

**EDUCATIONAL CHANGE -
THE CASE OF NEWFOUNDLAND**

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EDUCATIONAL CHANGE - THE CASE OF NEWFOUNDLAND

by

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VERKLARING

"Ek verklaar hiermee dat *EDUCATIONAL CHANGE - THE CASE OF NEWFOUNDLAND* my eie werk is en dat ek alle bronne wat ek gebruik of aangehaal het deur middel van volledige verwysings aangedui en erken het".

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STATEMENT

"I declare that *EDUCATIONAL CHANGE - THE CASE OF NEWFOUNDLAND* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references".

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Title: EDUCATIONAL CHANGE - THE CASE OF NEWFOUNDLAND
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SUMMARY

Dramatic changes in Newfoundland's environment and global developments during the past decade, significantly influenced growing demands for restructuring the education system of Newfoundland. Responding to these demands, Newfoundland educators succeeded in creating a single unified non-denominational education system which became fully operational at the beginning of the 1998/99 school year. This achievement has been hailed by the majority of Newfoundlanders as a monumental landmark in the provinces' lengthy experience with denominational education. As well, it is viewed as pivotal in achieving educational excellence and ensuring that children receive a relevant education that will prepare them for the demands of the next century. The former education system (which consisted of four separate denominational school systems operated jointly by the church and the state) had become too cumbersome and inefficient, thus adversely affecting the quality of education.

This thesis looks in particular at the contextual realities and perspectives that influenced the demands for changing the system. Such factors as the declining school population, economic conditions, technological developments, as well as legal and political issues have distinctly changed the Newfoundland society during the past number of years, hence the necessity to restructure the education system. The thesis furthermore discusses the proposed government model for restructuring the system and highlights the proposals for improving education. It also focuses briefly on the minority rights issue in Canada, as this has bearing on the legal rights of the church to educate in Newfoundland and its current role within the new structure.

An evaluation of Newfoundland's educational reform initiatives (which includes the views of key educators in Newfoundland on these issues), deals with some of the problem areas which currently exist within the new system. However, the focus centres mainly on the obvious improvements in such areas as management, organization, parent involvement, curriculum development, educational achievement and accountability. The impact of these reforms on the social, educational and political dimensions of the Newfoundland society will only become evident in time, yet they hold the promise of having a lasting impact on educational achievement. The remarkable feature of the whole reform process is, that it was achieved from within.

Titel: EDUCATIONAL CHANGE - THE CASE OF NEWFOUNDLAND
Deur: MC Dirkschen van Schalkwyk
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OPSOMMING

Die ingrypende veranderings wat die Newfoundlandse gemeenskap oor die afgelope dekade ondergaan het, tesame met ontwikkelings op wêreldvlak, het aanleiding gegee tot toenemende eise om die onderwysstelsel van Newfoundland te herstruktureer. Gevolglik onderneem die Newfoundlandse regering 'n omvattende herondersoek van die onderwys wat lei tot die vorming van 'n enkele, openbare, geïntegreerde onderwysstelsel wat aan die begin van die skooljaar 1998/99 in werking tree. Hierdie prestasie word as 'n besondere keerpunt in die onderwys deur Newfoundlanders beskou, aangesien die behoud en vooruitgang van die Newfoundlandse gemeenskap en onderwys daardeur verseker word. Voorheen het die onderwysstelsel uit vier afsonderlike kerkskoolstelsels bestaan wat gesamentlik deur die staat en kerk op alle vlakke beheer en bestuur is. Hierdie eiesoortige struktuur het die onderwys al hoe meer belemmer en opvoedkundiges genoodsaak om dit te hersien.

Hierdie studie kyk eerstens na die vergestaltende faktore en lewensbeskouings wat die onderwys in Newfoundland ten diepste raak. Faktore soos dalende geboortegetal, ekonomiese toestande, tegnologiese en staatkundige ontwikkelings dra veral by tot die veranderde leefwêreld van die Newfoundlander en noop die regering om die onderwysstelsel daarby aan te pas en 'n onderwysmodel vir die toekoms te ontwerp. Hierdie onderwysmodel wat alle komponente asook die struktuur van die onderwysstelsel aanraak, word vervolgens ontleed. Aandag word ook gewy aan die kwessie van minderheidsregte in Kanada, omdat dit die kerk se reg om onderwys in Newfoundland te bedryf, raak. Laastens word die onderwysvormings vanuit sekere perspektiewe in oënskou geneem en die standpunte van sommige Newfoundlandse opvoedkundiges word gestel. In die slotbeskouing word ook enkele probleme geïdentifiseer. Die bespreking word egter hoofsaaklik gewy aan aspekte van die onderwys wat alreeds verbetering toon soos onder andere onderwysbeheer en onderwysorganisasie, ouerbetrokkenheid, curriculumontwikkeling en onderwyskundige ontwikkeling.

Die toekoms sal bepaal hoe hierdie omvangryke en omvattende onderwysveranderings die sosio-kulturele dimensies van die Newfoundlandse gemeenskap sal beïnvloed, terwyl dit die belofte inhou om 'n dinamiese verbetering te bewerkstellig.

KEY TERMS

EDUCATIONAL CHANGE; EDUCATIONAL REFORM; EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION;
EDUCATIONAL RESTRUCTURING; SOCIAL CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT; EDUCATION
SYSTEM; EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT; EDUCATIONAL MONITORING AND
ACCOUNTABILITY; CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION; SCHOOL
COUNCILS; PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT; MINORITY RIGHTS; NEWFOUNDLAND,
CANADA.

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EDUCATIONAL CHANGE - THE CASE OF NEWFOUNDLAND

CHAPTER 1

1 A PERSPECTIVE ON NEWFOUNDLAND AND ITS EDUCATION SYSTEM

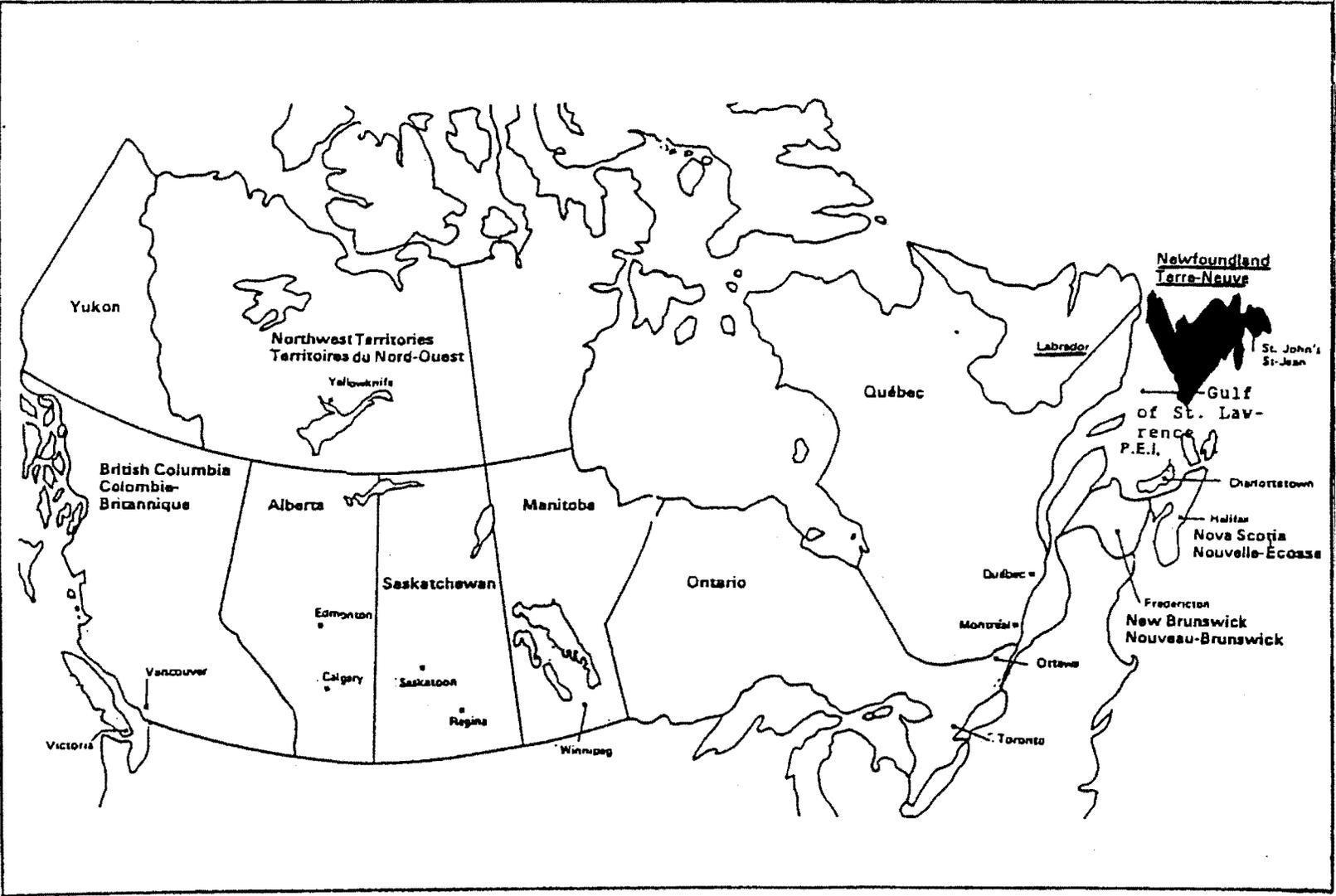
1.1 An introduction to Newfoundland and its people

Newfoundland, Canada's youngest province, is described as possessing a distinctive quality that sets it apart from the rest of Canada. In discussing its distinctiveness, Newfoundland historians suggest that the sweep of history in Newfoundland has been so much vaster than in any other part of Canada, thereby bringing about a unique society. Moreover, Newfoundlanders have a deeper historical sense, a more intimate knowledge of their past and a folk-memory more fully developed than any other people in Canada, which separate them from their fellow-Canadians (Horwood & De Visser 1986:1).

Newfoundland is an island facing the Gulf of St Lawrence off the east coast of Canada (see Map 1.1), and is considered to be the most eastern part of the North American continent (Mowat 1989:17). First discovered by the Vikings around A.D. 1005, it was abandoned some twenty years later when these Norse settlers failed in their attempt to colonize it. John Cabot, a British discoverer, subsequently reached the "New Founde Land" in 1497, but it was not until 1583 that Sir Humphrey Gilbert, a court favourite of Queen Elizabeth I, proclaimed the island as British property. At this time a small settlement of English merchants and fishermen were already flourishing in the harbour of St John's on the east coast of the island (English 1985:6-9; Horwood & De Visser 1986:1; Mowat 1989:25; Rowe 1976:2).

Often referred to as "this rock within the sea", Newfoundland appears to be a "mighty granite stopper thrust into the bell-mouth of the Gulf of St Lawrence" (Mowat 1989:17). Over the centuries massive ice sheets and glaciers have crudely sculptured this harsh and barren land, leaving in their wake a coastline slashed and convoluted with bays, inlets, runs and fjords. Severe and prolonged winter conditions have added to its

*P.E.I. on the map refers to Prince Edward Island.

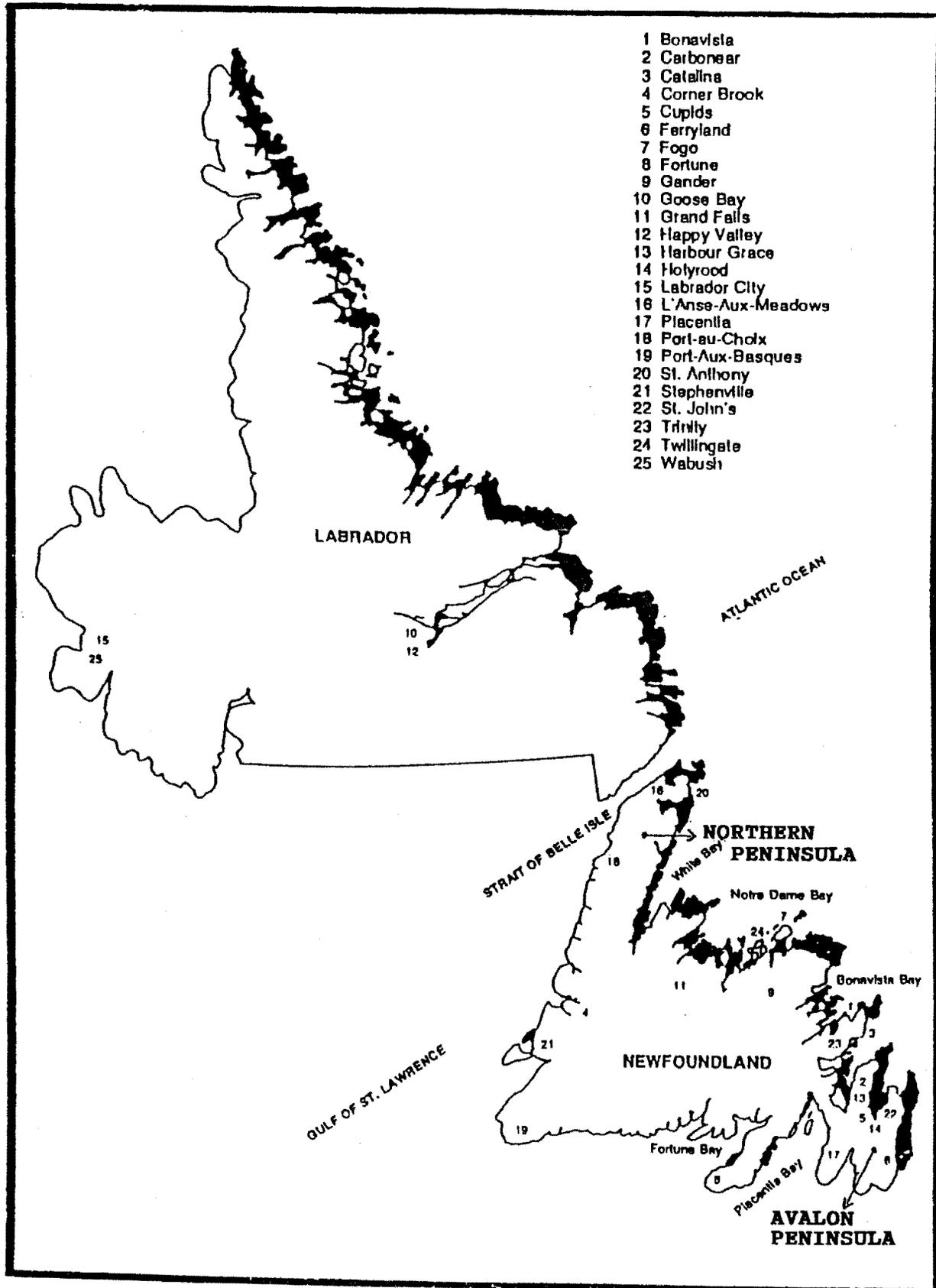


POLITICAL MAP OF CANADA
(Blair 1984:90-91)

MAP 1.1

MAP 1.2

GEOGRAPHICAL MAP OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
 (English 1985:40-41)



bleakness and isolation, nevertheless it is also very majestic in its appearance. Dense forests and the Long Range Mountains cover the western and northern parts of the island, while most of the central part of the island remains uninhabitable due to marshes and bogs (Mowat 1989:18; Rowe 1976:46).

In 1927 Labrador, situated to the northwest of Newfoundland on the mainland of Canada (see Map 1.1), was ceded by Britain to Newfoundland. Newfoundland is therefore known today as the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.¹ Labrador shares Newfoundland's geographical characteristics and harsh climate. Viewed topographically, both Newfoundland and Labrador are triangular in shape (see Map 1.2), hence the flag of Newfoundland and Labrador consists of two triangles (Economic Council of Canada Report 1980:4; Rothney 1973:24).

Britain conducted a referendum in Newfoundland in 1948 to determine whether Newfoundlanders wanted to remain a British colony or join the Canadian confederation. A small majority of Newfoundlanders voted in favour of joining Canada and on March 31, 1949, Newfoundland became Canada's tenth province (Harte 1989:1; Rothney 1973:26; Rowe 1976:10). It is generally believed that this decision enhanced and improved the development of the Newfoundland society as a whole. Horwood and De Visser (1986:2) postulate that confederation has given Newfoundland security and the opportunity for social progress, without doing any real damage to the heritage or the ethos of a people who "remain essentially separate from the melting pot of the Mainland". Newfoundland will always reflect the close association it has had with its mother country over the centuries. To this day, it is a community characterized by strong traditional sentiment, values and religious differences (Harte 1989:3).

Newfoundlanders are often referred to as a *singular* or *peculiar* people, with their traits traceable to England's West Country and to Ireland. Their peculiarity, however, has to do with the way these traits were moulded and magnified by their daily struggle to

¹

Whenever the province of Newfoundland is referred to in this text it represents both Newfoundland and Labrador.

earn a living as fishermen. They had to battle the sea, endure severe winter storms, face pirates and privateers who wanted to rob them of their meagre earnings, Dutch and French raiders who tried to wrest their country from them, and last of all their own home government in Britain where Newfoundland was regarded as a massive fishing station for exploitation by the English West Coast merchants (Horwood & De Visser 1986:2; Poole 1978:2). The daily struggle with the primordial forces of nature, claims Poole (1978:7), has coloured the Newfoundlanders' outlook, leaving them with a sense of fatalism. This fatalistic view, however, is "not a conviction that our dory² will fail to make it, but a sense that it is beyond one's control whether she makes it or not". Mowat (1989:20-21), likewise alludes to the interactive relationship the Newfoundlander has with the sea and the effect it has on his attitude towards life. He says that for Newfoundlanders, "the sea is the ultimate reality. They accept it as their master, for they know they will never master it. The sea is there. It is their destiny. It gives them life, and sometimes it gives them death. They do not inveigh against its imponderable strength, nor do they stand in braggart's opposition to its power" (1989:20-21).

Furthermore, according to Poole (1978:13-14), these encounters with ocean storms profoundly affected the Newfoundlanders' religious sensibilities. To Newfoundlanders, the battle would often personify man's own inward struggle.

This struggle for survival has made Newfoundlanders "tough and tenacious", as Horwood and De Visser (1986:2) put it, but paradoxically it has also induced in them a passivity in social and community affairs (Poole 1978:9). Traditionally Newfoundlanders have been inclined to settle in small isolated fishing outports, segregating themselves along religious lines. Harte (1989:10) believes that these settlement patterns are even evident today. It is in these small settlements that the church had assumed such a pivotal role as social and cultural leader in the absence of any form of local or municipal government. The leadership of the church was readily accepted by the Newfoundlanders as Murphy and Byrne (1987:i) indicate, because their daily

²

Small fishing vessel or boat.

struggles affected their faith in the deepest sense and they looked to the church to nurture them and preserve their identity.

It is from this singular past that the denominational education system of Newfoundland has evolved as an intricate part of its society, reflecting the cultural traditions, beliefs and values of the people. The momentum for social and educational change is quite interesting therefore, in view of Newfoundland's strong ties with its past. On the other hand the demands for change may not seem so unusual in today's context. In this regard Horwood and De Visser (1986:3) point out that even while Newfoundlanders treasure the past they have always been receptive to change, viewing it as necessary for survival.

1.2 The structure of the Newfoundland education system until December 1996

The development of the education system of Newfoundland has been shaped by geographical, religious, social, economic and political factors. The beliefs and values of the Newfoundlanders, their cultural and historical heritage as well as settlement patterns are attributed by Harte (1989:9) in particular as having influenced the formation of the unique denominational system within which both state and church have been partners in education. This partnership came into existence as a result of a century and a half of legislation culminating in the entrenchment of the constitutional rights and privileges of the church to educate under Term 17 of the 'Terms of Union of Newfoundland and Canada' (1949) and in the 'Charter of Rights and Freedoms in the Constitution Act' (Canada, Department of Justice 1976; Canada, Minister of Supply and Services 1982; par 3.1).

Under this arrangement, responsibility for education was shared among the provincial government of Newfoundland through the Department of Education and Training, and the major Christian churches, through three Denominational Education Councils (DEC's):

- ▲ The Roman Catholic Education Council

- ▲ The Integrated Education Council which comprises the Anglican, Moravian, Presbyterian, Salvation Army and United Church
- ▲ The Pentecostal Assemblies Education Council

The Seventh Day Adventist Church also operates a school system, but it has relatively few students and is not part of the Denominational Education Council arrangement (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (GNL) 1995a:2).

The basic responsibility of the government for the school system was to ensure that the province offered the best possible education service to all students. This responsibility was discharged through:

- ▲ the enactment of laws and regulations governing the operation of schools
- ▲ the development and prescription of basic courses of study
- ▲ the establishment and maintenance of educational standards (GNL 1995a:2)

The responsibility of the churches as represented through the DEC's was to:

- ▲ determine how and where money will be spent for new school buildings, extensions and equipment
- ▲ recommend to government the establishment and alteration of school district boundaries
- ▲ recommend to government the appointment of school board members
- ▲ prescribe religious education programmes (GNL 1995a:2)

There were 27 school boards in the province administering the day-to-day operations of schools. School boards were responsible for such things as:

- ▲ the organization of schools within their districts
- ▲ the quality of instruction
- ▲ the fixing of attendance zones
- ▲ the repair and maintenance of school buildings

- ▲ the employment of teachers and other staff
- ▲ the transportation of pupils (GNL 1995a:2)

School boards also received government grants to finance education. Money allocated for school construction was paid directly to the DEC's by the government.

The post-secondary component of the education system comprises the Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN), five regional colleges and private training institutions. Memorial University is governed by the *Act Respecting the Memorial University of Newfoundland* which was revised in 1970. The regional colleges are governed by the *Act Respecting Colleges of Applied Arts, Technology and Continuing Education* which was assented to on December 11, 1991. The private training institutions are governed by the *Act Representing the Regulation of Private Training Institutions* which was passed on July 8, 1988 (GNL 1995a:2).

Over the past number of years there have been many indications that the education system of Newfoundland is at the crossroads of change. Profound political, social and economic changes within the Newfoundland society thus prompted educators to reassess the effectiveness of their education system. Problems inherent in the education system itself, especially declining school enrolments and the duplication of services because of separate church-operated school systems, added to the urgency to take action. The government therefore, appointed a Royal Commission of Inquiry into Education on August 6, 1990 to investigate all aspects and components of education in Newfoundland (GNL 1992a:v).

1.3 A proposal for change

The Royal Commission, also know as the Williams Commission, was instructed by government to report back by March 31, 1992. The mandate of the Commission was to investigate, report and make recommendations regarding all aspects of the organization and administration of the province's schools. More specifically the Commission had:

- ▲ to focus directly on the denominational structure of the Newfoundland education system in the light of the political and socio-economic demands for change in education, and
- ▲ to determine whether the denominational structure contributed to fiscal and educational inefficiencies within the education system (GNL 1992a:4-5).

The Royal Commission's inquiry consisted of extensive surveys and public hearings, representing a broad spectrum of society, including parents, teachers, school boards, business and industry, churches, decision-makers in education and community groups from all geographical areas. In addition, the Commission also received a number of oral or written submissions and briefs from individuals, groups and organizations (GNL 1992b:2, 5-6).

Based on this inquiry, the Commission recommended a model that would unify the existing school systems into one system. Furthermore, the Commission recommended that the role of the church be changed to reflect basic church concerns with teaching religious and moral values, rather than with operating school boards and schools (GNL 1992b:21; GNL 1995b:1).

Following the general thrust of the Commission's report, the government developed a model for educational change called, *Adjusting the Course*, Part 1 and 2 (*The Western Star* 12/2/94:1). With this document the government states that the overriding objective of all its attempts to reform the education system of Newfoundland is to "transform this society from one of persistent under-achievement to one whose achievement ranks with the best in the nation" (GNL 1994:iii). This goal is based on the belief that high levels of educational achievement are essential to the social and economic wellbeing of the province. The document proposes to create a unified inter-denominational education system. It describes a model for governance of the school system that recognizes legitimate church interests in education, but rejects the concept that churches need to control school boards, funding, teacher employment and other functions in order to advance these interests (GNL 1994:19).

The model, as outlined in a press release by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador,

- ▲ reorganizes elementary and secondary schools along neighbourhood lines
- ▲ provides for a major restructuring of school boards on an inter-denominational basis, thereby reducing the number of decision-making bodies
- ▲ increases the influence of parents
- ▲ makes the system more accountable to the public (*The Western Star* 6/4/94:13).

Since the release of the document, the government and the church have failed to reach consensus on the proposed model for educational change. A statement published by the Roman Catholic Bishops of Newfoundland and Labrador to the supporters of Catholic education (*The Western Star* 5/3/94:10), cited the structure of inter-denominational school boards as one of the key elements of disagreement. It insisted that the creation of these boards would in effect be non-denominational public school boards on which there would be only token denominational presence. The government's proposal was to establish ten inter-denominational boards³ (thus reducing the existing 27 school boards), with ten members elected from among the denominations for each board, plus five members elected without reference to denominational affiliation. These boards would be responsible for the operation of inter-denominational schools and, under certain circumstances they could also operate uni-denominational schools for a particular denomination. Special denominational committees of these boards would assume designated responsibilities for the operation of these uni-denominational schools and also be responsible for religious education and pastoral care in inter-denominational schools. Furthermore, these committees would select teachers for religious education only and for assignment to schools established for individual denominations of the integrated group of denominations. The school boards, however, would assign teachers to all inter-denominational schools (GNL 1993:6-7). As school boards are generally viewed to be the basic educational

³ Ten interim school boards were put in place in August 1996 to eventually replace the existing boards (*The Western Star* 31/7/96:2).

decision-making units, the reaction of the churches and their leaders to these proposals has been “one of concern that the new education system would not adequately protect the constitutional right to religious education, religious celebrations and observances and other related benefits” the churches have enjoyed over the years (Stryde 1995:1).

It had become apparent that despite extensive discussions and negotiations, there could be no agreement between the government and church to implement the major reforms. This impasse compelled the government to seek public endorsement through a referendum for its plans to restructure the education system of Newfoundland, and to approve a constitutional amendment to Term 17 which would allow the needed changes to proceed (*The Western Star* 24/6/95:1). The revised Term 17, as proposed by the government, would retain the right of the church to religious education in all schools in Newfoundland. It would not, however, provide for the continued existence of separate denominational school boards. Where numbers warrant, it would provide for schools for the separate denominations, as well as for the election of two-thirds of the members of school boards along denominational lines (GNL 1995b:1).

The referendum was held on September 5, 1995, and Newfoundlanders voted in favour of school reform by a small majority (*The Western Star* 6/9/95:1). On October 30, 1995 the Newfoundland House of Assembly passed a resolution to amend Term 17, which would provide for the removal of the church from the administration of education. The resolution was approved and forwarded to the Federal House of Commons in Ottawa for ratification (*The Western Star* 1/11/95:2). On June 3, 1996 the Members of Parliament (MP's) of the Federal House of Commons approved the constitutional amendment to Term 17 by a free vote (*The Western Star* 4/6/96:1). The Senate rejected the amendment and referred it back to the House of Commons which passed the resolution a second time on December 4, 1996, thus opening the way for restructuring to begin (*The Western Star* 28/11/96:1; *The Western Star* 5/12/96:11). Following the approval, the ten interim school boards established in August 1996, assumed full responsibility for the province's schools on January 1, 1997 (*The Western Star* 9/12/96:1). Subsequent developments (see paragraphs 4.1, 5.1 & 5.3) resulted in a second amendment to Term 17, which proposes a uniform non-denominational

system for Newfoundland, without any church involvement in education at all. Final approval for this second amendment was given by the federal government on December 18, 1997, thus giving legal assent to the creation of a publicly-funded non-denominational system in Newfoundland (*The Western Star* 19/12/97:1).

1.4 The problem formulation

1.4.1 Defining the research problem within the context of the current investigation

Education does not and cannot exist in a vacuum, oblivious to change. It has become increasingly evident that Newfoundland, like other areas of Canada and the world, is faced with changing socio-economic conditions and the educational aspirations of an increasingly sophisticated society. Higher levels of educational achievement have, therefore, become more important in the face of these changes and demands for change (GNL 1993:1; Harte 1989:3).

The challenge is to reform the education system and improve the level of educational excellence, while at the same time retaining the traditional and religious values and preferences of the society within the education system. The challenge becomes more complex in trying to define the role of the church in the proposed model for change, in view of its long historical tradition of partnership in public education in Newfoundland.

The impact that the proposed model will have on improving education in Newfoundland has not been extensively researched in Newfoundland or elsewhere. These changes are currently at the initial stages of implementation. To evaluate these reform initiatives could be problematic as the overall effect of reconstruction will only become apparent in time. Notwithstanding the aforementioned difficulty, an evaluation of the response by the government to the contextual factors which prompted demands for change, would shed light on the necessity of implementing these reforms.

The research problem therefore comprises an investigation and evaluation of the contextual factors and situational demands that led to the proposed reform initiatives.

Furthermore, the impact of the proposed changes on the recent denominational structure of the Newfoundland education system has to be examined in order to determine the effect it would render to the Newfoundland society as a whole, as well as its education system.

