An Analysis of Recent Catholic Opinion of Pre-School Training in Nursery-Kindergarten Programs

Floraetta Lanham Morow  
Loyola University Chicago

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses

Recommended Citation
https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses/1427

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License.
Copyright © 1958 Floraetta Lanham Morow
AN ANALYSIS OF RECENT CATHOLIC OPINION OF PRE-SCHOOL TRAINING IN NURSERY-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

by

Florastina L. Norow

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

February

1958
LIFE

Floraetta Lanham Morow was born in Sheridan, Indiana, February 25, 1928.

She was graduated from Sheridan High School, Sheridan, Indiana, April 1946, and from Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, June, 1950, with the degree of Bachelor of Science.

From 1950 to 1956 the author taught kindergarten. She taught one year at Hawthorne School, Elkhart, Indiana, and the following five years at Lincoln School, Hammond, Indiana. Starting in the fall of 1956, the author taught fifth grade at Crescent Springs School, South Fort Mitchell, Kentucky. During the summers of 1951 to 1954, she taught summer school at Lincoln School, Hammond, Indiana. During the summers of 1955 and 1956, she took graduate courses at Loyola University. Her graduate work at Loyola University had begun in September, 1951.
PREFACE

There are approximately 16,000,000 children in the United States under the age of five years according to recent United States Bureau of Census reports. When these children attain kindergarten age, the question of whether or not to send them to kindergarten will have to be answered. For the Catholic parents of these children, this problem carries more significance because of the following situations: a great number of our Catholic elementary schools do not offer a kindergarten in their curriculum; many are in the process of abandoning their kindergartens for a number of reasons; and the Canon law requires that Catholic children must not attend non-Catholic, neutral, or mixed schools. With this problem in view, the author has undertaken the following study.

Acknowledgment is made of the interest and cooperation of Dr. John Wosniak of Loyola University, and of Sister Agnes Margaret, C.D.P., of Villa Madonna College, Covington, Kentucky, who helped guide the author at various stages of the study. Appreciation is owed to the librarians of Villa Madonna College, and to Sister Marie Imelda, O.P., historian of the National Catholic Kindergarten Association.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the thesis-Procedure to be used.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. HISTORICAL ORIGIN OF CATHOLIC PRE-SCHOOL TRAINING</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European development--Types of schools--Early educators and philosophers--Nations offering pre-school training--United States development--Enrollment trends--Research.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. FACTORS BEHIND OUR CATHOLIC PRE-SCHOOL TRAINING IN THE UNITED STATES</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. THE FUTURE OF CATHOLIC PRE-SCHOOL TRAINING</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems and trends--Lack of religion--Urban living--Modern families--Changing society--Cooperative plans--Lay teachers--Research.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. SUMMARY OF REPORTS OF SCHOOL PROVISIONS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. NUMBER AND TYPES OF EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. ENROLLMENT FOR CATHOLIC KINDERGARTENS AND FIRST GRADES</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Although educators throughout the ages have been conscious of the value of the kindergarten, this form of pre-schooling is only one hundred years old in the United States. Hence the kindergarten lends itself quite freely to almost any form of discussion. However, if the Catholic schools are to compete with the public schools, they must be prepared to defend Catholic opinions and beliefs in education. A fundamental part of the preparation of youth consists in giving them the best possible experiences in the home or in the school. Where do Catholics believe this can best be accomplished?

The purpose of this study, broadly speaking, is to determine Catholic opinion of pre-school education. In order to understand the basis for this opinion, this study will focus its attention on the following factors: the advantages and disadvantages of Catholic kindergarten training; past and future trends in Catholic kindergarten education; the cause and probable effects of these trends; and the future of Catholic kindergartens.

