Abstract Title:
Leadership for Inclusion and Policy-making: Initiatives of the Catholic Education Sector in Mauritius for the Preferential Option for the Poor

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Abstract

Mauritius is an island of 1,2M inhabitants with a minority population of Creoles who are in majority Catholic in faith. The academic achievement of the Creoles is in general lower when compared to the rest of the population, thus resulting in a greater economic and social divide. The Diocese of Port-Louis has for the past decades pioneered several projects in education and has implemented internal policy decisions in line with the preferential option for the poor. Some of these initiatives have led to national policy decisions in areas such as the inclusion of the mother-tongue and the inclusion of young persons which the education system has failed. Other pioneer projects have started, amongst others an adult education program for those who wish to resume their secondary education. Three interrelated areas weave themselves through the three case studies: ethnicity, language and poverty which all have a direct impact on school achievement. This paper gives an overview of the initiatives of the Catholic education sector for greater social justice, as well as the remaining challenges in the socio-economic and political context of Mauritius.

Key words: social justice, inclusion, preferential option for the poor, ethnicity, language hierarchy, policy-making...

Introduction

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Port-Louis is a main stakeholder of the government of Mauritius in the provision of free schooling. At present, for the primary education sector, out of a total of 312 primary schools, there are 223 primary government schools, 51 Roman Catholic Aided primary schools (16%), 2 Hindu Aided primary schools, and 36 private paid schools. For the secondary education sector, out of 173 schools, there are 68 State schools (36%), 89 grant-aided private schools (50%) including 17 Catholic grant-aided schools (11%) and 21 private-paid schools (Education Statistics, 2012). As a main partner in education, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Port-Louis has often had to express its concern regarding issues in the education sector pertaining to social justice and inclusion.
This paper aims to show how Catholic educational leadership in Mauritius has influenced national educational policies. Three snap-shots of significant initiatives in Catholic educational leadership will be given from an insider’s point of view. The first example given will be of the inclusion in a prevocational education programme (PVE) in secondary schools of students who have failed at the end of primary education cycle. The second example will be of the process of the inclusion of the mother-tongue in the primary school curriculum through a bilingual programme which started in the PVE, and which influenced the national language policy. A third example will be of an initiative with regards to adult education. The main focus behind all three examples is inclusion of those who were excluded in the educational system, mainly because of socio-economic status and the language divide. The preferential option for the poor, as promoted in the Catholic social teaching of post-Vatican II, will be a key guideline for inclusion.

“While the common good embraces all, those who are weak, vulnerable, and most in need deserve preferential concern. A basic moral test for our society is how we treat the most vulnerable in our midst” (no. 50).

Charity in Truth (Caritas in Veritate), Pope Benedict XVI, 2009

The treatment of the most vulnerable through education is one of the ways the Church works towards the common good, ‘not only for socio-political reasons or social justice but also as a theological commitment deeply rooted in the church’s Christology or doctrine about Christ’ (Gutiérrez, 2009). While promoting integral human growth in a synthesis of culture and faith, Catholic education needs to bear witness to Christ ‘in an active, inclusive care for others, while confronting contemporary injustices in economic and social structures’ (McLaughlin, 2000).

First, an overview of the historical and situational education context of Mauritius will be given at national level followed by the Catholic education context. Then the case studies will be presented with some recommendations on leading for inclusion and leading for policy-making.

The situational context

The Republic of Mauritius is situated in the Indian Ocean and has a population of 1,2M. Formerly a French colony (1715) then a British colony (1810), it gained its independence in 1968 and became a republic in 1992. Mauritius is the only African nation where the majority religion is Hinduism (52%), followed by Christianity (30%), Islam (16%) and minority religions (2%). With a population which originated from Europe, Africa, India and China, Mauritius is known as a multicultural, multilingual and multireligious country.

Ranking 5th in terms of GDP in Africa and 69th over 190 countries worldwide by the World Bank (2011), Mauritius is no longer considered as a developing country. The government of Mauritius provides free education to its citizens from pre-primary to tertiary levels in the public and grant-aided institutions. Since July 2005, the government also introduced free public transport for all students. Schooling is compulsory up to the age of 16. Government expenditure on education
was the equivalent of 400 million USD, representing 12% of total expenditure: 47% for secondary education, 26% primary, 6% tertiary, 3% technical and vocational, 2% pre-primary and 16% on other expenses related to education and training (Education Statistics 2012, Government of Mauritius).

