI's encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno* ('On Reconstruction of the Social Order') and the two 'instructions' from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (1984 & 1986).

According to Pope John Paul II, 'The Church does not need to have recourse to ideological systems in order to love, defend and collaborate in the liberation of humanity: at the centre of the message of which she is the depository and herald she finds inspiration for acting in favour of brotherhood, justice and peace, against all forms of domination, slavery, discrimination, violence etc' (3, 3; cited in, Hebblethwaite, 1999, p. 185). The 'Characteristics of Jesuit Education' (1986) explains elaborately on the Church's commitment to justice and gives directives on how schools can positively respond to this need. The discourse on liberation in the Christian context is next.

## **Liberation in the Christian Context**

From the Catholic perspective, liberation is mainly the freedom from the slavery of sin (see The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: 'Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation' (1984), nos. 3, 9-12 and the second – 'Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation' (1986), nos. 21-22, 28-33. See also Zalot, 2002, pp. 122; 141 and Sirico & Zieba 2000, p. 113, no. 223). The Church has to examine and interpret the aspiration for liberation within the context of the gospel. Viewed from this perspective, Pope John Paul II insists that the 'preferential option for the poor' 'excludes no one' (paragraph 68, in Hebblethwaite, 1999, p. 194; *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 34; Sirico & Zieba, 2000, pp. 160-161) and the 'Instruction on Christian

Freedom and Liberation' (1986, no. 68, p. 41) confirms that 'This option excludes no one. This is the reason why the Church cannot express this option by means of reductive sociological and ideological categories which would make this preference a partisan choice and a source of conflict'. In line with these views, Berryman (1993, p. 13), affirms 'that option is not exclusive or excluding, since the message of salvation is intended for all. ... it is a firm and irrevocable option' (see also the reference to an address to the Roman Curia of December 1984; in Rowland, 1999, p. 195). The preferential option is an option for all people, it is not an "exclusive option for the poor", as though God loved only the poor and hated everybody else, especially the rich' (Brown, 1990, p. 60; Gutierrez, 1999, p. 33). The poor are specifically mentioned in preference to every other person because their 'cries ... are heard, and are given priority over the complaints of the rich .... To start with a preferential option for the poor is finally to include the rich as well. To start at the opposite end with a preferential option for the rich ... cuts the church off from the poor...' (Brown, 1990, p. 60). The Church therefore makes it her responsibility to restore the 'true dignity, identity, freedom, and presence in the world' (Zalot, 2002, p. 92). An understanding of the concept of liberation in Latin America and Black African contexts are thus presented next.

### **Liberation Theology in Latin American and the Black African Contexts**

Liberation theology is an area well explored in Latin America. However, this is not being used intensively in Africa, and since this research is looking at the 'preferential option for the poor' in the Nigerian Catholic schools' context, it is appropriate to explore the different aspects of Liberation Theologies that have existed till today in various continents. Phan (2000, p. 41) points out that Liberation Theology has been carried out 'in different contexts and continents – North America, Central and South America, Africa and Asia' and each of these places had specific area of oppression such as 'gender (white feminist, womanist and *mujerista* theology), sexual

orientation (gay and lesbian theology), race (Black theology), class (Latin American theology), culture (African theology), and religion (Asian theology)' (p. 41). However, as a matter of relevance, the Latin American and Black African liberation theologies will be further discussed in this thesis. First, how does each group of people operating within a particular society understand 'theology' as well as 'liberation'? Secondly, what are the commonalities and differences between each group's experiences of liberation? The essence of this comparison is to generally understand Liberation Theology from both contexts and what the different groups of people are liberating from. The first discourse is on Latin American context.

### **Liberation Theology in Latin American Context**

The main focus of the Latin American liberation theology is on the analysis of their economy which is taken to be its pattern of control. Before the liberation movement, the Latin Americans were colonized by some European countries like Spain. This colonization ranged from power to economy, hence a '*political colonialism*: all power – most notably the deployment of the economic resources and riches that the colonies produced – was taken over regardless of the interests of local population' (Brown, 1990, pp. 3-4). Subsequently, when the Latin Americans were almost out of the rule of the Europeans, '*economic colonialism*' surfaced and according to Brown, (1990, p. 4) 'manipulators from abroad joined forces with indigenous manipulators at home, to continue the exploitation of the many by the few'. Gradually the message of the crucifix 'the omnipresent Christian symbol in Latin America ... the bleeding and dying Christ nailed to a cross' (p. 4) began to create new meaning in the hearts of the people, a 'political message' like 'liberation for the oppressed' and 'freedom for captives', in addition to the 'religious message' of Jesus 'atoning for the sin of the world...' (p. 4). Gradually, too, the encyclicals like that of Leo XIII's (1891) *Rerum Novarum* and Pius XI's (1931) *Quadragesimo Anno*, were rediscovered, with warnings against greed and unnecessary competition, 'that working men have been surrendered,

isolated and helpless, to the hardheartedness of employers and the greed of unchecked competition' (no.3), and 'the rights and duties within which the rich and the proletariat – those who furnish material things and those who furnish work – ought to be restricted in relation to each other' (no. 11) respectively. Of prominent importance is the calling of all the Roman Catholic Bishops by Pope John XXIII to 'convene in Rome from 1962 through 1965', the documents of the Second Vatican Council and the second meeting of the CELAM in 1968 at Medellin, Columbia. The discussion at the second meeting centred on "The Present-Day Transformation of the Council in the light of Latin America" (Brown, 1990, p. 11). There was an aura of transformation, marking the beginning of change in the lives of Latin Americans and 'Liberation Theology' began to emerge. It was in a 'conference at Chimbote, Peru' in 1968 that Gutiérrez 'presented the fundamental outlines of what for the first time he called "a theology of liberation"' (Brown, 1990, p. 35) to a group of priests he gathered together. Shortly after this conference, the Medellin conference of Latin American bishops was held and the theme on a 'theology of liberation' among other themes was discussed. One therefore can say that Liberation Theology was discovered at these gatherings, which further led to subsequent discussions on how to liberate people from poverty and other ills, and how to assist people in their struggle to liberate themselves and others from their oppressed situation in the society.

However, the theme of poverty in the Latin American Liberation Theology portrays poverty as 'scandalous' and that 'one must engage in "solidarity with the poor as a protest against poverty' (Brown, 1990, p. 36). This could sound Marxist, who sees religion simply as opium of the society and capitalist exploitation of the common good' (p. 36), which is clearly different from the Catholic Church's perspective because the Marxist idea denotes violence which according to Pope Paul VI (1967, EN 37), 'gives rise to a new form of oppression, more serious than before' (Dorr, 1992, p. 230). The attempt was to distance Liberation Theology from Marxist ideology and of class struggle, which gave rise to criticism of the first, by the 'Instruction on Certain Aspects

of the Theology of Liberation (1984) and later the 'Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation' (1986) by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, in Rome. The first was a warning:

To draw the attention of pastors, theologians, and all the faithful to the deviations, and risks of deviation, damaging to the faith and to Christian living that are brought about by certain forms of liberation theology which use, in an insufficient manner, concepts borrowed from various currents of Marxist thought (p. 1).

The second 'instruction' was more supportive or 'a more positive attitude toward Liberation Theology' (Phan, 2000, p. 41, footnote) though with the same intention but limiting 'itself to indicating its principal *theoretical* and *practical* aspects' (p. 1). The warning was to be able to 'distinguish absolutely between a Christian and a Marxist viewpoint. An "authentic theology of liberation" must be separated from one that is merely "an emotional pretext for plotting a social revolution", replacing the evangelical vision with a political one, substituting Marx for Christ, appealing to the use of violence "without discrimination", and leading people to "intoxication with the struggle"' (Brown, 1990, p. 15. See also Sirico & Zieba, 2000, pp. 117-118, no. 225). Thus, the second 'instruction' highlights the importance of 'truth' and 'freedom' which any genuine liberation is supposed to bring. John Paul II at Puebla in 1979 'recalled the three pillars upon which any authentic theology of liberation will rest: 'truth about Jesus Christ', 'truth about the Church', and 'truth about mankind' (no. v). The discourse on what Liberation Theology connotes in the African context, is extensively discussed next in Black African Liberation Theology.

## **The Black African Liberation Theology**

The African liberation theology manifested for the first time in published material in 1956 even before that of Latin and North America came up in the 1960s. Engelbert Mveng SJ, (Theologian from Cameroon), argued that:

Liberation theology was born in sub-Saharan Africa as a direct result of European colonial racism ... long before it was articulated in Latin America. ... African liberation theology arose out of an interpretation of the biblical message from the perspective of the Bantou people, an interpretation that led to the creation of independent Christian churches in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Mveng and Lipawing, 28-31; cited in Zalot, 2002, p. 94).

From the African perspective, Liberation Theology focuses on the need to 'liberate the African people from various forms of oppression' (Zalot, 2002, p. xiv). Following the 'First General Assembly of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) held in 1969 (p. xiv), it was discovered that the 'colonial oppressors did not destroy black Africans physically, rather, they deprived Africans of both their dignity and personality by systematically destroying the political, economic, and cultural structures of traditional African society' (Zalot, 2002, p. 93). First, we will discuss African theology, then the second, African notion of liberation, what are they liberating from and why?

First, the African theology is looked at from the angle of people's daily experiences starting from slave trade (oppression), colonialism (domination) before the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and are together called the 'anthropological poverty' and up to today's occurrences of injustice, joblessness, corruption, famine, and all sorts of hardships that disrupt the peace of the community. According to Mveng, 'black African theology can be understood only within the context of the specific challenges people face in the cultural, political, and economic realms of their lives' ('African Liberation Theology', 17-34, (17-18); in Zalot, 2002, p. 87). They look up to the time when all the humanizing errors will come to an end. They are anxious to be free and for God to proclaim justice

from his Kingdom, to 'set the down-trodden free' (Luke 4:18; Isaiah 61: 1-2), hence they long for 'freedom, truth, justice and love' and for spiritual liberation.

Spiritual liberation occurs when people feel the essence of their being – freedom, identity and dignity are fully achieved. This means that the Africans (black Africans precisely) seek spiritual liberation when they are particularly experiencing oppression and despair, they want to know the truth about their own existence and dignity, the truth about the Church and the truth about Jesus the Saviour (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: 'Instruction on certain aspects of the "Theology of Liberation"', no. 5, p. 16) and because they perceive God to be a liberating God, they rely on him for liberation. According to this document, these three 'truths' are 'indispensable pillars' for 'any authentic theology of liberation' (John Paul II at Puebla, 1979). It is equally imperative to deal with the commonalities and differences between the African and Latin American liberation theologies next in order to present their divergent views better.

### **Commonalities and Differences Between the African and Latin American Liberation Theologies**

The African and Latin American Liberation Theologies share four common grounds (Zalot, 2002, p. 94). The first is on '*contextualization*' meaning that both interpret the bible message from the context of their history that is the bible speaks to them from what they have experienced in life such as oppression from colonization. Secondly, and similar to the first is the experience of 'oppression, exploitation, and injustice' (Zalot, 2002) from the colonial powers. The third is that their Church founders interpreted the bible in such a way that it gives a feeling of liberation and salvation to the oppressed, and fourthly, both Liberation Theologies exhibited a kind of praxis that enabled 'freedom and creativity' to the people.

The differences however, centre on liberation itself. According to Mveng, Latin Americans had to be freed from 'material poverty and oppressive structures' while the

African liberation theology is on how to free the Africans 'from imposed depersonalization or poverty in its anthropological sense' (Zalot, 2002, pp. 94-95). That of the Africans may therefore be said to be a more holistic liberation comprising of 'cultural and spiritual' aspects of life. This by implication suggests that the oppression experienced by the black Africans might have been harder than that of the Latin Americans. Gutiérrez (1983, p. 60), on the other hand, has a different and broader view of the Latin American liberation theology that this would imply. For Gutiérrez, 'Theology in Latin America today will be ... an understanding of the faith from a point of departure in real life, effective solidarity with the exploited classes, oppressed ethnic groups, and despised cultures of Latin America, and from within their world'. Gutiérrez (1988, p. xxi) makes reference to "'Dominated peoples', 'exploited social classes', 'despised races', and marginalized cultures' (cited in Brown, 1990, p.50) showing some 'turbulent situations in Latin America' (Zalot, 2002, p. 130) and an indication of another aspect of poverty in addition to the 'material poverty and oppressive structures' mentioned above.

One other major difference is on 'methodology'. Latin American liberation is believed to have been influenced by Marxist class struggle, that is, 'the poor South struggling against the economic and political oppression of the rich North' (Mveng; in Zalot, 2002, p. 95), a position Cardinal Ratzinger, (1984 and 1986) frowned upon, saying that 'it is "theologically unacceptable" and "socially dangerous" to mix the Bible with politics, sociology, and economics because neither Scripture nor Catholic theology must ever be used to "absolutize" or "sacralize" any theory concerning the socio-political order' (in Zalot, 2002, p. 123. On further analysis, Marxist theory was judged, by the Vatican to 'contain errors which directly threaten, the truths of the faith regarding the eternal destiny of individual persons' ('Instruction on certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation', 1984, vii, no. 9) and it 'is a truth of class: there is no truth but the truth in the struggle of the revolutionary class' (1984, viii, no. 5). The African methodology on the other hand, is not revolutionary in nature, encompassing persons

and culture, taking into consideration the focus of their type of liberation on 'how one conceives of the human person, the world, and God within one's own cultural reality, and also how one is to overcome the forces of racism and anthropological destitution' (p. 95). Africans had to extricate themselves from the exploitations of the colonial powers, to find their true Christian Humanity. Having dealt with Latin American and African's concept of liberation theologies, it is also appropriate to relate liberation theology and education next.

### **Liberation Theology and Education**

This study shows the implication of liberation Theology in the context of Nigeria. The section discussed the 'preferential option for the poor', and noting that the focus of the research is in line with Freire's thoughts and approach on education and the Catholic Social Teaching (Theoretical framework). The significance of education and liberation theology will also be clarified to enable us have a better understanding of the relevance of this section. Moreover, the value of education cannot be over-emphasized, hence the 2002 report of the EFA Global Monitoring and the 2006 report of the Department for International Development (DFID) highlight the relevance of education in the transformation of lives (see full definitions in chapter one).

Liberation Theology as we already have seen exposes us to the darkness of people's lives. Among other things, it is a reminder of the right of people to education which according to Rozario (2012, p. 133) 'nurtures human freedom', the type of freedom that Freire's approach to education tries to promote. To remove this human freedom will automatically mean to remove the dignity that it comes with. People yearn for this freedom and dignity. More especially, liberation theology creates a deeper awareness of the biblical injunction to care for one's neighbor and to follow the path of an option for the poor particularly on the issue of education to such an extent that not only the well-to-do but also the impoverished themselves would begin to be aware of the need for this enlightenment and be able to participate in transforming not only

themselves but also the society, to move 'toward ever new possibilities of fuller and richer life individually and collectively' (Freire, 1993, pp. 9, 11 & 14). The rich themselves are invited to be more sympathetic and sensitive to the needs of the poor. Every person, rich or poor has the right to education and to clarify this, the Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation, (1986, no. 92) affirms that:

Every human being has a right to ... the development of one's intellectual capacities, moral virtues, abilities to relate with other human beings, and talents for creating things which are useful and beautiful. From this flows the necessity of promoting and spreading education, to which every individual has an inalienable right. The first condition for this is the elimination of illiteracy.

To eliminate illiteracy demands that people should be taught to read and write and to acquire skills that will enable them not only to gain access to their right jobs but to have the right sense of belonging in a specific community, to understand their situation and participate in its improvement or transformation.

From the Catholic perspective, education exposes persons to be aware of who they are, their 'freedom and dignity' which is the message of the Gospel that Liberation Theology tries to emphasise, to proclaim the Gospel 'in the power of the Spirit, [that gives] ... full respect for the freedom of each individual and the exclusion of every form of constraint or pressure' ('Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation', 1986, no.4). Liberation Theology can therefore be understood as a form of educational movement that showed people a way towards the solution to their problem, enlightening people on their relationship with God who created them in his 'image and likeness' (Genesis 1:26-27). We see this in the Latin American and African Liberation Theologies – taken from their lived experiences of economic colonialism and oppression respectively, a yearning to regain their right to life, a cry for freedom.

It is therefore expected that Catholic schools should give preference to the poor and teach the children to carry on the message of the Gospel in their lived experiences within and outside the school. The 'Characteristics of Jesuit Education' (1986) gives a clearer view of how the 'preferential option for the poor' is inculcated in the school

curriculum and its implementation. The next discourse is on the researcher's critical reflections on the subject matter.

The Liberation Theology is a Christian movement which started around the 1956 and early 1960s respectively. Historically, each of the two liberation movements revealed its biblical background particularly the Exodus story, where God liberated the Israelites from the bondage of slavery in Egypt, and led them through the Red Sea victoriously (Exodus 14: 15-31). However, '*The instruction*' calls for attention to the 'specific significance' of the exodus event – the 'purpose' of the liberation of the Israelites ('Biblical Foundations' no.3) to re-instate them. As God's own people, this re-affirmed the covenant He made with them that He is their God (Exodus 20:2). It is the duty of Catholic educators to direct the children in the schools on the right sense of liberation and better ways to approach this. Liberation Theology therefore is not a finished event yet, but it is a matter that all Catholic educators must continue to think about and to discuss to find the right way forward on this important new approach to theology and its implications for educational practice (Rozario, 2012).

At this juncture, the next discussion is on the view of the Catholic principle on the 'preferential option for the poor' as drawn from Freire's approach to education and Liberation Theology.

### **2.2.2 Preferential Option for the Poor – A Catholic Social Teaching Principle**

The modern study of Catholic education takes its inspiration from the 'Declaration on Christian Education: Second Vatican Council', *Gravissimum Educationis* of 28 October, 1965 and the document, *The Catholic School* of 1977. The documents declare:

For her part Holy Mother Church, (Catholic Church) in order to fulfill the mandate she received from her divine founder to announce the mystery of salvation to all men and to renew all things in Christ, is under an obligation to promote the welfare of the whole life of man, including his life in this world insofar as it is related to his heavenly vocation, she has therefore a part to play in the development and extension of education. Accordingly, the sacred Synod hereby promulgates some fundamental

principles concerning Christian education, especially in regard to schools. These principles should be more fully developed and should be adapted to the different local circumstances by Episcopal conferences

Part of this order is that the Church has ‘a part to play in the development and education’ of all people and in order to accomplish this mission, the sacred Synod published the ‘fundamental principles’. Firstly, education in the faith – a way of contributing to the Church’s mission of salvation; secondly, preferential option for the poor – that those in any kind of need will enjoy their right to educational services; thirdly, formation in solidarity and community – to live responsibly with one mind and one heart in the community with other people, and fourthly, education for the common good – to be able to work for the good of everyone, academic education that will equip the individual with the relevant skills and knowledge for service (Grace, 2002b, pp. 429-431; Grace, 2003, p. 125).

The ‘preferential option for the poor’ now becomes a central position of the Catholic Church in the area of education. In other words, people should be given admission irrespective of their academic ability. By so doing, the Church would be empowering the poor to participate fully in the process of their liberation (Rozario, 2012). Many official documents of the Church since Second Vatican Council insist that ‘first and foremost, the Church offers its educational service to the poor’ (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education 1977, p. 44; in Grace, 2003, p. 136), and that norms for authentic Catholic education must be guided by the ‘preferential option for the poor’. This issue will be looked at from pre-Vatican concepts and post-Vatican concepts.

### **The Pre-Vatican Concepts of the Option for the Poor**

Prior to 1960s discussion of issues relating to poverty, ‘the rights and duties of the rich and the poor’ became more salient in academic debates. No doubt, there had been discussions on the issues concerning the poor and the less-privileged such as Pope Leo XIII’s (1891, no.1) ‘the utter poverty of the masses’ and how to ease their

sufferings. As early as 1891, Pope Leo XIII issued his Encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* (“Capital and Labour”) which discussed the differences between the rich and poor, the seeming re-appearance of ‘enslavement of the poor’ by the richer classes of the society and the Church’s responsibility to call the world’s attention to the situation: ‘But the [Catholic] Church, not content with pointing out the remedy, also applies it. For the Church does her utmost to teach and to train men and to educate them and by the intermediary of her bishops and clergy diffuses her solitary teachings far and wide’ (no. 26).

The Pope sees no reason for the Church to neglect the issue of poverty since ‘by keeping silence we [the Church] would seem to neglect the duty incumbent in us’. The Pope acknowledged ‘the devotedness and self-sacrifice of Christian charity’ with which the Church exercised her duty. He exhorted every individual and the State in particular ‘to promote to the utmost the interests of the poor’ (no. 32). While Leo XIII in 1891 used the language of ‘charity’ towards the poor, by 1931, Pius XI was using the language of ‘justice’ (Grace, 2002a, p. 73). For Pope Leo XIII, charity is ‘the mistress and queen of virtues...the fulfilling of the whole Gospel Law’ (no. 63). Charity has long existed in the history of the Catholic Church and is the foundation of Jesus’ teachings on love which in Jesus’ views should be shown through sacrifice. The ‘Instruction on Certain Aspects of Theology of Liberation’ clearly states that, ‘charity is the principle of authentic perfection, [and] that perfection cannot be conceived without an openness to others and a spirit of service’. Simply put, ‘Charity inspires a life of self-giving’ (‘Instruction on Certain Aspects of Theology of Liberation’, 1984, no. 15; cited in Sirico & Zieba, (eds.) 2000).

Social justice, however, was first used by Pope Pius XI in his encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno* of 1931 commenting on how people had previously perceived charity to be the only way privileged people could support the poor. In this encyclical, Pope Pius XI notes that social charity and social justice are ‘loftier and noble principles’ (no. 88). Justice deals with the effective distribution of human resources and Pope Pius

XI urges all 'institutions of people' to be effectively just in establishing 'a juridical and social order' so as to benefit every person. The distinction between social charity (be kind to the poor) and social justice (do something to help to change wealth distribution in a society) is clearly given by Calvin and Perrin's analysis of Pope Pius XI's encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* of 1931 in the following words: 'A charity which defrauds the worker of his just wage is no true charity, but a hollow name and a pretence ... Doles given out of pity will not exempt a man from his obligations of justice ... True charity, on the contrary, is the virtue which makes men try to improve the distribution of goods as justice requires' (Calvin & Perrin 1961, p. 164; cited in Grace 2002a, p. 73).

The clarification of the distinctions between social charity and social justice was as important in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as it is still today because the Church and the society at large need to understand that just being kind to the poor (social charity) is not enough but that this should be accompanied with changing the condition of the poor for the better. In other words, the Church demands that the poor should be given their share of the society's wealth (social justice) – and this, itself, is a duty in charity as well as justice.

Donal Dorr, an Irish theologian, sees this Catholic innovative social thought which was developed by the ideas of Pope John XXIII's *Mater et Magistra* (1961) ('Christianity and Social Progress') and Second Vatican Council as a breakthrough to the needs of the poor, an avenue that has given rise to the Church's proper dialogue with the leading authorities on social matters particularly the disturbing issues of poverty. This discussion can be said to have surfaced at the proper time, the time when so many people especially those in the developing countries, were dying in utter poverty and the Church was not expected to look away but to show some practical concerns. According to Pope John XXIII's (1961, no. 3) *Mater et Magistra* '...concerns herself with the exigencies of man's daily life, with his livelihood and education and his general, temporal welfare and prosperity'. However, if for any reason the Church keeps quiet over social issues like poverty, she would be neglecting her present duty. (See

also nos. 157-174, 185; Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*, no. 16 and Dorr, 2012, p. 106).

Pope Leo XIII was of the opinion that, "the Church's Social Teaching" should serve to protect the rights of the poor and Hales (1965, p. 42) has argued further that, 'It was in extending the realm of human rights into the economic field that Leo was really saying that the economic order, ecclesiastical or government, existed for the sake of man, that the ultimate purpose was to enable man to live his own life and to save his soul' (cited in Twomey, 2005, p. 6). It becomes clear that the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) actually paves way for discussion on the 'option for the poor'. This is followed by the central position of the Catholic Church in the areas of education for the poor and a redefinition of the Mission of the Catholic schools to reflect this character, which is the expected outcome of the effective practice of educational service for the poor. Figure 2 illustrates this more.

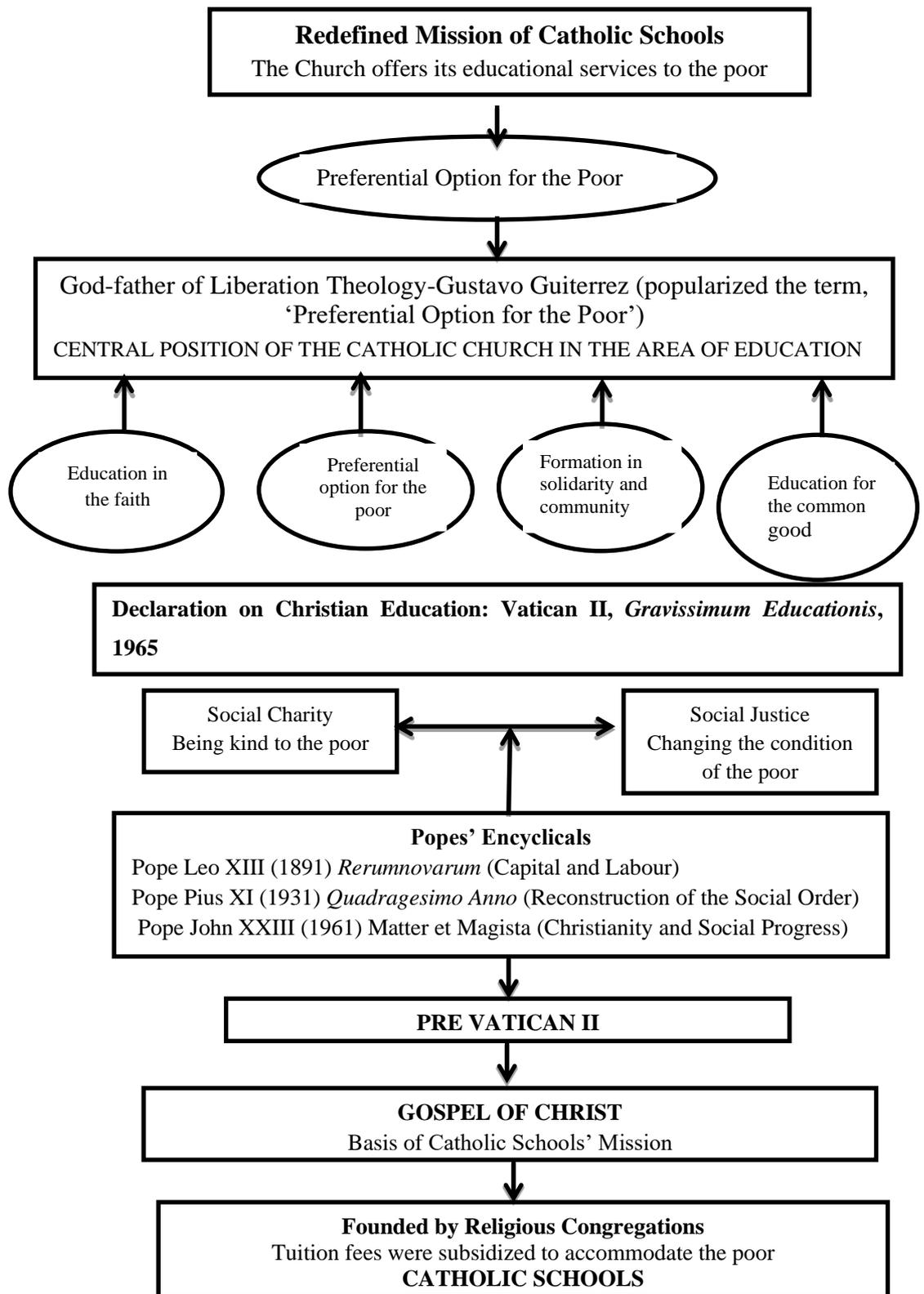


Figure 2: The Conceptual Map of the Preferential Option for the Poor

Figure 2 shows how the topic on the 'preferential option for the poor' was conceived from some biblical lessons as mentioned earlier. In the figure, the Gospel of

Christ (Good News) is presented as the basis for Catholic schools' mission. It starts by identifying that some of the Catholic schools were founded by Religious Orders in the early years of the missionary activities. These Religious Orders provided schools for students 'free of charge or at the lowest possible fee' (Grace 2010, p. 29). Furthermore, the concept was argued from the position of some of the official documents of the Church such as the writings of Pope Leo XIII (1891) *Rerum Novarum* (Capital and Labour), Pope Pius XI (1931) *Quadragesimo Anno* (Reconstruction of the Social Order), Pope John XXIII (1961) *Mater et Magistra* (Christianity and Social Progress) These have been categorized as written in the 'pre-Vatican era'. The next discussion is on the outlook of 'preferential option for the poor' from post-Vatican concepts.

### **Post-Second Vatican Concepts: The Preferential Option for the Poor**

The specific notion of the "preferential option for the poor" was coined in a succession of terms linked together by the writings of Gutierrez in 1968. He reflected in a much later interview:

The phrase comes from the experience of the Latin American church. The precise term was born somewhere between the Latin American Bishops' Conferences in Medellin (1968) and in Puebla (1979). In Medellin, the three words (option, preferential, poor) are all present, but it was only in the years immediately following Medellin that we brought these words into a complete phrase. It would be accurate to say that the term 'preferential option for the poor' comes from the Latin American church, but the content, the underlying intuition, is entirely biblical....The preferential option for the poor has gradually become a central tenet of the church's teaching (Hartnett, 2003, p. 14; in Twomey, 2005, p. 15; Dorr, 1992, p. 8).

Pope John Paul II saw the 'preferential option for the poor' as a 'social concern' and reaffirmed his position on the option: 'I have made and continue to make this 'option' my own. I identify with it...it is an option which is unwavering and irreversible' (cited in Twomey, 2005, p. 16). Sirico and Zieba (2000, pp. 160-62) further clarify this reflection (no. 42) on 'preferential option for the poor' as:

A special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness. It affects the life of each Christian inasmuch as he or she seeks to imitate the life of Christ, but it applies equally to our social responsibilities and hence to our manner of living, and to the logical decisions to be made concerning our ownership and the use of goods.

Reflection on this 'social concern' by the Latin American clergy with particular reference to the condition of the Church at the time yielded 'the publication of *Liberation Theology*, by the Peruvian priest, Gustavo Gutiérrez in 1971' (Streck & Segala, 2007, p. 175). Consequently, Gutierrez in his article 'Church of the Poor' takes up the challenge of commitment to the poor, because it is a biblical and evangelical question. Therefore, everyone in the Church should find a way of contributing to the preferential option for the poor....' (Boff 1984, p. 37; cited in Twomey, 2005, p. 24). The concept of the option for the poor is to start 'from the poor to love all others, inviting them to liberate themselves from the mechanisms of the production of riches on one hand and poverty on the other....' (cited in Twomey, 2005, pp. 26-27).

Thus, since the Medellín Conference in 1968, the phrase 'preferential option for the poor' has become widely used in the Church to indicate the predisposition the Church should have for the poor. Continuing on this spirit-inspiring work, Gustavo Gutierrez, the god-father of Liberation Theology, who popularized the term, 'preferential option for the poor', reflected that the Church is called to be a Church of the poor' (Gustavo Gutierrez; cited in Twomey, 2005, p.10).

Liberation Theology has a great influence in bridging the gap that existed between the rich and poor. Therefore, Hartnett (2003, p.14) noted, 'the term 'preferential option for the poor' comes from the Latin American Church, but the content, the underlying intuition, is entirely biblical. In other words, Liberation Theology tries to deepen the understanding of this core biblical conviction' (cited in Twomey, 2005, p.15). In addition, Pope Francis (2015) affirmed that 'the Church's mission of evangelization has always been accompanied by teaching and the founding of schools,

since education promotes the dignity of the person and provides for the full development of his or her God-given gifts. Illiteracy and lack of access to education are ... a form of poverty and injustice'. Pope Francis equally states: 'Behind this, there is always the ghost of money — always. It seems that only those people or persons who are at a certain level or have a certain capacity have the right to an education'. Furthermore, Pope Francis (2015) warned Catholic schools against being selective but insisted that they 'must work to restore the broken "educational alliance" among families, schools and society, which tends to place profit over people'. In Pope Francis' view, 'this is a shameful global reality that ... leads us toward a human selectivity that, instead of bringing people together, it distances them; it distances the rich from the poor; it distances one culture from another'. In other words, he (Pope Francis) stated that Catholic schools could contribute to building peace in the world when education is provided for 'the poor and the marginalised even if that meant cutting the staff at some of their schools in wealthier neighbourhoods'. This is because the poor youths do not have something that youths from rich neighbourhoods have, not through their fault, but because 'they have the experience of survival, of cruelty, of hunger, of injustice'. It is therefore only human and in tune with the teachings of Jesus Christ, who gave man salvation from his wounds on the cross to help the poor. The next review of the concepts in relation to this study will provide a deeper understanding of the concept of 'Preferential Option for the Poor'.

### **2.3 Conceptual Framework**

The researcher's knowledge as a Catholic nun, and an individual that manages a well-established Catholic school in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria informed the experience that the Catholic schools have a major mandate of educating and helping people to develop well, and particularly to meet the educational needs of the poor and the less-privileged. This awareness is very important as far as research on Catholic education is concerned.

As far as Catholic education in Nigeria is concerned, Freirean theory and practice in education stand to challenge and thereupon serve as a motivator towards 'deeper insights into constructions of power and ... the impulse for people to invent their own identities and realities ... personal and social liberation, both in thought and deed' (Bentley, 1999).