The general research procedure used has been to survey and review recent Catholic literature related to the above mentioned areas. General works on Catholic educational history and the theory, monographs on special problems of the pre-school, and periodical literature have provided the most important sources of information for this study. Data has also been secured through interviews with persons long associated with kindergartens and with Catholic
education.
Earl;r interest in the education of young children was suggested by
Plato in The Republic and was expressed in the play space provided for the
children by the Romans. In feudal Europe the history of education in Catholic
countries continually refers to the "Infant Schools" which were part of the
Cathedral school or the Manor school in the feudal lord's castle. For the
ordinary people, this education was part of the training in domestic skills and
preparation for all types of crafts and rural work. The purpose behind the in-
clusion of "Infant Schools" in this system was a common sense one with a
scientific basis; namely, to begin the education of the child at the age when
the child seemed best able to learn.\footnote{W. Kane, S.J., A History of Education, Chicago, 1938, pp. 89-112.}

During the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Comenius,
Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Owen advocated early childhood education as a means
of helping social conditions. The theory of Comenius was to stress health care
and training; Rousseau insisted that "children are not little adults," and aimed
to develop the child's unique character; and Pestalozzi described education of
the young child as a "process of unfolding."

Froebel was the greatest influence upon the true kindergarten in
Europe. This was in 1837, when he opened the first kindergarten ("Garden of
Children in Switzerland. This school, like the others, closed in 1864, and Froebel turned to lecturing to spread his theories of kindergarten training.  

During this period, a need was expressed by Father Rosmini in Italy. His ideas on the education of the young child had a similar resemblance to those of Froebel. Father Rosmini believed that the preschool period was the time when the child developed "an appreciation concerning himself and his relation to God and an awareness of his playmates and of the world about him. It develops in him attitudes of reverence toward God, of respect for his playmates, and of responsibility for his own actions." 

Pre-schools were also established in England by the Education Act of 1907, to care for the children of the poor. In 1914 Vera Fediaevsky, a Russian, established a pre-school to care for children of working mothers and to indoctrinate the children with a Communist education.

Italy dates its pre-school education back to Dr. Maria Montessori who began a special study for mentally defective children prior to 1900. Later she decided to adopt her method of educating these children to those of normal abilities. In the early 1900s, she organised "Infant schools" for children between the ages of three to eight years. Her influence spread throughout Europe and was especially felt in the British Isles, and in France, in addition


to her native Italy. The *Child and the Church*, written by Dr. Montessori, expressed her Catholic tradition and philosophy, and her work earned her the papal approval.

Australia has provided free kindergartens for the last sixty years. New Zealand and Denmark also provide kindergartens for "educational play" which allows each child to use his energy constructively and to develop his individuality. Even though there has been an increase in the number of kindergartens in Europe since the end of World War II, they are rapidly becoming overcrowded.

Table I, on page 6, indicates some of the countries which provide pre-school education and the ages at which children are admitted.

Kindergartens in the United States did not have their initial impetus in public schools. They were first established as private schools or philanthropic schools. Mrs. Carl Schura, a pupil of Froebel, founded the first kindergarten in the United States in Watertown, Wisconsin, in 1855 for German immigrants. In 1860, the first English-speaking kindergarten was opened in Boston by Elizabeth Peabody. St. Louis, Missouri established the first public school kindergarten in 1873. No definite date has been found for the opening of the first Catholic kindergartens in connection with the Catholic educational system.

The early kindergarten teachers in the United States were followers of Froebel. They followed his philosophy and, in spite of disagreeing with many of his ideas, today we are still following his original plan for the

---

*Sister Mary, I.H.M., p. 383.*
TABLE I
SUMMARY OF REPORTS OF SCHOOL PROVISIONS FOR
YOUNG CHILDREN IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nation</th>
<th>Terminology</th>
<th>Age of Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Kindergartens</td>
<td>3-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth of Australia</td>
<td>Preschool Centers</td>
<td>2-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czecholovakia</td>
<td>Kindergartens</td>
<td>3-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Kindergartens</td>
<td>2-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England and Wales</td>
<td>Nursery Schools</td>
<td>2-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>Nursery Classes</td>
<td>2-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>Free Kindergartens</td>
<td>3-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>Kindergartens</td>
<td>3-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union of South Africa</td>
<td>Nursery Schools</td>
<td>2-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union of Soviet Socialist Republic</td>
<td>Nursery Schools</td>
<td>Under 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kindergartens</td>
<td>3-7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Kindergarten environment of activities. From Montessori we have adopted much of our social aspects of the kindergarten. However, the greatest influence on the American kindergarten has been Dr. John Dewey. He is responsible for the unification of the kindergarten and the primary program in the United States.