1.4.2. Research approach

The researcher wishes to approach this investigation from the perspective that an education system is a complex, open system that reflects all the varied societal relationships and facets by which it is inextricably bound. Banathy (1991:21) maintains that the education system in any society is the reflection of the collective beliefs, aspirations, cultural and ethical norms of its members. This reflection is anticipated in terms of purposes and expectations that define the content and the form of the educational experience. He furthermore refers to the complex nature of an education system as a “deliberately constructed complex human activity system, operating at several systems levels, embedded in and co-evolving with the larger society, interacting with other social service systems, and designed to carry on the specific societal function of nurturing learning and human development” (1991:31). In a discussion on education and development, Bock (1982:98) likewise indicates the complex often paradoxical nature of the education system, and the contradictory functions it simultaneously fulfils. The complexity of the education system is further compounded by the fact that it exists both within and without the school system. It includes the family, youth organizations, mass media, peer groups, sport, tourism, cultural and social institutions, and many other nonformal and informal educative experiences. These educative experiences are all linked through formal and informal connections and operate simultaneously and divergently within the society (Cookson, Sadovnik & Semel 1992:4).

Thus, when examining the proposed model for restructuring Newfoundland’s education system, all of these complex interrelated societal dynamics will have to be considered. Moreover, the particular societal values which prompted the demand for educational change in the first place must be analysed, as change is grounded in the values and

beliefs of the people. These values are viewed as the key impetus driving change and bringing about the transformation of a society and its education (Badenhorst & Claassen 1995:7; Goens & Clover 1992:41).

1.4.3 Motivation for and scientific contribution of research

The motivation for this investigation is to obtain knowledge and understanding of the current problem of implementing educational change in Newfoundland in order to assess the impact it would have on:

- ▲ the Newfoundland society as a whole
- ▲ the structure of the Newfoundland education system
- ▲ the realizing of educational goals as it relates to the societal and educational expectations

The scrutiny of these reform initiatives would illumine the complexities of implementing educational change in a society where exclusive denominationalism in education has been prevalent. The value of this investigation pertains to the fact that it might be helpful to educators in other societies who are dealing with similar problems of *exclusivity* in education. The Williams Commission (GNL 1992b:4) for instance, states that educators "must construct bridges, not perpetuate social or intellectual isolation". In this age of interdependency and global consciousness where education systems mutually interact, the researcher hopes to 'construct a bridge' that could be of benefit to other educators in their research.

1.4.4 Objectives and limitations of research

Social change impacts on education and conversely educational change dynamically influences its socio-cultural environment. Taking this as the focal point of this investigation, the primary focus will consist of the following objectives:

- ▲ To define educational change, reform, transformation, restructuring, social change and development, and to indicate the interconnectedness of these concepts, as well as the role they play in the change process.
- ▲ To discuss the contextual factors that influence social and educational change, and to point out the mutual interaction of these factors to bring about change within the education system. Furthermore, to examine selected examples where the environment has activated educational and social change.
- ▲ To gain insight into the contextual issues, both internal and external, that prompted the government to restructure the education system of Newfoundland, and to discuss the perspectives on change in Newfoundland and how they affect restructuring.
- ▲ To focus on the impact the proposed model would have on the different components of the Newfoundland education system, such as management, organization and school structure.
- ▲ To demonstrate the impact of the minority rights issue (especially as it pertains to the educational rights of the church) on the proposed educational reforms in Newfoundland, and to highlight subsequent developments.
- ▲ To evaluate the Newfoundland reform initiatives from the following perspectives:
 - Principles and goals guiding the model for change.
 - The management perspective as it impacts on the planning, development and implementation of the proposed educational policies.
 - The historical perspective as it relates to the changing roles and responsibilities of the state/church partnership in education.
 - The socio-political perspective as it pertains to the impact the proposed reforms will have on the Newfoundland society and all its varied facets and expectations.

Although all of the above objectives warrant investigation, the researcher is limited by the fact that the proposals for educational change are in the initial stages of implementation. A proper evaluation of the impact of these educational changes can therefore not be conducted as the effect will only become obvious over an extended period. Moreover, because the whole reform process is in its infancy, there is a lack of research material and data to consult and consequently the researcher must peruse current information as it becomes available.

1.4.5 Research method

The method of data gathering is the literature study. A review of literature summarises and synthesises relevant literature on the research problem. This review of literature enables the researcher to define and limit the problem, thus becoming familiar with the major works on the topic. Moreover, a review of the literature places the study in a historical perspective and relates the findings of the study to previous knowledge and suggests further research (Schumacher & McMillan 1993:112).

The researcher has gathered, compiled and interpreted data from a wide variety of sources systematically and comprehensively. Wherever possible, the researcher made use of primary literature, that is original research studies or writings by a theorist or researcher (Schumacher & McMillan 1993:116). The literature study includes many types of sources such as:

- ▲ Scholarly books and monographs
- ▲ Scholarly journals
- ▲ Government documents such as:

official government reports
Royal Commission on Education Reports
educational task force reports
educational study project reports

- ▲ Published and unpublished papers
- ▲ Legislation
- ▲ Working documents of education departments
- ▲ Dictionaries
- ▲ Book reviews and
- ▲ Theses and dissertations

As the research topic deals with a very recent reform initiative of which the implementation is currently ongoing, the researcher has relied heavily on newspaper articles which document developments on a daily basis.

In addition to the available literature the researcher conducted several interviews with key people in education in Newfoundland. These included eminent academics, the Chairman of the Williams Commission, officials of the District 3 School Board, school principals and regional representatives of the Newfoundland and Labrador Home and School Federation.

1.5 Content of chapters

Chapter 2 comprises a discussion of the contextual factors that impact social and educational change. The discussion focuses on both the internal and external forces that dictate social and educational change in today's modern societies. The mutual interaction of these factors to bring about change is indicated in this chapter and some examples are given to illustrate the profound influence such factors often exert on societies.

Chapter 3 deals with the contextual realities and perspectives within the Newfoundland society which compelled educators to reassess the efficiency of the education system and make proposals for its restructuring. A brief historical review of the development of the denominational education system of Newfoundland until 1996 is included to indicate the deep roots the education system has in the socio-cultural and political traditions of Newfoundland society. The chapter also describes the profound impact certain widely-held perspectives have on educational policies in Canada and Newfoundland.

Chapter 4 looks at the proposed model for restructuring the education system of Newfoundland, based on the recommendations of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Education in Newfoundland released in 1992. The proposed changes to the different components of the education system are outlined especially as they pertain to management and organization, as well as the structure of schools. The proposed changes to curriculum development and implementation, teacher certification and professional development, and the system of accountability, are also reviewed. The opinions expressed by key educators to the researcher during interviews about these proposed changes are included in this chapter to shed light on how the current thrust of educational reform is being interpreted. The initial impact of those changes and reforms which have already been implemented in the last two years since 1996, are also highlighted in this chapter.

Chapter 5 centres on the minority rights issue as it relates to educational rights in Canada, and in particular Newfoundland where the issue received prominence because of the court appeal by a group of parents to uphold their constitutional rights to a denominational education for their children. The events surrounding this issue and the subsequent action by the Newfoundland government which led to the establishment of a non-denominational education system for Newfoundland, are outlined in this chapter. The chapter also considers the constitutional and legal foundations of minority rights pertaining to education in Canada and its provinces, in order to clarify the opposing interpretations about these rights that exist in Newfoundland. The church view (in particular the view of the Roman Catholic church and the Pentecostal Assemblies of

Newfoundland) about educational rights, as well as the government's view on this issue are debated in this chapter. The debate underlines the complexity of the minority rights issue as it pertains to education in Canada and its provinces.

In the final chapter an evaluation is given of Newfoundland's educational reform initiatives. First of all the government's response to demands for reforming the education system is reviewed. Next, the goal and principles guiding the reform initiatives are briefly discussed. The planning, development and implementation of the reform initiatives based on these principles are re-examined to shed light on the impact these initiatives have on the different components of the education system. The views of key educators on these reform initiatives are also included, as the researcher believes these views currently reflect how the reform initiatives are being perceived. The chapter also looks at the historical and socio-political perspectives to determine the overall effect of the reform initiatives on the Newfoundland society. The chapter concludes with the researcher's own remarks and observations of educational realities in Newfoundland in relation to the reform initiatives.

1.6 Definition of key terms

In discussing the key terms relevant to this investigation, it must be noted that they are to be viewed as interconnected components of the change process. Despite their connection, these terms are all distinguishable, each portraying a specific aspect of the change process. The problem with trying to define these key terms, is that they are often used as interchangeable terms by others with no clear indication as to what they comprise.

1.6.1 Educational change

By trying to define educational change, the researcher is immediately faced with a dilemma, because there seems to be no constant definition. Popkewitz (1991:17) points out that contemporary studies of educational change do not articulate clearly what it means. Educational change is viewed as "intrinsic to movement or activity", but

little attention is paid to change itself. Theorists and researchers concur, however, that change is dynamic and continuous and that it takes place at all levels of society from local to global (Banathy 1991:135; Goens & Clover 1991:xvi). Popkewitz (1991:1) views change as a confrontation between a rupture from the past and what seems stable and natural in social life.

A discussion of educational change must always include social change, as education is imbedded in its socio-cultural environment. In today's modern world, socio-cultural change is confronting education systems with radical changes and new challenges, according to Von Recum (1991:134). Thus, because of the co-evolutionary relationship that exists between education and society, education becomes the vehicle to realize the ever-changing demands of society. The problem is that people are not always aware of changes around them. Fägerland and Saha (1989:5-6) suggest we perceive short-term changes that occur daily around us relatively easily, as opposed to perceiving broader changes over a long period of time. Furthermore, social change is a phenomenon which might only be perceived over a long period of time from a macro-perspective. The dilemma with defining change is that we do not always have the advantage of a macro-perspective.

Change, as such, both social and educational, is interpreted from different theoretical perspectives, making it even more difficult to define. For instance, proponents of the conflict theory of society, see change as a struggle for power between rival groups seeking to attain and legitimate a ruling position (Bock 1982:86-87), whereas proponents of the complexity theory view change as a complex process evolving spontaneously through self-organization (Badenhorst & Claassen 1995:11; Waldrop 1992:11). As societies continually change or alter, however, so will the educational theories be subject to revision (Hartnett & Naisch 1990:13).

It is self-evident that educational change will only take place if there is discontent with the pre-existing arrangements. Educational change involves a certain amount of planning, but there are differences of opinion as to how the planning should proceed. On the one hand, some believe educational change is brought about through

deliberate, careful planning where educational reform and restructuring assume a major role in effecting change (Banathy 1991:135; Goens & Clover 1991:16). On the other hand there are those who argue that controlling strategies to effect educational change do not necessarily work because of the complexity and unpredictability of the change process. Change, they believe, emerges from within the structure or organization and should not be implemented in a top-down fashion (Badenhorst & Claassen 1995:11; Fullan 1993:19). Golby (1990:131) warns that because the process of educational change is complex, there is a need for sophistication in the analysis of the process. He maintains that theorists and researchers need to pay much closer attention to the ideological contexts and traditions when planning reforms that will last.

1.6.2 *Educational reform*

Defining educational reform is complex, because it is a concept that holds different meanings for different people. Popkewitz (1991:14) indicates that the term *reform* embodies different concepts over time in the context of historical developments and social relations. Fägerland and Saha (1989:145) explain that the term is frequently used in a vague and diffuse way and is usually defined as an attempt to change things for the better in a country or part of a country, particularly for the benefit of its population. In today's world, however, reform usually means major changes in the economic, social, ideological and political structures of a nation. These reforms usually take place after revolutions or violent political takeovers, but can also happen more gradually.

The term *educational reform* is best understood as a part of the process of social regulation, as Popkewitz (1991:2) describes it. It is also the opinion of Albornoz (1993:58) that educational reform is a social process that involves a multivariable approach to social change. He also distinguishes between *educational reform* and *educational innovation*, stating that innovation relates to the micro-aspects of education, whereas reform has to do with macro-changes in education. An example of innovation would be the introduction of new technology in education, while reform refers to changes in both the internal and external aspects of the education system. Goens and

Clover (1991:110) also stress that educational innovation involves the creation and implementation of new ideas. Educational innovation occurs almost all the time, whilst educational reform is a planned change process that takes quite a long time both to prepare and implement (Albornoz 1993:58). Fägerland and Saha (1989:145) specify that educational innovation seldom has economic, social, ideological or political implications, but educational reform always involves a political process with implications for the redistribution of power and material resources. Educational reform represents a thorough change in the structure of the education system of a society or country and usually implies a fundamental alteration in national educational policies (Fägerland & Saha 1989:145).

Goens and Clover (1991:10-11) identify three components or definitional strands, as they put it, with regard to educational reform:

- ▲ Renewal, which concerns the renovation of education
- ▲ Restructuring, which concerns the organization of education
- ▲ Transformation, which concerns the overall improvement of education

Ginsberg and Cooper (1991:370-371) caution that what is sometimes labelled *educational reform* is better understood as *reform rhetoric* which is not necessarily associated with any real sustained efforts to bring about changes in education. Sometimes the lack of correspondence between rhetoric and action is the result of an elite group who are responsible for implementing change but lack commitment to it. Besides, reform proposals are at times not implemented because the society and the state suffer from an economic and fiscal crisis. Quite often reform rhetoric is not followed by the implementation of reform because educators and others resist the change efforts of the elites. Furthermore, Ginsburg and Cooper (1991:372-373) do not support the assumption put forward by equilibrium theorists that educational reform is a "change for the better". They maintain that what might be viewed as constructive change by one group, may be viewed as destructive or regressive change by another group. Ginsburg *et al* (1991:6) also adopts the view that educational reform does not always improve the effectiveness of education. Educational reform could have an

adverse effect depending on one's perspective. Regardless of one's assumptions about the effectiveness of educational reform, when planning reform the cultural, religious, historical, political and economic dynamics of the society have to be considered (Cookson *et al* 1992:3; Ginsburg *et al* 1991:7). Educational reform in any society would most likely occur during periods of economic crisis and restructuring in the world system as this affects the economic, social and political wellbeing of every society today (Ginsburg *et al* 1991:19).

Lastly, it must be remembered that educational reform is fraught with limitations and cannot be viewed as a panacea for social problems. The main limitation of educational reform is the complexity of the education system itself (Dalín in Albornoz 1993:57).

1.6.3 Educational transformation

Values, norms and beliefs are critical issues in transformation. According to Badenhorst and Claassen (1995:7) "the transformation of a culture, and therefore of education, happens in its deepest sense due to a change in values". The emergence of modern technology is cited as one of the key factors in transforming the values of society today and in fact the very essence of society (GNL 1992a:34; Layton 1990:772). Layton (1990:772) says that inasmuch as values have their origin in individual and social patterns of choice behaviour, technological change is a potent agent for the transformation of values. Technological change confronts people with new options from which to choose, consequently previously unattainable, even unimagined goals are brought into the realms of possibility. The profound and pervasive consequences of technological change constitute a major challenge to education, therefore in order to meet this challenge it is imperative that education systems undergo transformation (Goens & Clover 1991:64; GNL 1992a:34, Layton 1990:772).

Educational transformation is always linked to the cultural, religious, historical, political and economic realities of societies. Apart from the values and beliefs of the people, these factors have a profound influence on the transformation of education (Cookson

et al 1992:3; Goens & Clover 1991:68-70). Educational transformation is comprehensive, affecting the total system. In the words of Goens & Clover (1992:41) it connects “the strategic and technical components of an organization with the human elements to create fundamental changes in the ways people perceive, think and behave”. Educational transformation is more than renewal and restructuring. It moves beyond the restructuring of roles and issues of governance and power in education. Educational restructuring, however, plays a key role in educational transformation as a framework designed to achieve educational transformation (Goens & Clover 1991:11; Murphy 1992:9).

The goal of educational transformation, as suggested by Goens and Clover (1991:18) is to change the nature and purpose of education in response to changing contextual and environmental conditions. Educational transformation is best achieved by allowing a process of self-organization within the education system. In this regard Golby (1990:130-131) believes that educational transformation cannot be wished into being by even the most powerful forces in the social order, without the practical consent of those subject to it. If educational transformation is to last therefore, it must evolve from the bottom-up.

1.6.4 *Educational restructuring*

Payzant (1992:79) claims that *restructuring* is a term borrowed from business. In business, it is associated with strategic planning that results in moving more decision-making responsibility and accountability down the organizational chart to people closest to the customer and to the service or product provided. Corporate support functions are streamlined, layers eliminated, bureaucracies trimmed. The resulting organizational change is systemic. It typically includes fundamental questioning of traditional assumptions, leading in turn to dramatic redefinitions of roles and responsibilities for people throughout the organization.

In education, restructuring is viewed as one of the cornerstones of educational reform in the 1990s, although, as Payzant (1992:79) points out, no consensus has emerged as yet on what it is and how policymakers should deal with it.

Educational theorists proffer different descriptions of educational restructuring and the strategies it employs to transform education. Although these descriptions vary, they all point to educational restructuring as providing new structures and changed patterns of organization within the education system and its interrelated components. Elmore (1990:26) for instance, define educational restructuring as a “complex compound of specialized knowledge about teaching and learning, organizational structure, administrative organization and political decision-making”. Goens and Clover (1991:11) view educational restructuring as a narrower concept than educational transformation, but necessary for transformation to occur. Murphy (1992:9) explains that educational restructuring generally encompasses systematic changes in one or more of the following:

- ▲ Institutionalized and governance structures
- ▲ Work roles and organizational milieu
- ▲ Core technology (the teaching - learning process)
- ▲ Connections between the school and its larger environment

Restructuring also involves fundamental alterations in relationships among the key players in the education process. According to Murphy (1992:9), the concepts of *school-based management*, *teacher empowerment*, *parental voice/choice*, and *teaching for understanding*, represent the four most prevalent strategies employed under the rubric of educational restructuring. Furthermore, restructuring can begin in a variety of places and employ a number of different strategies, depending on the specific objectives being sought.

The main components in the education system to be affected by restructuring are, according to Kirst (1992:28):

- ▲ curriculum and instruction
- ▲ governance (authority and decision-making)
- ▲ roles and responsibilities of all the key players (i.e. teachers, principals, administrators, parents)
- ▲ accountability

Theorists point out that in order for educational restructuring to be successful, it must flow from the bottom-up. In other words, teachers, students and parents will increasingly play a more influential role in determining what schools do (Elmore 1990:5; Kirst 1992:28). The idea of restructuring the education system from the bottom-up, places a new perspective on the role of the state in educational reform and restructuring. Murphy (1992:14-15) notes a shift in the state's historical role as monitor of the educational process. The state is becoming less involved in the micro-level management of educational enterprise. Instead, the state plays a more prominent role in charting the course and assessing the results rather than in monitoring processes and effort. Kirst (1992:34) says there is no road map to 'correct' state policy in restructuring, but lasting reforms tend to create organized constituencies committed to their maintenance. He adds that the state's role is to provide direction, resources and support to restructuring movements arising from within the schools and the education system. Kirst (1992:35) proposes that as far as the state policymakers are concerned, it is up to them to find the restructuring approach that works best in accordance with the norms and traditions of education in that community.

1.6.5 Social change and development

Social change and development are concepts that go hand in hand. Social change represents and includes development. Fägerland and Saha (1989:5) consider any change which promotes or actualizes the innate biological, psychological and sociological capacities of both societies and individuals, as representing development.

The term *social change*, and in particular *social development*, have often been clouded with political and ideological overtones, hence the whole concept of development is

ambiguous. Its ambiguity is related to difficulty in identifying the variables that contribute to social change. Furthermore, words such as *growth*, *evolution* *progress*, *advancement* and *modernization* are often used as substitutes for social change and development (Fägerland & Saha 1989:4-6).

Today, more than ever, education in the formal sense has come to be considered an essential component in the development process. The Williams Commission (GNL 1992a:272) is of the opinion that as changes unfold in society, the demands upon and expectations of institutions such as schools are increasing. The school has often come to be viewed as the most expedient setting for implementing social change. The curriculum too, is regularly modified to reflect changes that take place within society, ranging from new technology and knowledge to evolving social needs and values. Bock (1982:78) maintains there appears to be no logical limit to the expectations society has for the school. This single social institution is seen as the major institution for alleviating fundamental conflicts between ethnic minorities, social classes, regional and linguistic groups. At the same time it is also being called upon to redistribute power and status amongst these groups.

A change in values lies at the heart of social change and development. It is Von Recum's (1991:123) opinion that in order for value changes to have a real impact on society, they must be transformed via institutions such as the school. Proclaiming new values, he says, has little effect in itself. Moreover, it has become increasingly clear that the process of value change in society represents neither a short-term change of attitude, nor a passing fashion, nor a transitional phenomenon. It is not confined exclusively to members of younger age groups either. The discarding of certain attitudes to life in favour of new ones, is a basic fact of human existence. Today, however, value change and therefore, by implication social change, take place at an unprecedented speed (Von Recum 1991:123). The speed with which social change and development take place is linked to global pressures, especially in the more industrialized societies. In the case of less industrialized societies, Inkeles and Sirowy (1984:139) suggest that plans and structures to implement social and educational change are often borrowed, because of the integration of these societies into the

network of influence through which ideas and social forms diffuse. Ginsburg *et al* (1991:10) contend that despite some national, cultural, economic and political dynamics within a particular society tending towards divergence, global pressures force change processes and strategies towards convergence.

In today's context, social development is specifically linked to the socio-economic wellbeing of a society. Societies (i.e. nations and countries) will therefore be categorized as *underdeveloped*, *developing* and *developed*, depending on such criteria as Gross National Product (GNP), per capita income, employment rate, life expectancy, health status, literacy rate, level of education, quantity of communication media and percentage of the population living above a defined poverty level. The word *underdeveloped* has been replaced more recently by *developing*, implying that progress is or was being made (Thomas 1992:4). According to Bock (1982:78-79), the attraction of education as the institutional remedy for underdevelopment in the less developed societies, is quite apparent. Education appears to provide just about the only legitimate access to modern political and economic sectors. The educational development plans in these societies are often focused on creating competent and productive citizens to boost the socio-economic wellbeing of the society as a whole. A warning is given by Bock (1982:99) though that education does not necessarily have a direct, lasting and predictable effect upon the ways in which the schooled will influence the economic and political development of a society. He argues that education reproduces and even generates the conflicts that exist within the society as a whole. Education does have important societal effects over and above what happens inside the schools, however, but these effects are complex, unpredictable, largely unmanageable, and are not a result of manifest and explicit social engineering. Failing to take the complexity and unpredictability of the interaction between education and development into account, has led to too narrow and often incorrect theoretical explanations regarding the relationship between the two (Hindson 1992:161; Bock 1982:99; Golby 1990:131). Social and educational change strategies should therefore be developed, recognizing the values and experiences as well as the contextual realities of the particular society. These strategies should also take into account the global trends that impact upon the expectations of the society.

1.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher has attempted first of all to create a sense of what Newfoundland and its people are, because the Newfoundland education system evolved from the unequalled socio-cultural background of its people and their beliefs.

Next, an overview of the status of the Newfoundland education system was given to illustrate its unparalleled (if somewhat paradoxical) structure, which embraced a state/church partnership in matters of educational control and administration. In recent years, urgent political and socio-economic demands for change have compelled educators in Newfoundland to reassess the effectiveness of the education system to accommodate these demands. Accordingly, a Royal Commission of Inquiry was given a mandate to examine the fiscal and educational inefficiencies within the system that hamper the fulfilment of the current educational expectations of the society. A short synopsis of the main thrust of the Commission's proposals was, therefore, outlined in this chapter to indicate the focus and direction of the current proposals for educational change in Newfoundland. The proposals comprise a model for unifying the various church-operated school systems into one inter-denominational school system, as well as assigning the role of the church in education to religious matters only. The problem that both the state and church have in agreeing to implement the government's model for restructuring Newfoundland's education system, was then highlighted to show the complexity of implementing educational change in an exclusive denominationally-structured education system. It was also indicated that the research problem would include an investigation of the contextual realities that prompted the reform initiatives, and an examination of the impact of the proposed changes on the former denominational structure of the Newfoundland education system and its society as a whole. Following the outline of the research problem, it was indicated that the research approach would focus on the education system as a complex, open system which reflects all of society's varied facets and relationships. Thus the researcher would examine the proposed changes to the education system of Newfoundland in the light of these complex, interrelated societal dynamics.

The motivation for this investigation has been described as gaining an understanding of the current problem of implementing educational change as it relates to the overall effect on the Newfoundland society, its education system and the realizing of its educational expectations. It was pointed out that by scrutinizing the proposed changes, the complexities of implementing educational change in a system where exclusive denominationalism prevailed, would be highlighted. It was also proposed that the value of this investigation is its usefulness to educators elsewhere who are dealing with similar problems of exclusivity in education.

A brief overview of the objectives as outlined in this chapter indicate the primary focus of this investigation and include amongst others

- ▲ a discussion of the contextual factors that impact educational and social change;
- ▲ an examination of the contextual realities and perspectives that necessitated the restructuring of the education system of Newfoundland;
- ▲ an examination of the effect the proposed model for educational change might have on such aspects as management, organization and the structure of the Newfoundland education system;
- ▲ a focus on the minority rights issue in Canada and how it is affecting educational change in Newfoundland; and
- ▲ an evaluation of the Newfoundland reform initiatives from different perspectives, such as the management, historical and socio-political perspectives, as well as the goal and principles guiding the model for educational change.

The limitation of this investigation has been established as pertaining to the fact that educational restructuring in Newfoundland is in the initial stages of implementation and can therefore not be thoroughly evaluated.

Finally, by defining the key terms relevant to this investigation, the researcher has attempted to signify the important interrelated role these concepts play in the change process.

In Chapter 2 the researcher will specifically examine contextual factors (both internal and external) that influence educational and social change in societies today and how all these factors are interconnected.

CHAPTER 2

2 CONTEXTUAL FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL CHANGE

2.1 Educational and societal interconnectedness within the environment

It has already been established in Chapter 1 (see par 1.4.2) that education is deeply rooted in society reflecting all of its varied dimensions. According to Ghosh and Ray (1987:40), education "cuts across the multi-dimensional context of society", therefore education can never be removed from its socio-cultural context as it will always mirror the collective values, cultural norms and expectations of the members of its society. Furthermore, education serves to realize the aspirations and development of the members of its society. The dual relationship between education and society represents a complex phenomenon, however, with many facets (Bondesio & Berkhout 1992:116). This interactive bond is defined by Banathy (1991:29) as a "co-evolutionary relationship", in other words, a mutually interdependent relationship which co-evolves and changes simultaneously in response to the demands of its environment.

The environment usually comprises all the political, demographic, social and economic characteristics of a society as well as the socio-cultural attitudes, expectations and practices of its members. Fägerland and Saha (1989:225-226) believe that the economic, social and political realities in any society are the most important factors in bringing about education and social change. Each of these three dimensions interacts dialectically with the other and all three interact dialectically with education. Through this dialectical process education becomes an agent of change and in turn is changed by its environment.

Nowadays schools are often viewed as the foremost social institutions to reflect alterations in the environment because they are the visible manifestation of a nation's education system. In this modern era, schools interact with increasingly unstable

environments as Goens and Clover (1991:68) indicate. They argue that these environments are not as simple and as stable as they used to be, but contain many pressures, expectations and changes that were unheard of before, especially as it pertains to technological, political and economic changes. The response of schools and education system to adapt to changes arising from political and economic rather than educational considerations, is described by Holt (1990:615) as a distinctive modern phenomenon. So too is the perception that schools, as social institutions, ought to respond to the collective social need because they are viewed as part of the wider social fabric (Golby 1990:133).

Increased globalization of the contextual issues has constituted a major challenge in the 1990's to the design and structure of education systems worldwide. Some educators are concerned that there is a growing maladjustment between education systems and the rapidly changing world. This disparity is compounded by the acceleration and increase of technological and scientific knowledge, global fiscal and economic developments, growing imbalances between education and employment, political ideologies and environmental issues (Banathy 1991:8; Coombs 1985:9-13; Nicholas 1983:103-105).

2.2 Internal forces engendering change

Coombs (1985:9) suggests that the strengths and weaknesses of any educational enterprise cannot be properly assessed, nor can the future of education be rationally planned unless one takes into account the major contextual forces that strongly impinge on education and shape its future. Thus when making educational decisions and planning changes, educators have to analyze and gain insight into the cultural, social, demographic, economic and political dynamics of their societies as these forces are most likely to influence education in one way or another. Despite education's interrelatedness to these societal dimensions, education systems appear to maintain relatively autonomous structures overall. Ginsburg *et al* (1991:7) contends that regardless of one's assumption about the degree of relative autonomy of the education

system, one may incorporate cultural, economic and political dynamics into one's model for explaining educational change and reform.

It is the researcher's contention that socio-cultural attitudes and expectations, demographic trends, economic conditions and strategies and socio-political changes significantly influence education today. Combined with the external pressures (see par 2.3), these internal forces increasingly engender social and educational changes within societies.

2.2.1 Socio-cultural attitudes and expectations

Socio-cultural attitudes and expectations are shaped by the beliefs and values of the members of society. Von Recum (1991:123) states that socio-cultural values "offer systems for interpreting life and the world", and are therefore of vital importance to the to the functioning of societies. Any change in the beliefs and values naturally implies a change in societal attitudes and expectations. In contemporary society, however, changing values are transforming many fundamental convictions, opinions and orientations within a relatively short time. In this regard Von Recum (1991:123) claims that this is a typical phenomenon of especially highly industrialized societies and would be inconceivable without the powerful affluence of technological progress, mass influence, the social security system, revolutionary developments in the mass media, mass education and educational reform. The rapid pace of value change is furthermore accelerated by political changes of unprecedented proportions, unusual political alliances, increasing global interdependencies, changing family structures, increasing cultural diversity and changing economic trends (GNL 1992a:27).