Paulo's conviction is centered on the point that 'critical education is a basic element of social change' (Giroux, 2011, p. 160). Critical education, in the Nigerian education context, is the kind of education that would enable people to think from within (reflexive thinking), to understand their situation and to begin to think about how to make that situation better. This can be linked to the elements of power – negative power and positive power and in 'the notion that one's life has to come as close as possible to modeling the social relations and experiences that spoke to a more humane and democratic future' (Giroux, pp. 160-1). Critical thinking, if thoroughly addressed in Nigerian schools and beginning from Catholic primary and secondary schools precisely, the issues of power and its agency would be minimal and at the same time more expressive. It means that people would be able to make better sense of their environment, situation and experiences in life. This background information therefore paves way for the various concepts reviewed within the purview of this research.

### **2.3.1 'Preferential Option for the Poor' in Theology: Catholic schools and the Principle of 'Preferential Option for the Poor' in Nigeria**

The Catholic educational system in Nigeria dates back to the coming of the missionaries whose main aim was to evangelize the people. Schools were established as a means of achieving this aim. Many people who were enthusiastic to learn the language of the missionaries (English) quickly adjusted to the policy of sending their wards to school. Education basically was not free but contributions came from the missionaries themselves, the government grants and the communities.

Theologically, the aim of Catholic education in Nigeria is to provide an all-round education that will enable children and young people to grow physically, spiritually, morally, intellectually and otherwise. Earlier discussions suggest that Catholic education has been working along the option for the poor long time ago before the disruption by the government takeover of schools in 1975 by the Nigerian government who thought they could manage them better, with the establishment of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Universal Basic Education (UBE) schemes which consequently collapsed after a short time. Table 1 illustrates the existence of Mission schools before 1975.

**Table 1: Ownership and Control of Schools by Voluntary Agencies – 1952**

Missions		Primary Schools	Secondary Schools	Teacher Training
Roman Catholic Mission		1,910	10	21
Church Missionary Society		1,654	10	4
Wesleyan Methodists		356	5	5
Baptist Mission		229	5	5
Church of Scotland Mission		175	2	2

*Source: Ukeje, B.O. (1966). Education for Social Reconstruction Lagos: Macmillan, pp. 55-56; Cited in Ogunu, 1990, p. 67*

Catholic Church in Nigeria owned a total of 1,941 schools by 1952. This was 23 years before the Government take-over of schools. According to the 2012 and 2014 statistical reports on schools, there are 60996 government primary schools, 32862 government secondary schools, 824 Catholic primary schools and 433 Catholic secondary schools in Nigeria. However, one major challenge of the Catholic Church in Nigeria at this point is the inability to subsidise fees for their students unlike the

missionaries who sponsored the schools from their mission countries. Azikiwe (1965, p. 159) points this out in his statement that 'in the past, the backbone of the staffs [sic] of Voluntary Agency Schools were missionaries or missionary trained people who managed with bare existence'.

Some of the actions taken by some Catholic dioceses and schools in Nigeria as ways of maintaining their service to the poor are highlighted thus: 'Some Catholic schools now offer scholarships to students from poor families, for instance, the Loyola Jesuit College at Abuja. Other dioceses continue to provide ... as the need arises or offer scholarships ... [such as] the Bishop Finn Memorial Trust Fund...' (Omolade, 2009, pp. 38-39). On the other hand, apart from the assistance given by some organisations and some individual school charities, Catholic schools in Nigeria are generally understood to be expensive. Omolade (2009, p. 34) shares the same view with the Bishop that represented the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) in this research, Bishop Francis Ikpeme (pseudo names. See appendix D) that Catholic schools in Nigeria 'are beyond the reach of the poor'. However, research findings indicate, and as has been mentioned in this chapter and other parts of this work that 'school fees' is the main source of funding for Catholic schools in Nigeria. This is why it can be sometimes difficult for Catholic schools to subsidise fees for the students. However, some wealthy Catholics have been supporting the education of the poor in Catholic schools, but the support is low compared to the number of those to be educated (Omolade, 2009). This therefore means that if more wealthy are encouraged to give, more children will have access to education. In addition, the Proprietors of Catholic schools in Nigeria are yet to practically implement their theoretical aspirations of establishing foundations or similar organizations that will assist in raising funds for the education of the poor in Catholic schools.

One other view by Omolade (2009, p. 34) is that some of the Catholic schools in Nigeria should be managed by 'lay administrators', but arguing from a Catholic perspective, the benefits of schools managed by Religious Orders far outweigh those

of the 'lay administrators' as far as the 'preferential option for the poor' is concerned. This is so especially where vocation to the Religious Life is still sufficient, with the understanding that fees might be subsidised for children from poorer backgrounds. This view is strongly articulated in Grace (2009, p. 11) on the implication of shortage of Religious men and women in Catholic schools. Grace argues that lack of 'strategic subsidy' leads to 'an inevitable increase in the costs of providing Catholic schooling as more lay people have to be employed at high salary levels. The consequences of this are very serious for Catholic schooling in general but especially for the Church's commitment that 'first and foremost the Church offers its educational services to the poor'. Furthermore, it should also be understood that the lifestyle of a lay person differs in great deal from that of the Religious or Priests and this has its effects on the administration of the school. Azikiwe (1965, p. 160) articulates these effects properly:

The standard of comfort in the homes now varies more widely than ever before. ... those who run our schools...enjoy or aspire to a standard of living higher than that which the average Nigerian enjoys. The new Nigerian elite are demanding a higher standard and those who run schools respond to their prodding, and put up the fees to pay for the extras...:

Although the Catholic Church in Nigeria still records huge vocations to both Religious Life and the priesthood, the problem as mentioned earlier, is how to get funding needed to improve service to the poor. This research will create an awareness of this challenge and its implications and the need for the government and the public to assist Catholic schools as much as possible. There is the question of purchase of forms, which is the first step to gaining access to the Catholic schools in Nigeria, and this also increases the cost of providing Catholic schooling (Grace, 2009). This means by charging certain fees for the purchase of the forms, many children from poor backgrounds could be denied admission. Meanwhile, the emphasis in line with the position of Pope Francis is that students' education should be paramount to the Church (Pope Francis, 2015). The implication of this argument is that if education should be made to be paramount, it means that cost of fees should be waived as well.

Meanwhile, the dioceses in Nigeria are working hard to ensure their schools are reinstated to their normal status of Catholic schools with Catholic character. This, they know, is not an easy task, for obvious reasons. First, considering that the Nigerian Government does not offer financial support to Catholic schools and secondly, the efforts of each school project would have to be doubled so as to practically realize the purpose of the option for the poor. Many children in Nigeria long to attend school but unfortunately, they are not able to because of poverty and this is a major challenge to the Catholic Church in Nigeria. The implication of this is that even children with high academic ability will be denied admission, due to financial inability. However, if the essence of Catholic schooling as repeatedly echoed is to liberate man from poverty in line with the teaching of Jesus Christ, then academic ability of children should also be considered to liberate children of the poor from poverty (Giroux, 2011).

Another worrying issue is that Nigeria is a multi-faith/multi-ethnic developing country. Nigeria is constantly confronted with religious conflicts and other forms of corruption and these have adverse effects on both the Catholic and public education systems. The Catholic schools in Nigeria in particular are in a dilemma of effectively implementing the principle of 'preferential option for the poor' irrespective of their fee-paying policy and lack of government support. There is no uniformity in the tuition fees of the Nigerian Catholic schools, so many of the schools constantly increase their tuition fees according to their needs. This is very problematic with regard to the option for the poor.

However, charity comes into focus in addressing PO. This is seen in the character of some individuals who are good at giving, while some others are not good at charity, no matter how blessed and financially endowed they are. Pope Leo XIII's (1891) emphasis on social charity and Pius XI's (1931) emphasis on helping to change the conditions of the poor. Charity is important because if those that are blessed fail to address the needs of the poor, the poor could rise up against the rich and thus leading to anarchy as posited by Karl Marx. Charity as agreed by Pope Francis (2015) is the

essence of the Church, and therefore extending charity to education by the Church through PO is another way of promoting the teaching of the Catholic Church.

### **2.3.2 Implications of Advantaged Intakes in Catholic Schools in Nigeria**

Many factors have always necessitated the choice of schools by parents for their children. It is these factors that have also led to the choice of Catholic secondary schools by parents because of its religious character. Allen and West (2011, p. 691) have affirmed this point by asserting that parents reported that religious affiliate schools are more likely to ensure that their children/wards have better education, 'have a higher occupational class and a higher household income'. They also stated 'that higher-income religious families are more likely to have a child at a faith school than lower-income religious families'. Further argument advanced was that 'two thirds of children in Roman Catholic schools were from families with a Catholic parent, one fifth had an Anglican parent and others were of other religions or none' (Allen & West, 2011, p. 707). The reason advanced as responsible for having more children from higher social background in Catholic schools is because 'parents from higher social class backgrounds are [perceived to be] better able to negotiate the admissions process and understand how to meet specific admissions criteria' (Allen & West, 2011, p. 708) than parents from poor religious background.

Coldron, Tanner, Finch, Shipton, Wolstenholme and Willis et al. (2008) also looked at another dimension, which is 'social clue' and this suggests that 'parental preferences' are responsible for the differences in choice of religious affiliate schools for children. Moreover, parental affluence also 'principally leads to more advantaged intakes in faith based schools compared with secular schools' (Allen & West 2011, p. 708). There is also the 'moral incentive' in faith schools which attract intakes, and this has to do with lifelong character formation. Hence, 'the most direct

policy to reduce their advantaged intakes would be to require these schools to admit a broader cross-section of pupils from both religious and non-religious backgrounds' (pp. 708-9). The point made by Allen and West, as applied to regions in England is also applicable to Nigeria, which has some apparent implications, which are discussed next:

i. Advantaged intakes will deny the poor a place in Catholic Schools: One argument was that parents from higher social class backgrounds know how best to negotiate admissions process and understand how to meet specific admissions criteria than parents from poor religious backgrounds (Allen & West, 2011). This implies that children from lower social background whose parents are not better negotiators will be denied admission in the Catholic schools.

ii. The essence of Catholic policy on education of the poor could be defeated: The Catholic Church no doubt provides education to liberate the poor (Pope Francis, 2015), but in a situation where there is no definite policy that gives advantage to the poor in the admission process, the essence of Catholic policy on education of the poor could be defeated in the long run. Once this is defected, it therefore means that the teaching of Jesus Christ is not being adhered to and the principle of Liberation Theology is also defeated.

iii. Advantaged intakes would give Catholic schools a character of schools for the high in social backgrounds: The summary of the study of Allen and West (2011) is that the way the Catholic Schools are in favour of advantaged intakes could give the schools a character of schools for those in high social backgrounds. The implication is that once this character is established, it means those in the lower social backgrounds will find it difficult to consider the schools for their children. This will in turn give credit to the study of Coldron *et al.* (2008), which posited that 'parental preferences' for Catholic schools for instance will mean a form of segregation of the children of those high in social backgrounds and those low in social backgrounds (Allen & West 2011).

iv. Admission on the basis of affordability and not merit: There is need for the Catholic Church to consider so many factors in the provision of education in the society. This is because, when Catholic schools become too expensive, it will mean that it is only those who can afford it that will be given admission into Catholic schools in Nigeria. Obodo (2018) is of the view that such acts could overthrow merit, and it will mean a poor individual though intelligent could miss out in terms of admission into Catholic secondary schools based on factor of affordability.

v. 'Segregation of children along social lines': Another observation is that advantaged intakes could bring about 'segregation of children along social lines' (Allen & West, 2011, p. 692). This segregation will also be contrary to the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ that places all men as equal before God. It will also fail to liberate children of the poor from poverty (Giroux, 2011). If this is done, it means the poor will continue to be without quality education.

The greater implication of the five points explained above means that the Catholic Church in Nigeria needs to revisit the Catholic policy on education so as to realign the policy to meet the educational yearning of the poor. This is to ensure that the major aim of the 'preferential option for the poor' is attained.

### **2.3.3 'Preferential Option for the Poor': Some International Perspectives**

One major anxiety or tension which affects the principle of preferential option for the poor in developed and underdeveloped countries is the concern of how to run a system of education that is at the reach of everyone, rich or poor. There is also a general concern as to the extent this educational aim is being fulfilled. Another point of tension is the reduction in the number of Religious men and women staff in the Catholic schools.

According to Smith and Nuzzi (2007, p. 110), there is need for 'dedicated people to continue serving in Catholic schools'. This is pointing at the dedication, commitment and selflessness with which Religious men and women do their work. The

fear is that in today's contemporary society, very few people opt for the Religious or Priestly vocation. It then means that lay people would have to fill in the gaps created by the absence of men and women Religious as principals and other school administrative positions in the Catholic schools. This equally highlights the need to train these lay leaders who would work to maintain the Catholicity ('identity, governance, and administration') of the schools. Another area of tension is the closure of schools as a result of lack of funding for the maintenance of the entire educational system. All these will be discussed in detail in the chapter.

Current challenges include the school fees, funding opportunities, identity and natural disaster. School fees and funding are important elements in any educational establishment and they determine the extent to which education is made available to the rich and the poor. Many countries have issues with fees and funding in one way or the other. For example, the Catholic Independent schools in the UK charge fees, so the Church would have to worry about how schools like these offer opportunities to the poor and not only to the rich. In the same vein, those Catholic schools that charge fees would have to find ways of either accommodating the less-privileged children or subsidise their fees. On Catholic schools' identity, the Catholic Church in some countries would among other challenges be concerned about how to maintain her Catholic identity.

Many researchers from different parts of the world have responded to the invitation for a more systematic study in the field of Catholic schooling by investigating specific aspects of Catholic educational system and the challenges they are facing in the contemporary society. Grace and O'Keefe's work, "*International Handbook of Catholic Education: Challenges for School systems in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*," published in 2007 reviews 'the state of research and systematic analysis in particular fields of educational practice and ... suggest[s] agendas for future research to stimulate and develop the field. ... with specific reference to the international field of Catholic schooling' (p. 1). The 'Preferential Option for the Poor' in this book is first referred to as

'Responding to Vatican II principles of renewal of the mission' (p. 2), and taken to be one of the major issues of the contemporary world that Catholics in their various school mission practice must pay particular attention to. As this issue requires specific and urgent attention, many articles have been drawn from different parts of the world to 'monitor the extent to which these radical commitments to the service of the poor have been realized in the contemporary practice of Catholic schooling systems internationally' (p. 5). As mentioned earlier, research in this field has not always been extensive.

Catholic schools may through research findings re-visit their school policies on admissions/enrolment, staff recruitment and a more focused attention on mission and vision statements for better implementation and richer service; there may be the need to review school fees, maintenance of mission integrity, faith formation and transmission, youth motivation and participation in liturgical celebrations. Research in this area would be 'serving the human person', as Miller (2006) observed (see also Grace, 2007, p. 8). Research of this nature will help the developing countries like Nigeria to learn more from the developed countries like the USA. A study like that of O'Keefe and Scheopner challenges Catholic schools in Nigeria, for example, in understanding that there are challenges everywhere. They posited that these challenges should be addressed by focusing mainly on the original essence of the schools as against attempting to maintain a kind of competition with other similar schools. In the USA, schools manage to survive amidst financial difficulties, reduced enrolment / admission intake, school closures and its threats. As Garrone and Javierre (1977, p. 11) suggested, a systematic scholarly research with an international cross-referencing will not only enable Catholic schools to have the 'identity of a Catholic school ... [but will also give them] the courage to follow all the consequences of its uniqueness' so that work on Catholic education may continue to yield more visible, effective and lasting outcomes (Grace, 2002a, pp. 87-8; Grace & O'Keefe, 2007, pp. 6, 8-10, O'Keefe & Scheopner, 2007, p. 29).

Furthermore, Grace (2009, p. 6) identifies the Catholic educational system as the 'largest faith-based educational mission in the world... [but with] very little systematic scholarship and research...to assist, evaluate and professionally develop this great enterprise as it faces the many challenges of the contemporary world'. It invites researchers to look deeply into the Catholic education for more contributions towards the effective fulfillment of its mission with integrity: 'first and foremost, the Church offers its educational services to the poor' (cited in Grace, 2009, p. 6. see also Martinic & Anaya, 2007, p. 207; Toppo, 2007). This is also articulated in the Sacred Congregation 1977. Grace (2009, p. 11) however, argues that finances have been a general challenge for all Catholic educational missions, linked with decline in the number of 'Religious Orders and teaching brotherhoods' unlike in the past, when Religious Orders provided 'a strategic subsidy'. As this subsidy is fading, and as 'religious ethos and vocational culture of the schools' may be deteriorating, more scholarly research will help to discover alternative sources of support and the best ways to go about it (Grace, 2009, p. 11).

It is fully recognized that Catholic educational provision for the poor varies greatly in each country. It depends upon the ideological and economic conditions and the nature of Church-State relationship. The central commonality is that the Catholic Church has a central policy of providing education for the poor across the countries where Catholic schools operate, but the differences lie in the availability of funds. This defines the variation in terms of involvement of governments. For instance, in some countries in Europe, the government is directly involved in funding of Catholic schools, which defines the ability to provide education to more poor people, whereas in some South American and African countries, the government is not directly involved, which defines the school fees being charged by the Catholic schools and ability to provide education for fewer poor people in their schools in those south American and African countries.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE POOR AND CATHOLIC EDUCATION: INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

#### 3.1 Preferential Option for the Poor in USA

It is imperative to take a comprehensive look at how the concept of preferential option for the poor is being addressed in other countries across the world, so that the lessons therein could be used to address the peculiar situation in Nigeria, especially with regard to how the Catholic Church went about helping the poor in those countries without the much needed government support. For instance, the Catholics went into America 'with the large wave of European immigrants in the latter half of the nineteenth and early-twentieth century' (McLaughlin, *et al.*, 1996, p. 7). However, the United States of America became one of the countries in which Catholic education has shown remarkable records in the education of the poor. This dates back to the early days of 1930s, 1960s and 1970s when vocations to the Priesthood and Religious life flourished and Catholic schools were mainly run by Religious men and women who were more dedicated to their calling to serve God in a special way (Smith & Nuzzi, 2007, p. 109).

These were people of a 'vocational calling' whose commitment to duty did not depend on their salaries but on their desire to please God through their services to others (see also Smith & Nuzzi 2007, pp. 108-9). This dedication of members of Religious Orders is expressed by the principle given by the Belgian Bishops in the 1847 Circulaire (p. 37); to 'make happen that the education of young persons is preferably entrusted to the virgins of the Lord, who are dedicated by status to the education of the youth, and whose devotion is always so pure and so sublime' (in Vanderstraeten, 2007, pp. 527-28), and 'their way of life expresses their dedication to the Church and to the Catholic faith' (Vanderstraeten, 2007, p. 529). Salaries for the Religious would only come into context if the Order has a dire need of them. For example if many of their members are 'old and infirm' and those who remain active are 'forced' 'to request that their full teaching salary be returned to their Order rather than

being mostly contributed back to the school, as in the past' (Bryk *et al.*, 1993, p. 34; McLaughlin, *et al.*, 1996, p. 14).

To further clarify the salaries of the Religious, Bryk *et al.* (1993, p. 347, note 48) highlight that 'in 1987-88 Religious men and women in USA Catholic high schools were paid an average of about \$15,000, about the same salary as a new lay teacher without advanced degrees. This rose from about \$11,000 in 1984.' Part of this detachment from 'wealthy living' is as a result of the vow of poverty taken by Religious men and women. Schools managed by the Religious generally subsidize fees for their students through various means of support from the Orders themselves, dioceses, parishes, donations from the public and government funds. The situation, however, has changed because of the decline in the number of people joining the Priesthood and Religious Life. Research findings record that 'in 1967, Religious Sisters, Brothers and Priests constituted 58 percent of the teachers in USA Catholic elementary and secondary schools. By 1983, this proportion had dropped to 24 percent, and by 1990, it was down to less than 15 percent. ... [Thus] Religious staff in the schools declined from 94,000 in 1967 to 20,000 in 1990, a drop of 79 percent' (NCEA 1990a; in Bryk *et al.*, 1993, pp. 33-34). A more recent research, Cattaro and Cooper (2007, p. 75) give more evidence of a fall in the number of Priests and Religious men and women in the USA, an indication of the distressing condition of the Catholic schools. This is because the fall has made the Church to look outward for more teachers as against the use of Priests who made sacrifices in teaching in the Catholic schools and thus helping to reduce cost of running the schools. This report says that:

Priests declined in numbers by 27% in the period 1965-2005, from 58,632 to 42,528 or a loss of 16,104 in 40 years. Worse for schools was the loss of teaching religious (brothers and sisters), as the number of religious brothers sank from 12,271 in 1965 to only 5,451 brothers in 2005, a decline of 6,820 or 55% in 40 years. But the loss of religious sisters, many of whom had been teachers in Catholic K-12 schools, was most problematic for Catholic schools, dropping from 179,954 sisters in 1965 to just 68,834 in 2005 – a loss of 111,120 or 62%.

The implication was that the reduction in the number of Priests and Religious Sisters in schools would mean that more lay persons would be employed and the effects of this are changes in the lifestyle of the school, beginning from the high salaries of the lay staff of the school to an increase of tuition fees and finally to more drastic effects, that is, school closures (Smith & Nuzzi, 2007, p. 110).

The question is whether Catholic Schools in the USA are private or public? From a general perspective, schools' resort to fee-paying when they cannot receive financial support from the government or other funding bodies and public donations. In the USA, Catholic education is not part of state system, meaning that the USA government does not give financial support to Catholic schools compared to the case in the UK where Catholic schools are mostly voluntary-aided, hence free. Catholic schools in the USA are regarded as 'private' and 'access to such schools is mediated by a fee-paying policy' (Grace 2002a, p. 81). Families, according to Cattaro and Cooper (2007, pp. 62-63) are 'not guarantee[d] ... public subsidies for their children's education; thus, private education ... became dependent on tuition and subsidies from a variety of faith-based sources, i.e., families, churches, charities, and donations through fund-raising'.

Wallace (2006) points to the subsequent decline in the percentage of parish financial support to Catholic schools such that 'in 1969, parishes subsidized 63% of Catholic school costs, by 2000 parish subsidies were only 38% of the cost' and 'between 2002 and 2005 financial giving to the Church had decreased by 10%, making it more difficult for parishes to subsidize Catholic schools' ('Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate'; cited in O'Keefe & Scheopner 2009, p. 22). Catholic schools in some urban areas like 'Detroit, Michigan East Catholic High, as Cattaro and Cooper point out, serve 'low-income minorities almost exclusively... Nearly 75% of its students go to college after graduation, and only 15% of the parents paying the \$2,000 tuition fee are Catholic' (Cattaro & Cooper 2007, pp. 72-73). Thus, according to research findings, some of these Catholic schools in inner-cities survive only by 'funded

scholarships'. The effects of these are that some students drop out of school when their parents cannot afford the fees (US Department of Education 2005; in O'Keefe & Scheopner, 2009, p. 16), and school closure becomes an option when a school can no longer cope with acute financial difficulties and its effects. Grace (1998c) notes the loss of the 'strategic subsidy' thus: "Religious Orders in inner-city schooling have represented a 'strategic subsidy' in the 'option for the poor' educational mission. Religious Orders and teaching orders have provided spiritual, cultural and economic capital for poor communities....' (cited in Grace 2002a, p. 87).

The issue of 'strategic subsidy' by Grace is further confirmed by Cattaro and Cooper (2007, p. 64) when they point out that 'the number of Religious (priests, brothers, and sisters) was at its highest, allowing schools to offer qualified teachers at minimal costs, meaning that most children in the 1940s and 1950s attended their parish school free of charge, with tuition being collected in the Sunday collection, plus help from wealthier families'. Today, the story is different. The question is now: 'How does the fee-paying policy affect the USA Catholic schools' service to the poor and how do they deal with the issue? The fee-paying policy has so many implications but I will limit my first discussion on the issue of enrolment, followed by school closures as would be seen below.

It is worth mentioning that many people in the USA live in the urban area and '51% of these children' are from poor backgrounds, 'yet the public schools in this area record high enrollments but with low achievement' (Ludwig *et al.*, 2001; O'Keefe *et al.*, 2004; Berliner, 2005; in O'Keefe & Scheopner, 2007, p. 16-18). Despite all the efforts to increase facilities and financial support, students' enrolment is still a major and serious issue for the American Catholic schools. Other challenges linked to the enrollment issue include child abuse cases and the Church's conservative stance on the legality of abortion and gay marriage in the United States. Issues like these attract hatred from the public who ordinarily would support the Church financially and otherwise (Cattaro & Cooper, 2007, p. 74) in addition to the decline in church

attendance to which the issues mentioned are likely contributors. These challenges in one way or another contribute to low enrollments because many people who do not attend the churches or have nothing to do with them would likely find it difficult to send their children to Catholic schools; and when a school begins to have very low enrollment records without any hope of survival, the nearest alternative is closure.

O'Keefe's (1996) research on 'the pattern and pace of Catholic school closings in poor urban communities during the 1990s' (Grace 2002a, pp. 87-88) reveals the deteriorating nature of the Catholic educational mission regarding the 'preferential option for the poor.' Similar findings have been highlighted by Bryk *et al.* (1993, p. 337) that 'despite often heroic efforts by individual Catholic religious and lay people, inner-city Catholic schools are closing at an alarming rate. This trend, first noticed in the late 1960s, shows no sign of abating' (see also O'Keefe & Scheopner, 2007, pp. 15-35). The position is that since the Catholic schools in the USA are fee-paying, it means that the schools would have to find ways of dealing with the problem of admitting students from poorer families. Bryk *et al.* (1993) give elaborate instances of how the seven Catholic schools used in their study tried to maintain their future and commitment to their mission to the poor, though one of the schools, St Francis, 'unfortunately' did not survive the 1980s due to huge debt of \$750,000 it accumulated and had to be closed down in 1988 (pp. 330-33). According to their study, St. Edwards

Has made a major commitment to a financial aid program, and about a quarter of all students receive some assistance. ...[its] current fiscal priorities include building an endowment to stabilize tuition costs ... and extending the resources for financial aid that currently limit the number of disadvantaged families who have access to the school (pp. 329-30).

In St Richard's school, 'a student assistance program awarded \$100,000 in financial aid' so as to reduce tuition fees that had risen by '150 percent' within nine years (p. 330). The next school in Bryk *et al.*'s (1993) study is Bishop O'Boyle. The school was known for its expensiveness but had initiated 'a small financial aid program'

and with the help of 'grants from several foundations', studying in this school would be at a reasonable cost (p. 331).

Saint Cornelius' school has a development office and 'receives about \$50,000 in Ohio State funds for 'mandated educational services'. Donations come from corporations, foundations, alumni, and individual donors'. These are:

... A diocesan inner-city school fund provides some aid, and a ... weekly Bingo program ... Several Sisters of Notre Dame have joined the faculty, helping to keep costs down because of reduced salaries. ... In 1990-91, the school distributed over \$130,000 in scholarship aid, and it is seeking additional funds to expand access to the school for disadvantaged students (p. 331).

According to Bryk *et al.*,

Despite Saint Madeline's migration of its traditional clientele to the suburbs...chose to remain in Los Angeles and to serve an increasingly non-Catholic and nonwhite population... Although many inner-city schools did close, both dioceses and individual religious orders allocated their human and fiscal resources disproportionately toward keeping these institutions open. Deserting the poor and serving a more affluent clientele would be a counter-witness to the gospel (p. 52).

Saint Madeline's further devised a work program whereby students' tuition fees are 'partially' discharged when students and their parents help out in the school. Available in St Madeline's school also, is 'a financial aid program [which] ... distributes over \$100,000 annually to one-third of the students' (p. 332) and the presence of the twelve Religious Sisters, four of whom are teachers and eight assisting in various areas of the school. As pointed out by Bryk *et al.*, St Madeline's 'provides a safe haven for girls in a troubled part of the city and affords productive life chances to some who otherwise might not have them' (p. 332).

The point is that each of these schools in the study have its own challenges, but each devised positive way to move on and to accommodate all students except for St Francis mentioned earlier. A school like St Peter's was seen by the Principal as 'continuously struggling' and had despite not receiving any 'financial support from the bishop ... been sustained over the last decade by grants of almost half a million dollars

from local foundations' (pp. 332-33). However, though the school recorded high tuition cost, it was surviving due to the hard work of some of the members. Another strategy used by the Nativity model schools according to Cattaro and Cooper (2007, p. 73) involves:

Opening the path to new forms of Catholic education to meet the needs of urban America. These schools do not receive governmental or diocesan subsidy to aid their operation. Unlike more traditional Catholic urban schools that charge fees to meet their expenses, Nativity model schools are essentially tuition free. ... [Their] funding ... is provided by individual donors and organizations.

The Nativity model schools are originally known for their educational services to the 'underprivileged youth' which is clearly stated in the footnote as 'elements' of the schools: 'For students of low-income urban families who would not otherwise have access to such an education....' (Cattaro & Cooper, 2007, p. 74). This, in other words, is an example of 'Preferential Option for the Poor', in new challenging conditions.

Catholic schools in the urban areas apply the system of 'free-or reduced-lunch for some of the students' (O'Keefe *et al*, 2004, p. 19; in O'Keefe & Scheopner, pp. 18-19; 2009, p. 17). In addition, to accommodate the educational needs of the poor, the urban Catholic schools embark on various activities such as 'increase in non-tuition income, including donations from individuals and community businesses. ...increases in grants received' (O'Keefe *et al.*, 2004; in O'Keefe & Scheopner, 2007, p. 20) together with such schemes like 'donations, grants, and development monies for the school' which are sought out by the development officers who also

'operate separately from fund-raising efforts, which...provide minimal supplementary funds for the school....events such as capital campaigns...cluster organization...Prekindergarten programs ... [and] day programs...monitoring for...beginning teachers and... partnership with other Catholic institutions...'. (cited in O'Keefe & Scheopner, 2007, pp. 20-21).

These charitable activities are possible where the principle of solidarity abounds. In this case then, schools like the Vincent Gray Alternative High School in the East St Louis, which Oldenski (1997) has identified as portraying 'the qualities and

dynamic characteristics of Catholic education ...' (cited in Grace 2002a, p. 89) work in harmony. O'Keefe (1996, p. 160) has equally argued that communities can always overcome some problems if solidarity exists amongst them (cited in Grace, 2002a, p. 88), thus, implying that schools in the USA implementing the principle of solidarity may survive amidst challenges. What is particularly interesting here is that Catholic schools are urged by their Bishops to ensure that children gain admission into the schools no matter the financial background of their parents (O'Keefe & Scheopner, 2009, p. 23). This is stated clearly in the policy that 'Catholic schools should not abandoned [sic] their assurance to urban populations and therefore the educational needs of many poor families'. The Church's mission to the poor is further supported by 3,237 Catholic schools or '43.2% of their population in inner city or urban environments' as Cattaro and Cooper's (2007, p. 77) record indicates.

### **3.2 Preferential Option for the Poor in Australia**

Another study shows that in the 2001 census in Australia, the percentage of people who nominated themselves as Catholics was 26.6% (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2005; in Pascoe, 2007, p. 787), compared to the 20.7% Anglican, 25.6 of other religions, 15.5% with no religious affiliation and the remaining 12.6% that was not sufficiently identified. These statistics make Catholics 'the largest religious group' in the country in contrast to the time when Anglicans had the highest number of people with 39.7% against 22.7% Catholics (Pascoe, 2007, p. 787).

Pascoe (2007, p.792) equally reveals that the Catholic Church in Australia is committed to a 'Preferential Option for the Poor' 'within health, education, and all of its services' and it is noteworthy that the education system there has 'common values and principles, agreed distribution of funding within the system on the basis of need, geographic coverage across the continent, socio-economic coverage across income groups and cultural coverage across ethnic groups'. According to Croke (2007, p. 812),

Australian Catholic schools are essentially funded by three sources: Australian government grants (53% of annual recurrent income), State government grants (varies from state to state but 19% on average) and tuition fees charged to parents (20%). The Australian government also provides capital grants for building of new Catholic schools and refurbishing of other schools ... The main source of capital funding is loans, which are repaid by parental and church resources. Some states, for instance NSW [New South Wales], also provide a subsidy on the interest paid for the school buildings.

What might be responsible for the uniform system of funding? What is the status of the Catholic education system in Australia? The question also posed is whether Catholic schools in Australia are private or public? The relationship between the Australian Catholic schools and the Government shows clearly that Catholic education operates in a dual system, (like the UK Catholic education system but with significant differences) whereby the Catholic schools are part of the state system as well as the independent system. That is why the Catholic schools share in the government's 'funding strategies' and other state affairs. However, though receiving some state-funding since the 1970s, Australian Catholic schools can, and do, and have to charge fees unlike the UK. Pascoe (2007, p. 808) testifies to the 'mix of federal and state funding which has enabled comprehensive provision of Catholic education in Catholic primary and secondary schools across the country.' This is remarkable especially when the contributions of the Catholic schools to the community are evident in the 'democratic institutions and civic virtues' (Pascoe 2007, p. 808), and as of 2005. many states in Australia were looking closely at their fee policies to review and to make sure poorer people are given opportunities in Catholic schools.

The dual educational system is equally seen in the early years of the Casimir College in Australia, when the school not only enjoyed the funding from the Congregations but that of the government right from the 'early 1970s' and according to Luttrell (2000, p. 147), the school is 'predominantly funded by the Australian and state governments. ... [and] forms part of the community of schools whose management and development are supported by the Archdiocesan Catholic Education Office' (cited in Croke, 2007, p. 811). Indigenous Australians are also beneficiaries of the government

funding. As of 2007, there were '11,554 indigenous students in Australian Catholic schools. From 2004 to 2005 the number grew by 1.7%, which was higher than overall enrolment growth from 2004 to 2005 of 1.1%' (Croke, 2007, p. 821). Very importantly is the use of 'evidence-based (or data-driven) approaches to improving educational outcomes' through such expertise like the 'International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement (ICSEI) and the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE)' (Pascoe, 2007, p. 800).