Total kindergarten enrollment in the United States grew rapidly from 31,227 students in 1888 to 645,268 students in 1940.5 Private kindergartens flourished in the beginning but public schools rapidly added kindergartens to

their curriculum, until by 1940 public schools surpassed private school kindergartens in enrollments. Following the great depression (1929-1933), kindergartens and kindergarten enrollments were not increasing noticeably, but by 1940, both public and private kindergartens and kindergarten facilities were increasing. Public kindergarten enrollment totaled 594,647 in 1940, while private kindergarten enrollment totaled only 59,621.6

The second great increase in pre-school enrollment came with World War II due to better economic conditions and to the changes in family conditions. Many children were enrolled in pre-school education because it became necessary for mothers to work while fathers were in the armed service of our country. This emergency period dramatized children's needs and thus produced the growth in kindergartens beyond what might have been expected in normal circumstances.

Statistics for Catholic kindergarten education in the United States are, for the most part, either unavailable or fragmentary. As of this study there is no accurate count of the number of Catholic kindergartens now in operation in the United States. However, the author understands that Father Jenks of the National Catholic Educational Association is presently undertaking the task of contacting diocesan superintendents in the hope of compiling this much needed information.7

6 Ibid.

7 Information in a letter to the author from Sister Mary Agnes, C.P.P.S., President of the National Catholic Kindergarten Association, February 1, 1957.
Recent surveys indicate the following enrollment statistics for Catholic kindergartens in the United States: 1949-1950, 106,812, an increase of 4.3 per cent over the last survey; 1951-52, 145,247 an increase of 5.2 per cent; and 1953-1954, 149,350 an increase of 4.9 per cent. However, this data is not complete in that only 80 per cent of those surveyed in 1950 responded; 92 per cent in 1952; and 95 per cent in 1954. 8

The overcrowded condition of pre-school education has continued to grow, as indicated, since World War II because of the increasing birthrate. Today, enrollments in both public and private kindergartens are overpowering. As a result of crowded conditions, lack of qualified teachers, financial aid, and other limitations, many of the private kindergartens are being closed as well as a few of the public kindergartens. 9 Catholic kindergarten enrollments are also increasing but for the most part at a decreasing rate. Evidence also seems to indicate that Catholic kindergarten facilities are not being expanded, and in many places they are even being closed.

During the depression, the war, and early postwar years, much attention was focused upon the needs of young children. Research in the area of pre-school and child development was brought directly to the public. Both


9 Information from a personal interview of the author with Sister M. Alanaa, S.N.D.
in England and in the United States, federal programs were set up to provide for the welfare of young children. Many research centers having pre-school laboratories are now in existence. Large universities have laboratory schools in connection with their education departments. Merrill-Palmer, Iowa Research Center and the Yale Clinic are but a few of the special research centers in the United States. Many well known persons, such as Gesell, Shirley and Anderson are noted in the field of early childhood education.

National and international organizations have been established for fostering childhood education, such as Early Childhood Education International, National Catholic Kindergarten Association, National Association for Nursery School Education, The Child Study Association of America, and World Organization for Early Childhood Education. In these organizations Catholics have taken little active part.

Catholic kindergartens have been promoted through an organization called the National Catholic Kindergarten Association. The organization of the Catholic Kindergarten Association was under the direction of Miss Mae T. Kilcullen during the spring of 1940. Four conferences were attended by almost one hundred teachers, many experienced teachers at the kindergarten level and others wanting to know how the kindergarten would operate. These conferences were so successful that from the suggestion of the group and approval of

---

Monsignor D. F. Cunningham, Archdiocesan Superintendent, the Association was formed. The first official meeting was held at De Paul University in April, 1941.