An example of changing values transforming societal attitudes and expectations in recent years, is the global pressure exerted on all societies to provide greater equality of opportunity for all their members. In both developed and developing societies extended schooling has been seen to provide the best chance for social and economic mobility and for improving the quality of life. Hence education has come to be viewed as a societal investment which led to an increase in the demand for greater access to

all areas of schooling and for equal educational opportunities for all students. Consequently education systems have had to accommodate a much larger and more diverse group of students than previously, as well as initiate relevant reforms in response to the changed expectations of their societies (Bock 1982:78-79; Bondesio & Berkhout 1992:113-114; Goens & Clover 1991:68; House 1986b:9; Nicholas 1983:104).

Another example of changing values influencing societal attitudes and expectations, is the belief that the maintenance of a healthy ecological environment is pivotal in ensuring the survival of this planet and all its life forms. Consequently there is a heightened awareness of environmental issues which in some instances have become politicized (GNL 1992a:27; Von Recum 1991:129). The importance placed on these issues today is also affecting education as is evidenced by the many environmental science courses that are currently being incorporated into high school curricula, as well as being offered as university degree courses or as courses being integrated with other science courses.

Von Recum (1991:129) ascribes the changed socio-cultural attitudes and expectations to, on the one hand, the impetus of the highly developed industrial, consumer and welfare societies, and on the other hand, the social-critical thrust of the new social movements, that is, protest, counter-culture, ecology, antinuclear power, feminist and peace movements, and a large number of citizens' initiatives. Quoting Capra and Spretnak (1984), Von Recum (1991:129) describes the new social movements as the creators of a new image of the world with the aim of establishing a post-materialist, trans-industrial, socio-ecological society based on new principles such as self-fulfilment, self-determination, self-organization, decentralization, participation and solidarity. Furthermore, there has been a proliferation of post-materialist attitudes towards values as a result of the prosperity of industrial societies. Because of the long period of affluence since the Second World War, the value placed on material needs has decreased, whereas the value put on non-material needs has risen. As the new value orientations are most prominent among younger groups with higher socio-economic status and political competence, they have a considerable influence on

political objectives and political behaviour, according to Von Recum (1991:130). Since education is embedded in society, it is, and will be deeply affected by the sheer magnitude of the current societal attitudes and expectations. The question is whether education systems worldwide will be capable of accommodating the accelerated demands for socio-cultural change adequately and efficiently.

2.2.2 *Demographic trends*

Demographic trends comprise such things as population growth and decline, mobility, labour force participation, age and migration. These trends are an integral part of social regulations and therefore also influence the provision and planning of education. For example, the decline of student enrolments will affect the provision of education services and facilities, curriculum planning, teacher supply, school buildings and extra-mural activities (Bondesio & Berkhout 1992:98-99; Press 1990:5; Van Schalkwyk 1988:254-255).

One of the most significant demographic trends to influence education in the latter part of this century has been population growth and decline. For instance, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, population growth continued at a hectic pace in the developing nations, whereas fertility rates¹ dropped significantly in the developed nations, causing reductions in student enrolments (Coombs 1985:13). This downturn in the fertility rate has come about as a result of progressive industrialization and urbanization and the values, ambitions and behaviour patterns which accompany such changes, as Press (1990:11) explains. He attributes its causes to a number of economic, demographic, social, psychological, environmental and political factors. For instance, among the demographic forces contributing to a continued decline in fertility have been

- ▲ declining marriage rates

¹

Fertility rate refers to the measure of the average number of children that would be born per woman.

- ▲ age at marriage (the earlier the marriage, the larger the exposure to the risk of pregnancy)
- ▲ high divorce rates
- ▲ size of young adult population (specifically females 15-44 years of age)

Press (1990:11) also shows that economic factors can result in depressing fertility rates. For example, the cost of living, the availability of work, the opportunities to pursue post-secondary programmes are factors influencing the participation of women in the labour force and resultant fertility levels. He maintains that unless there is a significant change in the attitude of society towards children and family size in the developed nations, the fertility rates for these nations will not change in this century and in some cases could even drop even further. Press (1990:8) does point out, however, that births have been increasing in the United States since 1978 and in Canada since the early 1980s. The United States Department of Commerce report for 1989 actually projects a slight increase in the fertility rates by the year 2000, for the developed countries it lists in its report. For example, West Germany is reported to have had a total fertility rate of 1.37 in 1988 and it is projected to increase its fertility rate to 1.70 by the year 2000 (United States Department of Commerce 1989:817-818, Table 1405). The same report also projects a decrease in the total fertility rates by the year 2000, for the developing countries it lists. For instance, Zambia had a total fertility rate of 7.00 in 1988 and it is projected to decrease its fertility rate to 6.30 by the year 2000 (United States Department of Commerce 1989:817-818, Table 1405). Devastating diseases, such as the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), could of course dramatically influence the fertility rates of many countries in the next decade.

Population growth or decline is furthermore entangled with, and masked by migration. Migration is a rather complex phenomenon of the 1980s and 1990s and can originate within a province or state of a country, between provinces or states and between countries. Levels of aspirations and expectations and job opportunities are often the main causes of migration, especially among the young adult population. This kind of migration usually leads to the depopulation of rural areas and the rapid increase of

population in the urban areas (Press 1990:10; Van Schalkwyk 1988:255). It is the opinion of Press (1990:19) that the results of large scale migration can be invigorating or devastating, depending on the size of the migrant population, the economic, demographic and social circumstances, and the viability and general conditions of the individual community, region or province.

Looking at the profound influence demographic trends have on any society, there is little doubt that a thorough examination of the implications of these changes, not only for education but for all public and private sectors is therefore critical.

2.2.3 *Economic conditions and strategies*

Educational changes and reforms in many countries are directly linked to local economic conditions and strategies. Moreover, the globalization of the world economy influence domestic fiscal policies and thus directly or indirectly affects educational policies (Goens & Clover 1991:70; Popkewitz 1991:111). Economic conditions and strategies are also influenced by political ideologies, which in turn influence the type of education that is provided. For instance, a capitalist economic system might require a highly differentiated education system, whereas a socialist economic system might require a less differentiated system of education (Bondesio & Berkhout 1992:99; Van Schalkwyk 1988:258).

Economic conditions that influence education are amongst others, the availability of resources, affluence, poverty, productivity, human resource factors such as supply of skilled and unskilled workers, employment and unemployment (Van Schalkwyk 1988:258). The reason why these economic conditions have such a profound impact on education today is because education has come to be viewed as a capital or productive investment. Consequently, education is considered to have economic value as it is believed to contribute to economic growth (Bondesio & Berkhout 1992:105; Fägerland & Saha 1989:91; House 1986b:9). This belief in education as a capital investment is known as the *human capital theory*. The central notion of this theory is the assumption that if investments are made in human resources, there is a high

probability that their productivity will be enhanced (House 1986b:9). According to Bock (1982:78), the theory of education as a capital investment has proved to be highly marketable, especially in developing nations. In these societies education is seen to provide just about the only legitimate access to modern political and economic sectors. These assumptions are changing however, as theorists have come to realize that education does have limits in what it can do for economic growth. In this regard Fägerland and Saha (1989:93) contend that other factors likewise contribute to the mobilization of human resources. Such factors have to do with world economic conditions and recessions and the strength of the economic ties that bind nations together. Fägerland and Saha (1989:56) points out that development planners often overlook the impact these world economic trends exert on their own local economic conditions, and concurrently education planners often fail to recognize the inflexibility of education systems to adapt quickly to changing social and economic needs within their societies. In addition, both development and education planners in some developing countries have come to realize that schooling has created a skilled workforce, inappropriate to the demands of a Third World labour market. Accordingly, there is a disjuncture between educational attainment and the job opportunities available. Furthermore, as Bock (1982:79) notes, the endemic conflict that exists in the pluralist societies of the Third World (as manifested in power struggles between ethnic and tribal groups, and between emerging modern urban economic classes and traditional-rural constellations of interest), has raised the question whether education can ameliorate this endemic social conflict and facilitate economic growth.

From these observations it is quite clear that economic conditions and strategies are very closely linked to educational policies and changes. Obviously, in certain circumstances the productivity of the workforce can be and is enhanced by education. The role of education in economic development is nevertheless limited, as economic development is also contingent on other factors.

2.2.4 *Socio-political changes*

Socio-political changes come about because of a change in foundational beliefs and convictions. In any society these foundational beliefs and convictions are translated into a system of values, political ideology and social codes of behaviour which form part of its distinctive culture (Bondesio & Berkhout 1992:108-109; Coombs 1985:244). A society's culture is expressed in many forms, such as its

- ▲ religious dogmas, myths and taboos
- ▲ social structures
- ▲ political system
- ▲ productive technologies
- ▲ decision-making processes
- ▲ literature, art, architecture, dress, food, modes of entertainment
- ▲ language
- ▲ education

Coombs (1985:244) considers education's prime task in all societies as that of conserving and protecting culture and transmitting it intact to each new generation. Hartnett and Naisch (1990:12) refer to this task of education as the "transmission of social identity" and claim that it has a central role in shaping a society. A culture is always dynamic, however, reflecting the various changes that impact upon it and few cultures, except those that have been totally isolated, remain static for any long period of time. These changes are often translated into social and political goals with a view to change education in order to fulfil the current needs of society and sustain it in its altered form (Albornoz 1993:56; Hartnett & Naisch 1990:12). Since education is entrenched in society it naturally reflects the prevailing ideological goals of the political system of that society. In this respect Fägerland and Saha (1989:141-142) have found that education does contribute to political mobilization and development, but the specific form and content are dependent on the ideology of the political system involved. They believe there is no reason why the process should be any different for

a capitalist or a socialist society for example, or alternately, for a developed or developing society.

At the local level of education, there is the danger that schools could be the focus of political struggle. The struggle usually manifests itself in issues about the control of schools and the content of the curriculum. Single-interest power groups may pressure school boards and teachers to implement or remove programmes from the prescribed course of study. Some communities are known to be liberal or conservative, which may influence the nature of the issues that are politically sensitive (Goens & Clover 1991:68; Hartnett & Naisch 1990:14).

Lastly, modern social developments and problems arising from these developments have implications for education today. Taking Canada as an example, Roebothan (1989:24-25) identifies certain social developments and problems that require new approaches to education as well as the development of specialist educational services. These social developments and problems include the

- ▲ changing nature of the basic family unit
- ▲ increasing economic involvement of females in the workforce
- ▲ decline in personal and public morality
- ▲ increase in crime

Goens & Clover (1992:41) cite violence, drugs, poverty and changes in the family structure as social problems profoundly affecting children in North America today. They argue that these social conditions have altered the social context for schooling dramatically.

Clearly, socio-political changes shape and alter the content and structure of education and the direction it takes. Alternately, education is an essential component of political development and reflects social changes that occur. The acceleration of these changes could be problematic though, as it requires a rapid assimilation of new approaches and innovations in education systems that remain basically unchanged.

2.3 External forces engendering change

In order to understand the rapidly changing contextual environment of today and the way in which it affects education, it is imperative to focus on both the internal and external forces that dictate change. Bock (1982:80) maintains that today, more than ever, the internal forces impacting on societies operate in terms of external conditions and pressures. External pressures impinging on societies nowadays are above all the

- ▲ widespread penetration of technological and scientific advances
- ▲ global economic developments
- ▲ political interdependence of nations

2.3.1 *Technological and scientific advances*

The swift increase of technological and scientific advances over the past decades is challenging every society worldwide. Technological developments are invading all aspects of social life, including education. Biotechnology, laser technology, micro-electronics, knowledge processing, robotics and computer-driven design are just a few examples of new technologies permeating society. Banathy (1991:78) alleges that these technologies require enormous changes in the kind of competence required to work and live today. Furthermore, technology is reshaping the professional, scientific and other skill requirements of industry. Layton (1990:771-772) says that because of these technological and scientific advances in industry and commerce, the very concept of *work* as a lifelong, paid, specific occupation, is undergoing change. As far as educating students is concerned, Nicholas (1983:105) points out that because of the rapidity of technological change, it is impossible to anticipate what knowledge or skills will ultimately be most helpful to students, particularly with a 40-year working life in prospect.

Another consequence of technological and scientific advances is that our lifestyles are increasingly dependent on the availability of technological resources, not only for domestic use, but also for the storing, accessing and processing of many kinds of

information. Layton (1990:774) considers technological and scientific change to be irreversible. In his words "no technological change can be uninvented after it has taken place" (1990:774). He contends that we need to understand technology, not so much because we need to solve problems or find solutions, but so that we can control it. Henchey (1987:50) likewise agrees that technology is a means of extending our control over our environment, hence the importance placed on understanding new technology. Layton (1990:774) offers another perspective on the advances of new technologies. He says that they are not mere instrumentalities external to humankind, they also represent interior transformations of consciousness, of the way in which we see the world and respond to it. In this capacity technology has become a potent agent for the transformation of societal values as well.

It is quite obvious then that technological and scientific advances constitute a major challenge to education. Henchey (1987:50) maintains that despite the historical stability of education systems as social institutions, the influence of the new technology is likely to be pervasive and profound. Technological change will increasingly shape educational policies and priorities, alter structures, redefine the goals of education, transform content and curriculum, expand access and delivery systems for learning and reshape the profession of the educator. The problem that faces education systems in the 1990s, is how to develop an effective method of learning as it pertains to all aspects of technological change. In this regard, Banathy (1991:78-79) suggests that another type of learning will have to be developed that is innovative, anticipatory or evolutionary. Such learning would nurture our creative potential and stress co-operation as a mode and method of learning, rather than competition in learning which is currently being promoted in educational practices. Although this is a commendable approach, which no doubt will be supported by education planners, there are few education systems as yet, that prepare children to cope with the demands of this technological era in a deliberate and comprehensive way. For instance, in his survey of the impact of technological change on British education, Layton (1990:777-778) has found that in the late 1980s school curricula fell short in numerous ways of establishing a research base in the teaching and learning of technology. It would appear that the implications for curriculum reform, for the training and retraining of teachers and for

education planning, management and finance, are staggering, as Coombs (1985:263-264) foresees. He says that although countries can learn valuable lessons from one another's experiences, each must devise its own best solutions to fit its own particular environment. Educators cannot do the job alone, however. They need the help and co-operation, constructive ideas and criticisms as well as the strong support of many others, both in their society and beyond.

2.3.2 Global economic developments

Global economic developments directly or indirectly influence domestic fiscal policies which in turn have implications for education. According to Coombs (1985:10-11) the following global economic developments forcefully affected the economies and educational policies of countries worldwide in the 1970s and 1980s:

- ▲ Rapid increases in manpower surpluses which outstripped the creation of new jobs by the economy. The resulting phenomenon of the educated unemployed soon spread from country to country, creating widespread anxiety and frustrations among students and their families and worrisome political and psychological problems for governments and education systems.
- ▲ A major shift in the pattern of international manpower as it flows from and to countries, causing a brain drain in some countries and a stiffening of immigration restrictions in others.
- ▲ Severe worldwide recessions, declining oil prices and in some cases accelerated inflation rates, intensified the problem of the educated unemployed.
- ▲ The widespread slowdown of economic growth rates in both developed and developing countries, created highly disruptive changes in international trade, capital flows and exchange rates which threatened the integrity of the world's monetary system.

- ▲ Advancing technologies and changing economic structures further compounded the economic problems experienced by these countries. The GNP declined in most countries, whereas the service sector experienced unprecedented growth. The net effect was to increase the segmentation of the job market between a limited number of high-paying, high-tech jobs in industry, requiring advanced specialized training, and the increasing availability of low-paying low-skill jobs in such expanding service areas as fast food outlets, supermarkets and discount department stores.

It appears that some of these global economic trends and developments continue to influence the economic and educational policies of countries in the 1990s. Most countries are concerned about the need for improved economic performance in a global struggle for survival, hence the importance attached to education reform movements. Ginsburg and Cooper (1991:376) show that education reform movements in various countries have occurred at approximately the same time and in relation to volatile movements within the world economic system, such as global recessions. Layton (1990:773) claims that the prime aim of curriculum changes in Britain is to train a better and more adaptable workforce that would be able to exploit the opportunities presented by new technologies. In Canada, the notion of formal education as the avenue for individual economic and social mobility is central to informed thinking about educational policy, as Lawson and Woock (1987:133) indicate. This is also the contention of Livingstone and Hart (1987:4) when they point out that in Canada and most of the highly industrialized capitalist societies, the basic aim of formal schooling is to upgrade the labour force, thereby ensuring economic prosperity. This aim is based on the assumption shared by these societies that continued economic and social improvement of the society as a whole, is dependent on a more socially competent and technically knowledgeable populace.

Global economic developments not only influence educational policy, but also educational financing and the availability of financial resources (Goens & Clover 1991:70). Worsening global economic conditions have taken their toll on government budgets, as Coombs (1985:10-11) alleges. In most countries governments have

become more and more burdened financially with less money available for education. Fägerland and Saha (1989:55-56) give other reasons for the decrease of government expenditure on education since the 1970s. One of the reasons is the debate concerning the quality of educational output and the apparent inappropriateness of much education in some countries. Considerable scepticism prevails in developing countries about the relevance of schooling for specific kinds of work (see par 2.2.3). It is the opinion of Fägerland and Saha (1989:57), however, that much of the cynicism which has emerged about the role of education in economic development has been due to the perceived mismatch and breakdown in the relationship between schools and the workplace. Another reason for spending less on education is the conviction that if a disproportionate share of limited resources is given to education, less will be available for other vital areas of social development, such as health and welfare (Fägerland & Saha 1989:55).

Looking at all of these factors, it is apparent that global economic developments influence educational policies and reform initiatives. It is to be expected that education will be subject to more changes as the global economic interdependence of nations continues. Whether education will be able to keep abreast of these developments and fulfil the current expectations of most societies to ensure optimum economic developments, remains to be seen.

2.3.3 Political interdependence of nations

The consequences of the increasing political interdependence of nations can no longer be ignored today. According to Nicholas (1983:105), the political interdependence of nations does not only exist within the boundaries of one continent, but also recognizes cross-continental relationships. The Williams Commission (GNL 1992a:27) is of the opinion that because of their interdependence, these nations are being influenced in an unprecedented way by accelerated political changes, unusual political coalitions and new political ideologies. As the political interdependence of nations continues, so will their education systems be influenced by these political changes, alliances and ideologies. Moreover, because of their interdependence, global issues that have

become politicized, can no longer be ignored. The mass media are instrumental in communicating global awareness of these issues, thereby intensifying the challenge to the traditional beliefs, norms and values of societies (Von Recum 1991:129-130). These issues are often driven through powerful social movements and political groups and focus on such things as abortion, homosexuality, alternative lifestyles, equality, racism, feminism, ecology, AIDS awareness, euthanasia and many other matters that are relevant in today's context. Some of these issues have become very contentious and are confronting educators and policy-makers with new challenges and radical changes. Von Recum (1991:135) suggests that awareness of these issues has brought about increased educational aspirations, greater awareness of quality, increased interest of educational issues and more involvement of parents.

Although education planners and policy-makers deal with these issues and changes as best they can, they have to contend with, on the one hand, the beliefs, aspirations and political ideologies of their own societies, and on the other hand, socio-economic inequalities and disparities within their societies. Consider the concept of *equality of educational opportunity*, for instance. The concept stresses equality of access, equality of treatment and equality of results (Lessard 1987:184). Translated into fiscal terms, equality of educational opportunity means that "equal dollars are made available by government to educate every pupil" as Dibski (1987:71) puts it. The only way in which equality of educational opportunity could work, however, is if social and economic inequalities within societies are completely eradicated. Bock (1982:99) believes that because education is embedded within the larger structure of society, it reproduces and even generates the conflicts that exist within society as a whole, such as ethnic and cultural differences and social divisions. The socio-cultural context of each society determines therefore if these global issues and popular concepts can be successfully assimilated into its education system. Nevertheless, because of the political interdependence of nations and the heightened political awareness of issues and ideologies, schools have emerged as political instruments to serve political purposes (Fägerland & Saha 1989:33).

As the political interdependence of nations increases, one can assume that even greater global pressure will be exerted on education systems to accommodate global expectations and demands. The question remains yet again if education systems worldwide can successfully implement these political demands for change.

2.4 Change and the environment: selected examples

From the illustrations given in this chapter it is evident that the social, political, economic and cultural contexts of societies have changed dramatically, creating a new era. Looking at some examples where the environment is changing society, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) can serve as a useful example for presenting and assessing fundamental trends in value change. Von Recum (1991:124-138) gives several reasons for this change in the FRG. They are

- ▲ acceptancy of technology
- ▲ a new system of reference for the professional in the work world
- ▲ changing attitudes towards family and marriage
- ▲ liberal attitudes towards education
- ▲ dwindling interest in religion
- ▲ a lack of confidence in the traditional political parties
- ▲ proliferation of post-material attitudes towards values
- ▲ changing attitudes towards authority and the political system by young adults
- ▲ changing family patterns
- ▲ cultural pluralism

Discussing a new system of reference for the professional in the work world, as an example, Von Recum (1991:124-125) refers to a number of demoscopic and empirical studies in the FRG (Noelle-Neumann 1983) which indicate a diminishing work ethic, a decline in intrinsic work motivation and a secular, more distanced attitude on the part of the working population towards their work - with the exception of professions with higher status. In addition, more recent in-depth studies (Hondrich in Von Recum 1991:125) reveal a more differentiated picture of the attitudes of workers to their work

and profession. The classical puritan work virtues are becoming less relevant, increasingly yielding to new communicative virtues. Expectations of work are increasing as well. For example, work should be interesting and responsible, employees want to be better informed and participate in planning, and shorter more flexible working hours are desired. Work which is intellectually demanding, socially prestigious and regarded as meaningful is preferred in contrast to work that is physically demanding and unhealthy. Lastly it has become increasingly apparent that employees in a highly technical and democratic society need skills that go beyond their professional qualifications. These skills include individual initiative, self-confidence, social sensitivity, flexibility, a sense of individual responsibility, the ability to work in a team, and the ability to cope with conflict situations. Looking at all these factors, there is little doubt that they have substantially changed the values, aspirations and expectations of the professional work force in the FRG.

An example of political and economic realities generating educational change, is found in a study by Bergh (1993) of curriculum reform and reconstruction in Africa and Latin America since World War II. Case studies of countries both in Africa and Latin America indicate they were economically underdeveloped and politically dependent on other countries for external funding, hence the desire to stimulate economic development and become politically independent. A comprehensive system-wide restructuring of education was perceived as being the answer to social change and economic development. It was assumed that investment in the education of a nation would contribute more to the long-term sustainable growth of a country than capital or natural and material resources (Bergh 1993:465). Political and social motives are also credited for curriculum innovations in these countries. Bergh (1993:477) specifies that one such motive may be for a new country to establish and maintain its legitimacy. Another motive is attributed to the reproduction of an indigenous, ruling elite. In both Africa and Latin America, however, this led to the establishment of a dual education system of private and public schools and the entrenchment of privileges based on socio-economic origin (1993:477).

In his survey of educational reform in the United States of America (USA), Popkewitz (1991:110-112) focuses on the globalization of the world economy, as well as demographic changes within the USA as reasons for educational change. He alleges that a rapidly changing demography in the USA is an integral aspect of the current reconstitution of social regulations. By the year 2000, one in every three USA citizens will be non-white; 38 percent of the school population will be Black, Hispanic, Native American or Asian. These minority populations will continue to experience greater disparities in major social welfare indicators as compared to the majority population. These demographic trends are coupled with cultural tensions that together have implications for education. Other factors that influence school reform in the USA are, according to Popkewitz (1991:145-147), the advances of science and technology and a new nationalism that centres on the "greatness of America".

A final example of contextual factors inducing changes in education and social regulations is illustrated by the concept of multiculturalism. Demographic factors, in particular migration, has led to the emergence of cultural pluralistic societies in many countries of the world, above all in the USA, Canada and Europe. McAndrew (1987:146) describes the goal of multiculturalism in Canada as that of fostering national unity by giving ethnic groups a sense of belonging to Canada, which is defined as a "multicultural, tolerant and equalitarian society" (1987:146). According to McAndrew (1987:151) multiculturalism has had implications for curriculum changes in Canada as manifested in educational policies of integration and inter-cultural measures. He stresses, however, that Canadian provincial educational policies reflect regional traditions and priorities when it comes to interpretations of ethnicity. The concept of multicultural education is also taking root in Europe with the introduction of instruction in the native tongue of immigrants in a number of countries. Despite these efforts to accommodate the educational needs of immigrant pupils, Von Recum (1991:138) perceives multicultural education in Europe as a "halting process", which needs to go beyond curricular adaptations to achieve ethnic and cultural integration.

These examples clearly indicate the far-reaching and penetrating impact contextual issues have on education systems worldwide. In the foreseeable future substantial

efforts will be required in educational planning and restructuring to accommodate these momentous challenges.

2.5 Conclusion

Assessing the impact of contextual factors on educational and social change defies oversimplification. These factors are all interrelated and play an important role in shaping and steering change. To determine the level of influence is also complicated as it is contingent on the beliefs, aspirations, expectations and goals of society. Education is a complex, often paradoxical social activity in itself, which further complicates the process of evaluation.

In this chapter the researcher attempted to discuss the major internal and external forces that are responsible for educational and social change today. It was shown that educational and social change is intricately interwoven with changes in the environment, both internally and externally. What has emerged as a distinctive late 20th century phenomenon is the rate of change taking place, due to the powerful influence of technological progress. There is a real danger therefore, that education systems could remain rigid and allow their curriculum content to become progressively obsolete as Coombs (1985:35) points out, while the world of knowledge and action all around them continue to change at an ever more rapid pace.

It is the opinion of the researcher that these forces will continue to influence educational and social change, particularly as countries become more interdependent and the globalization of issues increases. Educational and social change does not take place overnight, after all. Within societies there are many factors that could hinder the process of change, such as

- ▲ lack of clarification of educational goals and purposes
- ▲ cynicism about the role of education in educational and social change
- ▲ power struggles between elite groups serving their own interests
- ▲ failure to implement educational reform and restructuring

Despite these and other hindrances, educational planners will nonetheless have to respond to the acceleration of change taking place these days.

There is no quick, simple solution, however, to address all such changes in all situations. Each society will have to develop its own reconstruction plan to accommodate demands emanating from its own environment.

In Chapter 3 the researcher will give an overview of the historical development of the denominational structure of the Newfoundland education system and examine the contextual factors that caused Newfoundland educators to alter this structure. In addition, the researcher will discuss the perspectives on education in Newfoundland, in order to gain insight into the move towards restructuring the education system.

CHAPTER 3

3 CONTEXTUAL REALITIES AND PERSPECTIVES THAT INFLUENCE EDUCATIONAL CHANGE IN NEWFOUNDLAND

3.1 A synopsis of the historical development of the denominational structure of the Newfoundland education system

The education system of Newfoundland is deeply rooted in its socio-cultural and political traditions and has consequently evolved as a distinctive denominational system. Over the years, it has been the product of an evolutionary process beginning with separate, local church-funded schools which eventually developed into state-supported denominational schools. Throughout the developmental stages of the education system, the church has played a major part in providing and managing education, especially in the small fishing communities or outports where any form of local government was virtually non-existent (GNL 1992a:49). It is the contention of the Williams Commission (GNL 1992a:50) that a public system under local control might have worked if the communities of Newfoundland had been able to develop institutions of local government earlier in their history. Instead, the colonial experience with England (Newfoundland's mother country), fostered both apathy for local government and suspicion of central forms of government. As a consequence, the church played a unique and powerful role in the educational, social, cultural and political life of Newfoundland (GNL 1992a:50; Snelgrove 1983:1). Moreover, the pattern of settlement along religious lines amongst Newfoundlanders, who segregated themselves geographically according to their preferred choice of denomination, significantly influenced the later development of the different school systems (see par 1.2).

As in other parts of Canada and the Western world, Newfoundland's first schools were begun by churches or religious societies. These religious societies, described by Rowe (1952:30) as "cultural beacons" in Newfoundland's early history, were the following:

- ▲ The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (Rowe 1976:16; Snelgrove 1983:5)
- ▲ The Society for Improving the Conditions of the Poor in St. John's (Mulcahy 1983:17-18; Rowe 1952:32-33; Snelgrove 1983:8)
- ▲ The Benevolent Irish Society (Curtis 1986:18; Rowe 1952:34; Snelgrove 1983:8)
- ▲ The Newfoundland School Society (Rowe 1952:38-43; Snelgrove 1983:9; Warren 1967:20)

Although these schools usually taught a basic curriculum of reading, writing and mathematics, they also taught specific church doctrines and religious education was a primary goal.

The first arrangement to provide educational instruction in Newfoundland was recorded by the French at Placentia and St. Pierre in the summer of 1686. These communities agreed to support a Roman Catholic priest whose duties included instructing the children for a few months of the year. The first documented school was established in the mid-1770s by the Church of England clergyman, Reverend Henry Jones, who opened a school in Bonavista (GNL 1992a:49; Rowe 1976:16; Snelgrove 1983:5).