**A competitive education system**

As a former colony, the education system is largely based on the British system. Formal education is a 3+6+5+2 years cycle from pre-primary to higher secondary and it is highly competitive. Admission to secondary schools is based on best academic results, thus creating a bottle-neck for national schools and high-demand private grant-aided schools, amongst which are the Catholic schools. The pass rate at primary school level is around 65% and the pass rate at the Cambridge School Certificate as well as the Cambridge Higher School certificate ranges from 77% to 78%, with Mauritian students ranked as top students in the world at the Cambridge International O Level and A Level examinations.

However, even with free secondary education since 1978 up to the age of 20, there is still around 30% of the primary school students not accessing secondary education, amongst which half of them are students who have failed the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) examinations twice. Around 15% of a cohort does not obtain their CPE even after repeating, and these children are branded as ‘double CPE failures’ (Ministry of Education, 2001).

**Exclusion, a consequence of slavery and majority/minority politics**

The assumption that if education is free, all children will be given a chance to succeed in life may be true but free education is only one factor. Other factors play a key role in school achievement. According to Walters’ (2012) research on ethnicity, race and education “it would seem that the [education] system serves certain ethnic groups better than others’ (p. 28) and that, as far back as the 1970s in the UK for example, “ethnic minority children were underachieving” (p. 31). In the Mauritian context, the Report of the Truth and Justice Commission constituted in March 2009 to ‘make an assessment of the consequences of slavery and indentured labour during the colonial period up to the present’, in order ‘to promote social justice and national unity’ (Government of Mauritius, 2011, p.6) is very revealing. According to the report, ‘descendants of slaves and persons of African and Malagasy origin continue to experience significant marginalisation and poverty in Mauritius’ (p.283). ‘The impact of slavery on descendants of slaves and persons with an African phenotype is believed to be more strongly felt on descendants of slaves than the impact of indenture on descendants of indentured immigrants (p.296).

Among Creoles and those who openly accepted the designation of being a slave descendant, an important view was that the situation of Creoles was negatively affected by the majority/minority politics in the country. The view articulated was that, as a significant minority, Creoles could never obtain advantages or even basic rights in Mauritian society. (p. 283)
Amongst all ethnic groups in Mauritius, the Creole community has been slower in achieving socio-economic success, a stigma rooted in the political, social and economic history of the island where slave trade was perpetuated during the Dutch, French and British colonial periods up to 1835. This situation is improving, albeit very slowly, due to more social awareness and political consciousness as well as actions led by the Catholic education sector.

**The Catholic Church, a main stakeholder in free education**

The Diocese of Port-Louis is the only Roman Catholic diocese present in Mauritius since the 18th century. It has been the main provider of education up to the 1950s. The first parish school was founded in 1742 (Diocese de Port-Louis, 2012) and congregations such as the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, commonly known as the Loreto Sisters in 1845 and the Christian Brothers in 1877 were invited to open schools. Changes at national level started in 1944 when the British government reformed the primary sector with a grouping of all confessional schools according to their religious denominations and created Education Authorities such as the Roman Catholic Education Authority (Education Act 1957). With the independence of Mauritius in 1968 and after free education at primary level, secondary education was declared free in 1976 with the government paying grants to its private partners, thus paying the school fees in lieu of the parents. In the 2000s, in the context of the government’s commitment to Education for All with regards to the Millennium Development Goals (UN, 2012), the government invested a lot in building more state secondary schools, as a means to increase access to secondary education.

**Intake capacity**

Despite the fact that all children of the Republic of Mauritius can have access to education, not all Catholic children can be admitted in Catholic schools. The percentage of Catholics in Mauritius is 26% (CIA, 2010) and the national student intake capacity for the Catholic primary schools is 20% and for Catholic secondary schools, 12%. Furthermore, the actual intake of Catholic students in the Catholic schools, which are open to all children of the Republic, irrespective of religious creed, ranges from 30% to 90% depending on the geographical situation of the school, with an average of 50%. Therefore, many Catholics do not have access to Catholic schools, thus the frustration caused amongst the Catholic families, particularly those from low income and low achievement groups, resulting in a perception of exclusion both by the government and the Church.