Apart from the combined funding strategies of the Catholic Church and the government, it is important to know precisely what the Church does in practice towards the option for the poor. It is imperative to state that the Catholic Church in Australia has embarked on various projects and activities to enable effective service to the poor. The 'Investing in the School Programs' (small grants for capital projects in schools) ... [as well as] the 'Literacy Voucher' programme and proposals to extend the voucher model to students with disabilities' (Croke, 2007, p. 816) are further contributions of the Catholic schools to the community. Resembling this is the scheme whereby 'families who hold a Commonwealth Health Card (i.e., unemployed or on some but not all pensions) are charged an annual tuition fee of \$800 per secondary student and \$120 per primary student... and sibling discounts... [given to] families...[with] more than one child enrolled at the school' (Pascoe, 2007, p. 797). The implication of the scheme is that it enables more poor children to have access to free education because the additional fees charged takes care of the needs of the poor.

The optimism with which the Queensland Bishops in Australia plan within 1998-2001 to achieve what was meant to be 'a strong Catholic identity and to give witness to Christian values ... [and] be a community of care and right relationships...' (Pascoe, 2007, p. 792; Croke, 2007, p. 825), and making this possible through 'ongoing staff formation' is a necessary step towards the achievement of the targeted Catholic identity and something worth mentioning.

Another important feature of the Catholic Church in Australia is the yard stick they are using to 'measure the Catholicity of their schools' (p. 793) – by ensuring proper adherence to the specific school's vision and mission statements which serve as the school's indicators of the expected character, identity and intentions. On the other hand, their worry will no longer be on what workable plans they need to make or how to plan for proper realization and adherence to the identity and character of Catholic school, rather the issue will be on the implementation of their agreed strategies and policies in addition to 'inclusion and the parent-school partnership ... a critical mass of Catholic students to maintain the Catholic identity of the school and the belief that Catholic schools should be demonstrably Catholic to account to government for public expenditure on the operation of Catholic schools' (Croke, 2007, p. 818).

However, what seems very problematic in the Australian situation is the subsequent decline in enrollments 'from 23.6% in 1991 to 22.2% in 2002' probably as a result of low Mass attendance of about 16% (Pascoe, p. 792). This is a major issue because this percentage of people who attend Mass is likely to gain priority over matters of admission against those who do not attend. Students from poorer backgrounds experience difficulty in accessing Catholic schools because in some cases, the schools are not locally available coupled with the cost of school fees and the social attributes of the Catholic schools in Australia (Pascoe p. 796; Croke, 2007, p. 819).

In Australia, there is close collaboration between the Catholic Church and the government but in spite of this, Catholic schools are not easily accessible by the poorer class. Furthermore, research findings by the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) on 'the affordability of Catholic schools explain the intensity of this situation: 'Catholic children from lower income families are less likely to attend Catholic primary or secondary schools. ... the proportion of students in Catholic schools receiving the Education Maintenance Allowance declined in the period under study ... fees had

increased faster than average weekly earnings....' (Centre for the Economics of Education and Training, 2004, p. 796).

However, within the year, the 'State Catholic Education Commissions [which] comprise [of] diocesan, education, and community representatives ... are accountable for the \$6.9 billion funding' (Pascoe 2007, p. 788), indicating some 'agreed distribution of funding within the system on the basis of need' (Pascoe 2007, p. 792). Moreover, each diocese caters for the Catholic schools within the diocese and the schools operate an 'inclusive education' (Pascoe 2007, p. 794). Part of what makes this possible is the support the Australian Catholic schools receive from both federal and state governments as earlier explained. The next review dwells on Catholic education in Europe.

### **3.3 Preferential Option for the Poor in United Kingdom**

Studies by Centre for Economics of Education and Training shows that most Catholic schools, like other faith schools, in the United Kingdom are State-maintained, with the government contributing 90% of the capital costs (Gallagher, 2007, p. 250) and so are voluntary aided, hence, non-fee-paying. They are supported by the government since 1870 when the dual system of education started (Gallagher, 2007, p. 256). Precisely, government support for Catholic education in England and Wales began in 1847, according to McLaughlin *et al.* (1996, p. 4), when the Catholic Poor School Committee received a government grant for founding of Catholic schools. From this point, the number of Catholic schools grew with the elementary schools generally a direct concern of the Bishop and the secondary schools that of the Religious Congregations.

It is worth noting at this time that Catholic education for the poor and the support given to them dates back to the origin of the schools: 'Pioneers of Catholic elementary education set up schools for educating and clothing apprenticing poor Catholic children' (McLaughlin *et al.*, 1996, p. 4). The partnership between the Catholic

Church and the State was completely marked by the 1944 Educational Act (p. 5). Later, some of the Catholic schools were encouraged to become 'Grant Maintained schools', by the 1988 Educational Act which gave them more access to government funding. All the costs of the 'Grant Maintained' Catholic schools were met from the public purse while those 'with Local Education Authorities had all running costs and 85 per cent of capital costs covered by public funds'. Thus, of all the Catholic schools, 92 per cent are in the public sector.

However, the freedom given to Catholic schools through government funding opportunities has its limitations which the Catholic bishops frowned upon, because the 'alliances create a serious conflict between Catholic teachings on solidarity with the poor and the radical individualism inherent in most choice schemes' (p. 12). This implies that the various 'schemes' through which the government supports the Catholic schools, might lead people into being attracted to choosing lifestyles that are at variance with the Church's teachings on supporting and associating with the poor; and in another way, may result in a misinterpretation of their identity as Catholics.

However, the Catholic independent schools charge fees in the UK. The question is how these independent schools deal with the 'preferential option for the poor' since it is through tuition fees and probably donations from sources such as the public, that the schools get their financial support and main source of funding. Moreover, the essence of the provision of affordable education by the Catholic Church to the poor is to keep the gospel of Jesus Christ (Christian faith) alive. However, one basic challenge in the UK is how to make such education available for children from target poor families. The answer to this could be seen in the presence of some voluntary aided Catholic schools that admit students from all backgrounds (Grace 2002a; 2002b).

Enrollment is not financially a problem unlike the USA where Catholic schools operate without government support and have to depend on tuition fees and donations. As it has already been noted, some USA Catholic schools face school closures

because of very poor enrollments. For Catholic schools in the UK, government support is a privilege and McLaughlin *et al.* (1996, p. 1) capture this well:

In England and Wales... Catholic schools enjoy considerable support from public funds in a way inconceivable in the United States. Contrary to the USA Catholic education situation, the admission records of Catholic schools in the UK are impressive considering that admission is given from amongst the 'poorer, more deprived families and across the ability range (Education in Roman Catholic Schools, OFSTED 2003; cited in Gallagher, 2007, p. 251).

Catholic schools have been praised for their system of admitting children from other faiths when space permits. Trevor Philips, the then Chair of Commission for Racial Equality, in his September 2005 speech to the Manchester Council for Community Relations, appreciates the Catholic schools by considering them

to be far more mixed than local authority schools. A healthy mix might be a school with a proportion of ethnic minority pupils somewhere between 5% and 40% ...But amongst Catholic schools, a third (32.5%) would fit this description (Gallagher, 2007, p. 256).

The mission to the poor has been in practice from the early years of Catholic education in England and Wales considering that the first Synod of the Province of Westminster declared that the foremost task is to satisfactorily provide education as needed by all people and urged that schools must be available in preference to other projects. Grace (2002a, p. 9) termed this policy, 'a necessary option for the poor', which existed in England prior to the Second Vatican Council in 1962-1965 as 'internal mission ... to provide religious, personal and educational formation for the children of the Catholic poor in elementary schools of reasonable quality' (Grace 2002a, pp. 9-10). A clear and necessary emphasis is worth making here that at this time (1847-1906), England already had in existence an educational committee – 'the Catholic Poor School Committee, the forerunner of the contemporary Catholic Educational Service' (Grace, 2002a, p. 9; Gallagher, 2007, p. 246) that served as a driving force in their educational service to the poor even before the dawn of the Second Vatican Council's principle of 'Preferential Option for the Poor' (1962-1965).

By 1852, the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales declared as their priority 'a sufficient provision of education for the wants of the poor... we should prefer the erection of a school ... to that of building a church without a school' (Grace 2002a, p. 8, Gallagher 2007, pp. 250 & 260). England at this time too, had many poor in the country, hence, the need for the option and the *mission of universal access* (Grace 2002a, pp. 9-10). Cardinal Manning, the Archbishop of Westminster (1865-1892) and a pioneer advocate of the Roman Catholic social justice, according to Roberts, was instrumental for the 'range of social institutions' that were available not only for the poor, but also the 'destitute and handicapped in human society' (Roberts, 1996; cited in Grace, 2002a, p. 10). As one of the means of facilitating the 'mission of universal access', Catholic grammar schools – 'free secondary education', were made available for talented Catholic children (for 'leadership formation'), and from this, more educational opportunities for much lower classes were established (see Grace, 2002a, p. 10).

### **3.4 The Case of the Republic of Ireland**

The Catholic Church in the Republic of Ireland operates both primary and secondary schools. For instance, the secondary schools belong to the second level which has four distinct school types: (1) secondary schools, (2) vocational schools and community colleges, (3) comprehensive schools, and (4) community schools (Drudy & Lynch, 1993, pp. 6-7). Out of the 792 second-level schools, 476 (60% of the 792) are secondary schools and 'are owned and managed by religious bodies affiliated to the Catholic Church', 253 of the 476 secondary schools 'are owned by female religious orders and 136 by male religious orders, with 7 amalgamated schools run by more than one religious order....28 are owned by the diocesan authorities. Protestant denominations own 22...one Jewish ... school, a German school, and 28 schools owned by lay Catholics' (Secretariat of Secondary Schools, 1992, in Drudy & Lynch, 1993, p. 7).

The Catholic education in the Republic of Ireland is both private and state system since all of them though privately owned, 'receive state funds' (Drudy & Lynch, 1993, p. 7) in one way or another. Simply put, the system is 'state-aided ... rather than a state-owned.... They receive state support in respect of capital expenditure, teacher salaries, and running costs' (Tuohy, 2007, p. 269). Majority of students do not pay school fees (OECD Report 1991; in Grace, 2002a, p. 108).

However, the idea of the school fees policy in the context of the 'preferential option for the poor' sounds problematic and is judged by Drudy and Lynch (1993) as incongruous with the status of Catholic schools in the Republic of Ireland, more so, from the point of view of the Church's commitment to the poor. In their own words, Drudy and Lynch (1993, p. 86) write: 'The Churches themselves are key institutions in the upholding of fee-paying secondary schools, which fits uneasily with their claim that their primary concern is for the poor and underprivileged'.

It is important to note that at the time Religious Congregations had the personnel and resources to run the schools, the schools were in one way or the other managed according to "the characteristic spirit" of the founders of the schools, meaning that they were 'conscious of the gospel mandate to preach the gospel, even in unfavourable or hostile conditions. ...To date ... the Congregations are committed to preserving Catholic education as a strong, viable option within the national system' (Tuohy, 2007, p. 269). This is clearly stating that the Congregations managing the schools must have subsidised fees for poor students just as other Religious Congregations did in other developed countries like Australia; (Croke, 2007, p. 811); England; (Grace, 2002a, p. 69); United States (O'Keefe & Scheopner, 2007, p. 29). Resembling this, is the statement by Bishop Anthony Fisher, the Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney, Australia to Catholic secondary schools in NSW that: 'If an option for the poor is a crucial purpose of the Catholic school – and certainly that was the mind of most of the founder religious, priests and parishioners who built up our schools – then our under-representation amongst the poor is a real problem ...' (Croke, 2007, p. 825).

It is imperative to note that many schools in the Republic of Ireland later became free and more accessible through the government's 'grant in lieu of fees'. This was an attractive innovation and many Religious Congregations joined the scheme while some other schools in Dublin remained outside the scheme and maintained their fee-charging policy, thus giving rise to 'a two-tier system of education' (Tuohy 2007, p. 276). The same research by Tuohy in 2007 records 57 fee-paying schools in the voluntary sector between 2002-2003, and that out of '380 Catholic schools 34 were fee-paying, 28 of them in the Dublin area. Of the 24 non-Catholic schools 23 were fee-paying ...' Table 2 illustrates the fee-paying education:

**Table 2: The Percentage of Students in the different Schools That Attend fee-paying schools.**

	Nationally		Dublin Area	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Total Schools	9.2%	6.4%	21.0%	17.1%
All Voluntary	17.4%	11.3%	37.4%	28.6%
Catholic Voluntary	12.3%	6.6%	29.5%	21.6%
†Difference between 'All Voluntary' and 'Catholic Voluntary'	5.1%	4.7%	7.9%	7.0%

*Copied from Tuohy (2007, p. 276).*  
†My addition.

Table 2 shows that there are more fee-paying schools in Dublin area and generally concentrating on boys. According to Tuohy, 'many Catholics attend the fee-paying non-Catholic schools' (Tuohy 2007, p. 276). This, therefore, invites more research to identify reasons why Catholics would choose the fee-paying non-Catholic schools instead of the Catholic schools. Research is also required to investigate how the 34 fee-paying Catholic schools deal with the option for the poor. What would be the

fate of students who may not be able to pay the fees at certain point of their education?  
Are there subsidies for children from poorer families?

One other thing worthy of mention here is the effect of the free education. This scheme attracted many people into the secondary education, people who were not academically at a high level. However, the solution to this immediate challenge was an establishment of a pastoral care initiative, designed to assist students; and as part of the work of the Religious Congregations, 'especially those that were founded in a philanthropic paradigm to deal with the poorer sections of society', as an opportunity to improve on their educational mission.

The report of the second OECD (1991) brought a lot of benefits into education which helped to improve the assistance given to less-privileged children and children with special educational needs. Parents also got more involved in the educational system, thus creating better awareness of the entire needs of the society with mutual understanding and tolerance.

The similarities and differences in the context of how preferential option is being addressed in some selected developed countries will suffice at this point to give a clearer picture of how PO is being addressed in those countries. For instance, in terms of their similarities, Catholic schools have more government funding for Catholic schools in Australia, United Kingdom and Ireland, implying that the schools are able to provide free education to more children from poor homes (Drudy & Lynch, 1993). Similarly, in USA, Australia, UK, and Ireland, the Catholic schools still deal with the issue of PO through subsidies to the children of the less privileged from funds sourced from Religious Orders, dioceses, parishes, donations from the public, faith-based sources, i.e., families, Churches, charities, and through fund-raising. This means the Church obtains additional funds from similar sources. Furthermore, in Australia, United Kingdom and Ireland, there is a funding strategy of the Catholic schools, which include government massive involvement in those Catholic schools that are still exclusively

Catholic (Croke, 2007). This shows government commitment to the education of the poor in Catholic schools in these countries.

In looking at their differences, the American government does not give financial support to Catholic schools in the United States of America, as the schools are regarded as private and access is by fee-paying policy. The effect of non-government funding in the US is that some students drop out of school when their parents cannot afford the fees (Cattaro & Cooper, 2007). This leaves the schools solely at the mercy of the Catholic Church to fend for the poor. The Catholic education in the Republic of Ireland is quite different from that of the United States of America in the sense that many schools in the Republic of Ireland (Catholic schools inclusive) became free and more accessible through the government's 'grant in lieu of fees' (Tuohy 2007, p. 276). Moreover, the report of the second OECD (1991) brought a lot of benefits into education which helped to improve the assistance given to less-privileged children. Only Dublin remained outside the scheme and maintained their fee-charging policy, thus giving rise to 'a two-tier system of education', public and private, where Catholic schools belong, but children from the poor enjoy a measure of subsidy.

Additionally, in Australia, Catholic schools are essentially funded by federal and state governments' grants, as well as through provision of capital grants for building of new Catholic schools and refurbishing of other schools through loans, which are repaid from parental and church resources. In spite of the funding arrangement, Catholic schools are not easily accessible by the poorer class in Australia (Croke, 2007). The United Kingdom differs from the Australian system in the sense that majority of the Catholic schools are funded from the public purse. However, the Catholic independent schools charge fees in the UK, and are mainly for elite classes so as to make education unavailable for children from poor families (Gallagher, 2007). These marked similarities and differences define the extent of provision of education to the poor in these reviewed developed countries.

### **3.5 Empirical Evidence of the International Implementation of the ‘Preferential Option for the Poor’ in the Developing Countries**

Some developing countries have also been empirically reviewed below to show how ‘preferential option for the poor’ is being implemented by the Catholic Church in those countries.

#### **3.5.1 Preferential Option in Brazil**

The education in Brazil around the 1920s and beyond underwent series of disputes between the Church and the State particularly on the issues of control and teaching of Religious Education in the public schools. According to Beozzo (1993, p. 69), Catholic schools at the time were:

More directed to the elite, [and] stood out because of the quality of their teaching... They also had a good structure in terms of services and equipment. In 1958, 80% of the high school students in Brazil were enrolled at Catholic schools. This education had to be paid for and could only be afforded by the middle and high classes in a country where the great majority of the population was illiterate. (cited in Streck & Segala, 2007, p. 174).

The implication of this is that only the rich could afford Catholic education, thereby creating an obstacle towards an effective commitment in their service to the poor. Moreover, the instability in the schools and the conflicts between the Latin American Church and the State had its negative effects on the Religious Orders at the time such that with the reduction in their number, some of their schools closed down, thus, increasing the school fees (Beozzo, 1993, p. 69; cited in Streck & Segala 2007, p. 175).

One basic feature of the Catholic schools is the provision of better teaching to the pupils/students than other schools, as well as inculcation of moral standards in the students, as this helps to promote the dignity of the person and provides full development of God’s given potentials (Pope Francis, 2015). This could be attributed to

moral standing of the Church, considerable funding, use of qualified and committed teachers, who are majorly from Religious Orders, strong community relationship with the schools. This is one of the motivations that make wealthier and more influential parents to get their children into Catholic schools and by so doing paying more to continue to promote standard and helping of more children from poor homes (Drudy & Lynch, 1993). It is therefore imperative to state that the standard of the Catholic schools varies from country to country. For instance, there can never be the same standard of schools in countries where there is government involvement in funding of Catholic schools compared to countries where there is no such funding. However, the Catholic schools try to maintain a minimum standard across board, which obtains in the countries, where Catholic Church operates Catholic schools, since the Church has common education policy irrespective of the country, they operate in.

People generally suffered gravely for their faith as Dussel (1992, p. 142) narrates:

The most glorious epopee in the history of the Church in Latin America took place then, an epopee that can be compared to the persecutions in the early church and was experienced with the same "spirit." Thousands of Catholics and Protestants, hundreds of priests, members of religious orders, dozens of bishops were persecuted, many of them were tortured and a significant number of them were "martyred" ... because of their commitment to the poor. (cited in Streck & Segala, 2007, p.170).

In the contemporary reality, education is more liberal than before when funding was only provided for the public schools (Dussel 1992; cited in Streck & Segala, 2007, p.171). People now see more meaning into education following the initiatives of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). In addition, the advent of the new era in the life of the Catholic Church from the reforms of the Second Vatican Council initiated a 'different way of being in the Church' (Streck & Segala, p. 165) and making the 'preferential option for the poor' 'a real turning point in Catholic education ... [establishing new] Church ... principles, goals, contents, methods, and practices determined by the approach of an evangelical-liberating education (CNBB, 1986)....'

(Streck & Segala, p. 175). It is also this new education that has directed the Latin Americans to the real search for their identity and to the new idea of commitment to the poor. The Conferences by Latin American Catholic Bishops in Medellin (CELAM, 1969), Puebla (CELAM, 1979) and the CNBB, (1986a, b), made this transforming movement possible. The proposal from the conference in Puebla indicates a collective fight against injustice and poverty and the beginning of new life:

(a) To humanize and personalize human beings, in order *to create in them the place* where the *Good News* of the Father's saving design in Christ and his church can be revealed and heard.

(b) To exercise the *critical function* inherent to true education, seeking to permanently regenerate, from the angle of education, the cultural principles and norms of social interaction that make it possible to create a new society that is truly participative, i.e., education for justice.

(c) To *turn the educatee* into the subject of his/her own development and to put him/her at the service of the community's development: education for service (CELAM, 1979, p. 288; cited in Streck & Segala, 2007, p. 171).

It is therefore important that education should meet people in their real-life situations if this education is to bring about the transformation that is expected.

### **3.5.2 Preferential Option in Peru**

Studies show that between 1532 and 1821 (the colonial times to the Peruvian independence), most schools were managed by the Church and formal education like in many African countries in their colonial times too, particularly Nigeria, was made available for only male children, but in the Peruvian context, private lessons were provided for upper class women in the convents (Klaiber, 2007, p. 183). This simply means that education existed in Peru as early as the 1530s, but was accessible only to the wealthy Spaniards (in effect, the colonials) as indicated by Klaiber (2007, p. 183) who articulates that there were 'two schools for the sons of Indian chieftains run by the

Jesuits in Lima and Cuzco. After independence (1821), the state set up an educational system which barely touched the countryside. Certain colonial religious orders provided some education in schools alongside their monasteries....' Since research shows that the Catholic Church in Peru has always provided schools for the poor (Klaiber, p. 186), the next is to find out the extent to which these schools are serving the interests of the poor. Religious Orders such as:

The French Sacred Heart Sisters (1848), the Jesuits (Colegio La Inmaculada) ... 1878 ... the ... [male] religious of the Sacred Heart (La Recoleta) ... 1893 ... the Salesians, the Marists, the Brothers of La Salle ... the Dominican Sisters of the Immaculate Conception ... the Franciscans of the Immaculate Conception ... (Klaiber, 2007, p. 183)

These Religious Orders were known for building schools and monasteries during the colonial times (1532-1821). This also confirms Klaiber's (2007, p. 183) point that Religious Orders manage 'many of the best middle- and upper-class secondary schools in Lima and other principal cities'. This too has its own implications with regard to the option for the poor. Positively, these Religious Orders provided the people with subsidies and state financial and moral support (p. 184). The Church's collaboration with the State has great impact in upholding their (Religious Orders) mission integrity and service to the poor. State fund is made available for the transformation of Catholic education and parishes as well as Religious Orders are now able to open schools that can be accessed by children from poorer backgrounds such that:

... in the decade of the 1950s there were 497 schools run by the church in Peru. But with the influx of state aid fund through National Office of Catholic Education, the number jumped to 1,051 by 1971. Of that number, 341 were completely free and 626 semi-free schools ... [and that] before the educational reform of 1972 more than two-thirds of Catholic schools received state aid.... (pp. 186-87).

The establishment of Fey Alegria ("Faith and Joy") in Peru from 1966 by José Maria Velaz, a Jesuit priest, and the progress the project made in Peru within 39 years: '64 urban schools, 97 rural schools, and two higher institutions for technical training, with a total of over 75,000 students' (p. 187), is a huge step to the enhancement of Catholic education in Peru, while 'an agreement

with the state assumes in part the cost of running the schools ... paying the teachers' salaries. [while] The Jesuits, with the aid of benefactors and the donated work time of the parents of the children, build the school itself' (p. 187).

The fact that the schools were being managed in 'practice' by Religious men and women – the Jesuits and women from other Religious Congregations, gives a sense of satisfaction and a complete orientation for the students on faith and spirituality of the Catholic Church, but more specifically the ideals of the Jesuits Congregation – 'the promotion of faith and justice'. This simply indicates 'a model of quality education for the poor' (p. 188). Though Peru has some significant poverty issues particularly in the field of education and as Klaiber (2007, p. 181) explains that it was in 2005 that secondary school provision was 27.2% for the rural and Andean population of this country 'as opposed to 48.8% in urban areas', the collaboration between the Church and the State makes it interesting that Peru could serve as a model for other states in Latin America.

### **3.5.3 Preferential Option in India**

Research shows that there are many marginalized people in India. In the Indian context, the poor include the Dalits tribe, rural women, slum dwellers, child labourers, unorganized workers (Toppo, 2007, p. 659). These are the 'have-nots' (p. 662). In 2007, the Catholic Church in India made up about '1.86% of the population and manages [d] over 20,370 educational institutions' (p. 655) of which there were '4,837 secondary and higher secondary schools...[with] 59% of the Catholic educational institutions in rural areas serving the poor and economically 42.5% of the students come from the poor income group, 32.5% from the lower income group, 18.3% from the middle... and 6.7% from higher income group' (p. 655). Rightly put, Toppo, the Cardinal-Archbishop of Ranchi in India says that the Catholic schools in India are 'open to all, especially to the poor and the marginalized, irrespective of caste, colour or creed.

Imparting Catholic education is indeed our common vocation and mission' (Toppo; cited in Tete, 2007, p. 684). In a similar context, the Apostolic Nuncio to India, His Excellency Archbishop Pedro Lopez Quintana, urges that the Catholic educational service should be easily accessible by the poor in all categories, including those who are 'far from the faith' (Quintana; cited in Tete, p. 684).

Although Catholicity in India could be classified as a minority unlike Latin America which is predominantly Catholic, the Catholic Church in India has made tremendous success in educational services beginning from the early days of the missionaries, that is, from Goa in 1540 by the Franciscans to St. Francis Xavier in 1542, and to St Paul's College in 1548 until the arrival of other missionaries in other parts of India. However, education at this time remained rather inadequate and characterized by inequality, class, gender and regional discriminations with 'Only 14% ... literate [population] and only one out of three children ... enrolled in primary schools' (Toppo, 2007, p. 655) until 1947 when India gained her independence. With independence, the Catholic Church became more involved in education and has been rated highly for the quality of her education. This is possible because the Catholic Church in India is open to change.

Openness to change and the search for new ideas are factors that make success possible. For the Catholic Church in India to initiate technical and vocational training indicates her awareness of the needs of the people. The Church knows that not everybody has the ability to meet the demands of the Western type of education because of individual level of motivation, willingness and readiness to go to school, and so training in technical and vocational initiatives gives the people ample opportunities to develop skills in these areas other than academic work. Apprenticing oneself to someone who already has the skills in a particular trade (Toppo, 2007, p. 656) is also obtainable in most African countries. It is a good opportunity which many go into especially youths or adults who may not have the financial resources needed for academic training and those who personally aspire to follow that line out of interest.

Nigeria is not left out in this, because of the financial involvement in going to school, and such where there is no financial ability, engaging in vocational training becomes the most feasible option.

Female education in India, especially for poor girls, is another endeavour worthy of mention. It is one of the attributes of the Christian missionaries. Before the dawn of women education, girls in most countries were left to remain illiterates, their education was not a point for discussion; rather it was only boys who were expected to be trained to any level as far as education was concerned. Girls had their places in the homes. However, the first of the girls' schools in India was established in 1819 at Kottayam, followed by the school in Alapuzha and then to other parts of the country. Government girls' schools were established in 1850, thirty-one years after the first girls' school by the missionaries. On the importance of the establishment of women's education Muthulakshmi Reddi of Madras Legislative Council has this to say:

I honestly believe that the missionaries have done more for women's education in this country than the government itself. The women of this country have been placed under a deep debt of gratitude to the several missionary agencies for their valuable contribution to the educational uplift of Indian women. ... Even at this day, in every province, we find missionary women teachers working hard in a spirit of love and faith, in out-of-the-way villages, where the Hindu and Muslim women dare not penetrate (cited in H. Gray. *The Progress of Women*, Op. Cit. p.446; in Toppo, 2007, p. 657).

Philomaath Passah of the North-Eastern Hill University in India equally observed that the successes made on education in India are possible because 'they put emphasis on an education at all stages of the growing child' (cited in Toppo, 2007, p.659). This observation is what Toppo (2007, p. 658) tries to recapture when he makes reference to the admission policies into Catholic colleges in India:

In recent times, we notice in these colleges a new awakening to the demands of social justice and human rights. Admission policies are modified to bring in more of the underprivileged into the college and programmes of social awareness are organized to create in the students' greater concern for the poor and exploited.

It is interesting to notice that the beginnings of education in many countries by the missionaries have similar patterns and methods. The missionaries who came to India thought that nothing would work without first of all establishing schools. The missionaries did the same in Nigeria, to teach the people to read and write before talking about belief in God (Omenka 1989, p. 7). In India, the missionaries 'were convinced that every form of development begins with and is based on education' (Toppo, 2007, p. 658). Adopting this policy, Louis Van Hoeck and Oscar Severin 'the first two bishops of Ranchi, insisted on a basic principle that in any new area a school must be built first, and only after that a church could be built' (p.658).

To ensure a continuity of this success and better standard, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India gave some practical strategic suggestions and some of which are listed below:

...a certain percentage of admission should in every institution be reserved for the marginalized; to retain the students up to class X (age 16) ... [by] provide[ing] free ... scholarships, loans, mid-day meals, books, and uniforms...; building a corpus fund to provide subsidy for the marginalized ... [and thus helping to maintain] the Catholic vision of education and ... the mission of Jesus Christ...' (Toppo, pp. 661-662; Tete, pp. 685-687).

The essence of issuing a new educational policy was borne out of the fact that the Catholic Bishops of India intend to evaluate their 'mission and vision' so as to not only improve the people's literacy, but to enhance the general outcome of education and in the long run help to eradicate the effects of their present challenges. One of such challenges is to ensure that education and other benefits of the public are easily available to the truly marginalised in India. The next review addresses the issues in other African countries.

The similarities and differences in the context of how preferential option is being addressed in some selected developing countries will also give a better understanding of how PO is being addressed in those countries. For instance, in terms of similarities, in Brazil, Peru and India, Catholic schools are seen as committed to the approach of an

evangelical-liberating education and incorporating the poor in the system (Klaiber, 2007; Streck & Segala, 2007; Toppo, 2007). Just as in the developed countries, in the developing countries of Brazil, Peru, and India reviewed, the Catholic schools still deal with the issue of PO through subsidies from funds sourced from Religious Orders, dioceses, parishes, donations from the public and faith-based. In Brazil and India, there is no funding strategy by the Catholic Church and government, which leaves the Catholic schools to entirely provide for the less privilege in the schools (Streck & Segala, 2007; Toppo, 2007).

In Peru, there is collaboration between the Church and the State in funding of Catholic Schools, which is not the same in states in Latin America, as only the rich can afford Catholic schools in Brazil (Streck & Segala, 2007). In looking at the difference in Brazil and Peru, in relation to the Catholic schools in India, the Indian Catholic schools are open to all, irrespective of caste, especially in provision of training in technical and vocational initiatives as well as in promotion of girl-child education, though the Indian government's involvement in the Catholic schools is non-committal (Toppo, 2007). The implication of this review is that it is only in Peru that there is relative government collaboration with the Catholic Church in providing education for the poor.

#### **3.5.4 Preferential Option in Zambia**

The essence of treating PO in the context of some selected African countries separately is an attempt to simply present an African Concept of PO in relation to how some developed and other developing countries are addressing the issue, as the arguments will help in presenting a better understanding of how the concept is being treated in Nigeria, which is the focus of this study. For instance, a research shows that schools in Zambia (one of the poorest African countries) comprise of those owned by the government, referred to as 'public schools' and grant-aided schools which receive financial assistance from the government (Carmody, 2007, p. 543).

Unfortunately, the Zambian government put stronger control over schools, and the Catholic Church lost the benefits of government support and had to face the challenge of competing with public schools for their survival, hence the inauguration of a fee-paying policy. However, in 1993, the government once again granted autonomy to the grant-aided schools in Zambia, after reviewing the 1966 Education Act which allowed the Catholic Church to, once again, regain her privileges, and one among them was 'involvement in Zambia's public education' (Carmody, 2007, p. 549). The words of the Catholic Education Secretary General (2002) explain this better: 'That the Church remains happy with the 1993 Statutory Instrument seems still to be substantially true. What causes difficulty sometimes is that officials are unaware of the Instrument's existence and act contrary to its provisions' (Kabwe, 2003, p. 11; Henze, 2003, p. 12; cited in Carmody, 2007, p. 549). This reveals the tension and depressing condition of the Catholic Church and her schools at that 'silent' time.

The Zambian Bishop's statement on Catholic education that: 'Education, in a very special way, is a concern of the Church. ... We look forward to our continued partnership with the government in the provision of quality education' ('Empowerment Through Education', 2004, p. 12; cited in Carmody, 2007, p. 549). The Church in Zambia is still committed to the 'preferential option for the poor'.

### **3.5.5 Preferential Option in South Africa**

The Catholic Church in South Africa has 343 schools of which '248 are public schools on private property and [the] remaining 98 [95] are independent schools' (Potterton & Johnstone, 2007, p. 565) but Religious Orders own most of these 98 [95] schools. Potterton and Johnstone (2007, p. 566) argue that Catholic schools in South Africa are fee-paying but 'the fees charged...are acceptable proxies for the socio-economic profile of the communities they serve. Of all Catholic schools 46% charge fees below R 100 per year. A further 24% charge fees between R 100 and R 500 per year, with only 11% of the schools charging fees above R 10,000 per year'. This is

suggesting that the fees are not very high for poorer families. On the other hand, this has some implications as the minimal fees paid reflect in the 'physical infrastructure and facilities' provided according to the 'make-up of the school communities'. These infrastructure and facilities in the schools 'range from rundown, totally inadequate rural facilities...through simple, well-maintained albeit simply equipped rural, township, and suburban schools and township schools; to very well-maintained and well-equipped architectural masterpieces all over the country' (p.566).