The first Education Act (1836) endeavoured to set up a secular school system. The Act provided for grants for schools which were intended to be non-denominational and established a public school system administered by nine local school boards. Although the senior clergy of each denomination were ex-officio members of the board, the government's intention to foster a non-sectarian system was clearly expressed in an 1838 amendment which forbade clergy to interfere in the proceedings or management of schools. The Education Act of 1836 did recognize the existence of denominational schools already established in St. John's and Harbour Grace, but made no move to ensure any control over them (Billard 1987:42; GNL 1992a:50-51; Rowe 1976:42). Although the Education Act of 1836 was commended by educators for its assertion of the principle that the state had a responsibility for the promotion and advancement of education, the existing social and economic conditions together with the segregation of Catholics and Protestants, impeded any form of non-sectarian education (Harte

1989:12; Perlin 1959:76; Rowe 1952:79; Snelgrove 1983:9). According to Harte (1989:12) it is not surprising then, that in 1843 the grant for education was divided between Catholics and Protestants. The Education Act of 1843 thus marked the beginning of legislative provisions for the denominational system of education in Newfoundland (Billard 1987:42; GNL 1992a:52; Harte 1989:12).

For thirty years following the initial division of the education grant between Catholics and Protestants, successive governments resisted the pressure from the Church of England for subdivision of the educational grant. In an effort to end the bickering and disputes among the Protestant churches, however, the government conceded to subdivide the educational grant among Protestant denominations according to population. The Education Act of 1874 made provision for subdividing the educational grant among the churches and thus became instrumental in further promoting the denominational structure of the Newfoundland education system (Andrews 1985a:19; GNL 1992a:53; Harte 1989:12; Snelgrove 1983:11). Two years later (1876), new legislation provided for the appointment of three denominational Superintendents of Education. The superintendents were to assume responsibility for the general supervision and direction of all schools and the training of teachers within their different denominations (i.e. Roman Catholic, Anglican and United Church). In 1892 The Salvation Army was recognized in the Act, followed by the Seventh Day Adventists in 1912 and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland in 1954. When the Pentecostal Assemblies were granted the right to operate separate schools, five fully-fledged denominational school systems (i.e. Roman Catholic, Anglican, United, Salvation Army and Pentecostal Assemblies) had emerged (Andrews 1985a:20; GNL 1992a:53; Harte 1989:13; Snelgrove 1983:12).

The Education Act of 1927, the last major education act before Newfoundland joined Canada in 1949, endorsed the then existing denominational education system as the recognized and approved system for Newfoundland. It identified four areas of church control in education:

- ▲ A right to denominationally-based school boards which could own and operate schools
- ▲ The right of these boards to appoint and dismiss teachers
- ▲ The right of these schools to receive public funds on a non-discriminatory basis
- ▲ The right to establish denominational colleges

These were the denominational rights that existed in the Newfoundland legislation at the time of Confederation and were given protection by Term 17 of Newfoundland's Terms of Union with Canada (1949) (GNL 1992a:53).

The expected outcome of five denominational school systems operating side by side was a multiplicity of small schools in the same geographical areas and a duplication of services. Increased concern over this situation led to the integration of the Protestant denominations into one integrated school system (1968-69), which immediately eliminated many of the small schools. This step towards consolidating schools and services in the 1960s, is viewed as the first substantial change in the education system of Newfoundland (Andrews 1985b:268-269; Harte 1989:13; Snelgrove 1983:27).

Another substantial change was achieved with the re-organization of the Department of Education following submissions in this regard to the Warren Royal Commission on Education and Youth in the mid-1960s. In response to the recommendations made by the Warren Commission, the Education Act of 1968 provided for the organization of the Department of Education along functional rather than denominational lines and the establishment of the three Denominational Education Councils (DEC's) (i.e. Integrated, Roman Catholic and Pentecostal) as statutory bodies. The governance and operation of the education system were therefore shared by a non-denominational Department of Education, the DEC's and the school boards¹ (GNL 1992a:56; Revised Statutes of Newfoundland 1968:Sections 4 & 5:2-3).

¹

For the responsibilities of the Department of Education, the DEC's and the school boards until December 1996, see paragraph 1.2.

This system of education has remained largely unchanged since 1969 until the 1990s, when Government proposals to restructure and reform the system were released (see paragraphs 1.3 and 4.1). As has been pointed out in paragraph 1.3, Term 17 was amended on December 4, 1996 to create an inter-denominational education system for Newfoundland (*The Western Star* 5/12/96:11). Moreover, a second amendment approved on December 18, 1997, now provides for the creation of a uniform non-denominational education system (*The Western Star* 19/12/97:1). Clearly, as is evident from this synopsis, the education system of Newfoundland is far more than a detached administrative structure. Its denominational structure reflects the close and emotive ties with its past, as well as the complexity that surrounds, and has always surrounded, education in Newfoundland. Although the denominational structure of the Newfoundland education system has remained intact for such a long time, it has not been unaffected by the dramatic changes that have taken place in Newfoundland's environment over the past number of years. The combined effect of these contextual realities on the education system and the Newfoundland society will hence be discussed in the following paragraphs.

3.2 Contextual factors that influence education in Newfoundland

It is always necessary and important for educators to gain insight into and analyze the current trends prevalent within their particular society, before they attempt to reform and restructure the education system. The Williams Commission (GNL 1992a:28) has identified, a number of trends that currently affect education in Newfoundland. They are:

- ▲ a provincial fertility rate among the lowest of the provinces in Canada
- ▲ a population that is becoming top-heavy with middle-aged workers and a tendency toward earlier retirement
- ▲ low-skill, low-paying jobs outpacing the growth of high-skill, high-paying jobs
- ▲ rising minimum literacy and numeracy requirements even for low-skill jobs
- ▲ the growing necessity of computerization in many workplace settings

- ▲ technology assuming a pivotal role in the delivery of educational programmes and services

The Williams Commission (GNL 1992a:29) furthermore identified certain contextual factors which undoubtedly affect the Newfoundland society today and which must be considered when planning for the future. They are:

- ▲ socio-cultural attitudes and expectations
- ▲ population dynamics and changing social patterns
- ▲ economic conditions
- ▲ technological developments
- ▲ legal and political issues

These factors are considered to have influenced the provision of education in Newfoundland in the most profound way, hence the urgency to restructure the education system. They are discussed in detail in the ensuing paragraphs.

3.2.1 Socio-cultural attitudes and expectations

Socio-cultural attitudes are grounded in the values and beliefs of people and feature prominently in their expectations (see par 2.2.1). As changes unfold in society the expectations and demands upon its institutions increase and the education system is no exception. Considering Newfoundlanders' strong and symbolic ties with the church, it is not uncommon therefore that the function of the education system is viewed in one sense as the preservation of Christian values. As a matter of fact, the Christian and the democratic values and beliefs of Newfoundlanders are incorporated in the first three aims of public education for Newfoundland. They read as follows:

- ▲ To help pupils understand the Christian principles and to guide them in the practice of these principles in their daily living
- ▲ To help pupils develop moral values which will serve as a guide to living

- ▲ To acquaint pupils with the principles of democracy and to provide opportunities for the practice of these principles (GNL 1984:6-7)

The Williams Commission (GNL 1992a:27) states that on the one hand, the education system of Newfoundland represents for many a devotion to church and religion, a commitment to morality in raising their children, and a patriotic pride in an institution which has uniquely evolved on Newfoundland's rocky soil. On the other hand, critics of the education system have charged that it engenders religious discrimination and segregation, and attenuates individual human and civil rights otherwise guaranteed by provincial and national codes. In this regard Crocker and Strong (1989:1) underline the importance of Canadian citizens' participation in decision-making regarding educational matters. They stress that in Canada, education is a provincial responsibility. In the most fundamental way therefore, the education system belongs to the citizens of each province. Citizens have both the right and the responsibility to participate in decision-making related to educational matters. Despite the strong tradition of denominational education in Newfoundland, more and more Newfoundlanders are beginning to realize that they have a right to participate in educational decision-making. This claim is substantiated by Newfoundland educators who have detected a gradual preference amongst Newfoundlanders for an inter-denominational education system as opposed to a denominational system (Crocker [Professor at the Faculty of Education, MUN], 8/11/96; Vincent [School Principal of Herdman Collegiate Senior High School, Corner Brook], 14/11/96; Williams [Chairman of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the delivery and services in primary, elementary, secondary education (1992)], 8/11/96). This shift in thinking does not reject certain features of the denominational system, such as teaching religion in schools and upholding Christian values, but is rather a rejection of the central structural features of the system. Most Newfoundlanders are opposed to the division of schools and boards into separate denominational pillars, where a small number of Christian denominations have the exclusive right to operate all publicly-funded schools, and where parents have virtually no say (GNL 1992a:93; Harte 1989:92-95). There are a number of people nonetheless, who defend and support the denominational structure of the education system. They point to a stable partnership between state and church that has remained largely unchallenged for the past hundred

years (GNL 1992a:95). The Williams Commission (GNL 1992a:102) claims, however, that the costliness and the discriminatory nature of the denominational system can no longer be ignored in today's society. The exclusion of disenfranchised individuals, religious minorities or other concerned groups from active participation on school boards or decision-making at any level, has been a central theme of human rights advocates, making it a very compelling reason for change.

Apart from the denominational issue, the realization is slowly taking root amongst Newfoundlanders that the education system also needs to change to cope with the demands of a high-tech world and to prepare students to function in it (see par 3.2.4). This has led to demands for higher educational standards and appropriate training. These demands will most likely increase as parents come to realize that the education system does not necessarily fulfil the expectations they have for their children's educational development and attainment of skills (GNL 1992b:6-7; GNL 1995c:9; GNL 1996:5; Roebbothan 1989:23; Vincent 14/11/96).

In addition, a global consciousness is beginning to take root amongst Newfoundlanders, according to Vincent (14/11/96). He says that by means of the mass media and information gained from the electronic network, Newfoundlanders are becoming aware of global trends and issues which in turn influence their beliefs, values and expectations. The relevance of global trends and worldwide social change has already been discussed in paragraph 2.3. Their effect will not go unnoticed in Newfoundland either and in many instances is already visible.

3.2.2 Population dynamics and changing social patterns

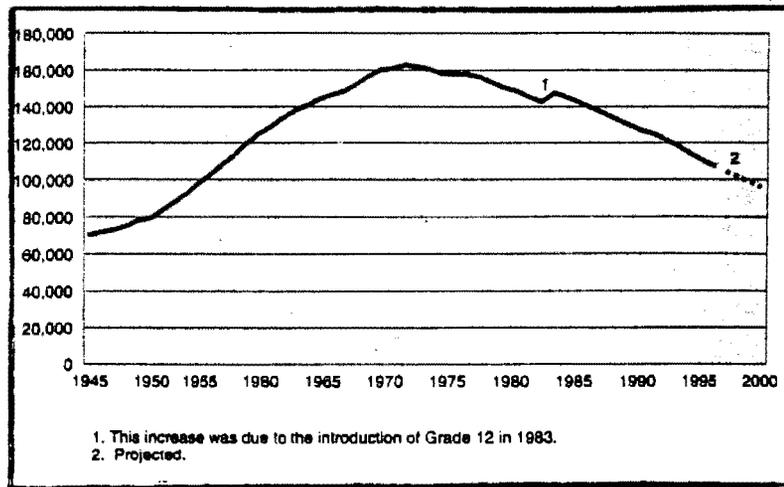
Important demographic trends are shaping the size, nature and composition of the education system in Newfoundland. Besides the geography, the harsh climate and the settlement patterns of the Newfoundlanders, such demographic trends as the declining fertility rate and the aging population, acutely influence the quality and delivery of education (GNL 1992a:127; GNL 1995c:7).

One of the greatest obstacles to overcome in designing an effective programme for schools in Newfoundland relates to the geography of the province, the climatic conditions and the settlement patterns of the people. Over the years communities have developed along the rugged coastline of Newfoundland as close as possible to the fishing grounds. Many communities are remote and isolated and can only be reached by boat or plane. The long, harsh winter often results in problems for students travelling to and from school and impedes the adequate heating of school buildings and the provision of drinking water (GNL 1992a:127; GNL 1995c:7-8; Harte 1989:11). Besides, the population in many of these communities is sparse and in many instances declining. Providing quality educational programmes therefore represents a dilemma. The geography and settlement patterns of the Newfoundlanders prohibit consolidation for some schools and this, combined with the continued decline in enrolment, ensures that a certain number of small schools will always exist in the province. It is often in high school that delivery of educational programmes in small school environments becomes particularly difficult (GNL 1996:1; Roebathan 1989:13).

During the past twenty-five years declining school enrolments have been a major concern for educators and one of the most prominent factors to influence the education system. The school population of Newfoundland has been in decline since the 1971/72 school year when enrolment peaked at 162,818 (see Figure 3.1).

FIGURE 3.1

PROVINCIAL ENROLMENT (KINDERGARTEN - GRADE 12)
NEWFOUNDLAND, 1945-2000
 (GNL 1997a:3)



In September 1995 enrolment had fallen to 110,456, a decrease of 32 per cent from 1971/72. The overall student population is currently declining by 3 per cent or 3,500 per year. The reduction is a result of both lower birthrates and a greater number of people leaving Newfoundland (GNL 1997a:2).

Throughout much of its recorded history the province of Newfoundland has had a high fertility rate. For instance, in 1966 Newfoundland had a fertility rate of 4.58 compared to a fertility rate of 2.81 for the rest of Canada, yet by 1987 the fertility rate had dropped to 1.57 and to 1.44 in 1990 (one of the lowest provincial rates in Canada) (GNL 1992a:29; Press 1990:8; Roebathan 1989:9). This trend is referred to by Press (1990:8) as an "incredible turn of events". He says few could have predicted that the fertility rate would drop with the speed it did. Consequently the enrolment decline is having a serious effect on the number of students within individual schools, particularly

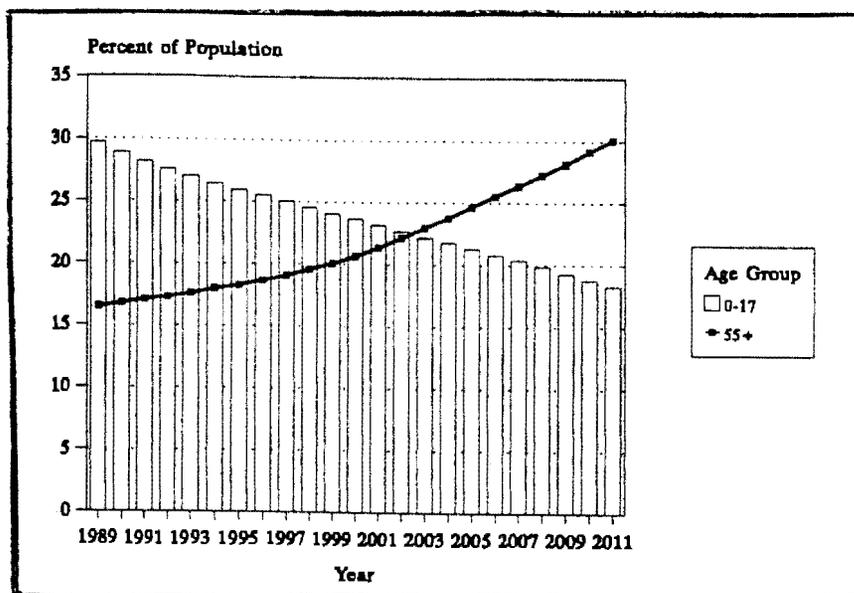
rural schools. During the past ten years enrolment decreases of more than 40 per cent have occurred in some of these schools (GNL 1996:2).

More significant is the fact that fertility rates are expected to continue to decline to levels unparalleled in Newfoundland's history, as predicted by Press (1990:1). As a result of low fertility rates and an increased life expectancy, the population is expected to age at an unprecedented rate as well. In 1966, 50 per cent of the provincial population was below the age of 18, whereas in 1990 only 16 per cent was below that age. Furthermore, the median age in Newfoundland rose from 18 years recorded in 1966 to 28 years in 1988 (GNL 1992a:29; Press 1990:14; Roebothan 1989:11). If current trends continue, the median will surpass 30 years by the mid-1990s (see Figure 3.2). In the words of the Williams Commission (GNL 1992a:30) "the province is thus being transformed from a school-aged to a middle-aged society as the baby boomers grow up".

FIGURE 3.2

THE CHANGING AGE STRUCTURE OF THE POPULATION IN NEWFOUNDLAND

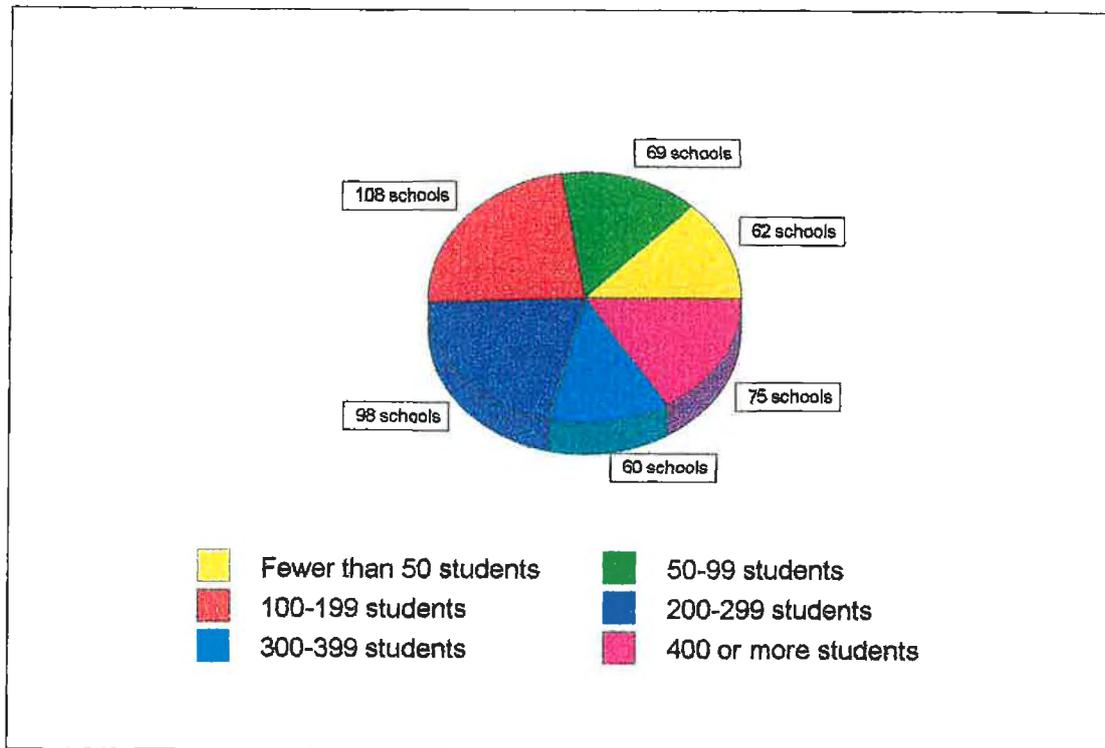
(GNL 1992a:30)



Aggravating the declining enrolment in Newfoundland schools, is the fact that throughout much of its post-war history Newfoundland has endured a constant migration of its citizens out of the province, primarily to other urban areas of Canada. In addition, fewer people move to Newfoundland from other provinces than to many other parts of Canada. A lack of job opportunities and insufficient industry are some of the major causes why Canadians do not settle in Newfoundland, nor Newfoundlanders remain. Similarly, less than half of one per cent of all immigrants who immigrate to Canada, settle in Newfoundland (GNL 1992a:29; House 1989:12; Press 1990:19).

These demographic trends have serious implications for Newfoundland schools and further intensify the 'small school problem' that already exists in the province, especially as two-thirds of all schools are located in small rural communities. For the school year 1995/96, 110,456 students attended 472 publicly-funded schools. Of these, 318 schools are situated in small communities. Figure 3.3 provides a distribution of schools by overall school size in Newfoundland for the school year 1995/96. The pie chart indicates that 69 schools had less than 100 students in total and 62 schools fewer than 50 students (GNL 1997a:1-2). These two categories of the chart contain over one quarter of all schools in Newfoundland, thus necessitating consolidation if the quality of education is to be maintained, according to the government of Newfoundland (GNL 1997a:1).

FIGURE 3.3
PROPORTION OF SCHOOLS BY SCHOOL SIZE CATEGORY, 1995/96
(GNL 1997a:1)



Lastly, changing family structures are placing an extraordinary burden on the education system of Newfoundland as well. While the traditional husband-wife family in which the father works outside the home and the mother raises the children, is still relatively common in the province, other less traditional family structures are emerging. Familiar examples include both parents working, unemployed parents, single parents, childless couples, unmarried couples with children, unmarried couples without children, second marriages with children from unrelated backgrounds and gay and lesbian parents. Evidence also shows that families of whatever type with school-age children, are becoming less numerous (GNL 1992a:30; Roebathan 1989:24-25).

According to the Williams Commission (GNL 1992a:31), these changing family structures affect children very deeply. In many classrooms in Newfoundland, children can be found who are ill-fed, ill-dressed, ill-nurtured and socially and emotionally disadvantaged. In some cases children suffer from profound psychological problems for which professional care is necessary but not always available.

The unsupervised and uncared for child is in many ways, the product of larger social phenomena. Educators are of the opinion that the problem is increasing in Newfoundland which could have dire consequences for the education system (GNL 1992a:31; Roebathan 1989:25).

3.2.3 *Economic conditions*

The degree to which any jurisdiction can support its education system is directly linked to local and global economic conditions and developments (see paragraphs 2.2.3 & 2.3.2).

In the provinces of Canada education is financed from three primary sources:

- ▲ provincial government grants
- ▲ local taxation, such as property taxes
- ▲ other sources, such as federal grants, school-based fundraising, rentals, et cetera

This arrangement has come about because of the British North America Act (BNA) of 1867 and similar subsequent legislation that empowered the provinces with the responsibility for the provision of education. In this type of structure, educational needs are thus assessed provincially and programmes are developed which reflect those needs. The federal government on the other hand, maintains educational responsibilities for Native Peoples, inmates of federal penal institutions and members of the armed services and their dependents (Dibski 1987:68-70; GNL 1992a:118-119; House 1986b:21-22).

In Newfoundland, school board operating funds come from two main sources, that is government grants and local efforts which provide for teachers' salaries, maintenance grants, bus transportation grants, text book subsidies and other special purpose grants (GNL 1992a:121-122).

Like the other provinces of Canada, Newfoundland's economic development has been adversely affected by economic developments worldwide and within Canada during the early 1990s. For instance, the world has in recent years experienced one of the worst economic recessions and appears to be emerging with some fundamental realignments of the global economy. This recession has had a devastating effect on the Canadian economy as well, which has resulted in reduced government spending and a weakened economic base (GNL 1995c:8; *The Western Star* 14/9/94:16). Furthermore, throughout Canada, increased demands on the public purse from other sources coupled with a declining educational constituency because of rapidly shifting demographic trends, have led to an overall decline in financial support for education (GNL 1992a:101). The province of Newfoundland is suffering many of the same difficulties within its education system, such as the effect of large-scale demographic shifts and a decrease in financial support. The presence of the denominational structure of the system has until now further exacerbated the strain placed on educational financing. Critics point to the duplication of schools and school resources, the duplication of facilities and administrative organization, the relative absence of large-scale sharing of educational resources and facilities, and overlapping busroutes for scholars as examples of waste (GNL 1992a:102; House 1986b:30; Roebathan 1989:72; *The Western Star* 16/2/94:5).

Changing economic conditions within Newfoundland itself have also affected the availability of financial resources. The collapse of the fishing industry (one of the mainstays of the economy) because of a total moratorium declared on fishing by the government in 1992 to help replenish depleted stocks of groundfish like northern cod, resulted in thousands of Newfoundland fishermen being laid off. The latter were forced to look for jobs outside of the province. The ban is still in place while fish stocks are being slowly replenished (*The Western Star* 13/11/95:1). More advanced technologies have also resulted in fewer low-skilled jobs in the fishery and other primary resource

industries such as forestry. Jobs are emerging in areas such as offshore oil, but many new jobs created will require significantly more training and higher levels of technical skills than those they replace (GNL 1995c:8; *The Western Star* 13/11/95:1). Lastly, because of links to international marketplaces, the province's manufacturing sector is under pressure to become increasingly competitive, requiring a more highly educated and skilled workforce.

The movement toward economic integration in North America, Western Europe and the Far East will perpetuate this trend and the demand for skilled employees (GNL 1992a:31).

It must be stressed that notwithstanding the lack of financial resources, the government of Newfoundland's financial commitment to education continues to be greater than any other province in Canada (GNL 1996:3). However, some of the *performance results* of the education system are among the worst in the country, according to government reports.

Examples of poor performance outcomes are the following:

- ▲ The basic skill levels of students in Grades 7 and 10 were assessed in 1994 and 1995 using the *Canadian Tests of Basic Skills*. For students in Grade 7, overall performance was essentially at the national average. On most subtests achievement was between the 45th and 50th percentiles, but performance in *vocabulary* and *spelling* was low. Results from the Grade 10 assessment showed that the overall percentile rank was 45, slightly below the national average. Performance was lowest on the *written expression subtest*. In addition, with the exception of *mathematics* in Grade 7 where the performance of males and females was the same, female students outscored males on all other subtests at both grade levels. Differences were most pronounced in the area of *language arts*. Furthermore, students attending schools in rural areas scored lower than students in urban areas (GNL 1997a:iii).

- ▲ Results from an assessment of performance in *elementary mathematics* showed that 86.5 per cent of Grade 6 students in 1994 met the minimum acceptable standard set for the test. It was expected that virtually all students should meet the minimum acceptable standard. Compared to the 20 per cent who were expected to reach the standard of excellence, only 12.7 per cent actually reached that level (GNL 1997a:iii).
- ▲ Performance in the Grade 3 *writing assessment* showed that many Newfoundland students did not meet the minimum standard established for students across Canada. As well, less than five per cent of the province's students met the standard of excellence (GNL 1997a:iv).

It is for this reason that the Newfoundland government has pledged to restructure the system and make it more accountable to the public. Making the system more efficient will allow financial resources to be put to better use in improving teaching and learning (GNL 1995b:1).

3.2.4 *Technological developments*

The rapid increase of technological developments in recent years has profound implications for all societies (see par 2.3.1). The introduction of new technologies into the workplace, the school and the home is becoming an important dimension of structural changes taking place in these societies. Roebathan (1989:25) contends it has had a dramatic impact on industrial development, space, travel, telecommunications, healthcare and indeed, every aspect of society. Henchey (1987:47) suggests that the technological revolution has likewise affected the Canadian society. For instance, the development of the electronic communications network has become a powerful tool in promoting knowledge and research in Canada. Apart from impressive technological changes in the information and communication fields, there have been startling technological changes in other scientific fields which have implications for education today. Henchey (1987:48) alleges that the reaction of educators and those involved in education towards the demands that technological developments place on

education systems, have often been a combination of enthusiasm, scepticism, anxiety, resistance and indifference. Downer [Department Head at the Department of Education, Sir Wilfred Grenfell College, Corner Brook], (3/11/97) has observed that in some instances, educators in Newfoundland have reacted in a similar way to the challenges of the new technological era. Nevertheless, Newfoundland like other provinces in Canada must keep abreast of new technical developments, as these developments are already changing the education system of Newfoundland in a profound way. Students, for example, must develop new skills that require critical thinking to cope with technological developments and scientific innovations. These skills go beyond the basic fundamentals of literacy and numeracy. They involve a capacity for independent learning, the ability to synthesize and communicate information, and innovative problemsolving (GNL 1992b:6; Henchey 1987:52; House 1986b:118; Roebathan 1989:25). Furthermore, in Newfoundland as elsewhere in Canada, educators have to consider the fact that technology is extending the skill-level required in most jobs. It is therefore likely that the trend toward a more highly educated, skilled and flexible workforce will continue. The Williams Commission (GNL 1992b:7) maintains that much of the public criticism of education in Newfoundland (which has emanated to a large degree from the business community), has centered on the need for a skilled graduate who will be able to meet the technological challenges of today's world. Thus, to satisfy the ever increasing demand for technically skilled graduates, it has become imperative that Newfoundland educators must rethink and re-examine the mission and goals of education in Newfoundland, as expressed by the Williams Commission (GNL 1992b:7)

It is quite obvious from these observations that technological developments are impacting education in Newfoundland in a dramatic manner, as in the rest of Canada. In many instances the changes have become irreversible. It is therefore imperative that educators develop new strategies to improve the quality of education. Besides, the Newfoundland government supports the federal view that ties comparative advantage to technical prowess as well as the educational and skill-levels of the population (GNL 1995c:9). This perspective in itself, is having a major influence on the need for educational change in Newfoundland today.

3.2.5 *Legal and political issues*

"Laws are a reflection of the morals and values of society. They are the rules and regulations that describe, reflect and interpret behaviour of individuals, groups and society as a whole". This observation by the Williams Commission (GNL 1992a:35) underlines the significant impact that legal issues have on all aspects and structures of society, including the educational environment. Leslie (1988:670) specifies that in Canada the aims of educational policy in each province are to develop the personal capacities of individuals, to impart skills useful to society, to induce conformity to community values, and generally to encourage socialization. These aims have resulted in controversies over various aspects of the education system, including the curriculum. Educational policy has to accommodate sensitive issues, such as:

- ▲ religious instruction
- ▲ sex education
- ▲ rights of ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities
- ▲ the extent and form of public financial support at the local, provincial and federal levels
- ▲ the related question of government control relative to the rights of pupils or students, parents and teachers.