**Preferential option for the poor**

In 1996, a secondary school was founded in one of the most vulnerable region of the island with boys admitted on the grounds on their low achievement and not on the basis of best results as for all other schools. This decision on admission policy was a forerunner of what was going to happen in the Synode 1997-2000 when the Diocese of Port-Louis invited all the members of the Church to participate in a reflection on the way forward for the Catholic Church in Mauritius (Diocese of Port-Louis, 2001). Four foundational pillars were identified:
- A Church with the risen Christ at the heart of its teachings
- A Church with a mission, open to the world
- A Church living the preferential option for the poor
- A Church in unity and communion with all

With regards to the third pillar: ‘A Church living the preferential option for the poor’ (ibid, p.52), this was a response to strong calls from Church members. Frustrations, disappointments and sufferings were expressed in pleas for a renewal of the Catholic Church in Mauritius. The parts pertinent to education are translated below, the original document being in French, and are self-explicit:

There are the cries of the poor, the small, particularly those from the Creole population, too often disappointed in their aspirations
- because their children are excluded from the present education system and are not admitted in Catholic schools because there are not enough available seats
- because they have fewer opportunities and do not have the support which would help them to find their place in society
- because the priests are not close enough to their parishioners at grass-root level, to see the conditions in which they live and their human misery
- because the Church does not denounce enough the injustices the Creoles have to live through (ibid, p. 46)

Thus, amongst other recommendations, an admission policy based on the preferential option for the poor, and an inclusive pedagogy which provides alternatives for children with learning difficulties were adopted as well as more accessibility to technical education for girls and for the poor (ibid, p.75).

As a result of the Synodal recommendations, the Catholic Church initiated some decisive actions in its struggle for social justice regarding the poor and the Creole population in particular. It reviewed its admission policy in secondary schools as from 2003 with guidelines towards the preferential option for the poor. In 2005, four new secondary schools were built in vulnerable regions of the island. The new constructions, on Church land property, involved massive investments and started without the financial help of the government. However, after three years of negotiations, a preferential loan was granted, repayable on grants - a loan which is at present available to the whole private aided non-confessional education sector. In many other ways, the Catholic education sector has pioneered projects which were later extended to the national sector, both public and private. The three following case studies show how pioneer programmes can lead to national policies.

First Case Study:

Inclusion of low achievers in mainstream secondary education: Prevocational education
Since the 1970s, at the post-independence period, the diocese and other congregations started operating Development Centres for out-of-school youths and school drop-outs. Secondary education was still fee-paying at that time and there were no vocational schools. The Development Centres were funded by private sponsors and the youths acquired functional literacy and numeracy skills as well as vocational and technical training.

In the 1990s, the elitist ranking admission criteria to secondary schools were decried as creating greater social division. ‘Best’ students were admitted in the ‘star’ schools, low-achievers were relegated to low-performing private grant-aided secondary schools, and CPE failed students had to repeat another year and take the examinations again. Statistics showed that only 30% of repeaters succeeded at the second attempt and many of these children were discouraged and dropped out of school, hence the importance of the Development Centres. However, funds were getting scarce and some Centres had to close down.

The Centres which survived were those situated on the compound of Catholic grant-aided schools. The secondary Catholic schools were the first to adopt a policy of inclusion: all students would wear the same uniform but follow a different curriculum and they would participate actively in all school activities. The mainstream school would fund the Development Centre found in its compound or adopt a Centre in the community. However, it was still a dual education system because the mainstream was being sponsored by government grants whereas the prevocational streams were not recognized as registered students in the free education system - a paradox and an injustice in a country where education was free - but not for those who were at the lowest level of achievement and at the lowest level of the socio-economic sector.

**Inclusion of prevocational education in the national education system**

The government was approached by the Catholic Church which urged the State to cater for the prevocational students, based on the model of Development Centres, but in the free education system.

In 2001, conscious of its responsibility to achieve Education For All in line with the Millennium Development Goals, government agreed to open prevocational streams for all the children who did not pass the CPE examinations twice. Each academic mainstream school, whether a State school or a private grant-aided school, having physical space would henceforth accommodate a prevocational stream.