The above record simply indicates the disparity of the economic levels of the various backgrounds existing in South Africa. It shows that many of the children are below poverty level and many of the Catholic schools serve in very poor areas, probably with the majority of black people or from ethnic minority. This also suggests that parents' choice of their children's schools is respected (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 2004, nos.240 & 241, p. 137).

Catholic schools in South Africa lack subsidy for the less-privileged students. One can attribute the lack of subsidy to be one of the effects of the decline in the number of Religious Congregations managing Catholic schools. Potterton and Johnstone (2007, pp. 571-2) lamenting on this effect, conclude that it is 'the most critical challenge facing schools'. They argue that Religious Orders 'provided the backbone of Catholic education in South Africa and across the world'. The struggles of the Cabra Dominican Sisters (of Irish origin) through apartheid period in South Africa confirm Potterton and Johnstone's argument. Despite the frustrations of the Cabra Sisters in their educational mission which started in South Africa in 1863, the Sisters remained steadfast with the mission and 'took a revolutionary decision, together with other Religious and the Bishops, and decided to open their schools to children of all races in direct contravention of apartheid law' (Flanagan 1982, 86-88; Brain 1997, 204; Mandela 1995, 194-195, 196; cited in Higgs and Kelly, OP, 2012, 5). This, indeed, was a bold step which from the Church's perspective is the work of the Holy Spirit and Christ fulfilling His promise to be with His disciples when He told them: 'Go therefore,

and make disciples of all nations. ... And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age' (Matthew, 28:19-20).

It is imperative to note that as the number of Religious Congregations in South Africa began to wane, the general option (which many countries worldwide facing similar problem have taken) was to handover the school leadership to skilled lay people. This, however, suggests more economic difficulties considering that lay management will not only demand more teacher/staff salary with higher expenditures on other school facilities (see also Carmody, 2007, p. 551) but will add more challenges to the ones already existing such as:

Declining government subsidies for independent schools as a result of a necessary redistribution to poorer schools and communities. For many of [the] schools this raises the question of sustainability if not short-term survival; Declining donor funding both foreign and from local organizations or companies; Rising educational costs and increasing fees; Increasing inability of communities to pay (Carmody, 2007, p. 572).

Notwithstanding the serious implications that will follow, the choice still has to be made granted that the aim is to improve the Church's service to the poor as seen in the following words: 'The primacy of the poor should be a particular concern. We will affirm and support our schools as communities of care where each person's worth is nurtured. Created in God's image, all people have a claim on the common good ...' (Johannesburg, South Africa, 23-25 September 2004; cited in Potterton & Johnstone, 2007, p. 574). God's work on earth will still be accomplished. However, there is need for staff training and scholarly research to be able to achieve effective and more rewarding results.

The similarities and differences in how preferential option is being addressed in the context of some selected African countries is an attempt to drum the argument closer to its outlook in Nigeria, which is the focus of this study. In terms of similarities in Zambia and South Africa, Catholic schools are seen as private schools. Catholic schools are also committed to the education of the poor and as such source for funds from Religious Orders, dioceses, parishes, donations from the public and faith-based in

Zambia and South Africa (Carmody, 2007; Potterton & Johnstone, 2007). In other words, in Zambia and South Africa, the Catholic Church plays prominent role in funding of its education.

In terms of their differences, in Zambia, government offer grants to Catholic schools, while in South Africa, it is entirely fee-paying with very negligible government support. When government grants dwindled in Zambia, Catholic Church started bursary schemes, but now the Zambian Catholic schools enjoyed continued partnership between the government and the Catholic Church in the provision of education, especially to the poor (Carmody, 2007). In South Africa, the schools are more private in nature (Potterton & Johnstone, 2007). This means provision of education to the poor by the Catholic schools in South Africa is minimal. The essence of the various reviews of how PO is being addressed in different countries is aimed at looking at the concept of PO from different perspectives in relation to the Nigerian situation, being the focus of this study. In Zambia, government offer grants to Catholic schools, while in South Africa, it is entirely fee-paying with very negligible government support. When government grants dwindled in Zambia, Catholic Church started bursary schemes, while in South Africa, the schools became more private. In comparison with South Africa, Zambian Catholic schools now enjoyed continued partnership between the government and the Catholic Church in the provision of education, especially to the poor.

### **3.6 Apparent Challenges and Resources that Have Enabled Expression of the 'Preferential Option for the Poor'**

There are a number of apparent challenges and resources that have enabled the expression of PO in several countries. One of the major resources that promoted PO is funding. This is the case because while some countries enjoy a level of partnership of the Catholic Church and the government and thus enhancing better

funding in provision of education to the poor, others do not enjoy such partnership, hence, provision of education to the poor remains minimal in such countries.

**1. Funding issues:** Funding could be seen as both a challenge as well as resource. For instance, the Australian Catholic schools obtain most of their funding from the Australian government, which is quite exceptional 'when compared to other nations' whose governments do not support faith schools. However, from another angle, this opportunity might constitute or is already constituting a challenge to the Catholic Church in Australia; and of course, the accusations are there already on why the Australian Government should continue to fund Catholic schools, and how the Catholic schools will 'consolidate their integrity and authenticity in a climate of reduced religious commitment from parents and the potential encroachments of government regulations' (Croke, 2007, p. 812) and what the government gains in return. The Igbo adage: 'aka nri kwo ak'ekpe; ak'ekpe akwo aka nri,' (literally meaning 'right hand washes the left hand and the left hand washes the right hand', in other words, both hands helping each other), is at play in the Australian situation, where the government through the influence of its financial support could easily get important policies such as 'outcomes and policy directions [to] ... the [Catholic] schools' (Croke, 2007, p. 812).

**2. Commitment of the Catholic Church:** Many Priests and Religious served as principals and teachers in Catholic schools; however, their places would automatically be taken by lay principals and teachers in order to keep the schools going (Pascoe, 2007). What is required here from the Catholic position is prudence, decency and tactfulness in their relationship with the government. This situation is delicate and challenging in the sense that lay teachers had before now been distanced from the managerial affairs of the mission schools, so taking over managerial positions at these changing times may be too challenging for them. The way out remains the commitment of the Priests and

Religious so that the mission of the Catholic Church to the poor in line with the teaching of Jesus Christ can remain intact in the long run.

- 3. Decline in the number of Priests:** The apparent challenging factor in many countries today is the decline in the vocation to the Priesthood and Religious life. For instance, the Catholic Church in Australia is not left out in this challenge. The picture in Australia as drawn by Pascoe (2007, p. 789), shows a decline in the number of Priests 'from 3,481 to 2,820 (down 19.0%)' between 1970 and 2002 and that of the Religious 'from 16,228 to 8,687 (down 46.5%).' Similar to this is the decline in the number of people who are active in the Churches as a result of 'rising secularization, individualism, and consumerism ...[and] sexual abuse cases' (Pascoe, 2007, p. 791; Croke, 2007, p. 815). In Peru also, the Catholic Church is facing the challenge of reduction in the number of Religious men and women 'since the 1960s' (Klaiber, 2007, p. 190). This challenge is expected to be a poser to the universal Catholic Church in many countries so that a way out could be sought in other to find amicable solution.
- 4. Deviation from the Church's mission:** There is need to clarify the identity of the Catholic schools, which are established in line with the Catholic Church's mandate of caring for the poor, as well as in line with the teaching of Jesus Christ, which has to do with providing for the poor (Cattaro & Cooper, 2007). It is rather unfortunate that this 'identity has been taken for granted and was interwoven with many other perspectives ... arising from the partnership with and dependence on government' (Tuohy, 2007, p. 269). This is a challenge facing the Catholic Church and her schools, especially in the Republic of Ireland, and it calls for a systematic and scholarly review to enable both the Church and the government to realize better ways of handling the partnership for better results.

- 5. Decline in students' enrolments:** There is a sharp decline in the enrolment of students 'from 23.6% in 1991 to 22.2% in 2002' (Pascoe, 2007). For instance, in the case of Australia, research findings revealed that the Australian Government devised many funding strategies such as 'a means-tested government education allowance (the Education Maintenance Allowance)' (p. 796), and schools' 'fee-relief strategies including fee plan ... fee concessions... and scholarships and bursaries' (p. 797). The aim of this partnership is to encourage more attention in provision of education to the poor. On the side of the Catholic Church, policy and funding matters are handled by Catholic Education Commission, while the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) comprising of a representative of the state Commission, 'advocates on behalf of all members of the Catholic education community, including non-systematically funded Catholic schools, which are largely religious institute owned schools' are to strive to carry out the mandate of the Church by enrolling more students (Pascoe, 2007, p. 788).
- 6. Conflict between Catholic teachings and the radical individualism:** There is a clear conflict between Catholic teachings on solidarity with the poor and the radical individualism inherent in most choice schemes (McLaughlin *et al*, 1996, p. 4). The fear is that if this conflict is not adequately addressed, the Catholic teaching might be corrupted. Fear in this context lies in the adjustment to the changes in Irish education especially – the change from school management by Religious Congregations to lay managers. The fear also is the maintenance of the founding principles and the charism of the Congregation. The Catholic Church in the Republic of Ireland is not alone in this era of change. Many countries like the USA and UK (Cattaro & Cooper, 2007; Schuttloffel, 2007; Gallagher, 2007) are facing similar challenges.
- 7. Gender disparity:** Gender disparity in enrolment in Catholic schools remain an Indian issue probably because of the caste system. However, the Church

admonished that education should be provided to every child, provided the child is able to cope (Toppo, 2007). This underscores the need to eradicate gender disparity. The issue is that there is need to form more lay people in the Church's theology to equip them for the missionary journey ahead. However, this challenge is not noticed thus far in Nigeria, as there are single sex Catholic schools as well as coeducational Catholic schools in Nigeria.

### **3.7 Summary**

In this chapter, the researcher has reviewed the theoretical perspectives and the literature on the 'preferential option (PO) for the poor' in theology and philosophy. The concept is also reviewed historically and critically. The researcher also empirically presented evidence for the implementation of the PO internationally, as well as its implementation specifically in Nigeria, and highlighting the apparent barriers and resources that have inhibited and enabled its expression as earlier discussed.

The review therefore shows that some Catholic school systems are completely private like the USA, some in the UK are state-maintained, while many Catholic schools in developing countries are private but subsidized by the State in varying degrees. In addition, Catholic schools like those of the UK which are state-maintained are free while few that are independent, charge school fees. The findings also indicated the consciousness of the Catholic Church to offer education to all people irrespective of religious background. As a result of that, greater efforts are being made to find solutions to the financial challenges that are confronting the schools.

It is interesting and important to know that many countries have similar ideas, experiences and challenges. The developed countries studied here – USA, Australia, Britain and the Republic of Ireland have many things in common beginning from the system of education in practice. UK and Australia have more in common, benefitting from government/state funding. The Republic of Ireland is more of 'state-aided' than 'state-owned' as we saw earlier, while the USA is completely private.

The Catholic Church in these countries has experienced reductions in the number of Religious men and women working in Catholic schools and this has given rise to the cost of school fees, shortage in enrolments and school closures in some of the countries. In the USA the Catholic Church is faced with the challenge of having to rebuild schools destroyed by natural disasters like 'hurricane Katrina.' This means that the Church will definitely require more financial assistance from the government and public donations to sustain her educational services (Cattaro & Cooper, 2007). However, the words from the USA Catholic Bishops' Conference are striking in acknowledging the value of young people in the society as future leaders of the Church. The Bishops urge the Catholic community

... to continue to strive towards the goal of making our Catholic elementary and secondary schools available, accessible, and affordable to all Catholic parents and their children, including those who are poor and middle class. All Catholics must join together in order to ensure that Catholic Schools have administrators and teachers who are prepared to provide an exceptional experience for young people – one that is both truly Catholic and of the highest academic quality (USA Catholic Bishops' Conference; cited in Cattaro & Cooper, 2007, p. 81).

The Bishops invite people to be steadfast in making educational decisions for all, and emphasise that Catholic schools should reach 'inner-cities and other disadvantaged areas', and that people should make more selfless sacrifices (USA Catholic Bishops Pastoral Letter on Racism, 1979).

For the Catholic Church in Australia, more work is required on 'preferential option for the poor'. There is need to find 'more creative ways of giving preference to the poorest' (Croke, 2007, pp. 821 & 823). Research findings revealed that despite all the funding from the Australian government:

Poorer families are [still] staying away from Catholic schools more than ever before. Between 1996 and 2001 (NCEC, 2001) the proportion of students classified, using standard national categories, as "low income" halved (from 6% to 3% of all students) while the proportion classified as 'high income' doubled (from 17% to 34% of all students) (Croke, 2007, p. 821).

This is equally attested to by Bishop Anthony Fisher, the Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney and the Chair of the Catholic Education Commission in the State of New South

Wales in his address to the Catholic secondary schools in NSW. The Bishop perceives the 'under-representation among the poor' in their Catholic schools as 'a real problem', arguing that 'poorer Catholic children are increasingly attending state schools' (Fisher, 2006; cited in Croke, 2007, pp. 826-826).

As already noted with similar challenges, this would require consistent follow-up and more systematic and scholarly research to ascertain the extent of the Australian Catholic schools' service to the 'poorest' more particularly in their elite schools. These more successful or 'elite' schools in Australia are encouraged to create better opportunities such as 'scholarships, bursaries, and fee remissions' for poorer children. What is left for the Catholic education planners as Pascoe (2007, p. 797) suggests is to provide adequate schools 'to cater for the aspirations of all Catholic families while maintaining their primary focus on access for the poor'. This could be achieved through consistent commitment to service and 'raising community awareness'.

On the part of the Catholic Church in UK, research has clearly shown that UK is ranked among the countries where the Catholic Church has provided equal educational opportunities for all classes. However, more recently, some educational decisions and plans were imposed on schools and Catholic schools in particular such as the 'academic targets' set nationally in all schools for children at certain ages and the 'league tables' may be a threat to children with lesser abilities who may 'not feature positively on the league table measurements' (Gallagher, 2007, p. 253) and to the Catholic schools' preferential option. In other words, though the Catholic schools in the UK have not much problems with students' enrolments, the 'academic targets' and 'league tables' may constitute problems for them because the schools may be tempted to admit only the more able children, knowing that the local and national media always regard them as 'evidence of the success of the school' (Gallagher, 2007, p. 255), hence, failing in their 'internal mission' – a 'necessary option for the poor' (Grace, 2002a, p. 9), a key mission of the Catholic Church in England.

The developing countries/underdeveloped/Africa – Brazil, India, Zambia and South Africa have also made progress in educational mission, though huge effort is still required to further improve their Catholic education system, such as more partnership between the Church and the government in the provision of education to more poor people in the Catholic schools, as well as reaching out to more wealthy people in the Church and the society to come to the aid of the Church in provision of education to the poor. It is also interesting to notice that many of these countries have in one way or the other received support from government and state funding in addition to donations from the public as well as other fund-raising projects.

The Catholic Church in Brazil has relentlessly striven to instill the Catholic character, precisely in the context of this research, a more commitment to the 'preferential option for the poor'. As a result people have become more informed; and many Catholic scholars and students have become united with the idea of 'non-school education' that had access to community support and was afterwards integrated into 'popular education' as 'an alternative to the shut off university and in general, to the formal, traditional elitist school' (cited in Streck & Segala, p. 174). These actions were taken to let Catholic education exist in new forms so that the poor also may have access to Catholic schools.

Like many countries, the Catholic Church in Zambia has undergone some ups and downs in trying to establish a stable system of education that will enable better services in their school. The good news about the Church in Zambia is her ability to stand back again in steadfastness with regained energy and zeal. However, both Kabwe, (2003, p. 11) and Chisempere, (1993) express their disappointments over the Catholic grant-aided institutions' inability to reclaim and maintain their Catholic identity: 'I discover that I could not distinguish between a Catholic institution and a public institution' (cited in Carmody, 2007, p. 550). As far as the Catholic Church is concerned, this loss of identity and Catholic distinctiveness is a serious problem. A lot of work is required through systematic and scholarly research to identify the

characteristics exhibited in the daily lives of the students that are not in conformity with the Catholic teaching.

Another area that requires systematic study in the system of education is the ability to identify better means of providing the education that will benefit both the rich and the poor. Carmody (2003a) has a similar view when he argues that 'people [now] see Catholic institutions as no more friendly than others to those whose resources are extremely limited in a context where approximately 80% of the population is considered to be below the poverty line' (cited in Carmody, 2007, p. 558). Much attention is also needed in this area.

The implication of the empirical studies of the 'preferential option for the poor' in the various developed and developing countries reviewed shows that Nigeria has so much to learn from these countries, so that its implementation in Nigeria can be approached from different perspectives as drawn from the various countries in line with the original design of this means of reaching out to the poor in the society.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology – ‘strategies and procedures’ (Alasuutari, Bickman & Brannen 2008, p.1) of the study and also justifies the epistemological (Hamlyn 1995, p. 242; in Crotty, 1998, p. 8) and ontological stance for the choice of the methods and their applications together with the theoretical perspective (Crotty, 1998, p.3. See also Schwandt, 2007, p.193). Among the numerous literatures explored and used, the *Go Forth and Teach: The Characteristics of a Jesuit Education* (1986) and Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1993) were very relevant to the interpretation of the ‘preferential option for the poor’ and they guided the thoughts on what was identified from the schools.

#### 4.2 Research Approach and Design

It is important to note that this research did not just look at how poor students in the Catholic secondary schools are treated in the schools but more broadly, tried to find out what the schools themselves and Nigerians in general, understand by the ‘preferential option for the poor’ in charity (Pope Leo XIII. *Rerum Novarum*, 1891, no. 63) and in justice (Pope Pius XI. *Quadragesimo Anno*, 1931, no. 88). It is also concerned with how the teachings on the ‘preferential option for the poor’ are permeated in the school curriculum, which is ‘within ... natural perspective[s]’ (Scott & Usher, 2011, p.99). Secondly, the methodology was a comparative case study because it involved a number of cases from three Catholic schools in Nigeria. This enabled the researcher to present a general picture of the situations as they emerged, since the researcher had ‘little control over events being studied’ (Yin, 2002, paraphrased in Schwandt, 2007, p. 28) and thereupon tried to offer comparisons – differences and similarities among the cases presented. The comparative case study research does have some weaknesses. One of its demerits is that researchers are not always ‘in the

cases', they study in the way ethnographers do. Alasuutari, *et al.*, (2008, p. 220) described the distance between the researcher and the subject as 'psycho-emotional.' The research is qualitative based on the 'need to tackle specific understanding through documentation of concrete details' (Erickson, 1986, p.124; cited in Alasuutari *et al.*, 2008, p. 218. See also Bouma & Atkinson, 1995, p. 207). Research findings therefore reveal that qualitative research allows 'subjectivity' contrasts with quantitative research (Alasuutari, 2008, pp. 5-6).

The data studied were a collection of instances. For example, all available documents in each school, interviews with the Bishop,, major Superior of a Religious Order and the school Principals on subsidy or funding and in what ways these people carry out their responsibilities, with regard to the 'preferential option for the poor' in real life situation within the educational system. It focused also on the vision and mission statements of the school. The researcher observed the general life of students in school through students' uniforms, feeding, (for borders), their interactions with one another, whether there is institutional awareness of the needs of the poor and the less-privileged, and what the schools do to fight poverty. This offered the opportunity to access through 'the invisibility of everyday life' (Erickson, 1986, p.121; cited in Alasuutari *et al.*, 2008, p.218), 'layers of lived experience, and implications' (Alasuutari *et al.*, p. 218). The results of the observations formed part of the interview questions with form tutors across the year groups or year heads, and with the Principals. Since this research is exploratory in nature, Lewis (2003) explains that 'case studies allow for the generation of multiple perspectives either through multiple data collection methods or through the creation of multiple accounts from a single method' (cited in Gray, 2009, p.169). This is an intensive comparative case study since it involved the study of more than one instance of the phenomenon.

#### **4.2.1 Case Study: Advantages and Disadvantages – A Summary**

One of the advantages of case study research is that it is an ‘in-depth investigation’ into a case or multiple cases ‘to provide insight into an issue [or issues]’ (Miller & Salkind, 2002, p.162). Punch (2009, p.123) equally argues that ‘only the in-depth case study can provide understanding of the important aspects of a new or persistently problematic research area’. On the other hand, Bromley (1986, p. xiii), recognising some disadvantages in using case study strategy, says that ‘case studies are sometimes carried out in a sloppy, perfunctory, and incompetent manner and sometimes even in a corrupt, dishonest way’ (cited in Robson, 2002, p. 180). However, Robson, (2002, p. 180) arguing differently points out that, ‘Even with good faith and intentions, biased and selective accounts can undoubtedly emerge. Similar criticisms could be made about any research strategy’. The strategy therefore ensures that data collection and analysis were carefully carried out following qualitative research tradition, especially in establishing ‘the reliability and validity of the findings’.

#### **4.3 Multi- methods**

The multi-methods approach was used in answering the three research questions for this research. Prior to the visit, information about the research and consent forms were sent to the participants (see appendixes A and B). The first stage of the multi-methods approach for this research was documentary analysis. The researcher first studied the documents of the schools, which provided information on students’ admissions – admission criteria, whether the school is open to all children Catholic or non-Catholic or exclusively Catholics, students from rich or poor families or both; the various policies of the school; expulsions – what happens when students’ families cannot pay the school fees? Secondly, vision and mission statements were also studied. The essence of the analysis of the admission criteria, vision and mission statements, as well as the expulsion policy of the school is to check the level to which the interest of the poor is being represented and to ascertain if the schools’ vision and

mission statements are being carried out in line with the Catholic policy of caring for the poor. Fourthly, an informal observation of students' life in the school provided some insights into the lived reality of the school. This informal observation simply takes note of what constitute the kind of interpersonal relationships existing between the students irrespective of their family backgrounds. This was informal in the sense that they constitute the researcher's impressions that further enhances the study. This information thereafter formed part of the one-to-one and group interview questions which helped to 'facilitate [the] development of subtle understanding of what happens in the case and why' (Alasuutari *et al.*, 2008, p. 218., also Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, in Creswell & Clark, 2011; Hammond, 2005; Hackness *et al.*, 2006; Bryman, 2006, in 2008).

The interviews conducted were semi-structured and focused so as to 'see things from the perspective of the participants' (Crotty, 1998, p.7), and face-to-face because they 'provide[d] shortcuts to the prior history of the situation, and thereby helping to identify other relevant evidences (Yin, 1994, p. 84; in Hays, 2004, p. 229).

Table 3 presents the data collection methods.

**Table 3: Data Collection Methods**

	Methods	Focus
1.	Documentary Analysis	Admission criteria, schools' vision and mission statements, expulsion policy.
2.	Semi-structured Interviews	Catholic Dioceses in Abuja, Enugu and Lagos States.
3.	Informal observation	Insights into the lived reality of the schools.
4.	Focused Interviews	Secretary of Catholic Education in Nigeria, Principal of Catholic Schools, administrative and non-administrative staff, teachers, students, public, professionals and political observers, parents, and critics of Catholic schooling in Nigeria.

Table 3 presents the methods of data collection and the focus of each of the methods. Detailed sample size of those that participated in the semi-structured and focused interviews are shown in table 4.

#### **4.3.1 Methods of Data Collection**

The researcher interviewed four public, professional and political observers and critics of Catholic schooling in Nigeria because the voice of external observers and / or critics of the system might highlight issues which those inside the system might not have mentioned. Throughout the interviews, the researcher was conscious that asking good questions and listening well among other attributes were very important in a comparative case-study (Yin, 2009, pp. 69-72). Data were equally extracted from the following sources:

1. **The Vision and Mission Statements:** Words and phrases that depicted help or support given to poor students and the 'preferential option for the poor', in other words, what the vision statement says about helping the less privileged students in the school and the poor in the wider society. The researcher attempted to locate specific charisms or mind of the founder of each school and how they deal with the option for the poor. There was also an identification of 'service to faith and promotion of justice' in the mission statements, the strategies the schools often employ to practically achieve their mission and to follow up their mission, as well as commitment to justice even after students' lives in the schools.
2. **Admission and Expulsion Policies:** The researcher investigated how admissions were offered to students and whether or not there are conditions that prospective candidates have to meet before they are offered admission. Particular questions such as whether or not children from poor families received any preferences were asked and what the policies said about them. Another important factor the researcher looked for in the policy document was the

admission of relatively wealthy students and whether or not the schools are more open to the rich than the poor as well as the percentage of wealthy students to that of the poor in the school. It was also necessary to look at expulsion in the schools and the conditions on which students are expelled, and whether or not there are concessions for second chances for students from poor families before any of them gets expelled.

3. There was also an informal observation of the students on site. The use of observation methods exposed the researcher to Green's (2007) 'Multiple ways of seeing, hearing, and making sense of the social world' (cited in Creswell & Clark, 2011, p.3).
4. **Interviews:** In qualitative studies, interviews are imperative in getting results, and they tend to be more personal form of research. Interviews are a process of a conversation with the aim of gathering information. This involves an interviewer that coordinates the process and asks questions, and an interviewee, who offers response to the questions (Easwaramoorthy & Zarinpoush, 2006, p. 481). The process of interviews in themselves are good and emancipating (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005). This is more appropriate when there is need for collection for an in-depth information, just like the case of PO in this study.

**i. Interviews with the Principals** investigated the language they use when speaking about the mission and vision statements, and admission and expulsion policies as listed above. The presence of the school/founder's specific charism in the school also formed part of the investigation. This is because the founder's charism should be important in any Catholic school. The source of the school's funding was also investigated as this was expected to inform us on the level of support the school gets from the diocese, the government, organizations or individual donations, as well as the schools' interpretation of PO. When the school is financially challenged, what alternative support does the school offer to poor and disadvantaged students?

**ii. Interviews with the Public, Professional and Political Observers of Catholic**

**schooling in Nigeria:** The researcher's interviews with some public, professional and Political observers and / or critics of Catholic schooling in Nigeria focused essentially on their opinions on Catholic education in Nigeria with regard to their service to the poor. Since interviews were open-ended in nature, participants were given enough time to speak as widely as they desired such as on the character of Catholic schools, students' academic achievements, morals, behaviour and attitudes, tuition fees, the relationship of Catholic schools with the poor as well as the rich and mode of enrolment.

**iii.** In addition, the researcher collected data through interview method on the roles of Bishops and Major Superiors as Proprietors of Catholic schools in dealing with the 'preferential option for the poor' in Nigeria. Moreover, it was not possible to interview each of the Bishops, as such one of the Bishops represented the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria on Catholic education and the Major Superior of the researcher's Order provided the needed information on Catholic education. Furthermore, the participants were asked to explain their roles with reference to the education policy that is applicable to their schools. The interviews conducted were within one hour.

**iv. Group interviews with 6 final year students** (3 girls and 3 boys if mixed school) in each school were conducted. The school management had earlier informed the participating students about the interviews. The session started with an introduction of the researcher; and the purpose of the interview was explained to them. The session was as informal as possible so as to reduce tension and to allow students to relax. The interview questions tried to cover areas like the students' relationship with one another, their curriculum – how they care for one another, if charity and justice have been discussed in their curriculum and their views on Catholic schooling in general.

**v) Interviews with 6 final year form tutors or teachers** (as used in Nigeria): One of the duties of form tutors is to be available to form members and to listen and share their joys and sorrows especially with regard to educational challenges they encounter

in school. Where it was appropriate, 3 female and 3 male form teachers were interviewed to allow a spread of opinion. Similar to the interview with students, the idea was to find out from form teachers, their perceptions of the school and of Catholic schooling in general.

**vi. Interviews with ‘representative parents’** (three of the members of the school board and three other parents): The researcher’s specific preference to interview three of the members of the school board and three other parents proved abortive because it was not very easy to get the parents in the first place. However, the interview questions tried to cover such areas as the extent of parents’ involvement in the school, their perception of the school, challenges their children experience in the school and the school’s relationship with the community.

The Principals, four administrative staff and four other staff were interviewed. The school Proprietors - the Bishop and the Superior General, together with the Catholic Education Secretary were also interviewed. In the research proposal, it was indicated that the education Secretary at the Catholic Secretariat would be interviewed, but the researcher was rather redirected to one of the Bishops. Table 4 presents the list of participants that participated in the interviews conducted by the researcher.

**Table 4: Table of Participants in the Interviews**

	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Number</b>
1.	Bishop	1
2.	Major Superior	1
3.	Public Professionals	4
4.	Political Observers	4
5.	Critics of Catholic Education	4
6.	School Principals	3 (Each of the 3 Schools)
7.	Final Year Students	18 (6 Per school)
8.	Teachers	18 (6 Per school)
9.	Representative of Parents	18 (6 Per school)

10.	Administrative Staff	4
11.	Academic Support Staff	4
12.	Catholic Education Secretary	1

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*Source: Author's Field Survey, 2015-16*

Table 4 shows the list of participants that participated in the interviews conducted by the researcher. Each of the schools that participated in the study was represented by the Principals, final year students, teachers, representative of parents, administrative staff and other academic support staff. Other participants as has already been mentioned were the Bishop, the Superior General, the Catholic Education Secretary, professionals, as well as critics of Catholic education in Nigeria. Altogether, 80 people were interviewed.

#### **4.4 The sample**

The Catholic Church in Nigeria has 52 dioceses divided into nine Ecclesiastical provinces - Abuja, Benin City, Calabar, Ibadan, Jos, Kaduna, Lagos, Onitsha and Owerri. The rationale for sampling was based on the consideration of the aim of the research, consideration of both the richest and the poorest dioceses in order to ensure greater validity and likelihood that significant patterns and differences would emerge. For this reason, the richest and poorest dioceses were randomly selected from the 'pro-rata' provided by the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria 'Basis of sharing CSN Levy form the annual Budget by CBCN' [Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria] adopted at 2008 Jos conference. The economic ability of the dioceses rated between 6.5% (richest) and 0.5% (poorest). The rationales for the classification of the 52 dioceses into rich or poor dioceses were: general population; number of cities (urban or rural) within the diocese; number of Catholics; geographical location of the diocese and its nearness to development (CBCN, pro-rata, 2008). The three dioceses finally selected for study include: Lagos (6.5%), Abuja (5.5%) and Enugu (4.0%). The selection was

done by first writing the first ten richest/rich dioceses on pieces of paper, folded and then five were selected by a simple random process (Lance & Hattori, 2016). The other five with 0.5% pro-rata were selected in similar manner, making a total of ten dioceses. This served as the first selection. The second and the final selection was based on the regional representation to avoid concentrating in one or two regions. For example, Lagos and Ijebu-ode belong to the western region of Nigeria. Ilorin is in the west-central region, Enugu and Owerri are in the eastern region, and Abuja is the Federal capital city. One school from each diocese was initially selected for the study. The above explanation showed the initial sampling that was meant to cover the regions of Nigeria.

It is important to note that one of the secondary schools (an all-girls boarding school) in Enugu diocese was purposively chosen because of some advantages and value it added to the study. The next school is in Abuja Catholic Archdiocese, a school with 'a big reputation' in Nigeria and beyond. It is also important to know how these schools together with the one in Lagos interpret in practice their preferential option. The research sampling consisted of one mixed school/co-educational – full boarding, situated in Abuja, one boarding and day boys' school in Lagos, and the third school is a full-boarding girls' school situated in Enugu (John & James, 2003).

#### **4.5 The Pilot Study**

The pilot study was considered to be necessary due to the 'geographical and diocesan spread' of Nigeria. The pilot study was aimed to match the population intended by the researcher to investigate in the main study (Brown & Dowling, 1998). A trial study therefore ascertained the suitability of the entire research design. Ilorin diocese with the 0.5% pro-rata and one of the six dioceses selected during the second random sampling, served this purpose (pilot study). The study was carried out in a mixed school with day and boarding facilities that is owned and managed by one of the

Nigerian Female Religious Orders. The analysis proved the reliability and validity of this method, hence, its suitability for the main study.

#### **4.6 Ethical Issues**

The IOE informed consent proforma was adapted and sent together with the participants' information leaflets and sheets to the participants. There were occasions whereby the researcher supplied the research information few minutes before the commencement of the interviews. This was because of the difficulties the researcher encountered trying to gain access to the participants (see location and access - appendix C). The participants were requested to participate in the research and asked to be available for the interviews. In other words, proper care was taken to ensure that clear and impartial information was presented to all participants. Secondly, the participants were assured of their right of privacy; the right not to participate in the research and the right to withdraw at any time. Efforts were made by the researcher to contact the participants at reasonable times despite some obstacles beyond her control. Such obstacles included: bad networks within and around the country that made telephone and email contacts difficult, participants' availability, distance, etc. Each person was allowed and encouraged to freely express his or her views. The third ethical issue was on promises and reciprocity. Participants were made to understand whether or not there was any gain in taking part in the research. The researcher also made it clear that any promise made, like providing a copy of the published thesis to any interested participant, would be kept. Fourthly, anonymity and confidentiality, were fully respected and in accordance with research ethical rules. Therefore, pseudo names were used in place of participants' real names throughout this research. (See appendix D - 'Steps for Anonymity and Confidentiality' & 'My Dual Role as a Religious Sister and a Researcher').

#### **4.7 Analysis of Data**

Since this research is qualitative, data analysis was carried out in qualitative terms. Using qualitative analysis means that the research 'findings or concepts ... [were] not arrived at by statistical methods' (Glaser, 1992, p.11). The accounts of the research findings include extracts from documents studied, word-to-word references of participants' responses and 'summaries of field notes...' (Dowling & Brown, 2010, p. 89), as well as a description of the themes and issues that emerged. It is expected that the elaborate description of the findings, supported with clear arguments and explanations given by participants resolved the issue of validity that is usually associated with case study research, due to its narrative descriptions (Dowling & Brown, 2010).