The Catholic Kindergarten Review is the official organ of the Catholic Kindergarten Association. This quarterly magazine has a circulation in the United States, Canada, and even in many foreign countries. It is the only Catholic magazine devoted exclusively to the interests of the teachers of the pre-school child. 11

11 Sister Marie Imelda Wilson, O.P., pp. 29-30.
CHAPTER III

FACTORS BEHIND OUR CATHOLIC PRE-SCHOOL TRAINING

IN THE UNITED STATES

Our Catholic kindergartens exist because we believe that careful guidance should be given to the young child's training. The Catholic kindergarten is a controlled environment providing for the physical, mental, moral, social, and spiritual development of our children. The National Catholic Kindergarten Association has the following recent statement of aims:

To provide better articulation between the home and the school, by sympathetic guidance during the child's period of adjustment. To inculcate and stress through purposeful activities the social virtues; an appreciation of the true value of all work; respect for the dignity of the human person (rich or poor); realization of the dependence of people on one another; and the meaning of the child's role as a member of the Mystical Body of Christ. To help the child experience joy in his growing ability to express himself effectively and creatively, in exploring the use of suitable equipment and materials. To develop in the child a definite readiness for school work, while avoiding two equally detrimental extremes—first grade acceleration and mere amusement. To give parents every possible cooperation in diagnosing and having corrected physical handicaps and emotional maladjustments of the child.¹

The curriculum for the Catholic kindergarten incorporates religion, natural and social studies, language arts, number readiness, creative expression, and health and play activities.

¹National Catholic Kindergarten Association, This We Believe About the Kindergarten, n.d.
These basic activities have been selected in order to help the child develop within himself knowledge, habits, and attitudes in all of these fields in relation to God, to himself, to the social groups, and to the Christian community.²

The methods employed for the teaching of these kindergarten children are to plan activities to parallel the child's mental and physical growth. The children are given an opportunity to reach the highest level of development possible in their kindergarten work and to develop awareness of their inner resources.³

The kindergartens are only "playrooms," but the play has a purpose. In 1943, Paul E. Campbell made the following statement concerning the value of the kindergartens:

The kindergarten has amply justified its place in the school system. Its underlying principle of utilizing children's activities as a means of education is now recognized as fundamental to the best work in all the grades. . . . The normal child has an overpowering impulse to experiment with materials. He is satisfied at first with the mere handling of objects and materials, but it is not long before he desires to go further, . . . The mother who supplies a child with paper and scissors, or with crayons, paints and clay, soon realizes that the desire for creative expression is inherent in the child. The crude results do not suggest much possibility of development, but the kindergarten aims to transform this urge into better technique through the child's own experimental method.⁴

²Ibid.
³Ibid.
Every minute of the kindergarten session is carefully planned by the teachers, who are only helping the parents in their duty of instruction by taking over a small part of the child's day for guided instruction. From these planned kindergarten experiences children become better equipped for facing the first grade situations. After a year in the kindergarten, the child has made a gradual adjustment into his surroundings in the school and is familiar with the routine. He has spent one year learning to learn, learning communication skills, and has made the transition ready for the learning of drill subjects.

First grade teachers most frequently advocate kindergarten training for the five-year-olds. Various studies have shown that the child who goes to kindergarten has a better chance of learning to adjust to the school situation than has the six-year-old who goes to school for the first time during a year generally considered hard for good adjustment, one which creates many conflicts in the child.

When we place a child from kindergarten training with one who has not had such training, the advantages in development are apparent. I.Q. differences on matched groups of children range from fifteen to thirty points in favor of the kindergarten child. The child is not only better developed in regard to his I.Q. but also in relation to other abilities. Studies indicate that children with kindergarten experience tend to make relatively more rapid

---

progress in the first five grades than those who have not attended kindergarten. The largest number of first-grade repeaters are those children who did not have the advantage of pre-school training. Research has found that children with kindergarten training excel in their reading rate and comprehension; they excel in the rate and quality of handwriting; they establish better person-to-person and person-to-group contacts; and they rate higher on oral language and other traits, such as industry and initiative.6

Studies by Sister Mary, I.H.M., of Marygrove College, pointed out that the same ratio of development is apparent in the moral and religious development of the pre-school child.7 If studies have indicated these facts in favor of the kindergarten training, how can the home situation be considered sufficient education for our five-year-olds today?

In the kindergarten, possibly to a greater degree than in any later grade of school, the teacher is free to counsel and to guide the individual child. The kindergarten is unhampered by a time element in its curriculum, and the teacher is able to seize opportunities for advising the child in ways acceptable to the situations as they arise. Here, also, the teacher has the advantage of careful observation of the child, and through the accurate well-trained kindergarten teacher many of the handicaps of children are detected.