Out of the 3000 prevocational students admitted yearly, some 15% secure a seat in the Catholic schools. At national level, there are still some schools, mainly state schools resisting the inclusion of a prevocational stream on the mainstream compound despite the government policy for inclusion. The main arguments for refusal of inclusion are based mostly on parents’ and school staff’s perceptions that the prevocational students’ social background is not the same as the mainstream students and there is a tendency to blame prevocational students for all cases of indiscipline and inappropriate behavior.
A more inclusive praxis in Catholic schools

As a value-added program in the prevocational education sector, the Catholic education sector introduced a more inclusive pedagogy through an activity-based curriculum. This was recognized by the Truth and Justice Commission:

The Prevocational Education Scheme proposes a shift in the pattern of traditional academic elitist educational goals to a more child-centered and need-based learning. However, the actual praxis is different in educational institutions governed by the State and Private sectors. Prevocational classes in State Secondary Schools tend to be more academic, while in Bureau de [l']Education Catholique (BEC) schools, much emphasis is laid on an inclusive pedagogy, where students are encouraged to participate in the various activities tailored according to the needs of those students (Truth and Justice Commission Report, 2011, p. 298).

Furthermore, in 2005, the Catholic education sector went one step further with the introduction of Kreol Morisien, the Mauritian mother-tongue, taught as a language and used as the medium of instruction – an innovative practice leading to a bilingual mode of assessment - which was going to make a major breakthrough in 2010, as will be discussed in the second case study.

Some findings on prevocational education in the Catholic schools

To better understand the impact of the prevocational education program on the youths labeled as ‘double CPE failures’ but whom in fact the national education system had failed, here are some findings from a small research survey I personally conducted in 2011.

The aim was to find out whether prevocational education had impacted positively on the students after the three-year prevocational education scheme. The sample used was 90 students out of the 275 students who were participating in the Kreol Morisien program, that is, one third of the net total. A questionnaire was used as the methodological tool in 4 Catholic schools: one urban girls’ school, one suburban boys’ school and two co-educational rural schools- one agricultural and the other one coastal. The number of boys and girls was more or less equal: 46 girls to 54 boys. The main results of the survey can be seen in charts in Appendix 1. The general findings are as follow:

1. Socio-economic background

Students admitted in the prevocational stream are in majority Creoles and from very poor and poor family backgrounds. The teachers identified the main problems as socio-economic and learning difficulties. The teachers had more interactions with the mothersthan the fathers who almost never came to school. One quarter of the mothers were housewives and three quarters worked as home helps. 60% of the fathers were reported to not having a regular job and for those who worked, the majority had manual jobs. Regarding the parents’ education background, some mothers had no schooling, almost three quarters went to a primary school with only 2%
completing their O levels; whereas two-thirds of the fathers went to primary school, 30% completed lower secondary and only 4% completed their O levels.

2. Academic achievement

In general, after an analysis of results at point of entry, it was found that half improved a little in all subjects and 41.3% were estimated to have improved a lot in all subjects. Teachers reported that the barely literate and numerate students decreased from 36.5% to 8% whereas the percentage of student with very good literacy and numeracy competencies improved from 8% to 58.7%. In all the subjects, there was a definite improvement of the percentage of students obtaining better grades.

In the domains of learning, the teachers reported that their students had improved in oral and verbal communication skills, numeracy and problem-solving skills, written communication skills, life skills and livelihood and trade skills. In the domains of human development, the teachers felt that their students had built up their self-esteem, inter relational and social skills, moral values, life management skills and spiritual development.

3. Experience of schooling at primary and prevocational levels

The students’ report on their past experience in their primary school shows that they liked their primary school because they had lots of friends (91%). A minority said they did not like their primary school (13%). However, with regards to the learning outcomes, they were very much aware that they had learning difficulties and that they were not able to follow the teacher’s lessons. The most frequent answers given were: “I did not understand the teacher, I did not understand the lessons, the teacher talked in English and I did not understand...”. After three years in prevocational education, the gain in self-esteem, self-confidence and learning outcomes cannot be neglected. None of them replied that they had not improved at all in their studies. For their learning outcomes, they said they could read, write and count better. For their personal and emotional development, they reported that they felt more confident, had made lots of friends, felt loved and cared for by the teachers, learned self-respect and respect of others, and that they gained a lot in terms of values.