Furthermore, data for this research were collected through documentary study, semi-structured/open-ended interview and informal observation methods, as such they were analysed with NVivo – 'Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software' (CAQDAS). However, great care was taken to ensure that data were organised and managed properly by coding, which started with key concepts from the literature review, making use of record tapes, memos, file cards and annotations, and data were carefully queued into the computer and 'constantly ... read and reread the texts to check interpretations' (Gibbs, 2002, p. 13). Gibb's (2002) argument is that NVivo 'is just a tool for analysis, and [that] good qualitative analysis still relies on good analytic work by a careful human researcher, in the same way that good writing is not guaranteed by the use of a word processor'. The analysis was concluded by the use of triangulation since data were collected through multi-methods. Triangulation was found to be a good strategy in checking the validity of the data. This therefore confirms Yin's (1994) argument that triangulation 'addresses any problems with construct validity', and in turn is 'the extent answers to study questions are considered to be accurate representatives of the case' (Hays, 2004, p. 230).

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the methodology of the study was discussed. The methods used for generating data, included reading the various documents of the schools, from vision and mission statements, to different policy documents, admissions and expulsions. The next was the interview methods, face-to-face interviews with the Bishop, the Major Superior, and Education Secretary, school Principals, some teachers, parents, students, representatives of the public opinion such as external observers and critics. There were informal observations of students in and around the schools. The informal observations as has already been explained enabled the researcher to intermingle within the schools hopefully unnoticed so as to retrieve some hidden information or 'minor' issues not mentioned by the participants.

The data analysis section explained the method of analysis which was qualitative analysis using NVivo and triangulation. A pilot study was conducted to test the chosen design for the research. As expected of every authentic systematic research involving human beings, ethical issues were equally discussed in this chapter, making references to accessibility, informed consent, freedom of participation and expression, anonymity and confidentiality.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS ON HOW CATHOLIC SCHOOLS DEAL WITH 'PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR' IN NIGERIA

#### 5.1 Introduction

Preferential option for the poor is the focus of this study. As a qualitative study, there was 'need for specific understanding through documentation of concrete details' (Erickson, 1986, p. 124; cited in Alasuutari *et al.*, 2008, p. 218; Bouma & Atkinson, 1995, p. 207). The researcher investigated how admissions are offered to prospective students and whether or not there are conditions, preferences and how the preferences are stated in the policies. The key issue here was whether or not the rich have more admission opportunities than the poor. What percentage of the school's population are students from wealthy families? On what conditions are students expelled? Are students from poor families given a second chance before finally expelling them? Do the schools offer some assistance in any way to the expelled students? In what areas do they assist the expelled students?

The participating schools were presented as 'School A' (All Girls'), 'School B' (Mixed), and School C' (All Boys) in order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. To be able to adequately analyse the information provided by participants, the data were categorised into themes as follows:

a) Entrance Forms: An Obstacle to Access for the Poor; b) Admission to poor students; c) Scholarships; d) School fees of Catholic schools compared to Private Schools; e) Instalment payment of school fees (more time to pay school fees) and School fees waiver; f) Employment opportunities to local community; g) Service to community (building or working in orphanage/charity homes); h) Endowment funds scheme (where relatively rich parents, dioceses, Congregations, Priests and other groups and individuals also contribute) and donations; i) Quality education that teaches core values including morality, discipline and academic excellence, and, j) Non-discrimination between rich and poor students.

**Research Question one: How do Catholic schools in Nigeria address the principle of 'Preferential Option for the Poor'?**

**5.2 Theme 1: Entrance Forms: An Obstacle to Access for the Poor**

The policy of the entrance forms was introduced into Catholic schools in Nigeria soon after the takeover of schools by the government in the 1970s although the costs were not as expensive as they are today. For instance, school A sells the entrance form at the cost of three thousand Naira (N3,000), equivalent to UK £6.40; school B, eight thousand, five hundred Naira, (N8,500) which is £18.10, and school C's form costs five thousand Naira (N5,000), equivalent to £10.64. However, it is equally important to recognise that the poor do not easily have access to this first stage of registration for the entrance examination into the schools. The argument is why do people have to pay for entrance forms? The fact remains that the Catholic schools also generate funds from the sales of entrance forms. However, it should not be a hindrance to some students getting access to the schools. This is because this policy is contradictory to the ideals of the 'Preferential option for the poor'. Moreover, the high cost of the forms often puts off the poor from aiming to go to the Catholic schools due to the inability to afford the forms in the first place. One of the Principals interviewed stated that:

The responsibility falls on my office to ensure that every child irrespective of the background is given the opportunity into this school. In all honesty, if the opportunity is not given, how can we ascertain those that are academically gifted? Many a times, in the Catholic Primary schools, gifted students could be identified, but such students could end up not coming into the secondary schools probably because of funds, beginning from the inability to purchase entrance forms. We thus encourage parents to ensure that they find a way around this so that when it has been established that such a student is truly up and doing academically, they might just decide to assist in one way or the other to allow such a child to be educated here. There is therefore a special scholarship scheme for such indigent students.

One of the teachers also affirmed that:

A student was found to be exceptional right from the primary school stage. He was a child whose mother had been singlehandedly training. The point was that because he distinguished himself through wonderful academic performance, some old boys took it upon themselves to

assist. The entrance forms were purchased for him and he did well in the examination. His performance eventually earned him a scholarship from the old boys, some of which were mates with the student's late father. He did not disappoint at the end of the day, as he made straight distinctions and gained admission into one of the Federal universities in Nigeria.

One participant spoke about the need-based and all-round scholarship to include the forms and how the school should manage the situation thus: 'The poor should have a fair chance to write the examination. If they pass, they should be automatically placed on the need-based scholarship. This is to say, any child that writes the examinations and succeeds, should be enrolled into the scholarship scheme, whether they can afford the forms and fees or not'. The idea of not being able to purchase an entrance form due to poverty becomes an issue for Catholic education system, as well as an obstacle to the preferential option and a cause of disconnection in the system. After the purchase of the entrance forms, what follows next is the admission process, which is discussed next.

### **5.3 Theme 2: Admission to Poor Students**

Procedures or strategies for admission of students from poor family backgrounds are not explicitly stated in the admission policies of the schools, neither are there issues concerning admission of the poor. Rather, the general practice concerning this theme is that the school can consider people when they notify the school management after the entrance examination, of their financial challenge. However, the general criterion is for every prospective student to take the entrance examination and the interviews. In other words, admission is first on merit and this (merit) comes before any further discussion and consideration on admission. Admissions are, therefore, offered to children who have passed the entrance examination with very high scores. Opinions were gathered from teachers in schools A, B and C, and they gave their views on their schools' admissions to poor students.

Teachers in school A had the same opinion that the school admits children from both rich and poor backgrounds as far as they succeed in the entrance examination. This view explains what the Proprietor (Mother May Anukam) meant when she referred to the school as 'mixed.' On the other hand, teachers in school B argued that though the school is generally perceived to admit more of children from rich homes, the school also offers opportunities to the poor after successful entrance examination and interviews. However, they clearly stated that preference is given to candidates who are academically sound. According to one of the respondents, the school management goes out of their way to give admission to some blind, but brilliant children from less privileged homes. While emphasizing on the number of poor students admitted in school B, one of the students reported: 'they're a lot of such people [poor students] in the school and there are many of them'.

According to respondents in School C, the school admits candidate that passes the entrance examination and interviews just like most Catholic schools. However, the admission is sometimes turned down by parents who are unable to pay school fees before the closing date for payment of the fees. The participants in this interview also observed that in addition to not meeting up with school's payment date, parents are expected to pay in bulk for new intakes, but when they cannot do so, they lose the admission in some cases. This situation was best explained by the Principal based on the school's two major admission criteria:

Entrance examination and then the interview. The child is expected to complete the fees before starting. If at some point any child is unable to cope, we usually understand. Yes, we have some cases where the parents come here, but all we have to do is try to verify and be sure that these people are actually telling the truth. Once we get that done, then, we give them some concessions.

Constructively, the poor can gain access into Catholic schools in Nigeria based on the information they give to the school. Admission is on merit whether the candidate is rich or poor. However, those who think they cannot afford the fees reserve the right

to approach the school management to discuss their challenge. Seeking to discuss one's challenge means that the individual understands the situation and then comes out of his or her 'culture of silence'. This is also the voice or positive power. The ability to utilize one's power positively in the context of school admissions is the beginning of transformation from the present situation. However, after the admission process, what follows is the issue of scholarship, especially to the very poor students and this is discussed next.

#### **5.4 Theme 3: Scholarships**

It is a common expectation by people that Catholic schools should offer scholarship to children in their schools. This is borne from the manner in which the early missionaries in Nigeria handled and made education available. In view of Catholic education in Nigeria during the time of the early missionaries, Rev. Fr. Vincent, a Roman Catholic Priest and one of the critics in this research argued vehemently on the impact of the early missionaries in comparison to the educational activities of the Church in the contemporary society, particularly with regard to service of the poor. Catholic education served the interests of the poor without discrimination at the time of the missionaries. In his view, Father Vincent saw the nature of the populace at the time as 'not socially stratified as most people were peasant farmers and craftsmen' and the missionaries enrolled the children of these men into schools, though at that time it was mainly the boys or men who were given the opportunity; girls and women were engaged with domestic work. Thus, Father Vincent stated:

We never had upper middle class, high class and middle class. It was a more economically homogeneous society. We had the chiefs but even the chiefs took care of their relatives and friends; they did not make too many distinctions between their own children and their relations' children, whom they raised generally. So, the chiefs could raise a hundred children around their houses. They could raise fifty children around their houses and the education at that time was not expensive, but available to everyone. That was why it was possible for the child of the poorest person in the village to gain admission into school. Some even got scholarships in those days to attend mission schools and government schools. So many schools were supported by agencies like Missions from Germany. The Holy Ghost and the S.M.A Congregations also got

some resources from other European agencies, which they used to augment in their school, so that the little fees that people paid was used for administration purposes. Though this fee could not cover what the expenses were, they got some support from home. Later, many of the schools also got government subvention, grant-in-aid as it was called. Many of the Catholic schools around the country were grant-aided, meaning that the provincial government and the regional government supported many of the primary and the secondary schools by paying the teachers.

As earlier explained, the missionaries devised several means to promote their work of evangelisation and education was one big strategy they used to achieve their goal. In order to convert as many people as possible, the missionaries established schools where people learnt to read and write, especially to read the Bible, the Word of God. People were attracted to the schools with gifts and by the desire to be as educated as the 'White man.' However, from the moment the Nigerian government took over the Mission schools in the 1970s, Catholic schools took a different shape particularly in the areas of funding, staffing and infrastructure. The leaders of the Catholic Church in collaboration with counterparts in other Christian Churches negotiated in vain with the government for the release of the schools. From the time of this takeover till today, the funding of Catholic schools became the sole responsibility of their respective Proprietors. It therefore, became the prerogatives of the founders of Catholic schools to take care of their schools financially and otherwise. Consequently, schools resorted to charging different amount of fees according to size and standard. Thus, Bishop Francis Ikpeme elucidated on the differences of fees by schools as follows:

The Proprietors which are the Bishops and sometimes the Superiors of Religious Congregations set the tuition for their schools. Sometimes, they want to be able to pay their staff, maintain their schools, and also to have something set aside for the management of the schools in different ways such as expansion and so many other things that go into upgrading of the standard of the schools.

It therefore, falls within the jurisdiction of the Proprietors to determine how to manage their own schools, how to source for funding and how to make scholarships

available to students who should be offered educational opportunities in their schools. Interviews with participants revealed that offering scholarships to children could be in different forms such as need-based scholarship (given when a child loses one of his parents or a bread-winner) and merit-based scholarship (given when a prospective or continuing student performs exceedingly well in examinations but is unable to pay school fees). Respondents from school A asserted that school A sometimes gives opportunities to poor students, and that concerned people sometimes assist the school by paying the fees of up to ten students from poor families.

Participants from School B shared much on scholarships and the various ways the school offers scholarships to students who need financial assistance. One of the respondents recognized the amazing work the school does particularly in the lives of the partially blind students:

This school is doing marvellously in the sense that they provide all that it takes for the blind to be educated. Majority of the students with visual impairment are on scholarship. This means without the school coming into their education, many of them would not have been here or gotten this kind of knowledge they are receiving now. They are the poorest of the poor set of students in the school.

One of the respondents from school B described the different kinds of scholarships that the School offers to poor students at various stages. These are the Need-Based and Merit Scholarships. Need-based scholarship is mainly reserved for the needy but the number of beneficiaries is determined by the availability of funds. Some of the participants attested that the scholarships are mainly available to those who do well academically. In view of this, the respondent stated that:

It is given to those students who have the potential (brilliant) to be in the school. Those who receive the need-based scholarship apply and the school decides who to consider. People are given scholarship ranging from 20% to 100%. This is how the school tries to lessen parents' burden on fees. Also, any staff whose child passes the entrance examination is given 100% scholarship.

Another respondent referred to the 'need-based' scholarship as 'compassionate' scholarship. It is understood that the school places students who

encounter difficulties with paying fees on 'compassionate scholarship' and that sometimes some well-meaning parents try to assist either as individuals or as groups to pay the fees of some poor students. In other words, this is another source of the school's funding:

It is imperative to note that the scholarships have different tags to them. So, for those who have the need-based scholarship, they really cannot afford the fees, though one may have the potential to be here. The school does not dismiss such persons at all. It has never been done; instead, they go to the assistance of such a child.

One of the parents from school B gave further information on the need-based scholarship, with reference to one of the beneficiaries. She explained that, 'The scholarships are kind of tuition-based, they might not be full scholarship, as there was a lady who received the need-based scholarship. At the interview level, one or two parents whose children performed well but were not able to afford the school fees received the scholarship'. There is also the bread-winner account that the school opens specifically for students who lose any of their parents especially the main sponsor. According to one of the teachers, bread-winner scholarship is solely the school's initiative. It is an insurance scheme which was deliberately created to take care of students who, unfortunately, might fall into such a circumstance. In view of this, a respondent explained that one has to be open to discuss the financial crisis with the school management, who decides how to distribute the scholarships after making some necessary inquiries. The school also gives another form of scholarship known as the 'merit best girl and best boy'. According to one of the parents, this merit award is given to the candidates who get the highest scores in the entrance examination.

What is interesting in this discussion with regard to school B is the effort the school makes to give opportunity to children to access the school. In view of this privilege, one of the teachers that was interviewed explained that the scholarships are sourced from the school fees paid by richer parents and donations from well-meaning friends of the school. Clarifying this further, one respondent stated that, 'the school once gave a 'means-stated' full scholarship to a poor but brilliant student who later

studied at Harvard University in the USA'. Research findings also indicated that School C offers scholarships particularly to poor students who represent the school in football competitions. However, one of the teachers who was interviewed and one of the students presented the same view that the scholarship is available to each of the players after a successful football competition. In other words, this is a conditional offer that is based on the outcome of the tournament, and thereby negating the principle of PO, which should have no conditionalities attached to provision of education to the indigent students.

Furthermore, it was noted that another form of 'conditional' scholarship that is similar to school B's: bread-winner scholarship, according to one of those interviewed in School B is scholarship for successful and brilliant candidates, provided on the course of admission; the school management is informed of the candidate's loss of parent or parent's job. Sometimes, some members of the governing board of the school can choose to assist in paying the school fees of one or two students. This also, is similar to the need-based scholarship in school B which is given based on academic performance.

In the perspective of the Principal in School C, every child should be given an opportunity to study as long as the child indicates interest or the parents wish to train their child in the school. In view of his roles and to confirm what some of the participants disclosed, the Principal stated:

I have the responsibility of ensuring that as much as I would like to give that child the opportunity, he has to be up and doing academically. If he is up and doing academically, we might decide to allow him have his education here. It is like a scholarship scheme. We try to give it to some of them that we know, in all truth, do not have the means to afford schooling here. So, there is a special scholarship scheme for such students.

The Principal is aware of the social situations of some of the children in today's society and with his managerial position and available resources, he can allow some of the students access into the school. It is therefore, based on the above stated

conditions that one other teacher clearly revealed that school C does not give scholarships to poor students. The argument was that such opportunities should be provided for students from poor backgrounds so that more poor children and not just brilliant ones could gain admission to study in the school. The expression was carefully stated, 'Some parents would like their children to study in Catholic schools and we know that Catholic schools provide the best of education for both Christians and non-Christians.'

Three teachers, on similar opinions expressed that prospective candidates lose their admission because of their inability to afford the fees. It was further disclosed that the school gets some funding from its Old Boys Association which sponsors poor but brilliant students. The Principal stated that:

One of my students was so wonderful, as it was the mother that had been shouldering the responsibility. So, when he distinguished himself through wonderful performance, old boys who were aware of his predicament decided to sponsor him. He will soon be graduating from one of the Federal universities as a Medical Doctor.

Studies have therefore proven that a candidate's brilliance is central to the offer of scholarships by Catholic schools in Nigeria. This is a stable reality based on the part of the poor, who has to display the needed talent to qualify for the offer. It therefore contradicts the Catholic Social Teaching of offering educational services to those who are poor and that this service should be made available to all. Freire's (1993) educational approach also does not give room to a conditional offer, but seeks to promote the freedom that comes through education. Table 5 shows the percentage of students in one form of scholarship or the other in schools A, B, and C.

**Table 5: The Percentage of Students on Scholarship in the Catholic Schools**

	<b>Schools</b>	<b>Population of Students</b>	<b>Scholarship (%)</b>
1.	A	1080	5%
2.	B	650	14%
3.	C	1, 250	10%

*Source: Author's Field Survey, 2015-16*

Table 5 shows the percentage of students on one form of scholarship or the other in the various schools that participated in the study. School A has the least scholarship figure, which is 5%, while school B has more because of the various types of scholarships in the school that cater for the interests of the poor. School C with more students' population has 10% scholarship reserved for the poor. Going by the result of the scholarship to the poor as seen on table 5, the principles of liberation theology is not being comprehensively upheld in line with the principle of 'preferential option for the poor'. This means PO will have been seen to be upholding if more poor children are being educated in these schools as against mere 5%, 14% and 10% for schools A, B, and C. The implication is that there is still much to be done in this direction for PO to be seen as operational in the schools.

#### **5.5 Theme 4: Endowment Funds Scheme and Donations (Rich parents, Congregation and Priests also contribute to this scheme)**

As this theme indicates, this section discusses the means of funding or sponsorship or the financial strengths of the schools that enable them to assist the poor educationally. Some of these sources have already been mentioned in other themes, namely, scholarships in school A where some priests help in paying some students' school fees. Information retrieved from participants in School B, pointed to the school's endowment fund through which the school offers various scholarships to students as

discussed earlier. More participants also revealed the generosity of many of their students' parents and well-wishers. Sometimes, parents choose to assist in the training of some students. In view of this support, one of the teachers stated that sometimes some parents choose to assist by providing some of the students' provision, school fees or other payments. This participant pointed at one incidence by stating that 'a parent gave me twenty thousand Naira and said she wanted to remain anonymous, but that she would be contributing to a particular student's education'. This represents how some of the parents show their generosity.

In addition to the support given for payment of individual students' fees, two teachers and a parent attested to the goodwill of people who not only donate money to support the running of the school, but also to the support of some organizations, such as banks who often donate books. Some banks equally try to support the school during special functions like inter-house sports. There is endowment and other means of funding in School C. Some of the participants including students were of the view that the school does not only get funding from students' school fees or Old Boys Association as discussed in the scholarship theme above, but that the school sometimes organizes fund-raising events towards particular projects. It was also disclosed that students sometimes contribute to the projects through levies.

### **5.5.1 Students' Perspectives**

It is pertinent to note that being a student could lead to denial of a voice or power to show true feelings in times of challenging situations. Instead, the student resorts to being polite and humble. Fellow students become the voice but they still do not have the power to change the situation. In this case, education is expected to empower the students to speak for themselves, to meet the management of the school to disclose the parent's financial challenge. This might be the beginning of transformation, and moving forward to change the situation, because the school would see it as a very rare encounter to see such actions from a student.

One of the teachers posited that sometimes the school invites the parents of the poor students who could not resume school due to financial problems. The meeting is to assess the problems and in many of such occasions, as stated by the teacher, 'proper arrangements are made with the school authority to pay the fees gradually or if the person is totally incapacitated and cannot pay anything, the management decides a way out for the child especially if the child is a brilliant child'. The Priest who is also school C's Principal, informed the researcher that the school gives some compensations when it realises the authenticity of the request and status of the student's background. This participant pointed out that 'if at some point there is inability to cope, the school understands. There are some cases that the parents come, and the situation is verified to determine if the people are actually telling the truth. Once that is done, some concession is thus given'. Confirming the condition at which the school gives concession to poor parents, one of the teachers explained that the school would first of all identify those with such issues.

Secondly, they will invite the parents of the child to know the outstanding debts. Some of the problems can either be that the parents are no longer working, or that the person is a single parent for whatever reason. What is most important for the school to grant the concession is that the student is brilliant. It is only on this condition that the school can conveniently take over the responsibility of paying the school fees for any particular student. This is similar to School B's compassionate scholarship since it has to do with the intention to relieve the burden of the single parent. Beside the endowment funds, which the schools use in assisting the poor students, there is provision of instalment payment or outright school fees waiver. This is discussed next.

#### **5.6 Theme 5: Instalment Payment of School Fees (More Time to Pay School Fees) in Addition to School Fees Waiver**

It is not usually common for schools to allow people to pay fees in instalments, especially as people's lifestyles change because of high cost of living. However, many

Catholic schools today allow people to pay in instalments. In some cases, fees are waved out for those who might be experiencing financial difficulties and have taken time to discuss their situation with the school management. Some of the findings from the research interviews with some participants that correspond with paying fees in instalments were also discussed here.

Looking at the data from School A, one of the parents mentioned that: 'when we went for registration, they told us that we could just register with the little money we had and then pay later. So in school A, you can pay even two, three times before the session runs out. So, this is preferable'. Not only that School A allows people to pay fees almost at their convenience, it is also discovered that the school hardly sends students away if they are unable to pay at the expected time. Many teachers in School A were of the view that the school intervenes for students whose parents encounter problems with paying school fees. What the school requires from parents by all means is to give genuine or verifiable information that they are unable to afford the fees. When such is confirmed early enough, it gives the school sufficient time to deal with issues and to sort out people accordingly, even when they have to intervene or subsidise fees for students.

In addition to the school fees waver, the researcher sought to know whether or not the school dismisses students who are unable to pay fees. At this, many participants from the school said the school does not send students away for owing fees but that they are allowed to complete their O'Level examinations, though, the school retains their certificates until they are able to clear their debts. In view of the fees, School A's Principal clarified:

When some of them are unable to pay fees on time and some parents come to plead with the school to give them more time, we grant that and try to bear with them. Sometimes, we extend that to a whole academic session or more, though with constant reminders. Fees are then retrieved when they come for their testimonials and certificates. In some occasions, the Proprietor directs that we release these documents to them even when they have not paid.

It is the responsibility of the Proprietor to ensure that founders' principle is implemented particularly with the training and development of the poor in all the schools. To confirm what many participants revealed about School A, the Principal indicated that:

The school does not send students away for owing; instead, they leave them because many things are considered. In the first place, the nature of this school does not allow anyone to take any strict action against students who have outstanding fees. At certain extremes, such as when the money owed is much, the Proprietor is contacted and sometimes she offers advice that such people should be allowed to go because if they had the money, they would have cleared their bills. However, they might come to pay in the future; otherwise, the school should count it as a 'bad debt'.

In view of this 'bad debt', the Principal explained that such debts are categorised as forgotten, and nothing can be done about them as far as the school is concerned. This is considered as one of the ways the school assists the poor.

Considering that one of the strategies of how schools deal with the 'preferential option for the poor' rests on its funding capacity, the Proprietor explained that the Religious Order (as mentioned earlier, the school is owned by a Religious Order), is conscious of the mandate Christ gave to the Church 'to announce the mystery of salvation to all men [and women] and to renew all things in Christ ... she [the Church] has therefore a part to play in the development and extension of education' ('Declaration on Christian Education: Second Vatican Council', *Gravissimum Educationis* of 28 October, 1965 and the document, *The Catholic School* of 1977). In view of this mandate, therefore, the Congregation is under the obligation to provide an inclusive education. This, however, cannot be achieved without proper planning as the Order tries to do by setting aside some money for educational purposes including small subsidies for poor students and for the training of the Sisters in the Congregation. Being a 'convent' school (originally set for the training of Religious Sisters), people

occasionally send or donate money to assist in the training of young girls for such vocations.

However, people are still motivated, once in a while, to donate money to help in the training of children whose parents may not be able to comfortably complete their school fees. In other words, these are done on charitable basis. The school's Parents/Teachers Association (PTA) also contributes money when the need arises to assist some of the students who encounter financial difficulties that might disrupt their education.

In School B, according to one of the teachers, students are hardly asked to leave because they cannot pay fees especially when the student is doing well academically and the parents discuss with the school about their financial challenges. The school does not dismiss such students or children. Rather, the student might be expected to pay certain amount but not the full payment. However, this can be understood to be a conditional assistance since it is tied to the condition that the student has to be brilliant as well as having a good record.

From the parents' perspective, School B allows one to spread out fees and gives them specific time to complete the payment. According to one of the parents, who has two students in the school, what one needs is to officially consult the school management on one's financial challenges. It is a matter of proper communication that informs the school that one is not able to make the payment at that particular date. The school might require that one states when the payment could be done. According to this participant, 'I have asked a couple of times and I was able to get some extension. I made sure that I met that extension'. Sharing from a parent's perspective, the school allows people to pay in instalments as follows: plan A which is 100% full payment of school fees; plan B is 50%, and plan C pays on termly basis. According to one of the administrative staff in School B, sometimes parents owe school fees, but the school does not turn them away for owing. Rather, the school writes to remind them of the debt and expected time of payment.

Researcher's findings revealed that since the history of School B, the school has never expelled any student for not paying school fees. However, some of the people who are on scholarship do not always disclose when they can conveniently begin to take care of the fees themselves. Rather, they withhold the information. In view of this issue, the Principal stated:

Sometimes, the generosity of the college is taken for granted or even abused. For example, someone requests for scholarship, and it is given, but when the situation improves, the individual is supposed to inform the school. This is because the school has created the ability to offer, and there are a lot of other people who need this scholarship. Now if under the scholarship an individual is now making money and can pay the school fees, the school should know, so that the school can offer that to someone else who actually needs it.

According to the Principal and some of the participants from School B, the school has not sent students away for owing fees, even when they owe more than two years school fees. This can be likened to what school A termed a 'bad debt,' though in the case of School B, they can still retrieve the money even after two or more years, unlike school A, whose Proprietor would otherwise let go of the money. Both schools still aim for better service of the less-privileged because School A may let go of the money, not because they no longer need it, but it is almost like a compulsion to fulfill the intention of the founder. It can be taken to be a display of charity and to avoid adding to their stress. On the other hand, school B will expect the money back. According to the Principal, that money, if recovered, could be used to assist other students.

School C was not left out in the investigation to find information on instalment payment of school fees. One teacher explained that the generosity of the school towards those who find it difficult to pay fees at their convenience within the sessions in the school could be overwhelming. Moreover, interviewing students was another way to retrieve information as sometimes students might reveal information which staff or Principal might not want to share or they might share information about the school from their own point of view and from what they sometimes witness about their fellow

students in the class, form or general school gathering like the assembly or refectory. On paying fees in instalments, school B's students confirmed the school's payment plan of a, b, and c which generally gives people time to pay. One of the students from school A revealed that one can start normal schooling without paying school fees and other development fees. According to the students, 'the school gives like two or three weeks, a month or five weeks before they can start asking for payment'. What bothered the students at the interview section was the situation of the less-privileged who cannot pay but are very serious with their studies. The students underscored that they gain the same knowledge that other people are gaining instead of being neglected. This takes us to the next discussion on low school fees in Catholic schools compared to other well-established private schools.

#### **5.7 Theme 6: Low School Fees compared to Private Schools**

The nature of Catholic schools in Nigeria is such that people generally judge them to be 'expensive'. Ironically this judgment is commonly posed by people who do not have their children there, but have only heard about the 'high-quality' education that the schools offer. Private schools on the other hand are schools owned by individual persons or groups of people with a common purpose wishing to establish schools for profit-making or as a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), charitable project. Schools owned by NGOs are not for the poor; rather they are run on very high costs particularly for wealthy people and as a profit-making project. Catholic schools are not private schools, though; there are some private schools that are called Catholic schools because they are owned by Catholic individuals.

Catholic schools in Nigeria from a general perspective, charge low fees compared to private schools that are known for their high fees policy. This is presented in table 6.

**Table 6: Comparison of Catholic Schools and Other Private Schools Fees**

	Catholic Schools		Secondary Other Private Secondary Schools	
	Junior	Senior	Junior	Senior
1. Abuja	₦250,000- ₦1,500,000	₦300,000- ₦1,700,000	₦450,000- ₦1,700,000	₦500,000- ₦1,900,000
2. Enugu	₦50,000	₦60,000	₦300,000- ₦400,000	₦500,000- ₦600,000
3. Lagos	₦60,000	₦85,000	₦250,000- ₦380,000	₦455,000- ₦765,000

*Source: Author's Field Survey, 2015-2016*

Table 6 presents the school fees being charged in Catholic Schools in comparison with other well-established private secondary schools in Abuja, Enugu, and Lagos States. For instance, in Abuja, being the Federal Capital City, Catholic schools are more expensive as seen in the range of two hundred and fifty thousand (₦250,000) to one million five hundred thousand naira (₦1,500,000) being charged in junior secondary school and three hundred thousand naira (₦300,000) to one million seven hundred thousand naira (₦1,700,000) being charged in senior secondary school. This is still lower than some private schools that charge as much as from one million seven hundred thousand naira (₦1,700,000) and one million nine hundred thousand naira (₦1,900,000) respectively for junior and senior secondary schools respectively. It is only in Enugu that Catholic schools charge lower fees, which is between fifty thousand naira (₦50,000) and sixty thousand naira (₦60,000) respectively for junior and senior secondary schools. Private schools in the state charge more as seen on the table. This shows that Catholic schools are considerate but still negates the principle of 'preferential option for the poor'. The next focus will be on what participants said about fees charged in Catholic schools in comparison with those of private schools.

As earlier mentioned, school A was originally established to form women for the Religious Life. In frank terms, it was not, from the outset, meant for profit-making; rather, the school began from inception to charge low fees so as to enable the poorest of the poor to access it if they wish to serve God through that means. Analysis of interviews conducted showed that many participants tried to confirm the 'low-cost' fees of the school by asserting that the fees are much lower than what many non-Catholic schools charge. Two teachers and one of the parents spoke convincingly on the nature of the school. According to one of the participants, the school is doing well because they are equipped with modern facilities and new infrastructure that enhance their teaching and other activities in the school, unlike the private schools that charge high fees.

While looking at fees in the school, it might also be relevant to include the location of the school in our comparison with other schools in much bigger cities like Abuja and Lagos. This comparison is important because it will help to have a better view and to appreciate the schools from different perspectives. In view of this, another teacher, tried to see the school from the economic condition of its location. It is therefore understood that schools in Enugu city and its neighbourhoods would be cheaper than those in Abuja and Lagos, especially because the cost of living in Enugu is expected to be cheaper than what obtains in the bigger cities. The economic condition of the region, therefore, determines the cost of education there. One parent who has a child in school A tried to compare the fees of the non-Catholic school, an Anglican secondary school. She stated that:

The school fees paid in this school is low compared to the training and attention they give to the children. This is a Mission school; a school they have opened to help others, to help the poor. What they are paying is so meagre because in the other school, 'Good Shepherd,' an Anglican, they charge between one hundred and fifty and two hundred thousand per session. But school A takes about forty-five thousand, fifty thousand per session for school fees and in instalments.

While commenting on the low cost of school fees in school B, one teacher interviewed stated that:

Many people opt for private schools, but since many families cannot possibly afford to train their children in private schools, the Catholic Church in a way stands as a bridge, so to say, to make provision for the children of the poor to get into possibly Catholic schools, if they have something like scholarship programme for them.

One other teacher from school C was of the view that some Catholic schools are expensive, thereby contradicting the views of many also from the same school. She doubted if the Church sets up some schools specifically for the poor, but 'school C is certainly not for the poor because, by comparing this school to other schools in terms of the fees, the poor, the average Nigerian cannot afford it and that is the truth; it is only for those who are rich'.

Another teacher, also in School C pointed out that School C was originally established to give access to the education of the poor and thereupon has the opinion that the school is serving the purpose for which it was founded. Comparing school C to other non-Catholic schools within the city, the participant stated: 'It was primarily meant to be for the poor, that is why the school fees is not as high as some other schools like Green Spring and some other schools around. That is why this place can accommodate the poor and it can also accommodate the rich'.

### **5.7.1 External Perspectives**

The external observers in this research, who were chosen from their various educational and professional backgrounds, presented their individual and general views on Catholic schools and Catholic education in Nigeria. Speaking on the low cost of fees in Catholic schools in Nigeria, especially in relation to the minimum wage of N18,000, a participant, who is also a politician, argued that fees in Catholic schools are affordable compared to those of private schools where people pay up to one million Naira and above (Nigerian currency). Similarly, another observer and member of the National Assembly in the parliament, House of Representatives, argued that education

has been made accessible to both the rich and the poor of the society by the Catholic schools. In view of the accessibility of Catholic schools, this participant stated that, 'Catholic education is impressive because with it, a very good number of people who could not have had access to education now have access to education and the only sure way to drive away poverty is to ensure that somebody is well educated and has a better foundation in life and with that, a better society will be built'.