7Sister Mary, I.H.M., p. 384.
Parents are not always trained in the detection of minute disorders of children, and thus many times are unaware that something could be affecting the child beyond its control.

Table II, on page 16, indicates the number and types of exceptional children that are often detected by careful observation of the kindergarten teacher.

Many kindergarten children with some of the handicaps listed in Table II have been discovered and helped, as have their parents, to make an adjustment to their handicap before the complexity of the handicap was delayed or had the opportunity of delaying the child's progress any longer.

Today's modern homes and the modern way of living are not always ideal environments for children. The homes are small and crowded, and the lack of out-of-doors play area inhibits the child's natural need for space for developmental play activity. These crowded homes in the cities, with today's strain and tension in daily living, do not provide the child with a place to discover truths for himself. Paul E. Campbell said "various influences have conspired in the industrial age to destroy the potency of the home as an educational agent... The helplessness of the home has created a demand for public education of the child from the third to the sixth year. Added to this is the psychological demand urged by the exponent of kindergarten education. The kindergarten is a fact... The kindergarten is the tide in the affairs of childhood. We must take it at the flood, else the voyage of the child may be found in shallows and in miseries."  

---


TABLE II

NUMBER AND TYPES OF EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Exceptional Children</th>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentally gifted</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentally retarded and slow-learning</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crippled (including cardiacs)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blind</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially seeing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf or deafened</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard-of-hearing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior problem (maladjusted)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epileptic and convulsive disorders</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glandular deficient</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defective in speech</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowered vitality</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Kindergarten for two hours a day can offer the child the time for this exploration and discovery that is so vital to childhood.

There are many reasons for early childhood education which are valid at all times; and a few others which apply to our times especially. The good judgment and common sense of our Catholic forefathers evidently had a scientific basis in observation. They began education at the age when the child is very receptive to learning. Now at a time when research points to the early childhood years as the most important in forming the ideals, the attitudes, the social habits, and the basic personality pattern for the human person, our Catholic school system is devoting itself increasingly to interest
in education of the older children.\(^9\)

As shown in the Summary of Catholic Education there were 9,279 Catholic elementary schools with a total enrollment of 3,235,251. Below is a table showing the kindergarten enrollment in comparison to the enrollment in these schools for first grade.

**TABLE III**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>1949</th>
<th>per cent</th>
<th>1950</th>
<th>per cent</th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>per cent</th>
<th>1952</th>
<th>per cent</th>
<th>1953</th>
<th>per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>106,812</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>115,247</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>119,350</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Grade</td>
<td>363,152</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>394,376</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>479,376</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The above figures seem to indicate that approximately 65 per cent of those children entering the first grade have not had the opportunity of a Catholic kindergarten experience. The principal reason why many of these children did not attend a Catholic kindergarten is the fact that one was not available.

This lack of availability comes about as a result of several factors: (1) increased enrollments; (2) lack of teachers; (3) financial limitations; and (4) Catholic concepts.

Many Catholic elementary schools, having had kindergartens in the past have been forced to abandon them because of overwhelming enrollments in their first grades and the grades beyond. Even the parochial schools that are in the process of expanding their present facilities and the parishes that are establishing a new school find that, when building or construction is completed, enrollments have increased beyond their original estimates, thereby forcing them to forfeit the planned kindergarten in favor of the other grades.

Lack of teachers is another reason why many parishes do not incorporate kindergartens within their curricula. The number of nuns entering the educational field is not sufficient to fill the positions created by the rapid expansion of the Church and its educational system. Therefore, the exclusion or abandonment of a kindergarten is seized upon as a means to release a nun for teaching in one of the elementary grades. 11

Many parishes that have expanded their educational facilities in recent years have been unable financially to include a kindergarten. The kindergarten room usually costs more to build and equip than does the average

10 Information from personal interviews of the author with parish priests and with Catholic educators.

11 Information from a personal interview of the author with Father John A. Reifsnider.
elementary classroom because of some of the following needs: larger floor area, private bathrooms, lockers, rest equipment, mid-day lunch provisions, out-of-door play area, and educational toys. For these reasons many parishes consider kindergarten a "luxury" and not important enough to warrant this financial burden.