One of the more significant documents that has influenced Canadian provincial education systems in recent years, is the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This Bill was passed in 1981 as part of the Canada Act. The Canada Act includes the amended BNA of 1867 and a schedule of twenty-four other acts. These Acts extend the geographical jurisdiction of the federal Canadian government and spell out the relationships of its constituent parts (Wells 1985:36). The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms provides for such issues as

- ▲ individual citizens rights
- ▲ the fundamental freedom of peaceful assembly, association, conscience and religion
- ▲ mobility rights
- ▲ the right of all children to equal educational opportunities, including those with disabilities (GNL 1992a:35; Roebathan 1989:23; Wells 1985:36)

According to Leslie (1988:670), the protection of minority rights is the most visible feature of educational policy in Canada, both historically and currently. Issues, such as student rights, discipline, academic freedom and accessibility will therefore continue to challenge educators and educational policy-makers and also alter the links between educational process and the law. Leslie (1988:670) cites the extension of minority language education through federal bilingualism rights, as one example of the use of federal power to remedy the rights of minorities in education. Clearly, these prominent issues, especially national issues pertaining to minority rights and the rights of children, will continue to challenge educators in all the provinces of Canada.

At the local level, there is always the possibility that schools could become the focal point of power struggles between single-interest power groups (see par 2.2.4). In Newfoundland, it has manifested itself in a struggle between the churches and the government about schools (see par 1.3). Other influential groups in Newfoundland, such as the St. John's Board of Trade and human rights advocates, have also been prominent in pushing for changes in the curriculum (Crocker 8/11/96). There is no doubt that these groups will continue to voice their concerns during the process of restructuring the education system of Newfoundland.

Together with the contextual issues, certain perspectives on education that are prevalent in Canada as well as Newfoundland, also influence changes in educational policy and directives. In the next paragraphs the researcher will discuss these approaches.

3.3 Different perspectives on educational and social change: an introduction

All stages of educational and social development and change occur within the context of a particular set of values, which reflects the socio-cultural and socio-political perspectives of the particular society. These perspectives are usually translated into specific ideological approaches or theories that serve as conceptual frameworks within which educational and social change can be realized (Carnoy 1983:3; Lawson & Woock 1987:134; Smyth 1991:49). Popkewitz (1984:11) considers these approaches or theories products of human ingenuity and social context, which provide "symbolic coherence in periods of changing social, political and economic conditions" (1984:12). He furthermore emphasizes that the concern of theory is to identify ways in which existing institutional arrangements limit the fulfilment of certain cherished values, and to offer metaphors that direct attention to new relationships (1984:16). There is no single approach, however, that adequately explains the complexities of educational and social change. At best, several approaches or theories could serve as complementary explanations of change. Explaining change in a particular society, howbeit, must always include an overview of the particular experiences and local situations which precipitated demands for change, therefore contextual issues are always relevant.

It is possible to locate the many theories dealing with educational change in two broad categories of approaches: the equilibrium approach and the conflict approach (Ginsburg *et al* 1991:8). The first category known as the *equilibrium approach*, is based on the assumption that society is an orderly, self-regulating whole in which incremental changes take place to ensure stability and consensus. The other category, known as the *conflict approach*, envisages society as an arena of conflict between social classes with different interests in which some groups dominate, and in which only radical social changes engender educational change (Berkhout & Bondesio 1992:127-129; Bock 1982:87; Carnoy 1983:3). In spite of their differences, these approaches are not considered irreconcilable when it comes to explaining educational and social change. Thus, depending on the aim and focus of the research, combinations from both approaches could be used to analyze educational and social change (Berkhout & Bondesio 1992:127; Husen 1988:13).

Ginsburg *et al* (1991:8-11) explain that within the equilibrium approach, educational change tends to be portrayed as natural movements toward ever higher stages of societal development or adaptations required by system imbalances or social needs. From a conflict perspective, educational change is perceived to occur through conflict and competition within social classes and also within ethnic, national, religious and gender groups. On a world system level, proponents of the equilibrium approach view education systems as having a tendency to converge to a common structure and set of practices. In contrast to this view, proponents of the conflict approach view efforts to reform education as being conditioned by the world system of capitalist production, by the way the particular country's production has developed in the world economy, and by the way class conflict has developed in that context (1991:13-15).

Most theories pertaining to educational and social change fall within either the equilibrium or conflict approaches. More recent theories, such as the complexity theory and the post-Newtonian paradigm suggest a new analysis of educational change based on the concept that change evolves naturally from within through self-organization (Badenhorst & Claassen 1995:11; Waldrop 1992:11).

For the purpose of this study, the researcher will concentrate on the modernization and human capital theories which fall under the umbrella of the equilibrium approach. The assumptions about educational and social development and change contained in these theories feature prominently in current perspectives on educational, social and economic development in Canada and its provinces (Ghosh 1987:276; Lawson & Woock 1987:133; Livingstone & Hart 1987:4).

3.4 Perspectives on education prevalent in Canada and Newfoundland

Ghosh (1987:276) states that provincial policies in Canada comprise concepts of modernization and human capital theories which advocate that education be seen as an investment, both for the individual and for society (also see par 2.3.2). More specifically, modernization theory suggests that a society can only develop if the majority of its population hold modern values. Closely tied in with this view proffered

by sociologists, political scientists and others, the economists formulated their own theory of development, called human capital theory, which focuses on the productive capacity of human manpower for specific purposes (Bondesio & Berkhout 1992:105; Hindson 1992:152; House 1986b:9; Paulston 1977:381).

These concepts have significantly affected educational thinking and planning in Canada. For instance, the idea that education is a societal investment and that it is an important agent in transforming a society, receives strong support. Not only is it believed that education bestows benefits that are cultural, intellectual and social, but that education has economic value in the sense that it enhances economic development and productivity by creating a suitably skilled workforce. In addition, education is seen to help create a population of modern individuals who will be able to cope with complex institutions and rapid technological and social changes in the modern world (Ghosh 1987:276; House 1986b:9).

As elsewhere in Canada, educators in Newfoundland hold similar perspectives on the value of education. They believe first of all that part of the socializing responsibility of public education is to recreate the knowledge, skills and customs which are indigenous to its society and which are necessary for societal development (GNL 1992a:27). A recent mission statement of the Newfoundland Department of Education underpins this belief. The Department states that its mission is to "enable and encourage every individual to acquire, through lifelong learning, the knowledge, skills and values for personal growth and the development of society" (GNL 1997a:xii). At another level, education is viewed as being inextricably linked to increasing productivity and promoting economic growth. It is not considered, however, as simply a matter of preparing people for a particular style of working and living, or training them to fit a specific niche within an industrial system. Rather, it is seen as a way to improve the quality of the human resources of the Newfoundland society as a whole (House 1986b:9; Vincent 14/11/96; Williams 8/11/96). The following statement by the Royal Commission on Employment and Unemployment in Newfoundland (1986) clearly illustrates the belief that education fosters economic growth.

An educated population can attract industry, foster the growth of research and development, improve competitiveness, productivity and innovation, become an economic good suitable for export, and can lead to the creation of employment (House 1986a:209).

Despite criticisms that have been levelled at the notions put forward in the human capital approach (see par 2.3.2), the Newfoundland government nevertheless remains committed to the concept that education has investment value. It is convinced that public education exists primarily to prepare students for their future role as contributing members of society (GNL 1994:1). Whereas this perspective is central to public understanding in Newfoundland of the role that education plays in social and economic development, the diversity and complexity of education demands a still broader vision, according to the Williams Commission (GNL 1992a:27). It claims that part of the dilemma facing educators is the change which has been occurring within society itself. The pace of change has been so rapid in recent years that few can predict its consequence or its future course. Looking outward, the Commission cites political changes and alliances, global interdependencies, environmental issues and third world overpopulation as accelerating the rapid pace of social change. Looking inward, it attributes the speed with which social change occurs to changing family structures, shifting values, increasing cultural diversity, rising unemployment and a fast-changing provincial economy. All of these contextual realities, however, will require new perspectives on the value of education in today's world. Implementing educational change in Newfoundland therefore, will be challenging, especially in view of the contextual factors and current perspectives that are already determining its course.

3.5 Conclusion

Education cannot afford to lag behind in the context of a diverse and ever-changing world, rapidly changing technology and demands for excellence from all segments of society.

It is obvious from the discussions and observations in this chapter that the Newfoundland education system is at a turning point in its development and overall structure. Clearly, the traditional denominational structure can no longer accommodate the demands for change and the multiplicity of factors that affect it. In particular, such factors as the dramatic decline of the student population, concerns about cost-efficiency, and rising demands for quality in education, have compelled Newfoundland educators to submit proposals for the restructuring of the education system. Furthermore, the denominational structure of the system itself and the cost of maintaining four denominational school systems during times of fiscal restraint, have prompted educators to reassess the effectiveness of the system.

It has also been demonstrated in this chapter that not only internal factors have spurred on change, but external forces as well. Global economic trends and conditions, political and technological developments are constantly challenging the education system. The prevailing perspective that education is a societal investment, has added to the urgency to implement changes and to equip students to face the challenges of tomorrow's world.

In Chapter 4 the response of Newfoundland educators to the contextual realities that are changing the Newfoundland society, will be investigated in the light of the proposed model for restructuring the education system.

CHAPTER 4

4 RESTRUCTURING THE EDUCATION SYSTEM OF NEWFOUNDLAND

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 described the dramatic changes in the environment of Newfoundland over the past number of years which have significantly affected the education system, compelling educators to make proposals for its restructuring.

The process of restructuring was initiated with the appointment of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Education (also known as the Williams Commission) on August 6, 1990, with the mandate to investigate all aspects of the organization and administration of the province's schools (GNL 1992a:v; also see paragraphs 1.2 & 1.3). The recommendations of the Williams Commission subsequently formed the basis of the government's model, *Adjusting the Course*, which contains the proposals for restructuring the education system of Newfoundland (GNL 1993:19; *The Western Star* 12/2/94:1). In order to implement these proposals, the government had to revise Term 17 of the *Terms of Union of Newfoundland and Canada* (1949), which guaranteed the churches' constitutional rights to manage education in Newfoundland. The revised Term 17 provides for the restructuring of the education system of Newfoundland on an inter-denominational basis and limits the power of the church in matters of governance and operation (see paragraphs 1.3 & 3.1). Following the approval of the revised Term 17 by the Federal House of Commons on December 4, 1996 (*The Western Star* 5/12/96:11), the Newfoundland government promptly responded by passing the Education Act (1996) and the Schools Act (1996), which incorporate most of the proposals of the government model (Education Act 1996:1; Schools Act 1996:1). The establishment of ten inter-denominational school boards on January 1, 1997 (see par 1.3), following the release of the Education and Schools Acts, must be seen as an historic event in the light of Newfoundland's long history of denominational education. Ironically, during the months of June/July 1997, the Roman Catholic Church and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland took legal action against decisions made by these new school boards about the designations of schools for the school year

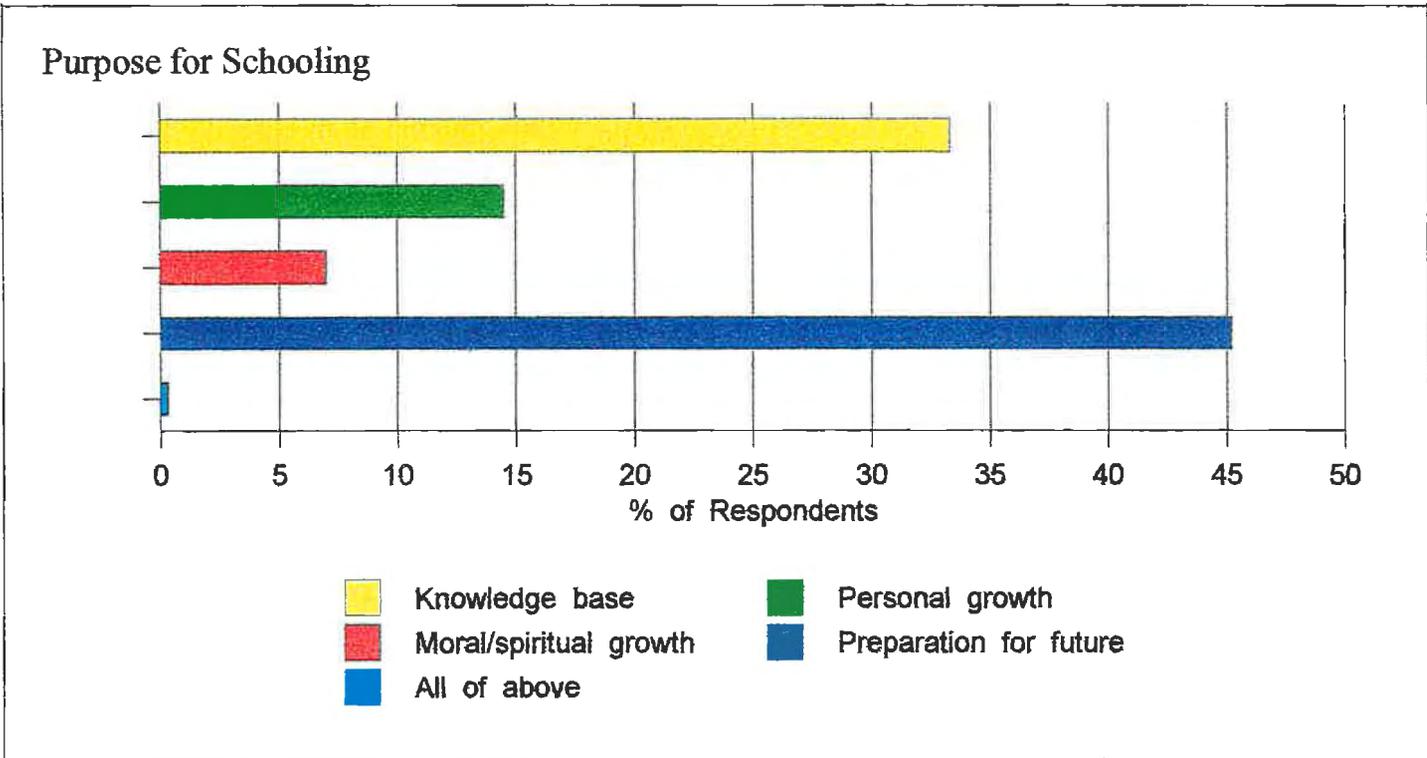
1997/1998 (*The Western Star* 19/6/97:1), thus succeeding in stalling the whole reform process. Subsequent action by the Newfoundland government resulted in another amendment to Term 17 which in essence proposes a uniform non-denominational education system for Newfoundland (GNL 1997b:l; *The Western Star* 19/12/97:1). These most recent developments are discussed in Chapter 5, especially as they pertain to the issue of minority rights in education and how they involve the church.

The new amendment to Term 17 does not alter the proposals for educational changes to the system as contained in *Adjusting the Course*. In the succeeding paragraphs of Chapter 4 these changes will be outlined and discussed. According to the Newfoundland government, it sets the stage for more substantive changes in curriculum, teaching, parent involvement, support services and other aspects of the system (GNL 1993:19-20).

4.2 Adjusting the Course: proposals for restructuring the education system of Newfoundland

The Newfoundland government states that the purpose of restructuring is to streamline and refocus the education system so as to concentrate better on the goal of higher achievement for Newfoundland students that would be comparable to the best in the world (GNL 1994:iii). This view coheres with the vision for education found in the Williams Commission Report which states that "our children are our future", and "that much higher standards and expectations are required if our children are to be assured of a bright future" (GNL 1992a:4). This view appears to be shared by a substantial portion of the Newfoundland population. To measure the range of opinions held by the public regarding the fundamental purpose of education and other basic issues, the Royal Commission Implementation Secretariat commissioned a telephone poll in 1994. A thousand individuals were polled across the province of Newfoundland to ensure an accuracy of response within three per cent, 95 per cent of the time. Respondents were asked a series of questions designed to elicit their opinion regarding the purpose of education, the degree to which schooling prepares students for the future, as well as other selected issues (GNL 1997a:43). Figure 4.1 summarizes the opinions of the public on the issue of the most important purpose for schooling.

FIGURE 4.1
MOST IMPORTANT PURPOSE FOR SCHOOLING, NEWFOUNDLAND, 1994
(GNL 1997a:43)



In 1994, almost half of the respondents (45.2 per cent) felt that *preparation of students for the future*, was the most important purpose for schooling. The *acquisition of a broad base of knowledge* was the most important for one third of respondents and those who felt that *personal growth* and *moral/spiritual growth* were of greatest importance made up about 20 per cent of the group. Very few indicated that *all* were equally important (GNL 1997a:43). The Williams Commission (GNL 1992b:5-6) conducted similar polls and public hearings amongst Newfoundlanders in the early 1990s, which provided valuable insights into the attitudes, expectations and opinions of the public and all the key participants in education. Based on the findings of these polls and public hearings, the government of Newfoundland proposed its model to restructure the education system of Newfoundland in order to meet the expectations expressed in these surveys. The proposed model is broadly consistent with the recommendations contained in the Williams Commission Report. The emphasis is on organization at the provincial and the local level, which include changes to school districts and school boards as well as schools (GNL 1993:2-3; *The Western Star* 12/2/94:1).

4.2.1 Goal and principles

The overall goal of the current reform initiatives of the Newfoundland government is "to transform this society from one of persistent underachievement to one whose achievement levels rank with the best in the nation" (GNL 1993:1). This goal is linked to the widely-held perspective that improved education is crucial to individual, social and economic wellbeing and that higher levels of educational achievement have become ever more important in the face of changing economic and social conditions (Crocker 8/11/96; GNL 1993:1; House 1986b:9,11; Roebathan 1989:22; Vincent 14/11/96; Williams 8/11/96; also see par 3.4). Thus attaining higher levels of educational achievement is seen as an essential part of any strategy for improving the quality of life in the Newfoundland society. It is furthermore believed that only a united effort involving the co-operation of parents, teachers, school boards and the government, will achieve this goal (GNL 1993:1,19). The model for reform was therefore designed with the following aims in mind:

- ▲ To provide a basis for higher expectations, standards and achievement
- ▲ To provide for accountability to the public
- ▲ To provide for church control of religious education and related matters, guarantee church access to schools for this purpose and give a church presence on school boards and provincial bodies¹
- ▲ To allow children to attend the school nearest their home
- ▲ To facilitate greater parent involvement in the education of their children
- ▲ To improve school-based leadership and decision-making
- ▲ To provide for participation in governance for citizens who do not belong to the denominations that hold educational rights
- ▲ To provide for school construction based on province-wide priorities
- ▲ To keep the number of decision-making and administrative entities to a minimum (GNL 1993:3-4)

In looking at these aims, it would seem that they have been designed with the overall purpose to streamline the education system and to make it easier to attain the basic goal of improving educational achievement levels. It would appear that the educational attainment levels of Newfoundland students are of real concern to the government. It states that over the past number of years, Newfoundland students have consistently performed less well than others in Canada on key measures of achievement (GNL 1993:2). This concern is verified by figures released for the ten-year period from 1985-95. These figures show, for instance, that Grade 12 Newfoundland students scored below the national Canadian average when they completed the *Canadian Test of Basic Skills*. Out of 26 main national test results available over the ten-year period, Newfoundland students have been at, or higher than the national Canadian average, on only four tests. On most of the other 22 tests, Newfoundland students have been substantially below the national average (press release by the GNL in *The Western Star* 27/8/95:7). The improvement of the overall quality of the education system has therefore become of paramount importance. Notwithstanding the government's

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This provision could be subject to change, with the acceptance of the newest amendment to Term 17 by the Federal government of Canada.

concern about improving the attainment levels of students, there are educators who believe that the government's motives for changing the system are not altogether altruistic. There is a very real concern for "balancing the books" as educators put it, and the economic realities in combination with global factors (see par 3.2.3) have spurred on the momentum for streamlining the system (Downer 3/11/97; Downer [School Principal of St. Gerard's Elementary School, Corner Brook], 13/11/97; Genge [Director of Education, District 3 School Board, Corner Brook], 12/11/97; Walters [Assistant Director of Programmes, District 3 School Board, Corner Brook], 14/11/97).

4.2.2 *Restructuring education at the provincial level*

4.2.2.1 Department of Education

The Williams Commission (GNL 1992a:243) advocates that, the core of redefining the role of the Department of Education, is a recognition that the provincial legislature has sole jurisdiction to make laws respecting education. It must therefore provide the direction and framework which set out the terms and conditions under which educational services are provided to students. Based on this premise, the role of the Department of Education should comprise direction-setting and should ensure accountability, rather than direct management of the education system. In concurrence with Recommendation 34 of the Williams Commission Report (GNL 1992a:245), the government has thus proposed that the Department of Education assumes certain responsibilities, namely:

- ▲ establishing and maintaining the legal framework
- ▲ setting the provincial goals and standards, and ensuring that they are met
- ▲ establishing the means to assess the effectiveness of the system
- ▲ providing the appropriate resources to the system
- ▲ seeing that the education system is appropriately employed to protect the public interest
- ▲ ensuring that the resources allocated, both human and financial, are effectively and efficiently utilized (GNL 1993:8)

Furthermore, the Department of Education should refocus its attention placing emphasis on setting of standards, curriculum development and monitoring. In addition, the Department will also retain responsibility for routine functions, such as payroll and data base management, which are more efficiently performed by a central agency (GNL 1993:8).

In order to meet these responsibilities, the Newfoundland government appointed a Royal Commission Implementation Secretariat to reorganize the Department of Education and introduce a system of school accreditation. The goal will be to ensure that schools meet minimum standards of resource inputs, organization, instructional processes and student outcomes. Provincial standards in all these areas will be developed as part of the broad mandate of the Department of Education. In addition, the Department will be responsible for establishing accreditation teams that will conduct periodic reviews of all schools within the province. Personnel with specific responsibility for accreditation will be appointed to the Department of Education. School accreditation teams will report to the school board, the Department of Education and the school council, on the quality of education in each school. Teams will also make recommendations on specific action required to improve performance when minimum standards are not being met (GNL 1993:8-9).

Despite the collaboration that the government is seeking with school boards, schools and school councils at the local level, there is a perception amongst educators that in some of its dealings with these educational bodies and institutions, the Department of Education still pursues a top-down approach (Downer 3/11/97; Downer 13/11/97; Genge 12/11/97). On the other hand, it is perhaps too early to evaluate the Department's role in this respect. The government has stated that it believes in a united effort involving the co-operation and collaboration of all interested parties at the local level, to bring about meaningful change (GNL 1993:1,19).

Clearly, to achieve meaningful change, the collaboration of all interested parties must be obtained. Time will tell whether the Newfoundland government has honoured its commitment.

4.2.2.2 School Construction Board

One of the main features of the denominational education system as it existed until December 1996, was church control of capital funding (see par 1.2). The churches have maintained that such control was necessary to establish and maintain their separate schools. Thus, the old Term 17 accorded the churches the constitutional right to a division of capital allocations based on the proportions of the total provincial population belonging to the particular denominational groups (GNL 1992a:53; also see par 3.1).

In the opinion of the Newfoundland government, this capital funding provision has been more restrictive than other funding provisions to which a more general non-discriminatory term applies. Moreover, proportional funding caused more difficulty in a period of scarce resources and overall contraction of the system. The government further argues that as fewer schools are needed because of declining enrolments for example, it would be more likely that the needs of the different denominations will become unbalanced to the point where proportional allocations can themselves become discriminatory (GNL 1993:9). Besides, under the denominational education system each school system pursued capital planning and construction independently, which rendered the overall system less efficient (GNL 1992a:249). It had therefore become necessary to change the process of allocating capital funds along denominational lines and move to a province-wide approach. In this regard the Newfoundland government adopted the recommendation by the Williams Commission (GNL 1992a:250) namely, that decisions on school construction and maintenance, as well as the renovation of existing facilities be placed in the hands of a School Planning and Construction Board. A modified version of this Board has been incorporated in the government model, *Adjusting the Course*. It is proposed that the Board be given decision-making, rather than advisory powers. More specifically, it is proposed that

- ▲ a School Construction Board be established by legislation, with full powers to accept proposals from school boards, establish criteria for funding, determine

priorities, receive all capital funding appropriated by the legislature, and distribute funds on the basis of the criteria and priorities established;

- ▲ the Board consists of seven members, three appointed by the denominations, three by the Minister of Education, plus a mutually agreed upon chairperson. In the event that agreement could not be reached, the government would have the authority to appoint the chairperson. School board members or employees would not be eligible for membership on the Board;
- ▲ the Board also assumes responsibility for school planning and construction guidelines, for maintaining an up-to-date inventory of the physical condition of school buildings, and for developing and carving out programmes of preventive maintenance and retrofit of buildings (GNL 1993:10-11).

These proposals have since been incorporated in the new Education Act (1996), which provides for the appointment of a School Construction Board consisting of seven persons, by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council (Education Act 1996, Section 5:4). The duties of the School Construction Board as outlined in the Education Act (1996) are the following:

The Board shall

- ▲ receive proposals from school boards for the erection, extension and equipment of schools
- ▲ recommend to the Minister those proposals or portions of proposals received under this section that should receive an allocation of funds
- ▲ advise the Minister respecting future allocations for the erection, extension and equipment of schools
- ▲ maintain an ongoing inventory of the physical condition of school buildings
- ▲ develop policies for the preventive maintenance, repair and construction of buildings
- ▲ develop school planning, maintenance, repair and reconstruction of buildings

- ▲ perform other duties required by the Minister (Education Act 1996, Section 6:5)

According to Genge (12/11/97) the newly created School Construction Board is currently in operation. Although he supports the idea of a provincial body dealing with the overall needs of school construction, Genge (12/11/97) maintains that at this stage of implementing changes, it is too early to detect any real improvement. The establishment of the School Construction Board is nevertheless regarded as a very positive move. Previously, there was no process whereby the most important needs regarding the construction and maintenance of school buildings could be assessed and co-ordinated. Funds can now be allocated through this body for the most urgent needs, thereby reducing the influence of pressure groups and politicians to obtain funding for what they consider to be important as both Downer (13/11/97) and Walters (14/11/97) contend. In fact, when the denominational school boards were responsible for the construction and maintenance of school buildings, members of these boards would often differ about which needs should receive priority in a specific school district (Walters 14/11/97).

It is also the opinion of the researcher that the foundation of the School Construction Board far outweighs the denominational system that was in operation and could only enhance the assessment of construction and maintenance needs. It seems logical that where there is a central funding body, in this case the government, there should also be a central decision-making body with respect to the specific distribution of capital funds for purposes such as school construction and maintenance, and that this distribution be based on a set of provincial priorities.

4.2.2.3 Denominational Education Commission

Recommendation 36 of the Williams Commission (GNL 1992a:247-248) proposes that the DEC's be dissolved, although it recognizes that a provincial church presence should be retained to advise the government on educational policy which affects the rights of the denominations, as well as to oversee the development of religious education programmes. Based on this recommendation, the Newfoundland government

proposes in its restructuring model to form a new collective body called the Denominational Education Commission, which will replace the three DEC's. The function of this provincial body will be threefold, that is, to:

- ▲ maintain a provincial presence for the denominations and act as the denominational channel to the government and the school boards
- ▲ be responsible for programme development in religious education and for co-ordination of pastoral care
- ▲ appoint members to the School Construction Board (GNL 1993:11-12)

These proposals have subsequently been incorporated in the Education Act (1996) which provides for the establishment of a Denominational Education Commission at the provincial level.

The responsibilities of the Commission shall be to:

- ▲ advise the Minister and the denominational committees of school boards established under the Schools Act (1996), respecting issues of concern to the Commission
- ▲ develop and support programmes in religious education
- ▲ determine those denominational committees which shall be required for each school board and, subject to Section 78 of the Schools Act (1996), the number of members that shall constitute each denominational committee
- ▲ nominate for appointment to a denominational committee persons who are not school board trustees where a school board has an insufficient number of trustees of a religious denomination, provided that the nominated persons reside within the school board district
- ▲ nominate persons for appointment to the School Construction Board, in accordance with Section 5 of the Education Act (1996) (Education Act 1996, Section 3:2-3)

Since the release of this new legislation, a Denominational Education Commission has been established under the chairmanship of Bishop Donald Harvey (*The Western Star* 20/3/97:2). The Newfoundland government maintains that with the formation of this body, legitimate church interests have been recognized (GNL 1993:19). In view of subsequent developments (see par 5.3), questions are now being raised as to the justification of maintaining such a provincial church body. The newly amended Term 17 proposes that the Newfoundland government itself be responsible for religious programmes in the schools (GNL 1997b:1). Some educators see no role for such a body, except in a privately-run denominational school system (Downer 3/11/97; Genge 12/11/97; Walters 14/11/97). In her capacity as principal of St. Gerard's Elementary School, Comer Brook (which was designated as an inter-denominational school for the school year 1997/98), Dr Wynanne Downer declares there is justification in retaining such a provincial church body. She foresees that it could still fulfil a role in catering to the needs of children of different faiths in a particular school. It could also serve as a resource data base in connection with providing information about different religions (Downer 13/11/97).

4.2.3 *Restructuring education at the local level*

4.2.3.1 School districts and school boards

One of the most important features of the current restructuring process in Newfoundland has been the creation of ten new school districts together with ten inter-denominational school boards, each representing a school district. According to a statement by the Minister of Education, Roger Grimes, in *The Western Star* (31/7/96:2), the new districts will reflect the most efficient arrangement to administer schools in the province of Newfoundland.