Another of the external observers in this research, a prominent lawyer and a politician, was also of the view that the Catholic Church is doing well with regard to making education accessible to the less-privileged at bearable costs, especially at the pre-primary and primary levels. This participant explained that education is almost free in these Catholic schools because it is seen as a support from the Priest to his parishioners, and still expressed further that:

The fees that are paid in some Catholic schools in certain areas like Nsukka (East of Nigeria) cannot be compared to the fees that are paid in private schools of the same level. This is because fees are essentially subsidized in Catholic schools to allow the less-privileged to have access to good education. Here in Enugu, the two best schools that are run here are the College of Immaculate Conception and then the Holy Rosary Girls' Secondary School. Both of them are incidentally owned by the Catholic Church and anybody in Enugu can attest to the fact that the quality of education given by these two schools is quite high and that the fees paid in these schools are not comparable to the fees paid in private schools that have the same quality and standards.

Lower fees in the Nigerian Catholic secondary schools compared to other private schools, from findings, is a way of encouraging the less privileged to access admission for their children, a motivator for people to think both inwards and outwards towards making better sense out of life's situations, a breakthrough into a more meaningful and fulfilling lifestyle. The Catholic schools also provide employment opportunities for the community as discussed immediately.

## **5.8 Theme 7: Employment Opportunities to Local Community**

Some Catholic schools have different ways of compensating the local community where the schools are located. One of such means is by creating job opportunities that will benefit the people. According to one of the teachers in School B, the local community is often compensated by helping or empowering the poor:

Most of the times, the school tends to do charity but the best option is empowering the poor. One thing the school has done to empower the poor rather than give charity is employment because most of the people in this locality are very poor and they do not have skills to be employed as a bursar or cashier or as a P.E teacher or Chemistry or English teacher. However, the school has what is referred to as 'support staff' employed by our system and this support staff are mostly people around this locality.

Another participant suggested differently that 'rather than give the community a specific sum of money annually, the school employs the young men and women who are around to work and get money. This is how they are being empowered'. However, it would matter much to consider the extent of this empowerment. Does this assistance given to the support staff enable the staff to come out of poverty? How effective is the empowerment towards transforming their situations?

## **5.9 Theme 8: Service to Community (Charity Home)**

One of the attributes of Catholic schools is their relationship with the local community. What this means is that the Catholic Church is conscious of the local community in which the Church and/or the school is situated. This is one of the major reasons for establishing schools, nursery, primary, secondary or tertiary, so as to serve the people and at the same time help to boost the Church financially where possible, socially and as part of the means of evangelization. As the aim of this research indicates, to investigate the extent to which Catholic schools in Nigeria are serving the interests of the poor, some of the research findings point to the service that the school or schools offer to the people, not only to the locality but also to their neighbouring towns or cities, which were also presented here.

One of the teachers from School A spoke of the 'Charity Home' project which was founded by the Religious Order that owns the school. The participant identified that the school helps to maintain the inmates or residents of the 'charity home', in the sense that many families living in this home are handicapped and living freely through other people's goodwill and donations. Another teacher described the project further by pointing out that there were orphanages, disabled people's sections within the home. The home was built in order to alleviate poverty and to give the residents education, parental care and a sense of belonging in the society. It is, therefore, one of the ways through which the Order carries out its apostolate of love, charity and justice to the poor and the needy. Two teachers interviewed recalled that School C's students visit the motherless children's home, the old people and the physically challenged like the blind, with gifts every 27th January to celebrate the school's Founder's Day. However, one of the participants revealed that the school does not carry out this project regularly. Moreover, this researcher found out that School B does a lot when it comes to service to the community. This service is well built into the curriculum and it is called 'service program'.

## **5.10 Conclusion**

Drawing from the reflections and thoughts of the participants, the 'preferential option for the poor', though differently defined, means the same thing. In practice, the schools care for the poor educationally in different forms. The various themes derived from the findings show that the Catholic schools devise many ways of ensuring that the poor receive education. This is evidenced in the various scholarships that are made available for students, especially those from poor homes.

Based on the analyses of responses of the interviews, one of the broad findings is that upon purchase of entrance form, admission is given to students after passing the entrance examination and interview. Thereafter, poor students enjoy scholarship schemes provided by the Catholic schools. The schools also address the question of

the poor through endowment funds, as well as donations from rich parents, Congregation and from the Priests who make sacrifices from their allowances to help the poor. In addition, parents are sometimes allowed to pay fees in instalment and when such poor parents are able to prove their indigent state, school fees could be waived outrightly.

### **5.11 Critical Reflection on the finding**

The key role of Religious Congregations in Education for the Poor in Nigeria, past and present, has been demonstrated. At the same time, market forces are becoming stronger in the country shown by the growth of private fee-paying schools. The future of the 'preferential option for the poor' in education in Nigeria depends crucially upon Religious Orders being able to recruit Religious Sisters as teachers and by support from the wider Catholic community giving philanthropic financial assistance so as to be able to address the idea of providing educational justice for the poor.

However, it is also crucial that in the longer term, the Catholic Bishops must enter into political negotiations with the government to provide finance for poor students' scholarship on a national basis that can help Nigerian students to access Catholic and other Faith-based schools. As the researcher has argued before, it is likely that educational researchers will be able to show that Faith-based schools, because they provide not only good academic results but also young people formed in morality and values, they are contributing to the formation of good citizens in Nigerian society.

This has made the researcher realise how important it is to do follow-up research on the alumni of Faith schools to evaluate the extent to which their occupational choices and their life in the community can be shown to serve the common good. The researcher expects that the Catholic Bishops and Catholic Higher Education institutions in Nigeria will sponsor such research.

## CHAPTER SIX

### ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS ON THE ROLES OF THE BISHOPS AND MAJOR SUPERIORS AS 'PROPRIETORS'.

#### 6.1 Introduction

The interviews analyzed in this chapter were conducted with Bishop Francis Ikpeme of the CBCN, the Superior General of the Religious Order that is the Proprietor of one of the schools (Mother May Anukam), as well as the Priest who is also the Education Secretary for Catholic education in Nigeria (Father Anthony Eke), Principals and some representative staff of the three sample schools. Other participants whose interviews were also analyzed were students, parents and public representatives.

For proximity and convenient reasons, the researcher could not interview the Proprietors of schools 'B' and 'C'. Instead, Principals and some administrative staff were interviewed in place of the Proprietor because it was not possible to meet with them all. (See 'location and access'). The Principals in this case served as the recognized representative of the Proprietors.

Throughout the interview process, the researcher sought to know how participants perceived the 'preferential option for the poor' and their roles in ensuring that this principle is in practice taken care of in their respective schools. This strategy helped the researcher to draw more meaningful conclusions from the responses, knowing that the 'preferential option for the poor' might be interpreted differently by different people. Participants were also asked questions concerning admissions and what they do to ensure that the poor are admitted in their schools. The researcher also sought to know what the participants (Proprietors and Principals) do when the school does not have enough funds to assist the poor in gaining access to education.

**Research Question two: What roles do the Bishops and Major Superiors  
as Proprietors of Catholic schools play in this regard?**

In proffering answers to research question two, the researcher concentrated on the meanings that the major participants (Bishop Ikpeme, Mother Anukam and Father Eke) give to this principle; and secondly, the themes that emerged from the responses given by the Proprietors, the Secretary, Principals and other participants will be discussed. Below are the different meanings given to the principle of the 'preferential option for the poor': Firstly, henceforth will be referred to in this context as 'a') the Bishop - Bishop Ikpeme, secondly ('b'), the Superior General - Mother Anukam, ('c'), the Secretary - Father Eke.

a) 'Preferential Option for the Poor' according to the Bishop Ikpeme means that:

The poor should be given an advantage within a social political economic system of any society so that they can adequately participate in it and be able to have their livelihood, live their lives happily within that society; that no one should be marginalized or relegated, rather, that everyone should have some fair share in the resources of that society.

This participant in other words, ratifies that:

the poor is already marginalized within the social and economic political system of a society and that in competing for the resources of the society and for the livelihood of every individual, the poor are in a disadvantaged position and as such, there was need to make the system acceptable, and more available to the poor.

b) Defining 'Preferential Option for the Poor, school' A's Proprietor, Mother Anukam said that:

This is a way of ensuring that the poor have access into the Catholic schools. What this means is that those people who are not well-off financially are given particular attention in the Congregational schools, to admit them into these schools, and no matter their financial status, train them to become what God has ordained that they become. In other words, they should be priority in the schools so that nobody is left behind.

The implication of this to the Proprietor is that:

It is the duty of the Superior General of the Congregation to enforce this principle and to encourage those in this category to make efforts in their own way to assist themselves in gaining admission into these schools through successful entrance examination. However, these people have to be encouraged to go to school, by supplementing where possible,

with the help of not only the school fees, but also and very importantly, through the P.T.A, the goodwill of well-meaning people and the Sisters' salaries. This is why as a Congregation; those who cannot pay school fees are never sent away, rather, the Congregation makes up where they lack.

c) Father Anthony Eke stated that the 'Preferential Option for the Poor' generally means:

The way of giving the poor people in the society more attention so that they can also feel parts and parcel of what the Church is doing and stands for.

According to Father Eke, the Church considers all categories of people, rich or poor, in their schools but that more efforts are to be made in admitting the less privileged in order to make the Catholic education system more inclusive. It also means that in the Church's social programmes, 'both the poor and ... the rich, taken together but more attention is shown to the poor, those people who cannot afford the basic needs, of whatever it is that is supposed to go to them'.

To be able to meet up with what this principle is about, both from the perspectives of the Catholic Social Teaching and from the different perceptions that people give to it, it is expected that the Proprietors of schools play specific roles towards the growth and enhancement of the institution. In the context of this research, it is important to discuss some of these roles briefly in order to aid the understanding of this work better.

Bishop Ikpeme asserted that leadership is about taking the lead in every organization. It also involves the dissemination of the organization's rules, regulations and set goals, for more focused and acceptable productivity. In this case therefore, the role of the Proprietor, as stated by the Bishop includes:

Policy-making, supervision and making sure the Catholic character of the schools are well protected and that effective management of the schools is also put in place. In creating the general policy for all the Catholic schools in Nigeria, there was need to at least bring the schools to the level where everyone can identify them as Catholic schools, which are different in some ways from the public schools. The approach to education is very different as such the Church defines itself as collaborators in educational enterprise in Nigeria, as well as protects the

Catholic identity. In addition, the approach to life is very important because the Catholic school must be able to give every child that faith-based initiative; faith-based formation, which every Catholic school tries to implement so that those who attend the Catholic schools are able to see themselves as people who have something extra, something more than those who go to public schools. They first of all come to the Catholic schools to learn and to be formed in the practice of the faith in the values of the Catholic faith.

The responsibilities of the Bishop are very extensive in piloting the affairs of Catholic education as seen above and in the sense of being actively involved in the policy-making for Catholic Schools in Nigeria, which, 'includes all the elementary, secondary and tertiary institutions in Nigeria'. The Bishop works in collaboration with a committee of experts within the Nigerian system. By experts, it means:

Those that the bishops have appointed to work with the Chairman of education and to be able to provide necessary leadership for all the Catholic schools in Nigeria. They have been very helpful in providing useful advices and in giving the support needed to be able to govern properly and to also be able to manage the system properly.

Mother Anukam's role is more limited compared to that of the Bishop, in the sense that the Superior General is only concerned with the affairs of the schools owned by the Congregation. As indicated by school A's Proprietor, the responsibilities are as follows:

To ensure that the Congregation owned schools work in line with the instructions of the Catholic Social Teaching on education and the *Catholic Church Policy on Education in Nigeria*, in collaboration with the managers of the schools at all levels. As the school's Proprietor, proper care is taken in the making of policies that align with the Congregation's constitution on education, as well as creating the education commission that sees to the day-to-day affairs of all the schools, including supervision and implementation of the policies.

It is also important to discuss the role of the Education Secretary of Catholic Education in Nigeria. The Secretary stated that:

The role is to generally coordinate the activities in all the Catholic schools in this country, monitoring or ensuring that the policy of Catholic education is implemented in all the schools across the country; because there are some students in the schools that cannot afford the school fees that the school is expecting them to pay. What the Church recommends for such students is to encourage the Proprietors and school managers to give them scholarships so that they would not be deprived of education. The National Secretary ensures that the policy of the Catholic education is implemented in all the schools. More also, to

ensure that the standard, the quality, of the teaching, based on the policy is maintained, as well as reaching out to the Principals through the Directors.

The point understood from the various roles is that every effort is in theory focused towards enhancing the Catholic schools' service for the poor. During the interview, the Secretary, mentioned that in most cases, the Principals are left to take decisions on how to assist poor candidates to gain admission into their schools. However, some Bishops also help to hasten this support when they empower those managing their schools to admit children from poor family backgrounds even when they cannot afford part of the fees. In view of this assistance, the Secretary cited a practical example that:

In Saint Peter's, the Principal allowed about three children out of the total of one thousand, one hundred students to study free through scholarships. They are orphans and had no one to pay for their school fees. These are the poor being referred to in this study. However, there is need to do more.

School A's means of dealing with the preferential option and fees issue is stated by the Proprietor as 'natural means' of saving some money specifically for the purpose of training the less privileged and in some other ways as explained by the Proprietor:

The school also raises grants, as planning is not only for poor people, but for the rich people as well. Sometimes at the P.T.A meetings, some money is often set apart to take care of the poor ones that are admitted in the school. So, this is the line and strategy which is now helping to alleviate poverty and it has really changed so many people in that regard.

In this chapter also, participants' responses were arranged in themes and categories for uniformity and clarity. These were discussed with references for a better understanding. The first issue discussed is the low-cost fees.

## **6.2 Low-Cost Fees.**

The finding of this research indicates that there is no uniformity in the charging of fees amongst Catholic schools in Nigeria. Different schools pay different amount of fees. This can be understood from what school 'A's Proprietor said about the school in

comparison to other Catholic schools. In view of the low cost of fees, one of the participants and the Proprietor of school A stated that:

The school fee is not exorbitant for now. It is very moderate compared to what people pay now in many other schools. People pay heavily in those schools, but they are not in the Juniorate. This school still pays between 50 and 60 [thousand Naira] while others are 300, 400, 500, 600 [thousand Naira], but their results are never better than this school's at the end.

Information regarding School B's fees shows that the school charges ₦1.5 (One Million, five hundred thousand Naira) per child annually. In view of the fees, one of the teachers, a participant in the interview stated that everything is ₦1.5 provided it is paid up front. Participating students from school B also confirmed the school fees when they said that junior students pay ₦1.5 while the seniors pay ₦1.6 Naira (see chapter five). However, some of the students expressed concern about the payment procedure that if full amount is not paid at a certain date, more charges will be incurred. They equally argued that the school fees are on the high side for both privileged and non-privileged students and that it is harsh and quite inconvenient for the parents and/or the wards because it would be wrong to think everybody can provide the fees at once.

School C charges Eighty-five thousand Naira (₦85, 000.00) outside other school levies. The students interviewed revealed that with the exception of boarders, day students are allowed to begin school while they pay later in the term with other development fees. On the other hand, students who live in the boarding house are expected to pay their boarding fees before moving into the hostel. The cost of books is embedded in the fees at the first time, meaning that the books are not paid for separately. The next pertinent issue discussed is sponsorship/fee subsidy.

### **6.3 Sponsorship/Fee Subsidy**

The issue of sponsorship or fee subsidy occupies an important position in this research. This is because the 'preferential option for the poor' relies very much on the amount of sponsorship a school is able to offer to poor students or the extent of

subsidy that can be given for the educational training of such children. However, lack of enough funds in Catholic schools limits the number of children from poor backgrounds that could be offered admission, unlike in the developed countries like the UK and Australia where government assists financially with Faith School education. It could also be compared to some Catholic schools in the USA, particularly the Mount Carmel Nursery/Primary School owned by the parish but being managed by a female Religious Order. One-time parish priest at Mount Carmel [now a Bishop] revealed that at some point, the parish (Mount Carmel) paid almost two hundred thousand USA Dollars for the running and maintenance of the school. Using this reference as an indicator, it all means that it is still within the scope of the Proprietors to find possible ways of subsidizing fees for children whose parents cannot afford the schools' fees, by using parish levies.

In school A, the Proprietor saw the lack of money in the school as:

A worry but it is a lovely worry in the sense that the school really want to have a name, that is, a situation whereby the children should get what they should get as students and to have qualified teachers to teach them. This not forgetting the fact that a private school needs to have money to pay for the services of qualified teachers otherwise the qualified ones will disappear looking for where they will be getting more.

Mother Anukam therefore explained the school's efforts in ensuring that children from poor families are not neglected educationally by stating that:

The school within the little resources set apart some money to pay for the poor. Sometimes the P.T.A sets apart some money to take care of these poor ones that are admitted in the school. So, this represents the plan and strategy which is now helping to alleviate poverty and as such so many people have been trained with this type of assistance. The problems may have been enormous but through the goodwill of the people and the goodwill of the Daughters [the Reverend Sisters of our Congregation] who contributed from their own earning, the poor have been taken care of in this school.

This can be categorized to fall in line with Grace's (2010, p. 29) argument that:

The first Catholic schools established in nearly every country were founded by Religious Congregations ... These schools were provided for students free of charge or at the lowest possible fee. This service to the poor was made possible because of the subsidies which the Congregations made available to launch the great philanthropic mission.

Explaining the extent of the sponsorship, Mother Anukam said, 'It is a mixed school, we have the poor and also the rich'. By saying that the school is mixed does not refer to it as being co-educational, rather the participant means that the school is a female school, that offers educational opportunities to children from both rich and poor families.

It is also interesting to learn that some Bishops in the rural parts of Nigeria find ways of reducing or subsidizing fees for those who cannot afford them. The Bishop stated that:

In the rural areas, the Bishops sometimes bring down the prices of those schools to be able to accommodate the poor, but at the same time they still try to make money to meet the demands and the needs of the schools. But what is most important also is that, many dioceses, many Congregations, and Religious Congregations give rooms for scholarship to assist the poor ones, especially the very brilliant ones who are not able to meet with their school's expenses. So, in the Nigerian setting, there is this very serious problem of trying to measure: 'how to set the tuitions for the students? How can students, especially the poor ones be helped to be able to go to Catholic schools?'

The explanation provided by Father Eke, the education Secretary on sponsorships inform that some dioceses try to ensure that Catholic schools in their dioceses create some opportunities to admit poor students by subsidizing fees for them. In such cases, everything is given to them including books, toiletries and school uniforms, and these are addressed from external funding/grants as discussed next.

#### **6.4 External Funding/Grants**

This is another source from which a school can receive money for its use and maintenance which can also be extended for the education of the poor. In the Nigerian Catholic schools, as in many parts of the world today, external funding/grants can come through various means. Some of such means can be seen from what the Bishop tried to reveal:

Through adoption, the Catholic schools do have some very rich Nigerians who just want to contribute towards the development of some of the schools. They give donations towards the management of the

schools, which helps to bring the tuition down a little bit. In some dioceses in Nigeria, the bishops pay the tuition of some of these young people just to make sure they have the necessary education that they need. It may not be completely about the money, but the money is still very important to be able to keep the doors of the schools open.

In a similar form, school A's Proprietor highlighted donations from well-meaning individuals and sometimes grants from international organizations as another source of funding Catholic schools. The Proprietor explained:

Before now, the Juniorate girls prepared people to become Sisters only. Presently, being in the convent does not mean that an individual will be forced to become a Sister. After finishing education, and armed with the result, the person is free to go into the world to take care of people, use the acquired knowledge to help people, work and earn money to live well. When knowledgeable enough, then begin to help others. Now that is why, the apostolate gradually changed its face, by not relating it only to those who want to become Sisters. The school has about a thousand students on enrolment, but by the end maybe about ten will become Reverend Sisters.

According to the Proprietor, the Founder of the Order had huge plans to provide education that would benefit not only young girls who would become Reverend Sisters, but also an educational establishment that would train both rich and poor alike. This therefore brings us to the issue discussed next, which is social charity/social justice in the curriculum.

## **6.5 Social Charity/Social Justice in the Curriculum**

Pope Leo XIII's (1891) emphasis on social charity (being kind to the poor) and Pius XI's (1931) emphasis on Social Justice (changing the conditions of the poor) can be linked to what the Proprietor of school 'A', tried to explain, that students in school A are formed in ways that they can always apply their knowledge in the service of their fellow human beings. It means that one does not have to be a Religious to be able to help others or be charitable to people. Rather, the training is the same with other secondary institutions.

This view was stated by another participant, a Bishop whose expectation is that these teachings should be tackled in schools beginning from the entire education

system, through the structure of each school, to the managers, and to the students who are being taught. The Bishop stated that:

In the school, particularly within the school structure and within the school ... making sure that the poor are not discriminated against by the students, by the teachers and by the system that all children are treated fairly within their school system. In the witnessing part of the mission, Catholic schools are also a means of witnessing to the Nigerian populace. The Catholic Social Teaching emphasizes that the poor must have the same dignity like every other person within the society, no one has the right to diminish that dignity in any form or shape. So, the Church tries to promote that dignity in different ways and people have their own completely different ways in which they enhance the life of the poor within the system so that they can participate adequately and effectively within the environment they live.

The Church as a body is therefore very conscious of the place of the poor and its responsibilities towards the poor within the different dioceses in Nigeria and in all the Catholic institutions, which leads to occasional waiver of school fees for indigent students as seen in the next discussion.

## **6.6 School Fees Waiver**

This is a form of help given by the school to poor students or as a reward for some achievements by a student or students. It also happens when a school for some reasons allows one or more students not to pay fees. School 'A's Proprietor emphasized that the school normally sets up some plans in advance to avoid unnecessary disruptions that come from some parents who may not be able to pay the expected fees particularly on resumption days. According to one of the participants, and as has been mentioned in the previous chapter, the school does not send any student away for lack of fees. Occasionally however, some parents decide to quietly withdraw their children without consultation with the school. In this case therefore, there is nothing much that the school can do. This confirms what the Principal of School 'A' said about not sending poor students away when they are not able to pay school fees. Speaking about the Founder, school 'A's Principal said, 'had an interest in poor people precisely and that is why they are not being expelled because of fees.'

Different schools may have different ways of effecting this factor within their reach as stated by the Bishop:

In ... [one of the Catholic] Nursery and Primary Schools in Ondo State, managed by ... [a Religious Order], the daughters of the Governor passed through the school. The school charged the governor more (a million Naira per term) for each of his children and with that amount, the school was able to accommodate so many other children to be able to go to school. That completely subsidizes the tuition for many of the students who were not able to pay their tuition.

The implication is that the Governor was charged exorbitantly because he could afford it at that time, and the excess was used to help the poor who could not afford to pay their tuition fees. This policy of cross-subsidization has historically been used by Religious Congregations in other locations e.g. in Australia by the Marist Brothers (Canavan, 2009). It is equally imperative to note that the Catholic schools are equally interested in character formation of the students. This is discussed next.

## **6.7 Character Formation**

One distinguishing mark of Catholic education is a strong emphasis on character formation. This propels many parents, especially the wealthy ones to send their children to Catholic schools, as well as support the schools financially to provide for the poor. Explaining this factor, Archbishop Michael Miller, Secretary to the Congregation for Catholic Education in Rome (2006), points out clearly that 'The Catholic school is committed ... to the development of the whole man [and woman], since in Christ, the perfect man, all human values find their fulfillment and unity' (see also Miller, 2007, p. 462). The *Catholic Church Policy on Education in Nigeria* (2005, p.1) equally states that 'Catholic or Christian education is the sacred task of forming the character of a child and aiding him/her to attain the purpose of existence'. In line with these teachings, the Proprietor of School 'A' stated that the aim of the school is not just to 'train' the rich or the poor, but the school is expected to 'form' people to be good Nigerians.

In this view of human development, one of the teachers disclosed how school A performs this role, which is through:

Personal and Social Education, which is inbuilt in the school's curriculum. In these P.S.E. classes, issues of justice, charity, and helping the child to develop the virtues of a true human being, are the focus.

Bishop Ikpeme emphasized the importance of character formation as one of the prerogatives of Catholic schools' teaching by stating that:

Practically, everywhere in the world particularly here in Nigeria, it rests on good information and on the formation of the person. These two naturally lead to transformation. Many of the policies revolve round these three points that every Catholic school must give good information, what do teachers teach in class? What are the contents of the lectures? What is the subject matter that teachers are teaching the children within the school system? Once it has been ascertained that a good standard of education and good information have been given, the Church also wants the children well formed. Formation of character, formation in moral values, formation in integrity and so many other ways are what the Church requires the children to be educated in and to be brought up in. It is hoped that when children get good information and are well formed, that naturally means that they are in the process of the formation to be able to own themselves, to be able to stand as a people with the society and be able to impact the values of the society.

In reflecting on the above submission by the Bishop, students of school B expressed with conviction the practicality of what they are taught in school and how they translate them in their character (character formation). Through their learning in school, students have developed the spirit of sharing and accommodation amongst fellow students that each person is conscious of the other. One student stated that:

Some of us sometimes do not have what the other person has. No matter how little it is, even if it is as small as lolly pop and if there are ten students, we are taught to break that lolly pop for every single person and everybody will be ready to have a share of it. That may not be how we are brought up individually from our homes, but that is how it is here. That is how we are. It is how we are trained. We just put it into our head. When something is in you, it is not just you, it is in everybody.

In expressing the benefits of the service programme, some of the students of school B reported that:

In the service project, there were about a hundred people within my age bracket. Many friends were made there and we still call or try to call out to them once in a while and when I visit, it is really good because they

ask for things that I cannot give to them and it is like a habit for me to do that. ...[the school] therefore taught us in that sense because it is easier to say 'yes' or to accept to help them because of what they are going through.

Another student from school B thought that the best way he could assist the poor would be to work as a psychotherapist. In view of liberating the poor from oppression, the student argued:

Their human rights are being denied of them because they are poor. So there is need to help them psychologically as in to be a therapist, psychotherapist... to help them out, to guide them to be more confident, and that there is a reason why God created them and to remind them that everything that happens in this world is for a reason. So they should not harm themselves because of what they pass through, that they should just have faith in God.

Similar to what other students revealed from their school, students of school A expressed that the school taught them to be sensitive to one another's feelings and situation. According to one of the students, 'the school tries as much as possible not to raise any sense of disparity between students because it is sensitive'. This clearly explains the level of students' knowledge and understanding of what it means to relate well with the poor and the less privileged, to have a feeling for the other or empathy for fellow human beings, as well as to also recognize generosity in ensuring that they can give one of their two uniforms to the students who have none. These all add up to the character of Catholic schools as enumerated by the Bishop. The Bishop stated that:

In creating the general policy for all the Catholic schools in Nigeria, the attempt is to at least bring the schools to the level where everyone can identify them as Catholic schools, which are different in some ways from the public schools and ... their approach to education should be very different and that Catholic identity and approach to life should be visible too ... because the feeling is that a Catholic school must be able to give every child that faith-based initiative, faith-based formation, which every Catholic school tries to implement so that those who attend the schools are able to see themselves as people who have something extra, something more than those who go to public schools. They first of all come to the Catholic schools to learn and to be formed in the practice of the faith and in the values of the Catholic faith.

The teachings of Pope Leo XIII's (1891) on social charity and Pope Pius XI's (1931) on social justice both come into play in the students' attitude to one another.

The students talked about the virtues of sharing and being sensitive to other people's situations or circumstances as part of their character formation which they apply in the transformation of one another. In this also, there is the reality of Freire's 'Education as a Practice of Freedom' in the life of the students, and applying their own freedom to be able to transform others. This also explains the acquisition of the spirit of giving and self-denial, and the ability to apply themselves for the comfort of other people. In other words, learning to place others first in order to assist fellow students depicts students' assimilation and internalization of their formation in school. The question arising from this is: To what extent is the assimilation of the formation in Catholic schools? Or What is the percentage of the assimilation of the given formation at a certain time in the life of the students? How is this checked? The answers to these pertinent questions are addressed in the next discourse on maintaining quality education that teaches core values including morality, discipline and academic excellence.

#### **6.8 Maintaining Quality Education that Teaches Core Values including Morality, Discipline and Academic Excellence**

In Nigeria today, there is decline in quality of education, and so by maintaining quality, Bishops and Major Superiors as Proprietors of Catholic schools attract more patronage of Catholic schools by wealthy parents. This is because people are of the view that Catholic schools have a distinctive character, that enhances moral values and discipline in addition to academic excellence. Many people trust that Catholic schools are better even in this contemporary society in providing high educational standard compared to public schools. My findings show that this is one of the reasons many people wish to enrol their children in Catholic schools. Some responses from some of the participants revealed that these schools were founded to serve these purposes and that many people come to Catholic schools because they do not get those qualities in public or other private schools.

Looking at school A, one participating parent spoke with excitement:

In this school, we saw the sharp difference between individual private schools and Catholic schools. This school does not charge high fees and at the same time they give our daughter very good education and training that will make her to become a very better person tomorrow. In fact, the school (A) advertises before the school starts – so, everyone parent is free to come and register their children/wards at affordable cost. They do not place money in the forefront but they encourage people to first come to the school.

Another participating parent shared similar opinion to the above. According to her, the formation students receive from the school makes them better persons. Some of the external observers shared their views on the quality of Catholic education in this contemporary society. One participant stated that because of what Catholic schools offer to the public, including people who could ordinarily send their children to public or private schools,

People from all religions are now going to these Catholic schools because it is providing a bridge, a saviour for the society. There are a lot of benefits children who went to Catholic schools derive. What was lost yesterday has been brought back – Discipline. Secondly, they afford people the education they need, that is, the moral instructions which is not found in private schools where rich people go to. The results for instance in Anambra state shows that they score very highly and even number one in most examinations.

Another external observer in this research expressed the Catholic Church's contribution to the society by stating that:

The impact Catholic schools are making on education to the society transcends beyond the literal meaning of getting educated or being able to read and write alone. When the Anambra state government returned the schools back to missionaries, a classical example is Queen of the Rosary College (QRC) Onitsha; it was noticed immediately from their WAEC result performance. The way the Principal in the school took the administrative work seriously quite unlike when it was left in the hands of the government was unprecedented. Since then, Anambra State has been in the forefront of states that perform well in WAEC and in JAMB. In Nigeria today, one outstanding school that people have interest in attending is Loyola. Also, an outstanding Catholic Primary school is Fatima in Abuja, Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory. This is based on the fact that education is not just about books only, but it also involves the morals and discipline aspect of the students. As a matter of fact, in educating an individual, the person is being developed mentally, physically and then spiritually, which constitute a balanced education, that turns out a better leader, and then collectively better people in the society.

Equally recognizing the attraction of Catholic education to non-Christians because of its remarkable results in academics and moral status another participant stated that:

Many Muslims, example being the former CBN Governor who is now the Emir of Kano, went to Catholic school. Therefore, it is not only law and discipline that are instilled, but also academics. The foundation of any nation can be said to be shaking if good education is not given. So, Catholic education has been able to provide the very key to the road map of a good academic excellence to students.

A student participant from school C on the standard and quality of education in the school stated that the courses they encountered include:

Civic education and morals and apart from the religious arm, they were also taught how to relate with the less privileged in the society. And every day, members of the staff, that is, the administrative staff, especially the Reverend Father speaks to them on some things going on in the society.

The point is that from the students' perspective, the school always talks about bullying and its implications and urges them to avoid any form of bullying. In addition to this, students are counseled on ways 'to stop picking bad habits'. The students believe that the school has strict disciplinary measures, and according to the students, they have not witnessed any case of 'people assaulting the less privileged'. One of the teachers explained that he teaches both rich and poor students and the lessons concentrate on how not to disrespect or neglect the less privileged.

Speaking also on what the school does to practically teach students how to relate with the poor, even after their secondary education, the Principal (Priest) commented:

In life, all fingers are never equal. While some will be up there, others will be down there; sometimes it is just a gap, one has to ensure that he or she stretches hands to help out. The students are basically taught about love. The school therefore always admonishes the children that this is how to live, to always consider the other people that are less privileged.

One participating teacher from school C, spoke on morals and according to her, there is no special project with regard to inculcating justice and charity in the school's

curriculum, but that class teachers and those responsible for holding Wednesday assemblies speak to students on morals.

Similarly, another participant corroborated the above teacher that reading Bible passages is part of the content of the scheme of work and that it is there that the students are taught to treat one another equally. Considering this, the school teaches the students not to discriminate but to see themselves and others as children of God with equal opportunities. This consideration is given more understanding next in the sub-theme of non-discrimination between the rich and the poor students.

### **6.9 Non-Discrimination between Rich and Poor Students.**

One of the distinguishing marks of Catholic schools is the teaching of Christ to love God and to love neighbour as God's love (Luke 10: 27). In other words, people should be taught not to discriminate against people who are different from themselves. Participants from the three schools shared the various ways their school deals with this teaching. For instance, teachers from school A shared the same views on the school's lessons that there is no discrimination amongst students, and that discrimination brings hatred which goes against God's commandment of loving one another as instructed in the Bible. Both teachers like many others in school A, confirmed that the school is open to 'the poor, the rich, the average'. In view of these moral lessons, a teacher reported that in JS 1, students pay for everything – books, wears, and in the refectory, they learn to appreciate one another, and not to judge or castigate fellow students and other people. School A's students testified that there is no discrimination amongst them:

We talk about how to love and how to mix with one another so as not to feel stigmatised. ... We do not discriminate against each other even if we know some students are not so rich or they are poor. We do not discriminate. All of us tend to socialise together.