If qualified lay teachers are employed in the Catholic kindergartens an additional financial burden is placed on the parish since the lay teachers usually cannot be had unless salaries are equal to those of the local public school system.

Failure of the hierarchy to take a decided interest in the kindergarten and in the kindergarten children may stem from the Church's concept of the family's duty to educate the child. Canon Law 1113 states: "Parents are bound by a most grave obligation to provide to the best of their ability for the religious and moral as well as for the physical and civil education of their children, and for their temporal well-being."12 To some Catholic leaders kindergarten seems an infringement on the work of the mother.

To summarize this lack of availability Sister Mary, I.M., of Marygrove College in Detroit, Michigan, recently said: "There are many reasons to be given: the expansion of the Church physically, the development of the elementary school system, the lack of personnel, the financial problem—and the one we do not like to mention; the failure of clergy, religious teachers, and parents alike to appreciate that early childhood . . . is a period when a child

---

Also, Monsignor Monaghan, the Diocesan Superintendent for the Diocese of Oklahoma made the following statement concerning kindergarten:
"There are sixteen kindergartens in the Diocese of Oklahoma; and the total enrollment was 375. . . kindergartens are being beaten by circumstances; and kindergartens are not a part of the elementary system."\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{13}Sister Mary, I.H.M., p. 364.

\textsuperscript{11}"Minutes of the Fifth Annual Meeting in Oklahoma City," \textit{National Catholic Kindergarten Review}, IV, Spring, 1955, 21.
CHAPTER IV

THE FUTURE OF CATHOLIC PRE-SCHOOL TRAINING

Research has shown us that early childhood years are the most important in forming the child's character. If we are to abolish Catholic kindergartens, we are forcing the modern parents to place their children under the influence of the public school, forbidden by Canon Law 1371, which states, "Catholic children must not attend non-Catholic, neutral or mixed schools." It is for the bishop to decide, in what circumstances and with what precautions attendance at such schools may be tolerated without danger of perversion to the pupils.1 With many parishes abandoning kindergartens because of the factors mentioned previously, the vast majority of parents are placing their children in public kindergartens with the intention of returning them to the parochial school at the first grade level. Will these children of Catholic faith continue to return to Catholic schools after attending public kindergartens? At present, the average return is good; however, with the public schools sometimes offering better facilities, convenience, and free tuition, the Catholic elementary schools might become less important. Father Joseph H. Fichter, S.J., an authority on parish sociology, expressed the following views in an address, "The Parochial School and the Community," at the

---

National Planning Conference of the American Society of Planning Officials in San Francisco, California: "Two out of every three Catholic children of elementary school age probably will be enrolled in public schools ten years from now... The imminent invasion of the public school by large numbers of Catholic children has compelled a re-examination of the position of the parochial school in the larger community."²

Catholics should not run the risk of losing their children to the public schools in this modern society. Apparently with the crowded home conditions, with our changing attitudes in society, and with modern social influences, the present day Catholic home is not living up to its requirements for educating its children in the Christian way of life. The lack of religion in the family today is illustrated by Father John L. Thomas, S.J., in his survey of this problem, representing 20,691 Catholic children in 33 states, when they entered first grade. He found that only 52.9 per cent of the Catholic children entering the first grade in Catholic schools had been taught to make the Sign of the Cross; only 23.2 per cent could recite the Our Father; only 33.0 per cent knew the Hail Mary; only 15.5 per cent knew the prayers to the Guardian Angel; only 24.9 per cent knew about Adam and Eve; only 34.2 per cent had heard the Christmas story; and only 33.0 per cent knew the story of the crucifix.³ These figures do not speak well for the present day Catholic

²The Messenger, Covington, March 31, 1957, p. 1A.

This study also shows that "When the figures were broken down into rural and urban groups, and into groups representing different sections of the country, the rural children came out far ahead of the city children in almost every classification" concerning religious practice and teaching in the home.

Rural families are generally larger than urban families, thereby creating the opportunity for the older children to help give religious training to the younger children.

With the largest number of families living in the urban areas and with urban families generally smaller, every effort should be made to make available Catholic religious instruction, and in what better way than through parochial kindergartens?