The decision to create new school districts and to reduce the number of school boards, is based on recommendations by the Williams Commission. The Commission believes that to ensure quality of educational opportunity, a school district must encompass a geographical area appropriate to its administrative capabilities and its ability to deliver

programmes. In addition, to maximize administrative and operational efficiencies and educational opportunities, it is therefore necessary to establish fully consolidated school boards (GNL 1992a:240). Based on these recommendations, the Newfoundland government made the following proposal for the creation of school boards and districts in its restructuring model:

- ▲ The composition of eight to ten regional inter-denominational school boards, with boundaries aligned to the economic zones identified in the *Strategic Economic Plan*²
- ▲ All boards would be comprised of ten members elected at large and up to five others appointed by the denominations where numbers warrant a particular region (GNL 1993:6)

Ten interim school boards representing ten newly created school districts were put in place in August 1996, thus paving the way for restructuring to begin (*The Western Star* 31/7/96:2). With the approval of the new Schools Act (1996) on December 19, 1996, these interim boards assumed full responsibility to reorganize the province's school system, commencing January 1, 1997. The new Schools Act (1996) stipulates, however, that each school board will consist of eighteen members, twelve of which will represent the denominations which hold educational rights in the particular school district, and six members without reference to any religious denomination (Schools Act 1996, Section 53 (1-3):26). The ratio of school board members representing religious denominations and those without affiliation to any religious denomination, has therefore been modified from the initial proposal by the government. The fact that the churches still maintain a majority presence on the school boards with this arrangement, is an indication of their consistent influence in school matters at the local level³.

² A consultative group appointed by the government of Newfoundland developed a *Strategic Economic Plan* for Newfoundland in the early 1990s. The aim is to realize the economic potential of the province, in conjunction with a substantial increase in its educational performance (GNL 1994:4).

³ Church representation on school boards has been changed with the second amendment to Term 17. Any person may now be elected as a school board member, regardless of his/her religious affiliation (GNL 1997b:1).

The new school boards hold similar responsibilities to what school boards held before restructuring began (see par 1.2), with the following exceptions:

- ▲ Boards will be block-funded for all budget areas other than professional salaries
- ▲ Greater programme responsibilities will be devolved to schools
- ▲ Boards will be required to operate on balanced budgets, including all debt servicing cost (GNL 1993:6; Schools Act 1996, Sections 75-110:36-54)

Each board will also establish denominational committees made up of board members of each particular denomination, plus others where the numbers elected within a denomination is small. These committees will have jurisdiction over the following:

- ▲ The offering of religious programmes in schools, as prescribed by the provincial Denominational Education Commission
- ▲ Pastoral care, religious activities and observances in schools (GNL 1993:6; Schools Act 1996, Sections 78-80:41-42)

In addition, the denominational committees will advise the school boards on

- ▲ teacher assignment to schools which retain uni-denominational characteristics
- ▲ religious education, pastoral care, religious activities and observances in such schools
- ▲ the philosophy and ambience and the teaching of aspects of curriculum affecting religious beliefs in such schools
- ▲ directing the student admission policies for such schools
- ▲ approving the use of these schools outside of school hours (GNL 1996:8; press release of the GNL in *The Western Star* 29/1/97:4; Schools Act 1996, Sections 78-80:41-42)

Subsequent developments (see par 5.3) may also affect the presence of denominational committees on school boards. With the approval of the new amendment to Term 17, the Newfoundland government intends to switch to a non-denominational school

system, providing for religious programmes in schools itself (GNL 1997b:1), thus rendering the responsibilities of these committees obsolete.

In February 1997, the first major task of the newly created school boards was to decide which schools in their district would be designated as either inter-denominational or uni-denominational for the school year 1997/98. These decisions were based largely on a registration process. During the week of February 10-17, 1997, parents of school children had to indicate their preference for inter- or uni-denominational schools on their children's registration forms for the school year 1997/98. Even though parents could indicate their preference, they were not allowed to choose how a particular school should be designated. On receiving the registration forms, the boards first of all determined how many schools would continue to operate in their particular districts for 1997/98, based on the expected student population within that district and within specific communities. Only after the decision was made as to the number of schools that would remain open, were they designated as either inter- or uni-denominational (*The Western Star* 21/1/97:1; *The Western Star* 29/1/97:4). After the completed registration forms were received from parents at the end of February 1997, it was determined that in most of the school districts, inter-denominational schools were the choice of most parents. In certain areas, however, there were preferences for uni-denominational schools, such as the strong support expressed for Pentecostal schools in Central Newfoundland (*The Western Star* 11/3/97:1; *The Western Star* 1/4/97:1).

In making decisions about the designations of schools and which schools would remain open, the school boards had to consider their limited resources, including school buildings, resource facilities, transportation and teacher allocations. The fact that the denominational committees had a say in the hiring of teachers for uni-denominational schools, further complicated the process of reorganizing the school system along inter-denominational lines (*The Western Star* 15/4/97:3). Genge (12/11/1997) indicated in an interview with the researcher that the denominational committees played a very prominent role not only in the hiring and firing of teachers, but also influencing decisions about the designations of schools in his district. It was a difficult task to satisfy the demands of parents who favour inter-denominational schools on the one

hand, and the demands of those parents who support uni-denominational schools on the other hand, even though the latter are in the minority. Dissatisfaction with certain school designations in some districts, prompted the Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland and the Roman Catholic Church to threaten court action on behalf of these parents (*The Western Star* 22/4/97:1), which ended in court actions during the months of June/July 1997 and which upheld the parents' rights to uni-denominational education (see par 5.1).

Despite these early setbacks, the new school boards appear to be functioning well, except for the overwhelming amount of work that has now fallen on their shoulders. Each district school board is now an amalgamation of four former denominational school boards, but because of financial restraints imposed by the Newfoundland government, they only retain the minimum number of staff (Downer 13/11/97; Genge 12/11/97; Walters 14/11/97). Genge (12/11/97) has found for instance, that there is a fair amount of frustration amongst school principals in the District 3 School Board about timely responses from the board to requests about particular needs in schools. Walters (14/11/97) points out that there is a dire need for personnel and resources, and suggests that some of the areas of leadership now handled by the school boards should be devolved to the schools, to help alleviate the problem of timely action. In spite of these initial problems, school principals in general perceive the boards as working well and feel that the creation of these boards will in the end enhance the delivery of education and educational services (Downer 13/11/97; Vincent 14/11/96).

4.2.3.2 School organization

It is the opinion of the Newfoundland government that organization at the school level is the most fundamental feature of the proposed model for restructuring the education system (GNL 1993:13).

On the issue of school organization the Williams Commission recommends that schools be organized along neighbourhood lines, with one school serving all students within a particular geographical area, with children of different denominations co-existing in the

same school. Similarly, certain schools may retain the characteristics of a particular denomination in areas where that denomination is dominant (GNL 1992a:227). The Newfoundland government supports this recommendation and feels that greater tolerance and respect for others are best promoted when children are placed together in common schools, rather than when they are separated according to religious affiliation (GNL 1993:13-14). Nevertheless, under the denominational education system it was assumed by the churches that denominational schools are the norm, and that the denominations themselves should decide when it is appropriate to enter into arrangements for joint schools. Notwithstanding this perception conveyed by the churches, the government is convinced (based on different poles and public hearings conducted by the Williams Commission), that the values of different groups, including those who had no rights under the denominational education system, can be conveyed and respected in common schools whilst retaining a measure of church involvement (GNL 1993:13-14). The Newfoundland government therefore proposes in its restructuring model to consolidate the existing schools and designate them as inter-denominational schools, with the exception of those communities where a large majority of the population is of a single denomination. As long as there is no additional cost in such areas as teacher allocations or transportation, schools in such communities may continue to exist as uni-denominational schools. All new schools, however, will be designated as inter-denominational (GNL 1993:14).⁴

These proposals were subsequently incorporated in the new Schools Act (1996), which determines that commencing on September 1, 1997, all schools in the province of Newfoundland shall be designated as inter-denominational schools, unless the requirements set out in the regulations for designation as a uni-denominational school are satisfied. The designation of schools will follow a registration process to determine parental preference (Schools Act 1996, Section 82:42; also see par 4.2.3.1).

⁴ As has been pointed out before, the new proposed amendment to Term 17 aims at creating a non-denominational school system for all children (GNL 1997b:1).

As indicated in paragraph 4.2.3.1, the matter of designating schools as either inter- or uni-denominational is far from over. Recent events have also led to the new proposed amendment by the government to change the system to a non-denominational system (see paragraphs 5.1 & 5.3). With the creation of such a system, the role of the church in a provincially-controlled education system supported by public funds, will be terminated. The church would obviously have a role to play in a private denominational system as Walters (14/11/97) points out. Over recent months, open discussions on public television have indicated that certain churches, notably the Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland and the Roman Catholic Church wish to retain their traditional role in public education in Newfoundland, despite the majority decision by Newfoundlanders (as expressed in two referendums held on September 5, 1995 and September 2, 1997) to end the denominational structure of the education system of Newfoundland, (*The Western Star* 6/9/95:1; *The Western Star* 3/9/97:1, also see par 1.3 and par 5.3). The debate about the rights of these two church groups (i.e. the Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland and the Roman Catholic Church) to maintain their traditional role in public education, is further highlighted in Chapter 5.

4.2.3.3 School councils

The Williams Commission (GNL 1992a:230) specifies that education systems in many countries and in many Canadian provinces are moving from top-down administrative models, to collaborative models where all groups who are affected by educational decisions participate in their making. This fundamental change reflects a recognition that participation by parents, teachers and others in the community can bring both improvement in educational achievement and an increase in public advocacy for education.

Nowadays school councils are considered to play a key role in involving parents and teachers in educational reform and engendering higher levels of achievement for students. Newfoundland educators define the main purpose of a school council as developing, encouraging and promoting educational policies, practices and activities, in order to enhance the quality of school programmes and the level of student

achievement. Two intermediate goals are considered necessary ends in themselves for the success of the councils, namely increasing parental and community involvement and involving teachers in more curricular decision-making (Collins 1996:3; GNL 1993:16). Collins (1996:3) lists prominent examples where legislation has devolved authority to school councils that were instrumental in achieving educational reform in such places as Kentucky (USA), Chicago (USA) and New Zealand. In Canada, school councils have been operating in six provinces and the Yukon, with legislation pending in some of the other provinces (*The Western Star* 11/4/95:7).

Recommendation 18 of the Williams Commission Report (GNL 1992a: 233-234) advances compelling arguments for establishing school councils in Newfoundland. It describes a number of important functions for these councils. These include: protecting local interests; sharing with school boards certain school level decisions; fundraising; finding ways to encourage broader parent involvement; and monitoring information on how well the school is doing. Following the recommendation by the Williams Commission, the Newfoundland government proposes in *Adjusting the Course* that school councils be established as the main vehicle for promoting parental involvement. Although these councils will be bodies run by parents, schools (more specifically the school principal) will assume responsibility for their organization, promotion and support. Furthermore, it is recommended that the Department of Education sponsor and establish a pilot school council project in Newfoundland to document the conditions for effective school council functioning with a view to introduce legislation for forming school councils (GNL 1994:24-25).

The above pilot project was subsequently installed for the school year 1994/95, under the leadership of Alice Collins, associate professor at the Faculty of Education at MUN.

In an interview with a newspaper reporter (*The Western Star* 11/4/95:7), Professor Collins explained that school councils are providing a "really important link", allowing more meaningful involvement of communities in education. The aim is to support what does exist and advance it further. Professor Collins was also of the opinion that

collectively school councils could have a meaningful impact on reform, especially as it pertains to mutual concerns across the province.

In selecting schools for establishing pilot school councils (seven schools were selected) consideration was given to geographic and demographic representation, including school size and type. The seven *pilots* provided a means to test the conditions needed for the effective functioning of school councils in the province before full implementation proceeded (Collins 1996:4). The most important finding of this two-year project was that in order for school councils to carry out their mandate, they must have decision-making authority and legislated functions. Another finding pertained to the role of school principals. In his/her capacity as chairman of the school council, the school principal would have to demonstrate consensual leadership, team support and facilitation skills. Besides, the principals would need to lead by example in an effort to create councils that can advance the agendas of increasing student achievement, parental involvement and teacher decision-making (Collins 1996:6).

The findings of the above project were used to prepare legislation for the creation of school councils in the province of Newfoundland, which is included in the new Schools Act (1996). It stipulates that the principal of a school shall establish a school council for the school. It shall consist of no fewer than eight members and no more than fifteen members, of whom no fewer than two shall be teachers elected by teachers from among the teaching staff of the school. A parent of a student in a school who is a teacher in that school, shall not be eligible for election to the school council for that school. Furthermore, a school council should be comprised as follows:

- ▲ No fewer than three members shall be parents elected by parents from among parents of students in the school
- ▲ No fewer than two members shall be representatives of the community appointed by school council members already elected
- ▲ The principal of a school shall be a member of the school council for that school by virtue of his or her position (Schools Act 1996, Section 25:14-15)

The functions of the school council are to:

- ▲ represent the educational interests of the school
- ▲ facilitate parent and community involvement in teaching and learning in the school
- ▲ advise the board on matters of concern to the school and the community (Schools Act 1996, Section 26:16)

The school council shall furthermore:

- ▲ approve, for recommendation to the school board, a plan for improving teaching and learning in the school
- ▲ support and promote the plan approved by the school board for improving teaching and learning in the school
- ▲ approve and monitor activities for the raising of funds for the school
- ▲ consider information respecting performance in the school
- ▲ assist in the system of monitoring and evaluating standards in the school
- ▲ monitor the implementation of recommendations in reports on the performance of the school
- ▲ conduct meetings with parents and members of the community on matters within its responsibility under this section
- ▲ ensure that the report on the school is available to members of the public
- ▲ communicate concerns respecting board policies and practices to the school board (Schools Act 1996, Section 26:16-17)

These extensive functions provide an excellent opportunity for parents, teachers and other interested members of the community to be involved in improving educational standards in their schools. In an interview with Dr Vincent (14/11/96) the researcher was told that at first, parents were slow to grasp the potential for meaningful involvement in their children's education offered by means of the school council. For instance, in his first attempt to establish a school council, Dr Vincent had no success, despite ample information on the purpose and function of such a body. Only two parents

attended the initial information and planning meeting in September 1996. Dr Vincent ascribes this response to the trust that parents have traditionally placed in educators and the schools to provide their children with the best possible education. Nonetheless, parents are realizing more and more that they are in a position to influence directly the quality and efficient delivery of education. At the inception of the school year for 1997/98 the District 3 School Board reported that school councils were established at 33 out of 38 schools in its district, including Herdman Collegiate Senior High School, of which Dr Vincent is the school principal. These councils are moreover reported to be working fairly well, with parents participating actively (Genge 12/11/97; Walters 14/11/97).

The successful creation of these school councils over the past months, is seen by educators as one of the most positive aspects of the current educational reforms. Although the establishment of school councils is only in its embryonic stage, as Walters (14/11/97) puts it, it is foreseen as having a vital impact on improving educational standards and monitoring student achievement. It is furthermore viewed as a golden opportunity for collaboration among parents, teachers and students, and to help teachers create meaningful educational opportunities for their students. It is also seen to have the potential to help parents become more effective parents. In establishing these councils, however, Downer (13/11/97) cautions school principals not to adopt a top-down approach. The first step should be to make parents feel comfortable, allow them to realize the school belongs to them and that they have a vested interest in its development. Perusing the initial minutes of meetings by school councils in the District 3 School Board, Genge (12/11/97) has noted that issues, such as curriculum, busing, teacher allocations and the safety of children, were discussed.

In working with parents who are members of the school council of St. Gerard's Elementary School, Corner Brook, Downer (13/11/97) has found a lack of knowledge amongst parents in addressing educational concerns, due to lack of experience. Having questioned school board officials about this observation, the researcher was told that the District 3 School Board (as would be the case with other District Boards) is planning orientation sessions with parents of both elementary and high school

children to familiarize them with their role in the newly-formed school councils (Walters 14/11/97).

4.2.4 Curriculum development and implementation

The curriculum is the vehicle through which the desired outcomes of schooling are conveyed. It represents the required body of knowledge, skill and understanding which students are expected to acquire during their school years (GNL 1994:15). Ideally the curriculum should have as its starting point some universal set of concepts, principles, practical skills and ideas which society would agree are important for students to learn, according to the Newfoundland government (GNL 1994:15). It maintains, however, that in practice, the curriculum originates from two rather different sources. The first is essentially political. General expectations of society are expressed in a variety of formal and informal ways, including advocacy, studies by advisory bodies, formal public consultations, and even complaints. These expectations are formally expressed in national political policies such as *bilingualism* (as is the case in Canada) and translated into specific curriculum initiatives, such as the French or English immersion programmes in Canada. The second point of origin for curriculum is more professional. To a significant degree, the curriculum emanates from research activity, policy documents of professional associations, large scale developmental projects, the work of textbook publishers and other similar sources (GNL 1994:15).

In his discussion of strategies for curriculum change, Holt (1990:616, 622) warns that the management of curriculum change is often too politicized which results in top-down implementation models. In his opinion, it is the task of the schools to develop the capacity for identifying and solving curriculum problems, taking account of internal and external factors and the nature of the school's institutional life. At the present time though, global developments and societal expectations are increasingly responsible for curriculum change. For instance, the ability to think abstractly, conceptualize and solve problems is becoming more and more important in the workplace and in all aspects of learning. Furthermore, in a world of rapidly changing technologies and an unprecedented explosion of knowledge, learning how to locate, analyze and utilize information and

how to think critically about it, has become crucial. The Williams Commission (GNL 1992a:301) believes that to meet these challenges, the present means of developing, revising and implementing the school curriculum in Newfoundland will need to be changed. It recommends that the whole process be a shared responsibility involving the Department of Education, school boards and schools, and where circumstances warrant the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association (NLTA) and the Faculty of Education at MUN. Based on this recommendation, the Newfoundland government produced an action plan for the future development and implementation of the curriculum. This plan is outlined in Part II of the government's model for restructuring the education system and comprises the following points:

- ▲ A provincial foundation curriculum will be developed, consisting of primary core areas to be taught in all schools at all levels, secondary core areas to be taught at specific levels, and non-core areas to be offered at the discretion of the school.
- ▲ The primary core areas will consist of language, mathematics, science and technology. The secondary core will consist of a second language, social studies (history, geography, culture, economics), music, fine arts and physical education. All other areas will be considered non-core.
- ▲ The proposed achievement standards will be grounded in the provincial curriculum.
- ▲ The province will support, encourage and actively participate in regional and national projects designed to develop a common curriculum and establish common standards.
- ▲ A new model of curriculum implementation will be developed with the intention of reducing the gap between the mandated curriculum and the realization of this curriculum in the classroom.

- ▲ As part of the implementation model, curriculum guidelines will be developed for core subjects for each stage of schooling. These guidelines will include the underlying conceptual framework for the curriculum, the specific standards which students are expected to achieve, and an outline of curriculum content linked to these standards.
- ▲ The establishment of a Professional Development Centre⁵ is proposed with the mandate to facilitate provincial curriculum implementation.
- ▲ School districts will be given greater scope to select their own textbooks and related curriculum support material.
- ▲ A comprehensive review of the senior high school programme will be conducted during 1994 and a revised programme prepared for implementation by the schools following the review (GNL 1994:18-19).

Following the release of the above proposals, a Royal Commission Implementation Secretariat was formed under the auspices of the Department of Education, to conduct the proposed senior high school programme review. More specifically, it had to concentrate on such matters as

- ▲ curriculum content
- ▲ courses
- ▲ programme facilities
- ▲ graduation requirements
- ▲ articulation between the intermediate and secondary levels and the secondary and post-secondary institutions

⁵

Another mandate of the proposed Professional Development Centre is to provide for the ongoing professional development of teachers (GNL 1994:27-28; also see par 4.2.5).

- ▲ operational structures for high school programmes (i.e. semesterization, credit system, entry and exit points, career and guidance counselling to students, student evaluation and certification) (GNL 1995c:3-4)

The subsequent findings of the Royal Commission Implementation Secretariat point to the urgency to revise the curriculum. The Secretariat found that curriculum development and delivery at the senior high school level were not always occurring in the most efficient manner. At times, new courses are made available because of needs identified from outside the school system. Action is typically taken as a result of concerns expressed by post-secondary institutions, needs of business and industry and societal changes. Many such examples of curriculum modification have occurred in recent times. Post-secondary concerns about mathematics skills have led to changes to the mathematics curriculum. The need for a technologically literate workforce has influenced the introduction of courses to help prepare students for the challenges of the future work environment. In other instances, decisions related to the need for change in the curriculum are driven by factors within the education system. For example, the decline in student enrolment and a decline in interest by students in certain courses affect enrolment in these courses. In addition, some courses have become outdated and are no longer relevant. In other cases, courses have been found to be inadequate or not comprehensive enough in coverage (GNL 1995c:41).

Consultations⁶ with school board officials, school principals, teachers and others involved with the senior high school curriculum, indicated to the Secretariat that there is a need to return to a more basic curriculum. Moreover, there is consistent pressure for a more vocational/technical focus to education, and considerable pressure on educators to give priority to literacy, numeracy, science and technology. This pressure is linked to the perception that educational improvement in these core areas will of necessity improve the economic performance of the province. Calls for interdisciplinary

⁶ The Secretariat also invited written submissions from all who wished to respond to a Consultation Paper that the Department of Education released in connection with the senior high school curriculum in 1995. An Advisory Committee was established to review these submissions (GNL 1997c:1).

or integrated approaches to curriculum are likewise emerging, as well as a need for a more transactional approach to instruction. That is, the approach used should enable the learner to reconstruct knowledge by employing strategies that actively engage the learner in the learning process (GNL 1995c:59).

The revision of the senior high school curriculum undertaken by the Secretariat was subsequently published in 1997 and will be implemented in all the senior high schools of the province, commencing September 1998.

The message by the Minister of Education, Roger Grimes, accompanying this review, stresses that changes to the Newfoundland high school programme coincide with curriculum changes in Atlantic Canada proposed by the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, of which Newfoundland is a full partner. Beginning September 1998, the four Atlantic provinces (i.e. Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island) will begin to introduce a common core curriculum in mathematics, English language, arts and science. A framework for social studies is also being developed (GNL 1997c:i). The new curriculum places a primary focus on the development of intellectual skills in language, mathematics, science, social studies and technology, while recognizing the importance of the other subject areas for a well-rounded education. Furthermore, it puts an increased emphasis on the preparation of students for their future role as contributing members of the global society and on life-long learning (GNL 1997c:2).

There are some significant changes in the organizational structure and graduation requirements of the new curriculum proposed for senior high schools in Newfoundland. Senior high school courses now offered expand into post-secondary education courses, and students at the junior high school level may select courses offered at the senior high school level (GNL 1997c:7-9; Walters 14/11/97). Both Genge (12/11/97) and Walters (14/11/97) maintain that the new curriculum is quite cognizant of the recommendations by the Williams Commission for changing the senior high school programme, and both feel confident that the more important educational issues have been addressed in the new curriculum for senior high schools. The views of these

educators differ from the concern expressed previously by Crocker (8/11/96) to the researcher that these important educational changes to the curriculum were not receiving prompt attention by the government, because of the effort involved in restructuring the education system of Newfoundland. It thus appears that with the publication of the new curriculum programme for senior high schools, the Newfoundland government does intend to pursue the recommendations of the Williams Commission on these important educational issues, while at the same time restructuring the system to facilitate the implementation of these curriculum changes.

4.2.5 Teacher certification and professional development

According to government sources, there is a substantial body of research evidence to support the common sense notion that quality of teaching is an important influence on student performance. It is also clear that teachers require specific expertise in the areas in which they are assigned to teach. This expertise extends beyond subject matter competence, to include knowledge of how students approach subject matter, and how academic content can be translated into content suitable for teaching at particular levels (GNL 1994:7).

Bearing this observation in mind, the Williams Commission (GNL 1992a:279-281) suggests in its report that there appears to be much dissatisfaction among Newfoundland teachers with the availability, quality and focus of current in-service and professional development practices for teachers. It is frequently noted that in-service sessions (typically one day in duration), are too short to be effective. In addition, many teachers in speaking to the Commission, noted the lack of any follow-up to reinforce and support new concepts and strategies. Furthermore, a number of briefs to the Commission emphasized the fact that in-service sessions frequently do little to improve teaching. It was pointed out that these sessions are often focused on broad goals and methodologies with little attention paid to content or the teachers' knowledge of the subject. Teachers specified that what is proffered as in-service training is often not relevant to today's classroom demands. Many teachers feel that in-service training should also stress such concepts as classroom management, student discipline, stress

management and other classroom related issues. The opportunities for teachers to meet colleagues and to learn how they cope with problems, are some of the indirect benefits of in-service activities.

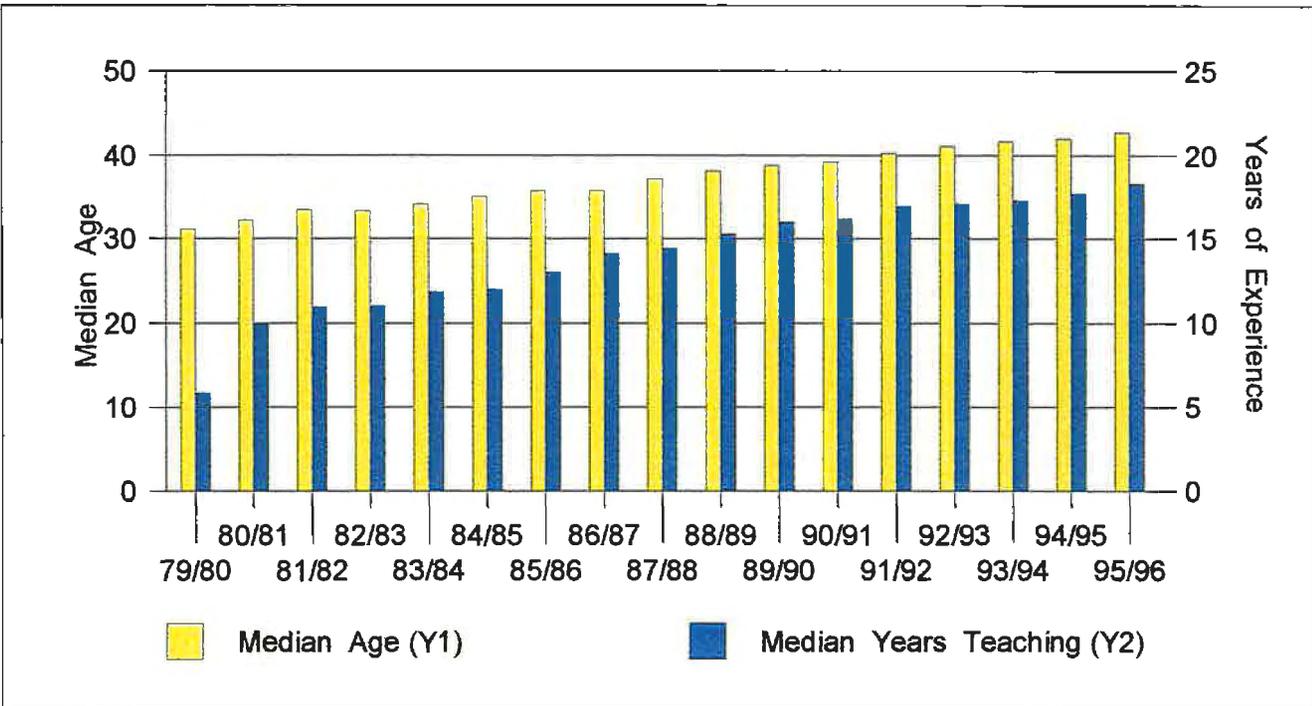
Amongst other concerns that have also been expressed, is the fact that the aging teacher workforce (see Figure 4.2) may not be keeping abreast of new developments and practices in education. Figure 4.2 indicates that the median age of the teaching population in Newfoundland has increased steadily since 1979/80. During the 1995/96 school year half of the teachers were over 42 years old with 18.5 or more years of teaching experience. Ten years earlier in 1985/86 half of the teachers were aged 36 years or older with 13 years of experience (GNL 1997a:51).

FIGURE 4.2

MEDIAN AGE AND YEARS OF EXPERIENCE OF TEACHERS IN NEWFOUNDLAND,

1979/80 - 1995/96

(GNL 1997a:51)



This upward movement in median teacher age and experience can be viewed in a positive light in the sense that the teaching force is well experienced. Nevertheless, as the age of teachers increases, the importance of frequent and meaningful professional development opportunities will become increasingly important in order to keep teachers abreast of recent advances in theory and practice.

Apart from these issues pertaining to professional development, it was also emphasized that the current certification/salary scale of teachers has outlived its usefulness. Most teachers now enter the profession near the top of the current certificate scale. The university degree programmes which form the basis of the scale are more suited to pre-service teacher education than to continuing professional development.

The advanced degrees which allow teachers to progress to the highest levels of the scale are not open to all teachers and are not suited to the specific job-related activities most needed for continuing professional development (GNL 1994:26-27). As a result of these issues and observations, the Newfoundland government made the following proposals for the improvement of teacher certification and professional development:

- ▲ A Professional Development Centre for teachers will be established, with the following functions:
 - to conduct ongoing needs assessments for professional development for teachers and other educators, as well as for school trustees, school council members, and others with specific roles in schools
 - to offer programmes required for teachers to maintain certification and advance to higher levels of certification
 - to co-ordinate professional development activities of school boards and other public agencies, including those in the post-secondary sector

- ▲ An initial focal point for the Professional Development Centre will be programmes emphasizing generic teaching strategies in time management, motivation, co-operative teaching and dealing with disruptive behaviour, as well as programmes in curriculum implementation and teaching in specific subject areas.