A teacher in school B expressed how the students are taught to see life positively from their parents' perspective, especially when they have financial challenges:

The school tries as much as possible not to make the children feel sad when their parents are struggling to pay. This is another way of controlling their social differences, and the social disparities in the school. Sometimes a parent has four children in this school, some three, some two and they pay comfortably, and then somebody has one and that one cannot pay, so if you make it open regarding who pays or do not pay, it will affect the children, especially the way the other children look at them. We do not let even the teachers know the students on scholarship in the school, it is highly confidential.

Looking at the above report from Freire's (1993) perspective, it will be relevant to allow students to understand their parents' financial situation, especially when they are finding it difficult to cope or to pay school fees. Parents on their part, have a lot of work to do in this regard because, the children would understand the situation better if their parents, through words of advice discuss their financial challenges with them and encourage them to do their best in school.

Another participating teacher from school B spoke on the uniformity of the general life in the school:

One thing the school has done is that all uniforms are the same; the sandals, as well as the food are same. The students attend the same mass and go to the same class rooms; they have the same type of lockers and chairs, and sleep in the same hostels. There is no differentiation between the child of the gate-man or the governor.

One student in school C revealed that the school teaches them to love one another, including those who are less privileged in the society:

As students, we actually treat each other like we are brothers. We do not identify people as poor. Everyone is equal; there is no partiality between the rich and the poor. Everybody is the same. The administrator always tries to drive in the point that everybody is equal, no matter the millionaire or billionaire status of one's father. That is positive attitude. It is about interaction, because after leaving this college, the person that is seen as poor today may even turn out as successful at the end, so nobody should be put down by anyone. The school taught such things.

Teachers from school C joined the students to acknowledge that the school teaches them not to discriminate and that they are given equal opportunities. One of the teachers clarified that the school mapped out some days like Wednesday assembly for certain topics such as to speak to students on morals and other related issues:

Once a week, the school does have class assembly. In the class assembly; the class teacher teaches morals. In the assembly, they have one or two things to tell the students. It is the time when the class teacher monitors the class and talks to the students on how to relate with one another.

The point derived from the above analysis is that the Catholic schools try to give opportunities to the less privileged to get education, as well as teaching them morals – to regard fellow students as equal and to be generous with their talents and gifts. They therefore see this as a way of life and how it should be lived.

### **6.10 Conclusion**

The findings from participants' reflections, thoughts and responses on the roles of Catholic schools' Proprietors towards effective service of the poor show that there are three major participants and each of them responded to the responsibility in accordance to their perception of the principle of the 'preferential option for the poor'.

Reflecting on the roles of Proprietors, the participants are conscious of the need to fulfill the mandate of Christ on the educational development of all people. It therefore became the obligation of the Proprietors to first familiarize themselves with their mission and secondly, to devise how to go about these missions. In this case, one major role is funding. The other factors that play prominent roles in the management of the entire education system include: policy-making and implementation, supervision, character formation and curriculum development.

Funding is seen as a major task for any leader because without funding, it would be difficult to achieve the aims of that organization. From the findings, it has been confirmed that Catholic schools charge fees, and the Proprietors acknowledge that Catholic schools are perceived to be expensive. This however, poses a problem to the Proprietors who worry on how best to surmount this limitation. It is equally acknowledged that Catholic schools charge different fees according to each school's size and standard or status. Bishop Ikpeme lamented on this lack of uniformity so as to

be able to pay staff and at the same time take care of the general aspects of the schools.

It is imperative to note that there is no organization that can survive without proper and implementable policies. In the case of the responsibilities of the Proprietors, efforts have to be made to expressly include the funding of education that will benefit the poor at all levels of education. The plight of the poor as far as education is concerned is the ability to complete one's education from primary to university level. The Nigerian Catholic Church through the Proprietors needs to strategize on how to make funds permanently available, create uniformity probably on the specific number of poor candidates that each Catholic school should admit annually.

There is the aspect of the factors of supervision, character formation and curriculum development in the management of schools, which are intertwined with each other. This is so because effective supervision should result in the expected character formation and curriculum development.

Looking critically at the themes – low-cost fees, sponsorship/fee subsidy, external funding /grants, social charity/social justice in the curriculum, character formation, maintaining quality education that teaches core value including morality, discipline and academic excellence, and non-discrimination between rich and poor students, and linking them to Freire's educational approach, Catholic Social Teaching and Liberation Theology, one can argue that Nigerian Catholic education should advance these themes. Freire has shown that people grow completely through the liberating education they receive. Likewise, Catholic Social Teaching proclaims that every human person should be given the opportunity to develop well, so as to be liberated from every form of oppression and or poverty in order to live a more fulfilled life. This is embedded in the themes. It is the responsibility of Catholic schools to constantly evaluate the extent to which each school is working on these themes, because for liberation and transformation to take place, there must be practical action, reflection and conscientization from the school, the students and the parents as well.

Based on the analyses of responses of the interviews, the findings in respect of the roles the Bishops and Major Superiors as Proprietors of Catholic schools play are that they provide effective leadership in the area of proper monitoring and supervision of Catholic schools to ensure that they comply with the Catholic Church's principle of helping the poor through scholarship. They are also engaged in saving some money specifically to help the less privileged. They also ensure that there are no uniform school fees charges taking into consideration locational factors, especially in engaging in drastic reduction of fees in rural areas to accommodate the poor. Funds are equally sourced from external sources to fund the education of the less privileged, as well as encouraging school fees waiver in the schools and promoting non-discrimination between the rich and the poor.

#### **6.11 Overall Critical Reflections: Senior Leadership and the Option for the Poor in Education: Theory and Practice**

These findings have demonstrated that:-

- i Bishops, Religious Congregations and School Principals have a clear understanding of what the Church teaches about the 'preferential option for the poor' in Catholic education. They understand the principle and they understand its implications at the level of policy and practice.
- ii The interviews have shown that in responding to implications for policy and practice they cite examples of help for the poor arising from a number of strategies. eg. scholarships, low-cost fees, fee subsidy, external funding, fee waivers. In this can be seen the continuing tradition of the Religious Congregations in particular, to use their resources to help the poor access education.
- iii However, what is lacking in this situation are the following issues:-
  - \* The lack of one unified policy for all Catholic schools in Nigeria in relation to their service to the poor in education, Chances for the poor vary according to the Dioceses and school policies in different locations.

\* Lack of systematic research in Nigeria (from the Bishops' Conference or the local universities) to produce the necessary statistics of the present policy situation. Eg. How many poor students receive scholarships or other help in accessing schools? What proportion of all students does this represent?

\* As Catholic schools in Nigeria can show that they form well educated, citizens of good character, can the Bishops begin negotiations with the State for some form of government grant aid, as is the case in some other developed states?

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS ON HOW THE SCHOOLS COPE WITH THE INTAKES OF STUDENTS IN SITUATIONS WHERE THERE IS NO FUNDING FROM EITHER THE GOVERNMENT OR THE CHURCH**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

One of the first things the researcher did in each of the schools after consultation with the Principal, was to study the documents of the school, such as the school's policy on admissions – how admissions are conducted, and the school's enrolment criteria. The researcher sought to know if the schools offered any form of concession or preference to candidates who may not be able to complete school fees within the academic year. There was also the need to know about post-admissions, the general life of the students, what happens to students who might encounter financial challenges. The researcher also studied the schools' expulsion policies, whether or not students are asked to withdraw from the school when they are unable to pay school fees. The schools' vision and mission statements were brought to light here as these were expected to reflect their respective Catholic schools' character.

#### **Research Question three: How do the schools cope with the intake of students in situations where there is no funding from either the government or the Church?**

Interviews were held with some final year students, some form tutors/teachers, a group of 6 parents and the Principal in each school. Data collected for this question were categorized into three themes as follows: a) Sources of Funding, b) Instalment payment/school fees waiver, and c) Scholarships.

#### **7.2 Sources of Funding**

The issue of funding is placed in the centre of this research because the research deals with the extent the poor are given access into Catholic schools, and

based on findings, availability of funds determines the extent of opportunity that any particular school can offer to the poor. Looking at the sources of funding for the schools, the most common source of funding is school fees. Below are the different fees charged by the schools:

School A: Forty thousand, five hundred Naira (~~₦~~40, 500) as at 2008/2009 academic session; from 2016 till date, the fee is Sixty thousand Naira (N60, 000); School B: One Million, five hundred thousand Naira (~~₦~~1.5M) per child, per year, and School C: Eighty-five thousand Naira (N85, 000). The implication is that Catholic schools charge fees because that is the only available major source of funding, but in many occasions, some people encounter financial challenges that make them not to be able to meet up with school fees. However, other forms of funding may vary according to schools but these funding may not be permanent or regular such as in the events of fund-raising which a school may organize to raise funds for particular projects that they wish to establish.

According to school A's Proprietor, one of the ways the school gets funds is through the goodwill of people and that of the Sisters in the Congregation, as has already been mentioned in chapter six - 'from their own earnings, which they use to pay for those people who are not able'. In addition, one of the teachers in school A revealed of the sponsorship to ten poor students in a particular year from one of the Priests in the diocese. According to this teacher, people sometimes donate money to assist the school either through goodwill or events like harvest thanksgiving and bazaar.

This is similar in schools B and C, in terms of individual donations to the school. except in some other extraordinary gestures from good-hearted individuals who sponsor some of the school projects like the building of the school fence in school B, and the tarring of the school roads in school C. These projects cost a lot of money and according to school B's Principal 'if we were to do that, [build the fence] there would be a lot of other things that the school would not be able to do but because of the goodwill of the people who are helping, then we would be able to finish it and do other things for

students and maybe for many other people who probably may not have been able to benefit in one way or another'. Confirming the Principal's submission, one of the teachers stated:

The school is run basically on the school fees but also, we have like PTA from different branches that also support the school and some individual parents that are generous enough to take up one or two projects in the school.

It was also revealed that School B has some trusts set up by individuals to assist the school, while some philanthropists donate funds towards the education of the students who are visually impaired. To confirm this, some of the teachers were of the view that some people 'contribute to the financial base of the school, maybe because their children have once been here or because they believe in the vision of the school', and that 'sometimes parents and other organizations like banks donate books and during functions like inter-house sports, some organisations are often invited, ... [and] ... they sponsor some school projects and the sponsorship might go beyond the normal target the school has set. Some are generous enough to give to the school's ideals'.

In the case of school C, where there is no assistance from the government, one of the teachers explained that the fund comes from students' fees and help from old students. The teacher reported:

At any time, the school has a project within the school that involves money, the school organizes a launching and the old students are often invited to come around to donate their own little quota towards the project and after which the remaining amount of money is used to address the poor students' needs annually.

A typical example is the excess amount of money realized from funds from individual students who graduated from the school in 1999. Another example is the Old Boys Association's donation of one million, one hundred and fifty-two thousand (N1, 152, 000) to congratulate the school on the occasion of its football competition. One of the teachers expressed this more:

The school has a very strong Old Boys' Association, who donate money during the school's fund-raising and other events. The Old students single-handedly tarred the road in the school.

### **7.3 Instalment Payment / School Fees Waiver.**

Research findings revealed that schools allow parents to pay in instalments when they express their difficulty in paying the fees especially tuition fees. Sometimes too, the complete fees are waived out, depending on the circumstances. In view of the instalment payment and fees waiver, school B's Principal disclosed:

There are people who sometimes would owe like equivalent of two year's school fees but they are in the college. The college has not sent them away. Or even more than that, more than two years' school fees. The point is which school accepts, manages or tolerates that?

In the case of school C, participants revealed that sometimes parents who have issues of fees do complain to the Archbishop who then writes to the Principal to allow them to continue with their education. At the end, the debt might be forgotten like in the case of school A's 'bad debt.'

However, the school fees waiver in most cases is only given by the Proprietor of the school like in School A and school C, when parents report their difficulties to the Archbishop or the Proprietor.

### **7.4 Scholarship**

Provision of scholarship to students who cannot afford their education or whose parents have very low income and as a result are unable to send their children to school, is one of the ways Catholic schools deal with the 'preferential option of the poor', especially in the case of Nigeria where the government does not fund mission schools. Scholarships are therefore given to children so that they can attend Catholic schools. Research findings show that school B has bread winner insurance. The Principal stated that:

This might look expensive, but the school has the insurance scheme because of the school's way of life. This is based on the recorded number of students who have lost their fathers. This means such students do not need to worry about their school fees again because the insurance will keep and cover them. The school considers it as imperative as such; it is a kind of pro-active measure.

One of the participants admitted that school B is a rich school going by many people's perceptions. However, findings showed that the school started by placing 20% of their students on scholarship:

When the school ran out of fund, it resorted to start an endowment fund. The larger the funding comes in, the more they reach out to the poor and the less privileged. The school tries to reach out to the visually impaired students who are smart and brilliant enough to pass the entrance examination.

Funding is a general issue for Catholic schools in Nigeria. In many occasions, schools would wish to admit as many students as possible, but they are hindered by lack of funds. This research found that the Nigerian government neither gives funds to Catholic schools nor sponsors individual children. Catholic schools therefore have no other alternatives than to charge fees. Moreover, as seen from the analyses of the different schools, it is either they depend solely on the fees or from time to time they fix events that would necessitate the invitation of people, who would eventually donate money to the schools.

## **7.5 Policy and Practice: Meaning and Place in the school**

Policy 'is a set of interrelated decisions ... connecting the selection of goals and the means of achieving them within a specified situation' (Jenkins, 1978, p. 15; in Adams, 2014, p. 25). Clarifying further on the issue of policy, Adams (2014, p. 25) explains that 'policy is the ways and means by which intentions are translated into action' but Adams warns that policies do not always imply that such actions must be taken and if taken, they may not yield expected outcomes. This however, is important for this chapter because it goes to re-address the aim of this research and the outcome of the findings, which serves only as a relevant contribution and suggestion to the field of education in general and more precisely to the Nigerian Catholic education systems.

In practice therefore, the schools reserve the right to adopt or reject any of such policies. Bishop Ikpeme's response on the areas of the existing policies in Catholic schools might require changing for Catholic schools in Nigeria to serve the poor better, revolves around dissemination of relevant information and character formation within the teachings in the Catholic schools. The Bishop stated that:

The policy regarding the educational institution within Nigeria is that of having people to graduate from Catholic schools and be faithful members of the Nigerian Society, obeying the laws and work to build up the Nigerian System. There is also the need for the people to have faith, have the ability to live their lives as good Catholics, good Christians within the Nigerian setting and be able to stand as examples of what the Church wants the people to be. This means people are being educated for the State and for the Church so as to have balanced individuals who are both Catholic faithful and also faithful citizens of the nation. This is one of the major reasons many people believe so much in Catholic schools including Muslims; even if they do not end up becoming Catholics. They can as well be protective of the values of the Catholic Church when they graduate from the schools and whatever lives they live thereafter.

Conscious that Catholic education has the divine mandate to contribute to the development of the human person 'so that they may attain a greater sense of responsibility and right use of freedom and be formed to take an active part in social life' (Can. 795; in Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, 2005, p. 1), the Bishop acknowledged the place of Catholic schools in the policy and the need to work with the set policy so as to achieve the expected educational goals within the Nigerian system and within the Nigerian society, especially in the event where the Church has no financial support from anywhere.

Similarly, Father Anthony Eke, the Secretary, connected this policy issue to school fees and urged Catholic schools to work with whatever that is possible within their reach with regard to making the schools more open to the poor. The Secretary stated that:

The policy stipulated very clearly that the dioceses should have a hand in helping the poor ones in their dioceses (*Policy on Catholic Education*, 2005, n. iv, p. 5). Some dioceses are trying and doing their best in this regard. There are therefore so many students that are studying at Veritas University [Nigerian Catholic University], courtesy of the sponsorship that they are getting from the dioceses. It was made available at the Bishops' Conference that all the Bishops should use their own allowances to support some students to come into the university. However, when people talk about the 'preferential option for the poor', people are quick to observe that the school fees in Catholic

schools are not friendly; as such the Church has been admonished severally to do something about it. The question is how can the Church maintain the schools with no adequate financial support to the schools outside the fees? This is the reason why the general policy regarding the review of the school fees to accommodate everybody cannot just run across board like that. The policies are there for everybody to see, but there is need to take into consideration certain things that are possible to be done. ... So in as much as the policies are there, people are often encouraged to also try to understand with the school in some of these areas. ... the policy is poor-people friendly but how to practicalise this, is the question, as such the wealthy in the society need to do everything possible to assist and be mindful of the poor ones among us.

The Secretary is therefore of the opinion that each Catholic school, whether, diocese or Congregation owned should focus in a most possible way on making their schools accessible for all. The policy tends to differ from one school to another, and the success of any policy depends much on its implementation by the people concerned. In other words, what seems to be problematic in a school might easily be accommodated in another. Looking at the policy and practice from school A, one of the teachers thought the school would be doing well for the less privileged if they subsidized fees for the poor or granted them freedom to pay fees at their convenience. The teacher thus suggested that:

In the area of payment of fees, people should be given some latitude to pay up their fees, knowing fully well that they can withdraw their wards without paying up the fees. The school can introduce policies to help identify the poor. The school could bring up an indigent kind of forms for parents to fill, with evidence to prove that a parent cannot pay the fees of the child/ward. If such a parent has more than one child in the school, the school can offer some form of support.

Another participating teacher in school A explained that since the school does not have any set down policy in favour of the poor from the point of admission, the school could do so at once. The teacher argued that:

It is relatively costly for a parent to send a child to this school, even though there are other more expensive schools, but since there are no policies guiding admissions of the poor, it should be built in. Let there be new policies that would consider the poor and be in their favour, and in the long run, the vision and mission of the founder of the school would have been achieved.

The interviews conducted with some participating students also revealed some certain aspects in each of the schools used for the study. School C's students were not forth-coming with the discussion on policy except one of the students who posited that there was no need for any policy in the school to be changed. School A's students were very open with their views.

In school A, the students interviewed complained that certain policies of the school should be altered so as to reduce the financial challenges of their parents. Such policies included, first, the submission of provisions such as 8 packs of cabin biscuits.

Secondly, on the buying of books, the students were of the opinion that they could equally be allowed to purchase some of their books or workbooks from outside the school as books sold in the school's bookshop sometimes can be more expensive compared to market prices or costs.

Another student complained of the way teachers give them 'invoices to buy textbooks from the store. Anyone that does not have these textbooks will not be allowed to write tests. Those who do not have fees will not be allowed to take the tests also. In that case, how are the poor expected to perform well?'

School A's students expected that the school should look into the teachers' demand for compulsory workbooks. The students remarked that the school should be considerate to those that are not able to pay their fees, instead of compelling them to buy books, which often frustrates so many of such students.

Thirdly, the students thought that school fees were expensive. On the issue of school fees, one of the students argued:

The fees are high. The point is that this is a mission school owned by the Catholic Church, why would their fees be much more than the government schools? Could it be that the students are paying more because of the moral upbringing they give students here? Moreover, there is no guarantee that students who have not paid fees would be allowed to continue with their studies; they may be asked to leave.

The poor student is therefore confronted with either seeking for freedom or using her voice and power to come out of dilemma. The issue here is whether

or not the student has the voice that would free her from the 'culture of silence' where the student finds himself.

In attempt to clarify the school fees issue, another student explained that:

When it comes to the issue of school fees, this school is so particular about it. In JSS One, about three hundred students were admitted; the school did not assist that much, as everything bordered on the fees. The charity aspect became secondary because of the high school fees that have to be contended with.

One of the policies in school A is that new intakes must pay for everything before they finally come in to begin their studies, and according to one of the students:

When the students come in, the school can now help by subsidizing the school fees. Generally, the school expects everyone that wishes to bring in their child or children to pay school fees and then if there is a problem along the line, the school can assist. There were cases of students who left the school, because of inability to pay the school fees but at last the school allowed some to come back, so that they could pay by the next term.

Confirming the views of the students, one of the teachers argued on the high fees, stating that:

Once the school fee is reduced to the extent where an average Nigerian can afford to attend this school, the school will be held in a very high esteem. What scares people away is the amount that is being paid currently. Most times in this school, children are meant to buy their textbooks in the school, and the prices are very high. If there would be an open-door policy that any person can buy textbooks anywhere, then it will further help in making it possible for children from indigent families to be able to come in here and get educated.

On the issue of clearance, every term students are expected to undertake a clearance exercise. One of the students complained that:

There is payment for clearance, SS 3 ICT levy, and classroom development levy that students pay every term. The point of emphasis is that after paying the first term, why asking students to pay by the next term again? Honestly this is much on the students. There was a situation where a student's house got burnt during the holiday. Upon resumption, the Sister bursar gave a pink paper for the clearance, and another paper to enable students to come in. But without the clearance, that means, definitely there is no going in.

Another teacher was of the view that the school could look into the admission criteria for children from poor families. In other words, the school could be a bit more

lenient towards the poor, especially in the issue of registration fee. This could be differed so that parents are allowed to bring in their children/wards, and thereafter remit the payment.

In the event where parents are withdrawing children from school, one teacher expressed that the school can find out from such parents and know why they are withdrawing their children, and if the issue has to do with money, the school can do something in that aspect. They can raise the policy that can help keep those children in the school. One of the participating teachers affirmed that the school could adjust their policy by encouraging teachers 'with a little higher payment, as this would make them to be more dedicated'.

In taking a look at policy and practice in school B, many of the teachers suggested more on how to be of relevance to the local community where the school is situated and thought that the school could do more than they are currently doing. Many of the teachers shared similar views on how the school could adjust some aspects of the existing policy so as to conveniently accommodate the poor. One of them suggested that instead of giving the community a specific sum of money, the school 'could employ the young men and women who are around who can work and get money to empower themselves'. Another teacher felt that the school could build a primary school in the village, to enable the villagers get more education beginning from nursery and primary levels, and thereupon, prepare them for the school's entrance examination. This implication is that by building the school in the village, children would be given more opportunity to access 'the school at an affordable cost; because that would amount to giving them a very good educational foundation'.

One other teacher argued that school B should sometimes avoid looking at the school's standard so as to admit children from poor families:

What about giving a chance to those students who are actually poor but are gifted? A school like school B should build a school, a school for the poor, mainly within the community. Such a school should be built especially for the poor and donated to the community, and then engage

some teachers to coach them. The school should look in this direction too.

Another teacher argued that children go to school to learn and in order to do that, the school has to first give them the opportunity to come in. The school therefore has to 'bend their policy a bit so as to accommodate the less intelligent ones'.

One other participating teacher argued from a different perspective. The teacher thought the school could first reduce the cost of their entrance form because, at the moment, not many people could purchase the form. This therefore means that, one has to be privileged to acquire, to purchase the form in the first place. The form is on the high side. The form is sold for as high as eight thousand naira, which equals a monthly salary of certain poor people. Such people do cleaning from morning till late and they are paid eight thousand nine.

Looking at policy and practice in school C, one of the participating teachers stated that the school could adjust their policy in favour of brilliant students whose parents encounter financial challenges that might affect their education in the school as well as finding ways to encourage their teachers. The teacher explained that:

When it is discovered that some students cannot pay due to one challenge or the other and the children are brilliant, the school can assist such students so that they are not forced to stop their education. Teachers should also be helpful, especially in encouraging them.

The analyses advanced in this chapter by the participants are geared towards addressing the issue of how the schools can cope with the intake of students since there seems to be little or no adequate funding from either the government or the Church. The schools have to heavily rely on the fees, which is contrary to the principle of the 'preferential option for the poor'. The suggestions proffered by the participants could therefore be seen as a way of ameliorating the pains of the poor in the Catholic schools.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

Notwithstanding this funding challenge, many individuals are still satisfied with the management and running of the Catholic schools. One of the parents interviewed and a PTA chairman in one of the schools stated that:

It is a thing of pride to say that the educational values of these Catholic mission schools are still of high standard, as such there are no regrets whatsoever in terms of the school fees. However, the Pentecostal churches not inclusive, because they are set out purely to make money and therefore not for the poor.

Therefore, to cope with the 'preferential option for the poor' where there is no government funding, schools operate fees policy so as to be able to manage their affairs and to keep the school alive, in terms of infrastructure and other befitting facilities. This is a worrying situation which was also shared with school A's Proprietor who revealed that in many occasions like this, the Congregation tries to solve the problem by paying the bills themselves. The implication of this is that the principle of the 'preferential option for the poor' from the Catholic point of view, is still suffering some challenges. These must be surmounted so that the poor and the less privileged in the society can have a sense of belonging and a way out of their situation through unhindered education.

Based on the analyses of responses of the interviews, the findings in respect of how the Catholic schools cope with the intake of students in situations where there is no funding from either the government or the Church, are that the schools try as much as possible to charge affordable fees to accommodate the children of the rich and the poor. The schools also allow instalment payment of the school fees or occasional school fees waiver, and where poor students could not afford the fees, the schools provide scholarships from the proceeds of donations through goodwill or proceeds from harvest thanksgiving and bazaar.

## **7.7 Overall Critical Reflections: Catholic Schools' Intervention Strategies and Option for the poor: Leadership Influence**

These findings have demonstrated that:

- i. Schools are limited to the number of poor children they can grant access at a time due to lack of funds.
- ii. Students themselves empathize with fellow students who are affected by the lack of funds and as a result, may face withdrawal from school.
- iii. Teachers too understand the serious implications of the Principals' inability to deal with the issues accruing from the lack of adequate funds.
- iv. Catholic schools are almost completely incapacitated in solving the problem of lack of subsidy for poor students.

However, what need to be done are:

- The Proprietors can empower the Principals to take necessary decisions on their own in matters that concern admission of poor children into their schools. To achieve this effectively, the Principals could be given the least and the highest number of poor children to be given access annually.
- This being a policy issue, should be monitored and supervised, so as to ensure uniformity in the admission process and that the poor are given equal opportunity.
- Similarly, the Church can create realistic policies that will provide funds for the education of the poor.
- Richer Catholic schools can be encouraged to establish and sponsor another school that will charge little or no fee that the poor can attend. However, this is not to discriminate against the poor and the less privileged, but it is a way of expanding access to quality Catholic education.
- The Proprietors of Catholic education in Nigeria could set up an Education Foundation to pull funds to enhance the option for the poor.
- Appeals should be made to Religious Congregations in Europe, members of which were the original founders of some mission schools in Nigeria. These appeals should ask for financial help with scholarship programmes to assist poor students to access the schools.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **DISCUSSION ON 'PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR'**

#### **8.1 Introduction**

The main purpose of this study in the first place was to investigate the extent to which the Catholic Church was committed to educating the poor in reality in Nigeria and to explore the different meanings relevant actors deploy and enact in Catholic education. Some of these meanings that participants shared during the interview formed the basis of this discussion because the way people see and understand the 'preferential option for the poor' sometimes determines how they react to it.

It has been a worthwhile endeavour to have carried out a research of this nature and successfully come to the end. This notwithstanding, many factors have to be properly checked and aligned to fit in their relevant order. One of these is the way the stated method of data collection (in this case, document study, interviews and observations) were conducted throughout the period of the research, which were triangulated. The form of triangulation in this research comes from discussion (interviews) with prominent Nigerians that associate with Catholics and non-Catholics, in both official and internal circumstances. People in this category were represented by almost every Nigerian for their singular attitude to the affairs of Nigeria and on their individual service of God and people.

#### **8.2 Discussion on Findings to Research Question One**

Findings were generated from the responses of participants to the three research questions. Admission is given to students after passing the entrance examination and interview. Thereafter, poor students enjoy scholarship schemes provided by the Catholic schools from endowment funds, as well as from donations from rich parents, Congregation and from the Priests who make sacrifices from their allowances. In addition, parents are sometimes allowed to pay fees in instalment and when such poor parents are able to prove their indigent state, school fees could be

waived outrightly. Moreover, when compared to other well-established private schools, Catholic schools still charge low school fees to accommodate the poor in Nigeria.

### **8.2.1 Admission into Catholic Schools**

Research findings revealed that admission into Catholic schools in Nigeria is not restricted to Catholic children only. Every child is given an opportunity depending on the choice of parents. This view was shared by Bishop Ikpeme who revealed that 'many people believe so much in Catholic schools including Muslims; even if they do not end up becoming Catholics'. This is simply re-echoing one of the characteristics of the Catholic school which states that Catholic school is 'a place of evangelization, of complete formation, of enculturation, of apprenticeship in a lively dialogue between young people of different religious and social backgrounds' (CBCN, 2005, p. 8).

However, admission is mostly on merit, that is, through success in entrance examination at the end of primary five or six. This means that parents who aspire to have their children in Catholic schools spend a lot of money on extra lessons for their children in order for their children/wards to succeed in the entrance examination. Zalot (2002) sees that as various forms of oppression because in many occasions, only very few children from poor backgrounds are offered admission compared to the number of children from rich or relatively wealthy families that gain access. Zalot (2002) explains that by offering admission to children of the poor, they be in position later in life to 'work to improve their own welfare' (P. 155). Although findings disclosed that many of the Catholic schools would wish to admit as many poor students as possible, not having enough funds to be able to subsidize fees for the poor is a serious hindrance. Likewise, many children from poor homes pass the entrance examination, but are not able to process the admission because their parents will not be able to afford the fees. This negates the principle of the 'Preferential Option for the Poor' 'to provide educational services to those most in need' (Grace, 2002a, p. 125).

### **8.2.2 Fee-charging Policy**

Throughout the investigations, two factors: Fee-charging policy and lack of funds were very outstanding as the major challenges facing the Nigerian Catholic Church and the Nigerian Catholic schooling system. Catholic schools in Nigeria operate a fee-charging policy. This policy was initiated as a result of the Nigerian Government's inability to send funds to Catholic schools as they are doing to public schools. Grace (2003) explains that fee-charging policy is not a commitment to the poor. For instance, this attitude began when the government of Nigeria took over mission schools from the Churches in 1970. Before this time, the early missionaries who started the western or formal education in Nigeria as a major means of evangelization provided a free education in order to attract the people to their schools. Instead of collecting money from the villagers as school fees, the missionaries gave out gifts like writing materials, the holy bible and toiletries, to the people to attract them to the schools. Rozario (2012) opines that education should aim at nurturing human freedom, i.e., the type of freedom that Freire's approach tries to promote.

Furthermore, the local people (parents) perceived this new religion to be a distraction to their style of living and interference to their source of sustenance, which was mainly farming, and found it difficult to release their children. It was as a result of this challenge that the missionaries and in particular, Father Lutz, the first Apostolic Prefect and founder of the Lower Niger Mission devised the 'charity-oriented' strategy to first of all, attract parents to the offer of education and so as to stop them from interfering in their children's education. At the takeover of schools by the government, the 'charity-oriented' strategy terminated. Grace (2009) argues that lack of 'strategic subsidy' leads to 'an inevitable increase in the costs of providing Catholic schooling' (in Grace 2002a, p. 87). Considering that the Catholic Church leaders neither had enough finance to manage the few Catholic schools they had, nor received financial support from the government, the only option within the reach of Catholic schools, was to

charge school fees. Unfortunately, this fee-charging has remained as an issue even to this day because of so many factors.

However, tuition fees are set by the school Proprietors for several reasons. According to Bishop Ikpeme, many of the Congregations and Dioceses in Nigeria set a tuition for their schools to be able to pay staff salaries, provide facilities and other infrastructure for the growth of the school. As a result of this, many schools now charge different fees, thus giving rise to lack of uniformity in the implementation of certain aspects of the Nigerian Catholic schools' policy on education. This therefore is one major reason that Catholic schools in Nigeria are beyond the reach of the poor (Rozario, 2012), an observation shared by many participants. In view of the necessity for the high fees, a participant argued that schools need money in order to employ qualified teachers, pay them well so as to keep them and to constantly upgrade their facilities and infrastructure. This view was corroborated by another participant who also argued that, 'what is needed to maintain the schools, even the salaries will determine the kind of teachers you employ in the school'. In other words, good and qualified teachers require higher salaries than teachers with lower qualifications. Looking at the different perspectives, some students particularly from school A still frowned at the high cost of fees in their school.

Cattaro and Cooper (2007) explain that funding was not guaranteed and therefore the schools became dependent on tuition and subsidies from a variety of other. This was the period the Nigerian Catholic schools were confronted with high expectations particularly by many Catholics, to make their resources as educational institutions available for all. This is based on the reasoning that they are Church schools or faith-based projects and that many of the parishioners contributed to the building of the structural aspects of the schools.

### **8.2.3 Endowment funds Scheme**

Endowment is a way some schools source for funds for specific projects or purposes. O'Keefe and Scheopner (2007) express that funds could be from families, Churches, charities, and donations through fund-raising, and such money collected through this means is sometimes used for subsidizing fees for students who may experience little shift along the line, which may be due to the loss of a parent (bread winner), or parent's loss of job. Cattaro and Cooper (2007) also assert that donations do come from individuals and community businesses, government and public donations to sustain educational services and such increase in grants received should be channeled towards the education of more poor people. The scheme is available in some schools. Sometimes too, some well-meaning individuals or groups make regular donations to assist in the training of students from poor backgrounds.

### **8.2.4 Appreciation of the Local Community**

Many Catholic schools employ labourers like gardeners and cleaners from the local community where the school is located as a way of appreciating the community for their land. Klaiber (2007) therefore supports an evangelical-liberating education and incorporating the poor in the community as a means of appreciation. On the other hand, some participants suggested that instead of employing people into the school, it would be better to build a school in that locality that would either not charge fees or charge very little fee so as to benefit more people from the community. This position agrees with Pascoe (2007, p. 797) who suggests the provision of 'sufficient schools to cater for the aspirations of all Catholic families while maintaining their primary focus on access for the poor'.

Another way of showing gratitude to the local community is in terms of the school organizing to visit some charity homes to donate gifts of money or other items for maintenance and well-being of the residents. This is meant to instil into the students

a sense of responsibility and commitment to one's environment and to place others first as Christian faith teaches (Klaiber, 2007).