The urban society creates tension among its members. There is much rush, strain, and tension in daily living which children can not cope with because they need leisure, quiet and peace. Many American children begin to carry emotional burdens at the early age of two or three years. It is difficult to evaluate the effects upon our children of broken homes, working mothers, and fathers engaged in two jobs. These situations can create psychiatric implications. In a city so man-made as New York, one out of twenty persons spends some time in a mental hospital before he dies, due to this strain.

1 Ibid.
2 Ibid.

5 Sister Mary, I.H.M., p. 385.
Early Christian childhood education is one great means of alleviating this problem.

According to Monsignor McNally, new homes are constantly being formed by young people, of whom ninety per cent have become mothers and fathers without specific education necessary for the rearing of children. The Church has not provided adult education for this aspect of marriage; therefore, a kindergarten could contribute much to help these young parents. What better way can the Church re-introduce religion into its Catholic homes today than through the five-year-old? The kindergarten child being energetic, having great powers of memory, and being impressed by truths told to him, can transfer much religion back to the neglected parents.

Each phase of education goes through a period first of organization, then of development, and finally of acceptance by society. One hundred years ago in the United States, our first kindergarten was opened. Development has continued these hundred years, and today society is still in the process of accepting kindergartens.

With these years of kindergarten experience behind the educators and child-development workers, we know that the education of young children can be advanced if they are established in good school environments. The kindergarten helps all children, but especially the emotionally and physically handicapped children; the only child; children of small families; children from isolated neighborhoods; and children of cramped living and play areas.

---


In fulfilling the Catholic heritage, services should be provided through our Catholic educational system for available education for those of all ages. Sister Mary Clare has stated, "Holy Mother Church has always fostered and encouraged learning in all branches of education, not for the sake of learning but as a means to work out our salvation. Kindergarten is the introduction to that learning." If the parents and the Church recognize the need and understand the values of early childhood schooling as being part of our Catholic educational system, it should or will be important to plan for its establishment and organization to meet this need. The Catholic Church should not escape the obligation of understanding and of interpreting the rapidly changing needs of society, particularly in those areas involving the youth and children of its faith.

As has been stated before, one basic reason given for the closing of Catholic kindergartens at present is the lack of finances. However, this factor has been overplayed in many of our parishes. It is true that the Church physically and economically cannot provide kindergartens in some areas, but in other areas the situation can be worked out through cooperation of the Church, parents, and teachers.

Sister De Lourdes, R.S.M. has made the following statement concerning Catholic kindergartens in the future: "I believe that the kindergarten of the

---

future will be a much more cooperative movement of parents, pastor, and teachers, all working together to give five-year-olds the finest opportunities for complete and harmonious growth. The kindergarten may even pass from under the school administration and so become a parish center...

By cooperative efforts we can provide good Catholic kindergartens under parent leadership but with the pastor's guidance. If such a plan can help save and increase Catholic kindergartens it should be fostered by the parents.

Once the parents understand the need for a kindergarten, they should no longer stand back or be afraid to state their desire for kindergartens to the Catholic school officials. They can make a beginning by securing accurate information in their parish; surveying kindergarten possibilities, getting facts on enrollments, available space, available teachers, and equipment; gathering evidence to support their need; publicizing the needs of the children to the proper authorities of their parish; and asking for assistance and support.

At present, there are a few interested parents and kindergarten teachers who are meeting the challenge and who are making new working situations in their overcrowded kindergartens. New plans for Catholic kindergarten training are being implemented; parents are aiding in the job of teaching

---

forming car pools, staggering attendance on a two or three day basis, and parents are being pre-instructed prior to the child's attendance in kindergarten. These plans are in operation at present and can be successful under the proper guidance.

The problem of supplying Catholic kindergarten teachers can be met by selecting experienced lay teachers. Lay teachers can be given additional training in the Church's philosophy of education and in the kindergarten curriculum for Catholics. 10 High school administrators usually welcome the opportunity to release students during school time for active participation in a whole session of kindergarten, and what better way to influence our high school children to enter the field of teaching, or to become nuns, than through actual experience in teaching? Parents can aid by taking turns assisting in kindergarten, serving milk, and working with groups of children. 11 The trained lay teacher, with additional help if necessary, can establish a Catholic kindergarten of the highest quality, either in the Church's educational system or in the cooperative plan as suggested.