- ▲ The teacher certification scale will be reduced to three levels, an Entry Level, an Intermediate Level and a Leadership Level.
- ▲ All initial teacher certificates will be issued at the Entry Level and will be valid for five years. The Entry Level certificate may be renewed once if all requirements are not met following the initial five-year period.
- ▲ Advancement to the Intermediate Level would be possible, following the first five-year term, on completion of an approved professional development programme and a satisfactory assessment of performance.
- ▲ The Intermediate Level certificate would be valid for a ten-year term and would be renewable on completion of an approved professional development programme and on satisfactory assessment of performance.
- ▲ The Leadership Level will be reserved for those teachers who demonstrate exceptional teaching skills, as recognized by their peers and by other professionals in the system. Lead teachers will receive salary credit recognition of their capabilities, and will be given time to share their capabilities, especially with new teachers. Lead teachers will also be the only teachers authorized to supervise teachers in training.
- ▲ A system of certificate endorsements will be introduced to indicate specific levels and subject areas in which teachers are qualified.
- ▲ A professional certification body will be established within the teaching profession, with the following responsibilities: accreditation of initial teacher education programmes; establishing standards for certification; professional development and teacher performance; and issuing, upgrading and renewing teaching certificates.
- ▲ Discussion will be initiated with MUN in order to find a means of ensuring greater balance of areas of specialization in the teaching force (GNL 1994:27-28).

Initial reaction from the NLTA to these proposals has been cautious. According to Peter Sutherland, the president of NLTA, the proposal to introduce a three-tier certification scale was received with mixed reaction. The new proposals would require changes to the present salary scale of teachers and would have far-reaching implications on the collective agreement of teachers (*The Western Star* 16/2/94:1). At present the proposal to overhaul the certification/salary scale of teachers still awaits implementation and therefore the current certification/salary scale for teachers is still in operation (Vincent 14/11/96).

In spite of the extensive guidelines by the government to establish a Professional Development Centre for teachers (see p 108 of this thesis), efforts to set up the Centre have been unsuccessful, according to Downer⁷ (3/11/97). Part of the reason for its failure can be ascribed to financial restraints. There is also a perception among teachers that a *provincial* centre is not the answer to their need for professional training and development (Downer 3/11/97; Downer 13/3/97; Walters 14/11/97). Walters (14/11/97) is of the opinion that decisions should be made at the local school level as to which areas of teacher training and development should be improved. He says that teachers themselves are most acutely aware of the need for training in certain areas. He proposes that professional development and training plans be developed at the local level, involving the district school boards, school teachers and parents.

4.2.6 *Monitoring and accountability*

The ultimate aim of any change in an education system must be to improve quality of education. The Newfoundland government maintains it is not sufficient simply to set goals and standards and to provide structures designed to facilitate their accomplishment. A means must be available to determine the efficiency and performance of the education system. An adequate programme of monitoring and accountability is thus an essential feature of a high quality education system (GNL 1994:29). The Williams Commission (GNL 1992a:381) gives the following reasons for holding the education system accountable for its performance:

7

Dr Don Downer has been involved in the initial planning of the Professional Development Centre for teachers.

- ▲ the need to maintain acceptable standards of performance
- ▲ the demand for efficiency in the light of diminishing resources
- ▲ the need for all to be informed about the performance of the system and how tax revenues are used
- ▲ the increased importance of education for economic development
- ▲ the need for continued improvement in the system because an unresponsive system is likely to prove stagnant and non-competitive

The perspective of the Newfoundland government is that specific measures should be established to ensure that educational standards in Newfoundland are on a par with educational standards in the rest of Canada. Moreover, the public has a right to assume that a high school graduate has reached a basic level of literacy and numeracy, as well as having acquired other knowledge and understanding necessary to function as an informed citizen, advance to higher education or enter the workforce (GNL 1994:30). Accountability is therefore directly linked to public expectations.

To strengthen the current system of accountability already in place (i.e. classroom tests, standardized tests, public examinations, and specialized tests of various sorts), the Newfoundland government has proposed the following measures:

- ▲ Competency-based measures will be developed in core curriculum areas, corresponding to the established performance standards. These will be used at the end of Grades 3, 6 and 9 to determine whether the required standards have been met.
- ▲ Each student's progress towards meeting the established standards will be monitored and reported to parents at regular intervals.
- ▲ The overall performance of the system relative to the established standards, will be monitored and reported to parents at regular intervals.

- ▲ The overall performance of the system relative to the established standards and relative to other systems, will be reported to the public at regular intervals.
- ▲ Within three years, at least 80 per cent of students will be expected to attain the set standards. Those who do not do so will advance to the next level only after remedial effort focused directly on meeting the set standards. An exception would be students diagnosed as having some specific condition which inhibits their learning ability.
- ▲ Emphasis will be placed on early intervention for those at risk of not meeting the set standards in order to minimize the need for remedial action at the end of each stage.
- ▲ Performance standards will also be established for high school graduation. These standards will include basic literacy, numeracy and scientific competencies acquired over the student's school career.
- ▲ Public examinations will become comprehensive in nature, including material from all levels of the secondary school curriculum, rather than being confined to specific high school courses.
- ▲ The number of areas subjected to public examinations will be reduced to those in the primary and secondary core curriculum.
- ▲ The current system of shared evaluation will be replaced by one in which the schools will be responsible for certifying that students have completed the required credits for graduation, and the public examination will be used to certify levels of achievement.
- ▲ A school accreditation system will be established, with the following objectives:
 - to develop and maintain criteria for school assessment and accountability

- to provide periodic assessment of the performance of each school in the province
- to ensure that schools meet minimum standards of resource inputs, curriculum coverage and instructional processes
- to identify whether schools are meeting the required achievement standards
- to make recommendations on appropriate action to improve the performance of schools not meeting the required standards (GNL 1994:31-32)

There is agreement amongst Newfoundland educators that some form of accountability and monitoring must be in place in order for students to achieve academically. There is a difference of opinion, however, whether standardized tests are the best way to measure performance, or whether a criterium-based assessment of how students perform (particularly in the provincial context based on a provincial curriculum), is better (Downer 13/11/97; Walters 14/11/97). Genge (12/11/97) contends that it is too soon to tell whether the educational standards will improve significantly with these new measures.

4.3 Conclusion

The Williams Commission (GNL 1992a:222) specifies that "any successful education system must evolve from both the individual needs of students and their parents and the collective needs of the society in which they live". Its success therefore, must be judged by how well it interprets these needs, as well as by how it responds to them.

This chapter has dealt with the response of the Newfoundland government to the needs and expectations of Newfoundlanders to improve their education system. The government's formal response, as outlined in its model for restructuring the education system, has been discussed in broad terms to indicate how it perceives educational change should take place. Fundamental to the proposed model is the recognition that educational change becomes effective and flourishes when all groups at the ground level

(such as parents, students, teachers and individuals in the community with interests in education), pursue a common cause to initiate change. The government firmly believes that consistent involvement by all interested parties at the local level can bring about significant improvements, both in academic attainment and public advocacy for education (GNL 1994:33). It has become clear to the government that in order to strengthen participation in educational change at the local level, appropriate structures must be established to allow meaningful involvement. It is accepted, albeit, that not all changes in the system can be addressed through a governance model. In fact, as has been pointed out in this chapter such structures set the stage for more substantive and far-reaching changes in education.

During informal interviews with a number of key educators, the researcher detected a spirit of optimism about the proposals to improve the education system of Newfoundland. On the other hand, there is also a measure of frustration with the difficulty the Newfoundland government has experienced in establishing the structures for a unified education system, whether inter- or non-denominational. Developments during the latter part of 1997 have caused some delay in restructuring the education system. The role of the church in these developments and its constitutional rights to educate will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

5 THE MINORITY RIGHTS ISSUE AND THE CHURCH IN NEWFOUNDLAND

5.1 Introduction

Contrary to what the Newfoundland government had foreseen as a smooth implementation of the first steps of its original proposals to restructure the education system, the whole reform process was stalled during the months of June/July 1997. The reason for this delay was that certain groups of parents (notably parents who are members of the Roman Catholic church and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland), requested the Supreme Court of Canada to uphold their rights to a denominational education. This request was the result of dissatisfaction with the proposed designation of schools as inter-denominational for the school year 1997/98 (*The Western Star* 19/6/97:1). The appeal by the parents resulted in a ruling by Justice Leo Barry of the Newfoundland Supreme Court upholding their constitutional rights. He stated that the Newfoundland government's process for determining which schools should be designated as either inter- or uni-denominational, was flawed and unconstitutional. It was therefore the court's responsibility to preserve the parents' rights and ensure these would not be taken away or reduced by legislative or administrative action. This ruling furthermore resulted in a restraining order placed on school boards to close or change the status of any Roman Catholic and Pentecostal schools (for the school year 1997/98), without the permission of the provincial Denominational Education Commission¹ (*The Western Star* 15/7/97a:1).

The effect of this ruling presented enormous difficulties for school boards in Newfoundland, considering that when the ruling was made most schools had already been designated as inter-denominational, based on parental preference in registering their children for the school year 1997/98 (for details of this registration process see par 4.2.3.1).

¹

For the responsibilities of the newly-established Denominational Education Commission see paragraph 4.2.2.3.

In addition, the assignment of teachers to these schools had also been finalized. The situation was further complicated by the fact that the court ruling was issued at a time when schools were closed and teachers, as well as school board staff were on summer vacation.

Subsequent reaction to this court ruling indicates that most Newfoundlanders were dismayed with the results. From across Newfoundland, criticism was levelled by individuals and groups at the Roman Catholic church and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland for encouraging their members to take court action, when the majority of Newfoundlanders supported an inter-denominational education system. A statement by Anne Chaffey, president of the Corner Brook Chapter of Canadian Parents for French, expresses the dismay that was felt by many:

It's cruel and unusual punishment that the boards have to go through the whole process again. It's absolutely ridiculous that it has come to this, because the only people to suffer are the children. (*The Western Star* 15/7/97b:1).

As a result of these concerns, the Newfoundland government decided to seek a second constitutional amendment to Term 17, to avoid a similar stalling of the education reform process from re-occurring (*The Western Star* 2/8/97:1). The subsequent developments will be discussed in greater detail in paragraph 5.3.

In order to better understand the court ruling upholding the constitutional rights to denominational education of a small group of parents, the researcher will try to shed light on the delicate issue of minority rights in Canada, especially as it pertains to education in the next paragraph.

5.2 Constitutional and legal foundations of minority rights in education in Canada and Newfoundland

As has previously been pointed out in paragraph 3.2.5, minority rights in education is one of the most visible features of educational policy in Canada. The constitutional basis for the organization of education in Canada is found in the British North America Act (BNA) which embodies the resolutions on which the confederation of the Dominion of Canada was established in 1867. The Act defines the executive power of the Dominion of Canada and its provinces, and provides for the division of legislative powers between the provincial and federal governments. Section 93 of the BNA Act deals specifically with the question of responsibility for education at the provincial level. The provincial legislatures may exclusively make laws pertaining to education, but this section also guarantees denominational rights in education that existed in law at the time of Confederation. These provisions were substantially reaffirmed with the admission of other provinces to the Dominion of Canada after 1867. The Canadian constitution today consists of the Canada Act and a schedule of 24 other Acts passed in 1981. The Canada Act includes the amended BNA Act of 1867 as well as the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Leslie 1988:670; O'Driscoll 1988:182; Wells 1985:36-37; also see par 3.2.5).

The thirty-four sections of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms discuss individual citizen rights to democracy, mobility, equality and fundamental freedoms. The rights are to be enforced by application to courts. Any limit to citizens' rights by governments must be *reasonable* and the onus is on the particular government to prove this in any court action by such citizens (GNL 1992a:35; Roebathan 1989:23; Wells 1985:36-37; also see par 3.2.5).

As far as education in Canada is concerned, Wells (1985:38) claims that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is designed to promote equality of opportunity, encouraging a democratic rather than an elitist cast to the education systems of Canada. Nevertheless, in seeking to promote a whole range of human rights, it may result in surprising

court decisions, as has recently been the case in Newfoundland (see par 5.1). In this instance the parents' rights to denominational education were upheld because the Charter also protects the rights of religious groups and their members (*The Western Star* 15/7/97a:l; Wells 1985:38).

The unexpected outcome of the aforementioned case, points to the complexity of the whole question of minority rights pertaining to education in Canada. Traditionally laws protected (and in some cases still do) the rights of religious groups in education. Many of these provincial laws also made provision for public financial support of denominational schools. A legal provision of 1841, for instance, permitted a religious minority in either Ontario or Quebec to operate publicly tax-funded schools, separate from the schools of the majority. This provision was at the root of the separate systems subsequently developed by Protestants in Quebec and, often amid religious controversy, by Catholics in Ontario, Alberta and Saskatchewan. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Quebec and Newfoundland still had public school systems that were entirely denominational. Quebec with its overwhelming Catholic population and long history of church leadership in education, established Catholic public schools while also providing public support for the schools of its Protestant minority (O'Driscoll 1988:181; Orlikow 1988:669). In the case of Newfoundland, the idea of a public non-denominational school system was rejected in favour of a complete denominational system in which the schools of several religious groups were given public financial support (see par 3.1). In the case of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island unofficial arrangements for public financial support of Catholic and other sectarian schools were made, although no legal provisions existed when these provinces joined the Confederation of Canada. Manitoba rejected legal and political attempts to re-establish public financial support for Catholic schools in the 1890s, but by the 1960s modest state assistance was extended to these schools, as well as other private schools. British Columbia has a single public school system, but has provided public financial support for private schools since 1949 (Orlikow 1988:669).

In the light of these traditional educational provisions and public financial support for religious groups across Canada, the issue of minority rights in education has become

even more complex in recent times. One of the prevailing perspectives in Canada and its provinces is the notion that all individuals have the right to be treated equally, and this includes freedom from religious discrimination (Byrnes 1987:31). This notion which is also being actively pursued in Newfoundland, is linked to the increasing importance that is being placed on the rights of the individual. It is thus ironic that the Federal Charter of Rights and Freedoms on the one hand, endorses equal educational opportunities for individuals, but on the other hand also protects the rights of religious groups in education because these groups are considered to be minority groups. It becomes a question therefore of whether the educational rights of the individual outweighs the guaranteed educational rights of a religious minority. This issue poses a real dilemma for parents, as Byrnes (1987:31) rightly points out. She says that it is an accepted principle that parents have the first and the inalienable duty to educate their children and should therefore enjoy freedom in their choice of schools. In view of the legal provisions that exist for religious minorities in Canada, however, parents belonging to these minorities can claim that they have as equal a right to choice of schooling for their children as those parents who do not belong to such religious minorities.

In Newfoundland, the provincial government endorses the principle of equal educational opportunities for all children in accordance with the provision of the Charter, hence the efforts to consolidate and restructure the education system (GNL 1993:1; also see par 4.2.1). Recent events, howbeit (see par 5.1), have proved that parents cannot be forced to let their children attend lessons or instruction which are not in agreement with their religious beliefs, if they have denominational educational rights guaranteed under the Charter. The problem of educational rights in Newfoundland though, is further complicated by the fact that most Newfoundlanders belong to different Christian religious groups. Therefore Byrnes (1987:30) and others (notably human rights advocates) view the educational rights of non-adherents as the *real* minority rights issue in Newfoundland. Byrnes(1987:30) declares that in the past, such groups as Jews or Muslims and those of no religious creed or affiliation, were subject to the employment and admission policies dictated by the official Christian church groups who controlled the denominationally-based education system. The Williams Commission (GNL 1992a:102) has found that the exclusion of this small percentage of individuals

from active participation on school boards and educational decision-making bodies in the past, is a real concern to human rights advocates. Commenting on the current struggle between the church and government about controlling education in Newfoundland, McConaghy (1996:174) also believes that the *real* minority is made up of the five per cent of residents who are not Christians. He finds the churches' argument that the struggle is about the violation of their minority rights quite preposterous therefore, in view of the fact that ninety-five per cent of Newfoundlanders belong to Christian churches. Also commenting on the issue of minority rights, Duke (1996:122) warns that history teaches that those who insist on appropriating public institutions to promote private religious beliefs, are capable of trampling on the rights of people who do not share those same beliefs.

Even though most Newfoundlanders are members of a Christian church, the majority do not support the claim by the Catholic church and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland that their educational rights have been violated by the Newfoundland government. The overwhelming reaction to the recent court ruling in favour of upholding denominational education rights, prompted the Premier of Newfoundland, Mr Brian Tobin, to state that it had become quite clear that the vast majority of people in the province want to end the control the churches have had over education. It had thus become necessary to propose a second amendment to Term 17 that would in effect remove the churches from all aspects of education, including religious instruction (*The Western Star* 5/8/97:1).

5.3 A second constitutional amendment to Term 17

The second constitutional amendment to Term 17 provides in essence for a single school system where all children, regardless of their religious affiliation, attend the same schools. It also cancels the constitutionally protected rights of individual denominational authorities to administer religious programmes and observances (GNL 1997b:1).

The full text of the second amendment to Term 17 reads as follows:

17 (1) "In lieu of section ninety-three of the Constitutional Act, 1867, this section shall apply in respect of the Province of Newfoundland.

(2) "In and for the Province of Newfoundland, the legislature shall have exclusive authority to make laws in relation to education, but shall provide for courses in religion that are not specific to a religious denomination.

(3) "Religious observances shall be permitted in a school where requested by parents" (GNL 1997b:1).

On September 2, 1997, Newfoundlanders had to approve this new amendment to Term 17 in a second referendum. The referendum question to which Newfoundlanders had to respond to in a 'Yes' or 'No' vote, was:

Do you support a single school system where all children, regardless of their religious affiliation, attend the same schools where opportunities for religious education and observances are provided? (GNL 1997b:1).

During the second referendum, Newfoundlanders voted overwhelmingly (73 per cent of voters) in favour of the newest amendment, thus justifying the government's assessment that people want educational reform to go ahead, including members of the Catholic church. Pentecostals, on the other hand, appear to have rejected the changes by a large margin, according to Table 5.1 (also see *The Western Star* 3/9/97:1).

TABLE 5.1**HOW DENOMINATIONS VOTED IN THE REFERENDUM**

(see referendum analysis by Mark Graesser, associate professor of political science at MUN, published in *The Evening Telegram* 22/11/97:11)

Voted Yes:

- ▲ Roman Catholics - 62 per cent
- ▲ Pentecostals - 32 per cent
- ▲ All others - 87 per cent
- ▲ Total electorate - 73 per cent

Using the King method², Professor Graesser obtained accurate statistics on the denominational breakdown of the populations within each provincial district from the Economics and Statistics Branch of the Newfoundland government and matched this data with the official referendum results obtained from the chief electoral officer. The data obtained from the Economics and Statistics Branch, shows that overall 37 per cent of the population is Roman Catholic, 7 per cent is Pentecostal and 56 per cent fall into other categories. The latter group includes 52 per cent from the other denominations who had guaranteed denominational educational rights under the original Term 17 and 4 per cent of other religions or no religion (*The Evening Telegram* 22/11/97:11).

The results of the analysis as shown in Table 5.1, take into consideration the possibility of different voter turnout rates, district by district, among the religious groups. Provincewide, the analysis shows that 65 per cent of Catholics voted, compared with only 44 per cent of the *other* category. Because most districts have very small Pentecostal populations, the computer programme that Professor Graesser used, was

²

Professor Gary King (Harvard University) has recently developed a new technique that is mathematically complex and which uses extensive computer computations to produce precise and reliable estimates of individual voting patterns within each electoral unit (*The Evening Telegram* 22/11/97:11).

unable to estimate a turnout rate for this group. The estimated 'Yes' vote for Pentecostals is therefore based directly on their percentage of the population. The analysis furthermore shows that a majority of Catholics are estimated to have voted 'Yes' in all but two districts, Placentia-St. Mary's and Port au Port. The Catholic 'Yes' vote ranged as high as 67 to 69 per cent in several St. John's districts, and 70 per cent in St. Barbe. These results led Professor Graesser to conclude that it seems very likely that a substantial majority of Roman Catholics voted 'Yes' in the second referendum, thereby endorsing the proposed changes in Term 17 (*The Evening Telegram* 22/11/97:11).

The 'Yes' vote, one of the largest majorities ever recorded in a Canadian national or provincial plebiscite was seen by the Newfoundland government as a strong mandate to move ahead. The Newfoundland House of Assembly unanimously endorsed the resolution to amend Newfoundland's Terms of Union with Canada for the second time on September 5, 1997 (*The Western Star* 6/9/97:1). As with the first amendment (see par 1.3), the second amendment was forwarded to the Federal House of Commons and the Senate, for approval. Despite protests by representatives of the Roman Catholic church in Ottawa, the second amendment was finally approved by the federal government on December 18, 1997 (*The Western Star* 19/12/97:1).

Compared to the original Term 17, the second amendment provides for a substantial change to the structure of an education system that has been structured along denominational lines for well over a hundred years (see par 3.1). The original Term 17 entrenched the right of the churches to maintain denominational schools, when Newfoundland joined Canada in 1949, thus strengthening the existing denominational structure of the education system. It stated that

In and for the Province of Newfoundland the legislature shall have the exclusive authority to make laws in relation to education, but the legislature will not have authority to make laws prejudicially affecting any right or privilege with respect to denominational schools, (amalgamated) schools or denominational colleges that

any class or classes of persons have by law in Newfoundland at the date of Union (GNL 1995b:1).

Compared to the first amendment to Term 17 which succeeded in creating inter-denominational school boards, but still allowed the churches to retain the right to provide religious education in schools and to maintain separate denominational schools, where numbers warranted it (GNL 1995b:l; also see par 1.3), it also represents a considerable change in structure. Looking ahead, the Premier of Newfoundland, foresees that the swift passage of the new Term 17 will enable school boards to implement the new structural changes for the school year 1998/99. The first item on the agenda, however, is the election of non-denominational school boards where anyone may run for school board elections regardless of religious affiliation (*The Evening Telegram* 10/1/98:3).

Creating a single uniform education system has thus finally become a reality, since the Williams Commission was instructed in 1990 to investigate all aspects of the education system and make proposals for its restructuring (GNL 1992a:v; also see paragraphs 1.2 & 1.3). In spite of the overwhelming support in favour of educational change as demonstrated in the last referendum, leaders of both the Catholic church and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland do not accept the outcome. The vote is being interpreted as a case of minority rights being overridden by a "tyrannical majority". Officials representing these church groups argue that constitutional rights guaranteed to a minority group cannot be rescinded without the consent of that group (*The Evening Telegram* 22/11/97:11).

In paragraph 5.4 some of the potential problems with regard to the new legislation in Newfoundland and how it affects the church and other religious minorities in Canada, will be highlighted.

5.4 The debate on the minority rights issue and the church

Having scanned recent newspaper reports, it appears that there are two opposing interpretations about the claims made by both the Roman Catholic church and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland that their minority rights have been violated by the second amendment of Term 17.

On the one hand, the Newfoundland government believes that its amendment does not violate the protection of minority rights provided for in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and rejects the suggestion that the church's minority rights are at risk (*The Western Star* 4/9/97:1). Responding on behalf of the Newfoundland government, Justice Solicitor Gale Welsh explains that the provisions of the Charter do not apply to Newfoundland's case, as religious education and observances are protected in the new Term 17 (see par 5.3). To support her argument, Welsh refers to other jurisdictions across Canada that have no provision for religious education and observances in their respective constitutions. Consequently, minority groups and individuals have successfully won court challenges to have religious education and observances abolished in particular schools. Welsh argues that in the case of Newfoundland there is a difference. She contends that as a fundamental principle, if religious education and observances are enshrined in the constitution of a province, protection from the Charter's provisions is guaranteed (*The Western Star* 13/8/97:2). Also commenting on the issue, Catherine Brock, professor in political science at Sir Wilfred Laurier University in Ontario, emphasizes that the Constitution and the Charter are equal documents. The one does not supersede or outweigh the other. The Charter contains sections allowing freedom of religion while also prohibiting religious indoctrination. She postulates that although the protection of minority rights is very important, it must not be detrimental to the rights of other minorities, particularly those who may not have an equal voice. She notes that the Constitution recognizes seven classes of people in Newfoundland, but within those classes there are varying opinions on denominational education. As to who represents these *classes*, whether the churches or the people who voted in the referendum, remains an open question, according to Professor Prock (*The Western Star* 15/8/97:1).

Conversely, concerned Roman Catholic parents and church officials believe that the second amendment to Term 17 subordinates the rights of religious minorities to the tyranny of the majority, as has already been stated (*The Evening Telegram* 22/11/97:11; also see par 5.3). It is also believed that the constitutionally protected rights of a particular group (in this instance the church) cannot be changed or revoked without the consent of that group (*The Evening Telegram* 22/11/97:11; *The Western Star* 4/9/97:1). Whether the minority rights of the Roman Catholic church and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland and also the rights of religious minorities in other Canadian provinces are at risk because of Newfoundland's reform initiative, is now the focus of the debate.

Clearly, there is no easy solution to the debate. George Horan, a lawyer representing the Newfoundland government claims it is inherently a political issue. He says that "our concept of government and the Constitution is that people vote in elections for those people they trust will represent their interest" (*The Western Star* 6/1/98:1). In this context it is therefore important to take note of the denominational breakdown of the vote (see Table 5.1), which indicates that 62 per cent of Roman Catholics voted in the second referendum in favour of changing Term 17. Joseph Hutchings, a Corner Brook lawyer representing Catholic parents not in favour of the second amendment to Term 17, maintains that the entire referendum and amendment process was flawed. His argument is that if the preconditions as laid out in the Constitution have not been met, the court has a duty not only to review the process by declaring the amendment invalid, but also the power in the interim to put the issue on hold (*The Western Star* 6/1/98:1). It is interesting to note that the position of the Integrated group of churches, (in particular the Anglican and United churches and The Salvation Army) changed in favour of supporting the government's current reform initiative, compared to the concern expressed by all church groups in discussions about the first amendment to Term 17 (see par 1.3). In an interview with a newspaper reporter, Lt.-Col. Shirley Rowsell, The Salvation Army's divisional commander for Central Newfoundland, said the government's intention to establish a single school system is favoured by The Salvation Army, because it would be an extension of what the Integrated churches, have been doing over the years (*The Western Star* 7/8/97:2). A statement released by

the United church indicates the church's willingness to relinquish all administrative control of education. As well, a spokesperson for the Anglican church, Bishop Donald Harvey of the Anglican Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador, said his church supported the government's decision to establish a single non-denominational education system (*The Western Star* 7/8/97:2).

In view of Newfoundland's long tradition of denominational education, it would be naive to expect that no further problems could arise. Despite the approval of the second amendment to Term 17 by the federal government, the Newfoundland government could expect future court challenges by the Catholic Education Committee in Newfoundland (*The Evening Telegram* 10/1/98:3). It could also ignite a national religious-rights furore, especially coupled with Quebec's quest for a constitutional change to divide its school system along linguistic, instead of religious lines (*The Western Star* 3/9/97:1). McConaghy (1996:174) alleges that the Newfoundland's reform initiative has also had an effect on the separatist movement in Quebec. Referring to the first referendum held in Newfoundland to amend Term 17 (see par 1.3), McConaghy (1996:174) declares that many Quebec separatists have been buoyed by the fact that the province of Newfoundland was able to get a constitutional change through the Federal Parliament of Canada on a slim majority of 54 per cent. They believe that when the next referendum on separation is held in Quebec, the federal government will have no alternative but to pass a constitutional amendment permitting Quebec to separate from the rest of Canada. Constitutionally speaking, the two cases are different, of course. It is obvious from this example that a major educational reform in one province could have bearing on other political issues in other provinces of Canada. It is thus reasonable to expect that Newfoundland's current reform initiative could have repercussions both educationally and politically in the rest of Canada.

In spite of the possibility of certain repercussions and problems that could surface, several educators have indicated to the researcher that they do not consider the church's minority rights issue a serious threat to educational reform in Newfoundland (Downer 13/11/97; Genge 12/11/97; Walters 14/11/97). Genge (12/11/97) suggests that the Roman Catholic church and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland may

use the minority rights issue as a *crutch* to hang on to in order to prevent changes in education from taking place. He maintains, however, that because of the contextual realities in Newfoundland, educational change is inevitable and will take place regardless. Walters (14/11/97) views the government's reform initiative as having a positive effect on society overall in the sense that it would help to break down the religious divisions and barriers that have existed for so long. The Premier of Newfoundland himself believes that the new changes would ultimately enhance the spirit of co-operation (*The Evening Telegram* 10/1/98:3).

5.5 Conclusion

Recent developments in Newfoundland have shown how difficult it is to achieve educational change, even if it is the will of the majority of people to have these changes implemented. It is perhaps not surprising in the context of Newfoundland's extended experience with denominational education and the church's prominent role in education, that there would be apprehension and doubt amongst some as to the necessity for these changes. Added to the problem of achieving change, is the fact that Newfoundland is inextricably bound to the rest of Canada. Even though provincial legislatures are responsible for educational laws and policies (see par 5.2), it is a common feature of Canadian educational policies to provide for religious and linguistic particularities, according to Leslie (1988:671). Thus, over the years particular groups such as religious minorities and others have challenged provincial legislatures if they perceived that their constitutional rights were ignored or were being compromised. The whole question of minority rights in education is a divisive and complex issue which requires an equitable solution. The problem is how to accomplish the common Canadian goal of extending equal educational opportunities to all children, without compromising the democratic process.