The amount of work the students do, including attitudes to and relationships with the poor can only be seen by the school and their parents who, by implication, are in the system because they have to completely support their children to achieve their educational goals. The implication of this is that there is need to appreciate the local community by ensuring that their children have access to school through affordable fees.

### **8.3 Discussion on Findings to Research Question Two**

Bishops and Major Superiors as Proprietors of Catholic schools provide effective leadership in the area of proper monitoring and supervision of Catholic schools to ensure that they comply with the Catholic Church principle of helping the poor through scholarship, funded from money specifically saved to help the less privileged. They ensure that there are no uniform school fees in the schools, especially with regard to rural areas where they charge very minimal fees. They source for funds from external sources, as well as encouraging school fees waiver in the schools and promoting non-discrimination between the rich and the poor.

#### **8.3.1 School Fees in Catholic schools Compared to Private schools**

School Fees of Catholic schools are discovered to be cheaper compared to those of other private schools though some people have the impression that Catholic schools charge high fees. This notwithstanding, the fees are still not up to those paid in many private schools whose academic standards are not as good as those of the Catholic schools. Streck and Segala (2007) take a look at the issue from the reality on ground by positing that the reduction in the number of the Religious leading to the closing down of some schools may have been responsible for the increase in the school fees.

### **8.3.2 Non-discrimination between Rich and Poor Students**

The Catholic schools teach non-discrimination between the rich and the poor in different ways. The teaching is inscribed in the schools' moral instruction lessons, assembly grounds and in the classes. Students are taught not to discriminate but to accommodate and tolerate other people. This is in line with the position of Pope Francis (2015) who warned Catholic schools against being selective but insisted that they 'must work to restore the broken "educational alliance" among families'. This position needs re-echoing because different cases emerged from within multiple sources on discrimination. The position also agrees with the work of Croke (2007) who concludes from the Australian Catholic Church's position that in spite of the funding arrangement, Catholic schools are not easily accessible by the poorer class in Australia. This gives the impression that the schools are meant for the rich class and not for everyone, the poor inclusive.

### **8.3.3 External funding Grants/Social Charity**

Through the investigation process, it was discovered that almost every Catholic school would wish it were possible to admit candidates without school fees, but the funds required to subsidize fees for poor students are not readily available because the only regular source of funding is the fees that students pay. This therefore is a huge obstacle to service of the poor in the Nigerian Catholic schools. Most participants expressed this limitation very clearly including students who were also worried about the yearly increase of fees in some Catholic schools. However, sourcing for funds from external grant or social charity remains a positive way to address the issue of PO in any school. This type of arrangement agrees with the position of Croke (2007) who affirms that the Australian Catholic schools are essentially funded externally by the Australian Federal and State governments' grants, as well as through the provision of

capital grants for building of new Catholic schools and refurbishing of other schools by the same government. Pascoe (2007, p. 808) also testifies that the 'mix of federal and state funding ... has enabled comprehensive provision of Catholic education...' The implication of this is that the Catholic Schools could apply this method by finding a way to seek more government and external grants to fund Catholic schools in Nigeria.

#### **8.3.4 Quality Education, Core Values, Morality, Discipline and Academic**

##### **Excellence**

This is the crux of the general standard of education in Catholic schools. It is a common perception that Catholic schools do not compromise standards, rather, the schools invest much effort and money to consistently enhance students' academics and moral life. Miller (2006) explains that quality takes into cognizance the 'growth of the whole person'. This is one of the greatest reasons people opt for Catholic education, because many people are of the view that there is no discipline in almost all the public schools, hence the return of some schools back to the mission by the government. In the light of the above, the Nigerian Catholic schools are generally highly respected for their good organization, discipline, moral standard and spirituality. This is in line with Grace (2002a) whose view is that Catholic education provides Religious, personal and educational formation for the children to attain reasonable quality. In the political circles, the Catholic schools are perceived to be valuable because of the declined state of education in the country, though much is still expected from them in the areas of availability for the less-privileged children. Tuohy (2007) also agrees that the need to maintain quality in teaching and moral standard so as to continue to attract financial assistance is one of the reasons why the Congregations are committed to preserving Catholic education as a strong, viable option within the national system.

#### **8.4 Discussion on Findings to Research Question Three**

Catholic schools cope with the intake of students by trying as much as possible to charge affordable fees to accommodate the children of the rich and the poor. The schools also allow instalment payment of the school fees or occasional school fees waiver, and where poor students could not afford the fees, the schools provide scholarships from the proceeds of donations through goodwill or proceeds from harvest thanksgiving and bazaar.

##### **8.4.1 Scholarships**

Scholarships are awarded to brilliant students according to the findings in the research. Many participants attested that the school sometimes grants scholarship to poor students but only when it is discovered that the student is brilliant and come out with outstanding examination results from the entrance examination. The granting of scholarship is another way of helping the poor in the schools. This agrees with the position of Omolade (2009) who reveals that one of such offer of scholarships is from Bishop Finn Memorial Trust Fund.

The provision of such scholarship to indigent students has helped so many children from poor homes to become educated today, and therefore helping to address Freire's teachings on providing education to liberate the poor from lack and poverty by the Church. This is in line with the position of Grace (2002a) who asserts that academic education will equip the individual with the relevant skills and knowledge for service both to self and to the community. The Nigerian context may not differ so much from how some countries address the issue of education of the poor. This finding also re-echoes the point made by Pope Francis (2015) who asserts that education should aim to promote the dignity of the person and provides full development of God's given skills and potentials so that the individual can function maximally.

#### **8.4.2 Instalment Payment of Fees**

In many Catholic schools, findings revealed that parents are allowed to pay their children's fees in instalments. Sometimes fees are waived out depending on the condition, that is, the Proprietor sometimes intervenes when parents disclose their challenges or inability to afford the fees. The Proprietor therefore upholds the 'preferential option for the poor' and contributes to the 'common good' (Grace 2002a & 2009).

However, it was discovered that schools sometimes lose their money when parents are allowed to pay at their convenience. Some of them leave school for up to university without going back to clear their debts with the school. This is termed a 'bad debt' by school A's Principal because the money is lost. This is a problem that can be caused by the principle of 'preferential option for the poor', because, the school may decide to stop giving such opportunities to other people who may be in similar situation. The point is that the ability of the schools to help depends on availability of funds, but this in the opinion of Vanderstraeten (2007) should not deter the people's way of life and their dedication to the Church and to the Catholic faith.

#### **8.4.3 School Fees Waiver**

Literature evidences show that among the developed countries such as the USA, Australia, UK, and Ireland, the Catholic schools still deal with the issue of 'preferential option for the poor' through subsidies to the children of the less privileged from funds sourced from Religious Orders, dioceses, parishes, donations from the public, faith-based sources, that is, families, Churches, charities, and through fund-raising by the Church. The USA treats Catholic schools as purely private driven affair, whereas in Australia, United Kingdom and Ireland, there is level of government involvement in funding Catholic schools. This implies that countries like Australia, United Kingdom and Ireland are in tune with Freire's liberation teachings.

The principle of PO is thus addressed through school fees waiver. This reflects the earlier work of Grace (2010) who asserts that the Religious Orders provided schools for students 'free of charge or at the lowest possible fee' or school fees waiver. Cattaro and Cooper (2007) also state that the effect of non-government funding in the US is that some students drop out of school when their parents cannot afford the fees, but this is being addressed by the Catholic schools by finding a way to accommodate more poor students in the school. This is the point where school fees waiver aid children of the poor to remain in Catholic schools in Nigeria as agreed by most of the participants.

#### **8.4.4 Policy and Practice**

It is in the policy statement of the Catholic Church to help the poor. This agrees with Hartnett (2003) who asserts that the 'preferential option for the poor' has gradually become a central tenet of the Church's teaching. So, just like the developed countries, in the developing countries of Brazil, Peru, and India, the Catholic schools deal with the issue of Preferential Option through subsidies from funds sourced from Religious Orders, dioceses, parishes, donations from the public and faith-based organizations. However, in Peru there is collaboration between the Church and the State in funding of Catholic Schools, which differs from other states in Latin America, where only the rich for instance, can afford Catholic schools like in Brazil. In line with the Catholic Church principle, Twomey (2005) explains that the ultimate purpose of the Catholic principle is to enable man to live his own life and to save his soul. To further buttress the principle of PO, Smith and Nuzzi (2007) posit that there is need for dedicated people to continue serving in Catholic schools, as this will be in the interest of the overall students irrespective of their backgrounds.

## **8.5 Overall Critical Reflections: Relevance to other Countries**

The implication of this study is that given the non-committal of the state in Nigeria to funding of Catholic schools in comparison to the developed, the developing and some African countries' literatures reviewed, the Church (Catholic) in Nigeria could be said to be doing her best through provision of scholarship to address the education of the poor. This means that if the government could come in to assist like the countries so compared, the Catholic schools in Nigeria could do more. In other words, the relevance of this study to other countries is that the countries could learn from the dogged determination of the Catholic schools in Nigeria by going that extra mile to learn from Nigeria regarding how scholarships and other means (instalment fees payment and waivers) are being used to make the education of the poor easy so that they can apply such means to the peculiarity of their own countries. This means that if countries could learn from one another, the issue of education for the poor could be addressed in line with Freire's approach, which demonstrates that people should be able to confront their situation and then consciously work out means of solving them.

### **8.5.1 Contribution of this Study to Funding Through Scholarships**

This study has been able to deal with scholarship as the major avenue through which the Catholic schools in Nigeria address the question of the education of the poor. The funding for the scholarship as seen in the findings of the study is through donation from rich parents, endowment funds, contribution from the Church's congregation, sacrifices on the part of the Priests and the Religious. Sometimes, scholarship is also funded from proceeds of harvest thanksgiving and bazaars.

In Africa, the countries compared were Zambia and South Africa. In applying Freire's framework to African education systems for instance, in Zambia, the assistance from the government has enabled the Zambian Catholic Church to be committed to the education of the poor, in addition to sourcing for funds from Religious Orders, dioceses, parishes, donations from the public and faith-based organizations.

However, in South Africa, Catholic schools are fee-paying but 'the fees charged are subject to the socio-economic profile of the communities they serve, suggesting that the fees are affordable to an extent. This means these African countries reviewed are equally committed to the education of the poor in line with Freire's liberation teachings.

## CHAPTER NINE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 9.1 Summary

This research creates the awareness to people of all works of life – the general public, educators and politicians, of the extent to which the poor are granted access into Catholic schools generally and in Nigeria precisely. The work also reveals to some extent, the existence of inequality in the educational opportunities that are made available to the poor compared to those given to ‘their more advantaged counterparts’ (Gamoran, 2007, p. 6) in the Nigerian Catholic education system. It points at the unaccomplished educational duties of the Nigerian Government and thereupon demands for equality in the distribution of the country’s educational resources so as to benefit the rich and the poor alike. The research is also an indicator to the Catholic Church on the need to practically confront the challenges of the ‘preferential option for the poor’ in Catholic schools so as to be more pro-active in the educational affairs of the poor and the less privileged. In this sense therefore, it calls for a review of the role of the Agency in the Catholic education system.

Agency in the context of education refers to power and its dissemination – the ability to initiate change in a society. The question one needs to ask at this point with the findings from this research is, who are the agents in Nigeria who could take action to make Catholic schools more open to the poor in the future?

This implies that in the situation of Catholic education in Nigeria, the Bishops acknowledge that it is their duty to mediate between the government and the people. The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) is the highest body in the Nigerian Catholic Church and they hold the Agency and therefore get to decide on matters concerning education.

The role of the Church demands that ‘it cannot be politically neutral’ (Freire, 1985, p.130) rather, it must be seen to be ‘entering into a totally different commitment to the dominated classes and so becoming truly prophetic’ (p. 133) in the educational

matters that concern the poor. This therefore calls for Commitment and courage so as to be able to rise from the 'culture of silence', and like Freire (1985, p. 73),

break out of the culture of silence and win their right to speak-only, that is, when radical structural changes transform the dependent society – can such a society as a whole cease to be silent toward the director society.

Research findings showed that the Catholic Bishops in Nigeria, from time-to-time speak to the government on the release of mission schools and on funding. According to the Secretary, the Bishops talk to the government on issues regarding education. It is also important to remark that this negotiation has been on-going as reported by Bishop Ikpeme:

It is imperative to note that the Bishops of Nigeria are talking every day with the Government and encouraging them to participate, to let us be partners in the life of the children, in the education of the children. ... We encourage them to make resources available for us so that we can carry out ... what we know how to do best, which is to affect the lives of the children positively.

Speaking more specifically, the Bishop acknowledged that it is his responsibility to approach the Nigerian government to make funds available for the training of children who come to Catholic schools. The Bishop reiterated:

Well, it is the duty of my office and we have been talking with the Minister of Education on the need of Government participation in funding Catholic schools. The Bishops in their own individual dioceses do reach out to the Government and thereby encouraging them to be part, to have some contributions towards the education of these children who attend the Catholic schools because they are also citizens of the state.

Sometimes the education office at the Catholic Secretariat 'hold[s] meetings with the minister of education on over-taxation of the schools' which sometimes can be too often, especially as the government does not fund Catholic schools. It can be judged as contradictory to tax and levy Catholic schools' pay. This by implication, dissociates from Pope Pius XI's (1931) *Quadragesimo Anno* who, through this encyclical urges all 'institutions of people' to be effectively just in establishing 'a juridical and social order' so as to benefit every person. In other words, human resources

should be effectively distributed (social justice). This is the obligation of both the Government and the Church to the Poor.

Speaking from the perspectives of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria on ways the Nigerian Government can assist Catholic schools, the Bishop argued:

The Bishops have been so passionate about it. The Bishops are still emphasizing that the children that come to Catholic schools are also Nigerian citizens and whatever benefits students have in a public school, should also be extended to the mission schools but in some dioceses, in some states in Nigeria, Government care less, they just regard Catholic schools as privately owned and so they have nothing to do with them.

Father Anthony Eke shared the same worry concerning government's disposition towards Catholic education that:

Sometimes they look at those of us managing the Church schools as if we are in competition with public schools. Meanwhile, no one can be competing with somebody and again come to that person asking for some assistance. The government feels the Catholic schools are making more money than they are and so should pay them through taxes and levies instead of them giving so that they can enhance the other things.

Notwithstanding that some of the schools that were released by the government were over-populated with both students and staff, with little or no money to manage the schools; it is encouraging to see the other positive presentation of the government's attitude towards Church schools. The Bishop cited an exceptional example of Anambra State (one of the States in the eastern Nigeria). According to the Bishop, Anambra State has been very outstanding in assisting Catholic schools, beginning from returning mission schools to the rightful owners. The Bishop stated: 'Anambra State is one State where the Government is actively involved in the lives of the Catholic schools. They pay the teachers; they pay the staff and also give money for the management of the schools. That is why Anambra today has the best Catholic education system in Nigeria'. This, by implication is urging the rest of the States who are still in possession of mission schools to refurbish the schools and release them for the owners, and for the sake of the poor masses that are truly in need of education.

## 9.2 Conclusion

Considering the findings of this research, it is imperative to note that the Nigerian Catholic education system could thrive from three different perspectives. Firstly, from the mandate of Christ to the Church on the training and development of all people as creatures of God needing to be formed. Secondly, from the point of view of what this mandate means to the leaders of the Church as the sole Proprietors of Catholic schools. Thirdly, from the numerous expectations of the world, to the general perceptions of what Catholic schools can presently and in practice offer and the implications of these expectations to the Church.

The mandate, as has been mentioned severally in this study, that 'First and foremost, the Church offers its educational service to the poor, or those who are deprived of family help and affection, or those who are far from the faith' (*The Catholic School* document, published by the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education in 1977 Para. 58) has continued throughout this research to be the motivating force in the educational activities of the Church at different levels. From the Proprietors' points of view, education as important as it is should be made available to everyone irrespective of their societal and financial status. What this means to the Proprietors will be seen in the way they exercise their duties as Proprietors irrespective of their financial capability. Part of their duties is to ensure the implementation of the existing policy of education by all Catholic schools. The general perception of the Nigerian Catholic schools with regard to academic performances and morals is still very impressive. However, the implication of this perception lies on the extent to which Catholic schools in Nigeria can be accessed by those who might be financially less capable as well as the treatment given to the poor by both the school and fellow students. This is because some of the participants observed that there are some discrepancies in the school's treatment of the poor. For instance, a particular student thought initially that her school was only for the rich. She wondered why the school could not give poor students time to clear their debts instead of delaying them in school. The student stated that:

Many of the students who do not have money to pay their school fees stayed back. One student said that her mother had to borrow money to pay for her. The school has borrower's form and the interest is much, much more than what is being borrowed. Why can the school not allow them? After all nobody is running away because they will still come to collect their certificate.

The implication of the above submission is that some of the students were not impressed with the way their school sometimes treats poor students. The students expressed their feelings that the schools should take it easy with the students whose parents have not paid their school fees, which makes them to form the opinion that the school does not have cordial relationship with the poor, which is against the original tenet of the Catholic faith and the teachings of Jesus Christ regarding the care for the poor and the needy in the society.

### **9.3 Recommendations**

Based on the discussions and the findings, the following recommendations have been made by the researcher.

1. There is need for the Catholic schools to revisit the issue of the 'preferential option for the poor' by ensuring that barriers such as the entrance forms are also freely given to indigent students to participate in the entrance examination so that when they merit the admission based on performance, they can begin to enjoy the scholarship subject to subsequent performance as they progress from one class to the other. Moreover, there should be a common examination for all intending students so that the various dioceses can have one day to conduct entrance examination into all the Catholic schools in Nigeria.
2. The Church needs to find possible means of ameliorating the educational services for the benefit of all classes of people in the society, since the Government support for Catholic schools is still far-fetched. In view of this responsibility, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) should insist on certain uniformity in the area of fees, such as building a nursery, primary and

secondary institution in each diocese that will be at the reach of the poor, with very little and stipulated amount of school fees for the schools. These schools could be free of charge if collective funding could be sourced for, by the Bishops and through the Catholic education committee, and then to evenly distribute the funds to the schools in this category. In addition to this, the selection of children who will attend these schools should be the responsibility of the Catholic education committee, led by the Bishop in charge of education. This will demand constant monitoring to ensure that the aim is achieved. It also means that the national committee in charge of education will set this as a mandatory instruction and recommendation for every Catholic school irrespective of the founder – Congregational or diocesan owned.

3. There should be constant monitoring and supervision at the grass roots. This will assist in ensuring that the Catholic school's distinctive character is maintained especially in the areas of ensuring that affordable fees are being charged across board. Catholic schools should establish formal projects that will engage students in learning to assist and relate with the poor. The schools can do more in addition to allowing instalment payment of the school fees or occasional school fees waiver by ensuring that they reach out to well-meaning Nigerians to adopt one or more brilliant students, who could not afford the fees so as to assist in paying for their education in the schools. The schools should also intensify more efforts to reach out to more old students who benefitted from scholarships and now doing well to assist in providing free education to more poor students in order to make the society a better place.

#### **9.4 Specific Research Projects Needed for the Future**

In view of the pioneering efforts of the researcher in this field so far in Nigeria, the following areas could be looked at in the nearest future:

1. Strategic policy design and implementation of the interests of the Poor in Catholic education in Nigeria.
2. The identity of Nigerian Catholic education system: The implications of the fee-paying policy on the poor.

### **9.5 The Limitations of the Research**

This research is limited due to its scope, and based on the size of Nigeria as a country and her system of education. A group research will involve more schools, hence more participants and more time consuming. It is also limited by the fact that it is a qualitative study and involves herculean task of transcribing the opinions of the participants.

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## APPENDIX A



Leading education  
and social research  
Institute of Education  
University of London

### **Catholic Schools and the Interests of the Poor in Nigeria**

A Research Project

From 2009 to 2016

Information for Participating Catholic Secondary Schools in Nigeria

#### **May you kindly Accept to Help my Research Effort!**

My name is Igbo Maria Ugonna Rita

I am a doctoral student of the Institute of Education University of London.

This leaflet tells you about my research and I want to believe you will find it informative enough; kindly do not hesitate to contact me in case of need for any clarification.

#### **Why is this research being done?**

The research is being carried out first of all, because there has not been any systematic scholarly research on the Catholic education system in Nigeria. Secondly, the issue of 'preferential option for the poor' is a contemporary one and it is the obligation of the Catholic Church world-wide to actualize the 1977 mandate of the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, - namely *The Catholic School*, a foundational document that challenged the Church to "First and foremost offer its educational services to the poor or those who are deprived of family help and affection or those who are far from the faith". This research seeks to contribute to the accomplishment of this mission in the context of Nigerian Catholic education. Thirdly, the research will add to the comparative systematic and scholarly research needed in the academic field of education and will serve as one of the resources on Catholic education.

#### **Who will be in the project?**

Four Catholic secondary schools (including the one chosen for pilot study) will be in the project. Two of the schools were randomly selected from all the Catholic secondary schools in Nigeria and the other two schools were deliberately chosen, one of which belongs to my Religious Order to enable an insider's advantage that might be relevant to the study and the other is a truly well privileged Catholic school in Nigeria.

### **What will happen during the research?**

During the research I will be studying your school's documents on vision and mission statements, admissions and post admissions, expulsion policies, minutes of meetings, grant application letters (if any) and replies thereto. I will be interviewing the school proprietor (Bishop or Superior General as the case may be), Principal, six final year students (3 girls and 3 boys if co-educational), six form teachers/tutors comprising of 3 females and 3 males), four teaching staff (2 females and 2 males), four administrative staff and six parents (3 women and 3 men respectively). The research will also involve an informal observation of the students on the school site.

### **The central questions for the research are:**

1. How does this sample of Catholic Schools in Nigeria deal with the principle of 'preferential option for the poor'?
2. What roles do the Bishops and Major Superiors in Nigeria as proprietors of the Catholic schools play in dealing with the preferential option for the poor?
3. What roles do the Principals and teachers play in dealing with the preferential option for the poor?
4. In situations where there is no funding from either the government or the Church, how do the schools cope with the intake of their students?
5. What changes in policy and practice are needed for the future?

### **The above questions will determine my interview questions such as**

- The position of the interviewee;
- The charism/founding principle of the founder of the school;
- The number of students on enrolment;
- The source(s) of the school's funding;
- Whether or not relatively wealthy students have more admission opportunities than the poor;
- The percentage of students from poor families in the overall school population;
- The content of the school's curriculum with regard to charity and justice,
- etc.

### **Implied commitment on your own part if you agree to participate**

If you agree to take part, I will tape record as well as write down your responses in the interview sessions and type them up later. Though research findings will be published, all personal information received will not be made public without participant's permission.

### **Could there be problems for you if you take part?**

Agreement to participate will expose you practically to no risks and no expenditure. I hope you will enjoy taking part in the research.

**Will doing the research help you?**

Yes, participating in the research will help you precisely in having some idea of the nature of Catholic education and its services to the poor. The research will mainly collect ideas to help the Catholic Church, the Catholic schools and students. It will help to provide better educational services to all people. On my part, the research will help me to learn to be a researcher so that I may do more research in the future which will help other people.

**Who will know that you have been in the research?**

The Institute of Education and the public when research has been published but I will keep tapes and notes in a safe place, and will change all the names in my reports – and the name of the school – so that no one knows who said what.

**Do you have to take part?**

You decide if you want to take part and, even if you say ‘yes’, you can withdraw at any time or even decline answering any of the questions.

**Willingness to participate:** You can tell me that you will take part by signing the consent form.

**Will you know about the research results?**

I will send you a short report of the research results when it is completed.

**Who is funding the research?**

This research is being funded by the Daughters of Divine Love Congregation to which I belong.

**You can reach me:** If you have any problems with the project, please tell me. Below are my contact details:

Sr Maria Ugonna Rita Igbo

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Tel: [Redacted]

Email: [Redacted]

**Thank you for reading this leaflet.**

Sr Maria Ugonna Rita Igbo

APPENDIX B

Consent form



Leading education  
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Institute of Education  
University of London

**Catholic Schools and the Interests of the Poor in Nigeria**

**Research Dates: 2009-2016**

I have read the information leaflet about the research.  (please tick)

I agree to be interviewed and know that my responses may be taped.  (please tick)

Participant's Name .....

Participant's Position / Occupation .....

Signature. .... Place ..... Date .....

Researcher's Name .....

Signature ..... Place ..... Date .....

## APPENDIX C

### **Location and Access**

The three schools used in this study were located very far from one another – Abuja (North Central), Enugu (South East) and Lagos (South West). Where appropriate, the approval of the Local Ordinary (the Bishop) was sought through phone calls and letters. In the case of the school A, owned by the researcher's Order, the Daughters of Divine Love, the researcher sought the approval of the Superior General who showed keen interest in the research, and greatly gave encouragement and the necessary support. The Proprietor contacted and persuaded the Principal then to allow the researcher access to the school and went further to facilitate the contacts with some parents, teachers and students who participated in the research.

Access to school B was sought by communicating with the Principal who permitted and highly supported the work by providing the documents needed. The Principal was equally available for interview. In the case of school C in Lagos, an approval was received from the archbishop through the education secretary at the early stage of the research. Two of the three schools that participated in the research had catholic priests as Principals while one is a female religious.

Information was retrieved from studying the schools' documents on vision and mission statements, admission and post- admissions, expulsion policies, and an informal observation of the students on the school site. The researcher therefore represented the Nigerian Church as a Catholic and a citizen to carry out an inquiry of the 1977 mandate of the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education namely, 'The Catholic School', a foundational document that challenges the Church to "first and foremost offer its educational services to the poor ...'

## APPENDIX D

### **a) Steps for Anonymity and Confidentiality**

All effort was made towards ensuring the confidentiality and security of all information provided by the participants.

To achieve the highest level of anonymity, respondents wrote their real names only on the consent forms that they filled on the day of the interview but before the interviews started. The completed forms were securely stored and can only be viewed by the researcher if necessary. In order to ensure that fair and honest responses were provided by the respondents, the researcher convinced them that their real names would not appear in any part of the thesis. Therefore:

- all the names that appeared in the thesis are pseudo names, to give a clue of how the interviews were conducted by the researcher, though the aim was to hide the identity of all the participants.
- information obtained were properly stored by the researcher, which ensured that they did not fall into the hands of unauthorized persons, but were only revisited when necessary for clarifications.
- the transcripts for the interviews were confidentially transcribed before the data were analysed using NVivo – Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), while ensuring that they do not fall into wrong hands.
- all information were therefore treated with utmost confidentiality and thereafter data that were no longer needed were properly disposed. These steps ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

### **b. My Dual Role as a Religious Sister and a Researcher**

As a researcher and a Sister in the Catholic Church, there are some basic issues that must be clarified:

- First of all, my research topic requires that some of the participants will be expected to criticize the Catholic Church and the ways Catholic schools are managed particularly with regard to creating access for the poor. Some participants may not be confident enough to criticize the Church as well as the schools, but would prefer to say only 'positive' things before the Religious Sister and the researcher.
- Secondly, I am under the authority of the Catholic Church, and though I know that there is need for Proprietors to revisit the policy on Catholic education, this must be presented with utmost wisdom and sincerity of purpose so that the aim of reaching out to more poor could be achieved.
- Thirdly, as a researcher, the finding of my study has proven that the Church needs to find possible means of reaching out more to the less privileged. This study has therefore brought out the humanitarian aspect of me as a Sister, and so I am bold to state that for the 'preferential option for the poor' to be of any essence, and to be in

line with Paulo Freire's writing on freedom for the poor, as well as to be in line with the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, I am of the view that there should be synergy amongst stakeholders in order to ensure that the Catholic school's distinctive character is maintained.

## APPENDIX E

CATEGORIES: PRINCIPALS, TEACHERS, STUDENTS, PARENTS, BISHOP, SUPERIOR GENERAL, CATHOLIC SCHOOLS' SECRETARY, PUBLIC (EXTERNAL OBSERVERS AND CRITICS)

**Gender: Male or Female**

**School A**

Name	Project Name	Category	Gender	Location
Rev. Sr. Tina Mmadu	Principal	School Principal	F	Enugu
Cornelia Dayo	Student	Student	F	Enugu
Pamela Uzo	Student	Student	F	Enugu
Uju Ogechi	Student	Student	F	Enugu
Cynthia Linus	Student	Student	F	Enugu
Precious Obichi	Student	Student	F	Enugu
Favour Udofia	Student	Student	F	Enugu
Julius Ekechukwu	Teacher	Teacher	M	Enugu
Calistus Okoli	Teacher	Teacher	M	Enugu
Elfrida Maduka	Teacher	Teacher	F	Enugu
Elijus Ganiru	Teacher	Teacher	M	Enugu
Fredrick Dantel	Teacher	Teacher	M	Enugu
Kennedy Akuno	Teacher	Teacher	M	Enugu
Ifeyinwa Silas	Parent	Parent (Civil Servant)	F	Enugu
Charity Agwu	Parent	Parent (Govt Official/Teacher)	F	Enugu

Dr. Martin Stephen	Parent	Parent (Lecturer)	M	Awka
Elias Eso	Parent	Parent (Public Servant)	M	Enugu
Eze Eloga	Parent	Parent (Lawyer)	M	Enugu
Julie Ikedi	Parent	Parent (Doctor)	F	Enugu
Donatus David	Staff	VP Academics	M	Enugu
Angela Ofor	Staff	VP Academics II	F	Enugu

### School B

Name	Project Name	Category	Gender	Location
Rev Fr Panther Akiro	Principal	Principal	M	Abuja
Halima Aliyu	Student	Student	F	Abuja
Agnes Doga	Student	Student	F	Abuja
Abigail Matthew	Student	Student	F	Abuja
Godwin Nnalue	Student	Student	M	Abuja
Joseph Innocent	Student	Student	M	Abuja
Chukwura Dangana	Student	Student	M	Abuja
Jerry Johnson	Teacher	Teacher	M	Abuja
Olivia Amen	Teacher	Teacher	F	Abuja
Justin Onyema	Teacher	Teacher	M	Abuja
Rose Owolabi	Teacher	Teacher	F	Abuja
Esther Onyia	Teacher	Teacher	F	Abuja

Tim Odili	Teacher	Teacher	M	Abuja
Patricia Oghene	Parent	Parents (Business)	F	Abuja
Stephanie Mbaefo	Parent	Parent (Dr)	F	Abuja
Josephat Chukwuma	Parent	Parent  Public Servant	M	Abuja
Kadiri Okwuelo	Parent	Parent  Architect	M	Abuja
Jonathan Chikwue	Parent	Parent (Lawyer)	M	Abuja
Chiamaka Opkara	Parent	Parent  Public Servant	F	Abuja
Chivita Ibealor	Staff	Resource Staff	F	Abuja
Gabriel Chukwuma	Staff	School Bursar	M	Abuja
Emmanuel Nebolisa	Staff	Exam Officer	M	Abuja
Sr. Triumphant Omaluchi	Teacher	Vice Principal Academics	F	Abuja
Sr. Mmachi Chikwelu	Teacher	VP Admin	F	Abuja
Rebecca Awe	Staff	Counselor	F	Abuja
Cosmas Enu	Staff	Admin Staff	M	Abuja

### School C

Name	Project Name	Category	Gender	Location
Rev. Fr Rex Abor	Principal	Principal	M	Lagos
Benson Orizu	Student	Student	M	Lagos
Titus Edward	Student	Student	M	Lagos
Thomas Akiyemi	Student	Student	M	Lagos
Kemi Okonkwo	Student	Student	M	Lagos
Telma Abiodun	Student	Student	M	Lagos
Donatus Aku	Student	Student	M	Lagos
Ted Igwe	Teacher	Teacher Maths	M	Lagos
Zotara Alabi	Teacher	Teacher HOD Science		Lagos
Abraham Obi	Teacher	Teacher	M	Lagos
Aloysius Crown	Teacher	Teacher (Economics)	M	Lagos
Fidelma Nduka	Teacher	Teacher CRS Counselor	F	Lagos
Gift Daluchi	Teacher	Teacher	F	Lagos
Placid Nkwado	Parent	Parent (Marketing Executive)	M	Lagos
Lawrence Ibechi	Parent	Parent (Business)	M	Lagos

Bolu Jacob	Parent	Parent (Company Executive)	F	Lagos
Festus Obiani	Parent	Parent (Pharmacist)	M	Lagos
Johnson Offor	Parent	Parent (Consultant)	M	Lagos
Ali Adawa	Parent	Parent (Human Resources)	M	Lagos
Sharon Kelechi	Staff	Admin Secretary	F	Lagos
Arinze Chinwuba	Staff	Staff	M	Lagos
Tonia Nebechi	Staff	Guidance Counsellor	F	Lagos
<b>The Bishop and the Superior General (Proprietors)</b>				
<b>The Education Secretary</b>				
Most Rev Francis Ikpeme	Bishop	M	DRACC Lugbe Abuja	
Rev Mother May Anukam	Superior General	F	Superior General's Office Enugu	
Rev. Fr. Anthony Eke	Priest	M	Secretary's Office Abuja	

### Observers and Critics

Rev. Vincent Nwafor	Fr.	Father Vincent/Critic	Director	M	His Residence Abuja
Hon Alphonsus Oti		Observer	Public Servant	M	NASS Abuja
Hon Walter Ngu		Observer	Politician	M	Regina Pacis College Abuja
Daniel Onyema		Observer	Commissioner	M	Enugu
Andrew Otakagu		Critic	Legal Practitioner	M	Enugu
Philip Obele		A political observer/National Assembly	National Assembly	M	RPC Abuja
Ken Okeri		Critic	Education Consultant	M.	Abuja
Elochukwu Udoh		Critic	Engineer	M	Abuja