CONCLUSIONS

"The welfare of the child is the welfare of the nation . . . America has awakened to a realization of criminal neglect in not availing itself of the splendid field of development, mental, moral and physical, offered by the pre-school years of a child's life."¹

Early childhood education has gone far in the United States with little sympathy or aid from Catholic educators. Many Catholic educators still regard pre-school training as an infringement upon the home's responsibility, or as an educational luxury not at all necessary in the parochial school system. With these attitudes the Catholic educators have ignored our Catholic heritage. Reverend O'Neil C. D'Amour, Diocesan Superintendent of Schools for the Diocese of Marquette in Escanaba, Michigan, made the following statement concerning the Church's concept as applied to present day family-education relationships: "This concept of the family . . . belongs to an outmoded and outgrown society. It is one that our people have discarded and if we are to be effective in educating the children of this generation, it is one we must also discard."²

The Church must realize this change in today's society and its effect upon the Catholic home, and it should through kindergartens encourage a

¹Paul E. Campbell, A.M., Litt.D., LL.D., "Is the Kindergarten Necessary?" Journal of Religious Instruction, XIV, September, 1933, II.

favorable atmosphere for the truths of our religion. Modern parents have drifted away from their responsibilities not only in the education of their children, but also from practicing religion as adults. With the interested five-year-olds, the truths taught them are often carried back to the home and given renewing religious spirit to the parents. These kindergarten children can be the best means of drawing the family back to its religious responsibilities.

Catholic educators cite financial difficulties as the primary reason for not supporting kindergartens in their parochial school systems. Solutions to this problem can be worked out, perhaps necessitating adjustments, research, and concessions on the part of people concerned, but these progressive changes will yield great dividends. Many parishes have increased their financial status by a thorough re-education of the parishioners' giving habits.

The lack of teaching nuns can be met by the use of qualified lay teachers.

The population of the future, the building of new schools, and the growth of Catholic education in general confirm the claim that the employment of the lay teacher is not merely an emergency measure in the Catholic educational system. Conditions demand that the lay teacher become part of our elementary and secondary programs. These teachers are not to be considered as "persons added to," but as very necessary and important co-workers in the cause of Christ through education at present and in the future.  

Catholic educators have ignored the proven findings of research on the necessity for pre-school training. With the psychological dangers of a limited environment in today's society, with a greater number of urban families, with modern means of communication, and with the shocking failure on the part of parents in regard to the teaching of religion to the pre-school child, we must have Catholic kindergartens. The kindergarten is not a substitute for the home; it is merely a supplement. Nothing can take the place of a mother's love, but the initial step outside of the family for the child is school, and kindergarten can bridge the gap between home and school in a more satisfying manner.

Kindergartens offer a keener realization of the physical, social, mental, and spiritual needs of the pre-school child. The significance of the kindergarten in the Catholic schools rests on the fact that it is a deliberate attempt to lay a more solid educational foundation. While kindergartens are few in the Catholic educational system, this condition entails both a challenge and a promise for the future.

The vacuum created by the lack of accurate and complete statistical data leads the author to feel that a vast amount of research should be undertaken in the field of Catholic pre-school education. Also, the following needs are relative to research in the Catholic training for early childhood education: (1) There should be more conscious and extensive attempts on the part of Catholic educators to be articulate and definite regarding systematic educational philosophies pertaining to pre-school training; (2) Better working relationships should exist among the dioceses; and (3) More effective research should be undertaken and carried out concerning Catholic pre-school education.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. BOOKS AND BROCHURES


National Catholic Kindergarten Association, This We Believe About the Kindergarten. n.d.


II. PERIODICALS


Clare, Sister M. Agnes, C.H.M. "We Need the Kindergarten," The Catholic School Journal, XLVIII, October, 1948, 261-263.


III. NEWSPAPER

The Messenger, Covington, March 31, 1957.

IV. UNPUBLISHED MATERIAL

APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Floraetta L. Morow has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Education.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

Jan. 15, 1938
Date

Signature of Adviser