In the case of Newfoundland, it is to be hoped that a spirit of reconciliation and co-operation between state and church and all other concerned parties will prevail in seeking to provide the best educational opportunities for its children. Achieving the creation of a single non-denominational education system, is a crucial first step. The

future promises to be an exciting one for the students and teachers of Newfoundland as educational reforms begin to take shape. It is a new beginning that will impact the provision of education in the most profound way to help prepare Newfoundland students for the future.

In Chapter 6 the researcher will endeavour to evaluate the whole educational reform process and its outcome in Newfoundland, from certain perspectives, such as the goal and principles guiding the reform process. Other perspectives, such as the management, historical and socio-political perspectives will also be evaluated to determine the overall effect on the Newfoundland society and its education system.

CHAPTER 6

6 EVALUATING NEWFOUNDLAND'S EDUCATIONAL REFORM INITIATIVES

6.1 Introduction

On the brink of entering the new millennium, Newfoundland's diverse denominational education system has passed through a decade of tumultuous change to evolve as a single, unified non-denominational system. The slow and often tortuous process of change described in previous chapters, highlights the difficulty of achieving meaningful reform in the midst of so many variables influencing that process.

With the rapid burgeoning of the information age, the Newfoundland society (like any other society worldwide) has been faced with consistent change. This constant and rapid onslaught has also left its mark on the Newfoundland education system. The education system that had served Newfoundlanders well for the past hundred years, had become largely uneconomical, unwieldy and ineffective in achieving the principal goal of excellence in education for all children. Educators were compelled therefore, to address this situation by making radical proposals for restructuring the education system and instituting reform initiatives for all aspects of education within the system. Whether too many changes were made too quickly, thus immobilizing the change process rather than invigorating it, is currently the focal point of the educational debate in Newfoundland. On the other hand, the question may well be asked whether these changes have gone far enough.

As there are no empirical data available to measure the effects of the reform initiatives at this stage, the benefit of these reform initiatives can only be evaluated on an inferential basis. It is also too soon to draw any lasting conclusions, which obviously poses a dilemma for the researcher. In this instance, the views of key educators have been invaluable for the researcher, as these reflect to a degree the current perceptions of educational change in Newfoundland.

Whatever the reforms have achieved or may achieve, the fact cannot be ignored that Newfoundland's education system will always be rooted in its past. The system has consistently reflected the cultural heritage of this province and by long historical circumstance and practice, this heritage remains Christian. Students cannot help but receive a Christian education in Newfoundland schools. The only difference with the new school system is that students will now be able to mix with other students regardless of their religious beliefs, or the Christian denominations they represent.

Finally, in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of this whole reform process, it must be stressed that the assessment will be coloured by the researcher's own perception of educational realities in Newfoundland.

6.2 Reviewing the government's response to the contextual realities within the Newfoundland society

Educational change is never easy. It is a complex process that co-evolves with the changes taking place in society (Banathy 1991:2). Chapter 3 discusses the dramatic changes that have taken place in Newfoundland's environment during the past couple of decades.

Pressing factors that have greatly changed the Newfoundland society, are amongst others:

- ▲ population dynamics and changing social patterns
- ▲ economic conditions
- ▲ technological developments
- ▲ legal and political issues (see par 3.2)

The most noticeable impact on the Newfoundland education system was caused by the low fertility rate, combined with the outmigration of the Newfoundland population over the past two decades. Because of drastic decreases in school enrolment of more than

40 per cent from 1985 to 1995 (GNL 1996:1), schools that had once been viable were left with so few students that it became futile to operate them (see par 3.2.2). Moreover, human and physical resources necessary to offer students the best possible education were being spread over more schools than could be sustained. Maintaining four separate school systems side by side within the then existing denominational education system, further complicated this waste of human and physical resources. The quality of education has also been impacted to a great extent by the fiscal needs of the province (see par 3.2.3).

The government's prompt response to initiate educational reform because of these urgent needs, must be commended. Ideally, when planning sustainable educational change, it should involve a consultation process with all the stakeholders in education. It must be pointed out that this consultation process was not ignored. It was maintained through extensive surveys, public hearings, submissions, briefs and many discussions with individuals and groups (GNL 1992b:2, 5-6). The consultation process has not always been easy. Negotiations with the church often failed, resulting in court challenges (see par 5.1). The government is nevertheless dedicated to keeping the lines of communication open with all interested parties in education. It has also sought to obtain consensus at the local level for its reforms, especially during recent months. This open approach to educational reform together with the government's swift action to create a non-denominational education system since September 1997, is viewed as a very positive step, according to Walters (12/3/98).

6.3 A vision for educational excellence: goal and principles guiding the model for educational reform

In looking at the proposed model to restructure and reform the Newfoundland education system, it is obvious that the government endorses the principle of equal educational opportunities for all children. It also endorses the perspective that education is linked to increasing productivity and economic growth. This endorsement is clearly evident from the stated goal and principles guiding the model (GNL 1993:1, 3-4; also see par

4.2.1). These views are commonly shared by most Canadians and Newfoundlanders (see paragraphs 3.4 & 4.2).

The government specifies in Part II of its model (GNL 1994:2-4), that its goal of higher achievement is not only narrowly confined to attaining high scores on tests of basic skills. Achievement also means understanding broad concepts, the ability to analyze and synthesize knowledge, the ability to think critically, and understanding processes in generating, locating and utilizing knowledge. The goal therefore provides a foundation for full intellectual development, which in turn benefits the individual and its society. Furthermore the goal of higher achievement can only work if society as a whole is convinced of its importance, and if all those involved in educating children help contribute to the attainment of this goal.

The principles guiding the model incorporate a strategy for attaining higher levels of educational achievement through

- ▲ consolidation of the education system
- ▲ setting standards of achievement
- ▲ accountability to the public
- ▲ parent involvement
- ▲ school-based leadership and decision-making
- ▲ neighbourhood schools
- ▲ participation in governance for all citizens, regardless of religious affiliation (GNL 1993:3-4)

As crucial as these guidelines are to improve education, the government's motives for reform are being perceived as not altogether pure, by some key educators (Crocker 8/11/96; Penney [regional representative of the Newfoundland and Labrador Home and School Federation], 12/3/98). The researcher shares this opinion as it is obvious that the necessity for change is not only driven by the need for higher achievement in education, but also by the fiscal needs of the province. The principles nonetheless, provide for a substantial improvement in educational achievement. For instance, the

consolidation of the education system has been a decisive first step in facilitating the implementation of the government's reform initiatives. Nowadays principles such as, setting of educational standards; increasing school-based leadership and decision-making; involving parents in the education of their children; and making the system more accountable to the public; are considered essential by Newfoundland educators for achieving educational excellence (Crocker 8/11/96; Downer 13/11/97; Genge 12/11/97; Williams 8/11/96).

The application of these principles as they pertain to the planning, development and the implementation of the reform initiatives, will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

6.4 The management perspective: planning, development and implementation of the reform initiatives

Chapter 4 gives an overall survey of the proposals by the Newfoundland government to restructure and reform the education system, based on the recommendations of the Williams Commission, and which have been used as a springboard for the planning and development of the proposals.

Briefly, proposals to restructure the education system aim at streamlining basic governing structures at the provincial and local level. Proposals for educational reforms include amongst others, curriculum development, the professional development of teachers and the improvement and monitoring of educational standards.

From 1993 to 1997 the Newfoundland government succeeded in developing the legal framework whereby these proposals could be implemented. The effect of the first steps of implementation on the education system and how it is perceived, will be highlighted next.

6.4.1 *Provincial level*

At the end of the school year for 1997/98, there is not much to report about changes to governing structures at the provincial level other than what has already been discussed in paragraphs 4.2.2.1, 4.2.2.2 & 4.2.2.3.

In the light of criticism that has been levelled at the government for pursuing a top-down approach in its dealings with educational bodies and institutions (see par 4.2.2.1), it was interesting to note the comments made by Dr Glenn Loveless [director of programme development for the Department of Education], at a recent conference of the School Administrators Council (SAC).¹ He said that although it was the Department's mandate to set educational goals and standards and develop curriculum programmes (GNL 1993:8; also see par 4.2.2.1), it would be foolhardy to insist on this mandate. He maintained that officials of the Department had come to realize that a top-down approach did not work. With regard to the development and implementation of programmes, as well as the professional development of teachers and school administrators, the Department sees its role as that of assisting and collaborating with school boards, school administrators and schools. Moreover, for the curriculum to be relevant it must be developed at school level, that is, it must be consistent, site-based, self-directed, interactive and immediate (Loveless 1998). The researcher views this response in a positive light, as it augurs well for the future improvement of education in Newfoundland.

Despite these assurances by Dr Loveless, a warning was issued to the Newfoundland government at the SAC conference by the keynote speaker, Dr Tom Williams, [professor at the School of Policy Studies, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario]. He commented on the fact that throughout his years of studying the implementation policies of governments, he has observed that it seems to be more important to some politicians to have the "symbols of change" in place, as opposed to the "operating reality of change". He also noticed in some instances that when governments

¹ The SAC conference was held on April 1-3, 1998 at Corner Brook.

implemented change, there was a gap between theory and reality. He therefore suggested that with the implementation of the new educational policies in Newfoundland, the government should also provide training programmes to help ensure the successful operation of the education system. Training in areas such as the development of negotiating skills and conflict management, would be helpful to school principals and school councils in building solid relationships (Williams 1998; *The Western Star* 3/4/98:1).

6.4.2 *Local level*

6.4.2.1 School boards and school organization

As has been pointed out in paragraph 4.2.3.1, the establishment of ten district school boards is considered to be one of the most important steps in restructuring the education system of Newfoundland. Chapters 4 and 5 detail most of the problems and frustrations that these school boards faced, since they assumed full responsibility at the beginning of 1997 for implementing educational changes at the local level. Apart from coping with an ever-increasing workload, school board officials had to deal with court challenges by parents about school designations and closures, as well as court rulings that rescinded the decisions made by school boards in this regard (see par 5.1). Nonetheless, the district school boards are being perceived as functioning well under the circumstances and breaking new ground (Downer 13/11/97; Genge 12/11/97; Walters 14/11/97).

An urgent problem that faces school boards at the end of the school year for 1997/98, is the limited amount of time they have to implement a non-denominational school system for the new school year commencing in September 1998. During discussions at the SAC conference, it was pointed out that it is an accepted fact that a year is required to prepare for major school changes. Many delegates (including school board officials and school administrators) believe that too many changes are involved. For instance, new policy statements have to be developed by the school boards, decisions made about school closures which in turn affect parents and students, and new

programmes have to be developed and implemented. Implementing programmes is also a problem because there is not enough time to train teachers and school administrators to institute these programmes (Dirkschen van Schalkwyk 1998a).

The organization and consolidation of the different denominational school systems into a single, unified non-denominational system, is currently the area of restructuring that concerns everyone involved in the process (i.e. school board officials, school administrators, teachers and parents). At school level, there is a feeling amongst school administrators and teachers that they are ill-prepared for the merging and consolidation of schools that are to take place in September 1998. Some delegates at the SAC conference indicated that they felt they were moving from one crisis to the next. School administrators expressed the opinion that they were expected to wear too many hats in trying to cope with all the changes that are now thrust upon them (Dirkschen van Schalkwyk 1998a).

It is to be expected that many problems will surface when schools are consolidated in the new school year. It will take time for the concept of a single non-denominational school system to take root, as Vincent (11/3/98) has observed. Students, parents and teachers will have to adapt to the concept of neighbourhood schools without denominational affiliations. School services will have to be adapted, and likewise school bus transport services. Decisions will have to be made about the use or non-use of school buildings where schools are closing down. It is the opinion of the researcher that it will take several years for the consolidation to be completed and for the new system to be well established. In spite of all these logistical problems and attitudinal barriers, the researcher believes that the advantages of creating a single non-denominational school system will clearly become evident in time.

6.4.2.2 School councils

One of the most positive outcomes of the current reform initiatives has been the formation of school councils across the province of Newfoundland, since the pilot project was first installed during 1994/95 under the leadership of Professor Alice Collins

(see par 4.2.3.3). During the past three years parents have gradually become familiar with the idea that by means of the school council, they can become directly involved in the improvement of their children's education. Unfortunately, most school councils established since 1995 have not been able to focus solely on their mandate for school improvement and educational outcomes, as Professor Collins reported in a follow-up survey that was presented at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Newfoundland and Labrador Home and School Federation² on April 26, 1998. The survey was conducted by telephone interview. Professor Collins reported that about one hundred council chairpersons across the province responded to the telephone interview (Collins 1998a:5).

In presenting this survey, Professor Collins remarked that provincial governments across Canada (like most western industrialized countries) have reformed their education systems during the past decade by focusing largely on two initiatives:

- ▲ increased parental involvement
- ▲ site-based decision-making (SBDM)

The concept of shifting authority to the school site together with parental and community involvement, is receiving increasing attention and is often manifested in the form of school councils. Across Canada there is a surging interest in school councils which, in theory, would substantially increase the ability of parents and school personnel to influence school policies and make schools more responsive to the demands of their environment (Collins 1998:1).

Referring to Newfoundland, Professor Collins assured delegates it is leading the way in establishing school councils. There are now four hundred school councils at various stages of development across the province (Collins 1998b).

²

The AGM of the Newfoundland and Labrador Home and School Federation was held on April 24-26, 1998 at Stephenville. At the annual business meeting, the name of the Newfoundland and Labrador Home and School Federation was changed to the *Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils* (*The Western Star* 2/5/98:23).

Preliminary results of the 1998 survey of school councils in Newfoundland indicated the following:

▲ Meetings

Most school councils surveyed, meet once a month.

▲ Committees

Of the school councils surveyed, many have committees in place. Typical committees deal with finance, fundraising, curriculum, communication and school improvement. Most councils surveyed, indicated that their committees consist of council members and others.

▲ Decision-making

Decision-making within a majority of councils is by consensus. In many others, voting is involved only if consensus does not work. Authority ranges from shared decision-making in some councils (about half) to advisory functions with very little or no authority in others.

▲ Issues

Operational details occupy almost all councils and half of those surveyed feel they spend most of their time on operational details. Other frequent issues are school improvement, fundraising and parent involvement.

▲ Development

Development ranged from being provided with a manual to read, to a few training sessions with school principals and school board officials. Many councils indicated that training was inadequate. Of those councils that did receive training,

the three most common topics covered in training sessions were legislated functions, school board policies and instructions on conducting council meetings. Even though these training sessions were considered informative, many councils desired more in-depth training especially about the purpose, role and mandate of school councils.

▲ Barriers

Time, uncertainty about purpose and poor training were listed as barriers. In some cases, school principals and school boards were mentioned as barriers. Finally, the lack of authority was cited as a barrier (Collins 1998a:5-6).

Despite these problems, many councils signified that they are working well together. However, the strongest sentiment expressed by councils surveyed, is that they need authority in significant areas in order to be effective. Collins (1998a:7) maintains that this factor (i.e. legislated authority), above all other factors, will determine the success of school councils in Newfoundland. The second most important factor is that of meaningful development. In the survey that Professor Collins conducted, she claims that she has yet to see a school council in Newfoundland that focuses solely on its purpose and mandate, that is, student achievement and increase of school performance. Confusion about the purpose, mandate and functions of the school council still exists. Councils get sidetracked by non-substantive issues, such as by-laws, protocol agreements, constitutions, policies and politics. This is also true of school councils everywhere in Canada, according to Collins (1998a:7). She firmly believes that legislated authority on important issues will greatly enhance the potential effectiveness of school councils, but it will also require a great deal of time, commitment and effort (Collins 1998b).

The researcher agrees that school councils have the potential to substantially impact education at the grassroots level. School councils in Newfoundland are still experiencing growing pains, but the researcher is convinced these problems will be worked out in the next couple of years. It would seem that across Canada, school councils are

here to stay and their impact on educational achievement in the future cannot be underestimated. Because school councils operate at the grassroots level, their influence on educational performance and improvement could be stronger and more sustainable, than authority granted from above, as Collins (1998a:7) puts it. Thus, school councils are perceived to be instrumental in effecting lasting educational reform and improvement.

6.4.2.3 Curriculum development and implementation

Paragraph 4.2.4 outlines the proposals of the Newfoundland government for developing and implementing a revised curriculum which aims to meet the needs and expectations of the Newfoundland society in an ever expanding technological world. It also gives details of the revised senior high school curriculum which will be implemented in high schools across the province at the beginning of September 1998, when the new school year for 1998/99 commences.

The curriculum for junior high schools, as well as for elementary schools are also currently under revision, according to a statement by Dr Glenn Loveless. When questioned about the government's intentions concerning the curriculum for the junior schools across the province, he told delegates at the recent SAC conference that the revised handbooks for the curriculum for these schools are currently being circulated for comments and reactions from teachers and school administrators (Loveless 1998). During discussions, some of the problems that school administrators experience with the implementation of new curriculum courses, were highlighted. Lack of in-service training pertaining to new courses was a common problem. Another area of concern was curriculum integration. Dr Wynanne Downer [principal of St. Gerard's Elementary School in Corner Brook], observed in this regard that in some cases there appears to be incongruity between what is offered and what actually happens in schools. A breakdown in communication between school administrators and school board officials, as well as financial restraints, were also mentioned as barriers to implementing new curriculum courses (Dirkschen van Schalkwyk 1998a).

In view of these discussions, it was therefore encouraging to be informed at the AGM of the Newfoundland and Labrador Home and School Federation, that the Department of Education, in collaboration with district school boards, plans to establish leadership teams at the schools to develop school improvement plans involving curriculum development and implementation (see par 6.4.2.5 for a discussion of the school assessment plan which is closely linked to the school improvement plan). A facilitator at each district office will assist these teams in the drafting of a school improvement plan. Leadership teams will furthermore help schools to identify needs and prioritize objectives in connection with the development of the curriculum, as well as monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the school growth development process (Dirkschen van Schalkwyk 1998b).

The researcher foresees that this new initiative will improve the learning experience for students in Newfoundland and help prepare them to face the new century with confidence. The goals of the school improvement plan focus on the intellectual and social development of students and the improvement of the teaching-learning environment. They also aim to provide an environment for shared decision-making, enable greater involvement in education for parents and others, and create an environment which fosters ongoing professional development of staff (Dirkschen van Schalkwyk 1998b).

6.4.2.4 Professional development of teachers

Paragraph 4.2.5 contains the proposals by the Newfoundland government for improving the professional development of teachers and their certification. Notwithstanding these proposals, the professional development of teachers remains one of the biggest concerns of Newfoundland educators as was evident from the lengthy discussions on this issue at the SAC conference. School administrators and teachers indicated their disappointment and concern about this aspect of educational reform and reiterated that new vision was needed. In responding to questions about the professional development of teachers, Dr Glenn Loveless assured delegates that the Department of Education is currently re-examining its proposals for the professional development of

teachers. It is now convinced that a partnership approach, consisting of the Department of Education, district school boards, the NLTA, school administrators and teachers, is the best way for putting a strategy in place that will provide for the consistent and ongoing professional development of teachers. No firm policy is in place yet, but the Department is working towards this end, according to Loveless (1998).

During discussions on this issue at the SAC conference, strong sentiment was expressed in favour of *lead* teachers undertaking the professional development of other teachers, as they are considered to be credible instructors. It was suggested that *lead* teachers should attend summer sessions and then conduct in-service training sessions for their colleagues during the school year. In some instances, the professional development of teachers by other teachers is already being undertaken under the umbrella of the NLTA. Recently, this organization has appointed a professional development co-ordinating officer. The officer's responsibility is to assess the needs of teachers in regard to professional development, and to assist with the establishment of professional development committees in all the school districts (Dirkschen van Schalkwyk 1998a).

It is to be hoped that the proposed collaboration of all the educational bodies, both at the provincial and local level, will succeed in bringing about a sustainable plan for improving the professional development of teachers.

6.4.2.5 Monitoring and accountability

Paragraph 4.2.6 highlights the proposals by the Newfoundland government to achieve an improved system of monitoring and accountability in education. In addition to these proposals, the government now plans to conduct school assessments in a systematic way by means of special committees of school councils. It is an organized approach or plan by which schools evaluate the quality of educational services their students are receiving and is closely linked with the school improvement plan (see par 6.4.2.3). The

primary focus is to improve student learning and performance. The purpose of the school assessment plan is to

- ▲ meet or exceed educational standards
- ▲ enable schools to engage in ongoing planning
- ▲ analyze all aspects of schooling
- ▲ enable schools to operate by a longterm and comprehensive school improvement plan
- ▲ enable parents to become involved in and informed about the progress and achievement of their schools
- ▲ define good practices and working models for schools
- ▲ ensure consistency with the outcomes shared by other provinces in Atlantic Canada (Dirkschen van Schalkwyk 1998b)

The school assessment plan briefly involves putting together an informal team consisting of staff, parents, students and others. The task of this team is to develop a mission statement and goals for improving the school's performance, as well as assessing the educational performance of students. Timetables are set for the various stages of the assessment process and for implementing goals to improve student performance outcomes. Structures are created and criteria identified to achieve these goals. A school profile is subsequently put together, based on surveys of all aspects of schooling, and the learning environment. Performance indicators of the school's performance on past external evaluations are also important and form part of the school profile. The school's strengths and weaknesses are then identified through an organizational preview. A school improvement (or growth) plan covering a two- to five-year period, is developed next to help sustain the school's strengths and to address priority areas needing change. Finally, an external team is invited to conduct an external assessment and to validate the school improvement plan. Based on the external team's recommendation, the district school board approves the school improvement plan for implementation (Dirkschen van Schalkwyk 1998b).

The researcher considers the concept of a systematic approach to school improvement and assessment by means of the aforementioned plans, as a valuable proposal for the enhancement of education in Newfoundland. The whole concept is indeed an effective approach to school improvement and monitoring and will in the long run immensely benefit educational outcomes.

6.5 The historical perspective: the changing roles and responsibilities of the state/church partnership in education

The most noticeable change that has come about because of the reform initiatives, is the termination of the lengthy state/church partnership in education. This partnership reflected much of Newfoundland's socio-cultural and political life in the past. The church was accepted as the natural leader to nurture and preserve the cultural identity of the Newfoundland society, and in this instance it played a significant role in Newfoundland's education during the past hundred years (Murphy & Byrne 1987:i). Had it not been for the dramatic changes in Newfoundland's environment (see chapter 3) that had challenged educators to restructure the education system, the denominational structure (with state and church sharing educational responsibilities) would still be intact.

With the creation of the new non-denominational education system, the church has been excluded from responsibility for the provision of education at the local level, including the provision of religious instruction (GNL 1997b:1; also see par 5.3). The debate over the manner in which the church's constitutional rights to educate have been rescinded, is still ongoing. It is a deeply complex matter involving the minority rights issue which is such an integral part of Canadian politics nowadays (see paragraphs 5.2 & 5.4). The Roman Catholic church still maintains that the process was flawed and unconstitutional and is currently challenging the Newfoundland government on this matter by another legal appeal. The church is appealing to the Supreme Court of Newfoundland to support another injunction that would halt the implementation of the

non-denominational education system in September when the school year for 1998/99 commences. At this point the case is still ongoing (*The Western Star* 13/5/98:2).

Although a non-denominational education system has now been created, religious observances and courses are still very much part of it. The only difference is that the government has assumed full responsibility for the provision of these courses in religious studies, and has thus taken over the role of the church in this regard (GNL 1997b:l; also see par 5.3). Consequently, from a historical perspective the school environment for children in Newfoundland will not be changing radically. As the researcher observed in paragraph 6.1, students will still receive a Christian education in Newfoundland, but without respect to any specific denominational affiliation. Perhaps this is one of the greatest achievements of the government's reform initiatives, as it is bound to foster tolerance and co-operation amongst all stakeholders in education. The church will still have an influence on education indirectly through its members who are teachers and parents, whereas the government provides the legal framework within which policies are implemented that influence the provision of education.

6.6 The socio-political perspective: impact of the reform initiatives on the Newfoundland society

The impact of the reform initiatives on the social, cultural, economic and political life of Newfoundland, is conceivably the most difficult to predict at this stage. Nevertheless, the much needed reforms hold the promise of

- ▲ breaking down religious barriers in society
- ▲ engendering a spirit of co-operation and involvement as parents, teachers, students and others work together at grass roots level to improve education
- ▲ improving financial resources through consolidation of the system
- ▲ satisfying the expectations of Newfoundlanders for a better life through improved education

- ▲ providing more equitable opportunities for all children in Newfoundland
- ▲ creating a technically skilled workforce to meet the challenges of the next century
- ▲ enriching the culture of the Newfoundland society through contact with the global village
- ▲ contributing to political development through skilled and educated individuals

Whether an improved education will truly invigorate the social and economic life of the many small fishing outports, remains to be seen. A much more concerted effort involving all aspects of social, educational and economic development is needed to sustain these outports. However, the researcher believes the pursuance of quality and excellence in education, is a starting point.

The government of Newfoundland foresees that students graduating from high schools in future will (with the new improved education that they receive) be able to influence the socio-cultural, political and economic dimensions of the Newfoundland society directly and indirectly by a knowledge and understanding of

- ▲ the social, political and economic forces that have shaped the past and present, and apply those understandings in planning for the future
- ▲ the global economy's influence on local economic development
- ▲ Canada's political, social and economic systems in a global context
- ▲ their own and others' cultural heritage, cultural identity and the contribution of multiculturalism to society
- ▲ existing and developing technologies and their impact on society
- ▲ the ethical issues related to the use of technology in a local and global context
- ▲ rules of ethical conduct as they apply to maintaining a moral and orderly society (GNL 1997c:3-6).

It is obvious from these suppositions that the Newfoundland government is truly convinced of the dynamic impact that an improved education will have on all aspects of the Newfoundland society.

6.7 Concluding remarks and observations

Organizationally and structurally, educational reform has been long overdue in Newfoundland. Ultimately, the impact of any attempt to reform education, must be measured by the effect it has on the student. Clearly, the impact that Newfoundland's educational reform initiatives will have on its students, is yet to be measured. Certain benefits are already obvious. Consolidating four denominational school systems into a single unified school system, will greatly reduce unnecessary expenses and duplication of services. The consolidation of 27 school boards into 10 district school boards has already proved to be cost-efficient. Streamlining the organizational structures at both the provincial and local levels, appears to be advantageous to the education system already. The establishment of school councils at schools across the province, is considered to be extremely beneficial to the system overall, especially as it pertains to the improvement of education and the monitoring of educational outcomes.

There are still some concerns, however, (as observed by the researcher) that could hinder the reform process, such as the following:

- ▲ There is a tendency on the part of the government to implement educational reforms too quickly in some instances, without proper guidelines and training. This practice could be detrimental to the successful incorporation of educational reforms that will last. At the same time, it must also be pointed out that most reforms have been smoothly implemented with thorough planning and training.
- ▲ There is a lack of vision and understanding on the part of some parents and other individuals about the purpose and objectives of the reform initiatives, especially as it relates to the closure of small schools that are no longer viable. Parents typically protest the inconvenience of having to send their children to a school that is not in their neighbourhood, even though the school to which their children have been allocated, is better equipped with more programmes and better services. This lack of understanding is causing district school boards many problems.

Decisions about school closures and the allocation of students to other schools for the school year 1998/99, are proving to be contentious issues at the present time.

- ▲ The continual effort by the Roman Catholic church to obtain a court injunction to delay the implementation of the new non-denominational school system, is confusing many Newfoundlanders. It has the potential of seriously eroding the whole reform process. The minority rights issue pertaining to the educational rights of the church, remains a divisive and complex issue that is subject to different interpretations.
- ▲ Certain power groups with political influence (notably business groups) could manipulate the provision of education for their own specific interests, thus compromising the government's reform initiatives.
- ▲ School councils could get bogged down by non-substantive issues, thereby jeopardising their mandate to improve education and monitor student performance.
- ▲ There is grave concern about the professional development of teachers, although as has been discussed in paragraph 6.4.2.4, this concern is receiving prompt attention.
- ▲ The needs of special groups of children (i.e. children who are mentally challenged, physically disabled, and children with above average ability) have not been adequately addressed, according to Penney (12/3/98). This is an aspect of the education system that requires a comprehensive plan of action.

Whatever consequence these concerns may have on the whole reform process, it is an undeniable fact that the advantages of educational reform to the Newfoundland society far outweighs any drawbacks caused by such concerns. The Newfoundland government has stated on more than one occasion that it greatly values the education

of its children, because it affects the whole community (GNL 1993:1; GNL 1996:1; GNL 1997a:xii). With the ever-increasing emphasis on higher educational achievement and world-class standards, the educational reform initiatives could play a decisive role in helping the Newfoundland society achieve those standards and improve the quality of life for its society overall. A relevant, up-to-date, meaningful education will be pivotal in preparing the children of Newfoundland for the next century.

Having achieved the establishment of a single non-denominational education system amidst what seemed like insurmountable problems at times, may inspire other societies to persevere in their efforts to implement educational reforms. The experience of instituting educational change in Newfoundland, could provide an example of tolerance, collaboration, site-based decision-making and achieving consensus on relevant educational issues, to the rest of Canada and the world.

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