4. Aspirations and career choice

One of the findings was that when asked about their career choice, the prevocational students responded according to the curriculum taught and to their own family experience. On top of their list and in descending order, here is their choice which can be grouped as follows: cook, baker, mechanic, electrician, hairdresser (16 to 37%) , then entertainment artist, musician, air steward/stewardess, plumber, barmaid, cashier, boat skipper (3 to 8%) and more rarely cited: taxi driver, florist, carpenter (1-2%). Out of the 90 respondents, 10% said they did not know what they wanted to do when they start working.
5. The role of Catholic education in policy-making

All teachers participating in the survey said that the Bureau of Catholic Education had a key role in policy-making and policy influencing at national level. They found that the stand of the Catholic education sector was positive in the following ways:

(i) Integration of prevocational classes in mainstream schools.
(ii) Integration of Kreol Morisien in the curriculum.
(iii) Advocating for 5 (or at least 4) years of PVE instead of 3 years, in line with compulsory education up to 16 years old.
(iv) Advocating for the recognition of the PVE Certificate as equivalent to the CPE, a policy decision which would give the students the opportunity to apply for a job in the civil service.
(v) Recognition of the experience and field work of the Catholic PVE sector, particularly in terms of the language issue.
(vi) Recognition of the experience and field work of the Catholic PVE sector, particularly in terms of the curriculum content.
(vii) Recognition of the experience and field work of the Catholic PVE sector, particularly in terms of the need for the reform of the prevocational sector.

Second Case Study:

Inclusion of the mother tongue in the educational system: Kreol Morisien, a language, a subject and a medium of instruction

The language situation in Mauritius is complex. All Mauritians speak Kreol Morisien (KM) and the majority can speak or understand French. However, education is conducted in English because of the Cambridge examination system used. Other ancestral languages taught at primary level are Arabic, Hindi, Mandarin, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu. At secondary school level, foreign languages include German, Italian and Spanish.

Kreol Morisien is the mother-tongue of more than 80% of the population whereas Bhojpurri, an Indian dialect, is the mother-tongue of an aging minority of Indo-Mauritians, the younger generations now speaking KM or French at home. For the vast majority of the school population, the medium of instruction, English, is their second or third language. Until year 2012, the language situation in the education system in Mauritius was creating a social divide because KM was not recognized as a language and was not allowed in the curriculum, thus disadvantaging the Creole population and all Mauritians whose mother tongue is Kreol Morisien.

Prevok-BEK, the first mother tongue based curriculum program

The catalyst in the policy decision regarding the recognition of Kreol Morisien as a language was the Prevocational program of the Catholic education sector initiated in 2005, called Prevok-BEK, the first mother-tongue based curriculum introduced ‘informally’ through the ‘formal’ national
framework of Prevocational Education with Kreol Morisien taught as a full-fledged language and used as a medium of instruction. In 2008, Prevok-BEK devised an innovative bilingual English/Kreol Morisien mode of assessment. In 2009, textbooks were produced in Kreol Morisien and in bilingual format for Mathematics.

Implemented in 12 secondary schools representing 900 students with 55 teachers who participated in the program, Prevokbek is grounded into several UNESCO Member States declaration and conventions for a ‘multilingual education’, encouraging education in the mother tongue alongside bilingual or multilingual education. It was a means to solve the problem of school drop-outs and a high rate of failure at the CPE examinations.

The program was monitored closely with regular reports submitted to the Ministry of Education to show –case the positive learning outcomes of the students who had failed twice at the CPE exams and who showed improvement in their academic achievement in the Prevokbek program. The successive Ministers of Education were invited to take cognizance of the positive academic outcomes. Performance in English varied from 68% to 95% overall pass, French: 62% to 95%, Maths: 46% to 93%, Science: 73% to 92% and Kreol Morisien: 64% to 85%, very good results when compared to level of achievement of the candidates at point of entry and average yearly results in the subjects at CPE examinations at national level.

In 2007 already, after three years of the Prevok-BEK program and results of the first cohort, the initiative was recommended as good practice in the list of recommendations in the National Human Rights Report (2007).

The use of Creole would be of great help to those children at the very start of their schooling so that teachers may understand their difficulties in acquiring knowledge in languages which are foreign to them [...]. For BEC, Grafi-larmoni is the recognized written form of the Mauritian Kreol language and technical knowhow for its implementation is available. (para.35)

**Prevok-BEK, finalist at the Commonwealth Education Good Practice Awards 2012**

Moreover, the programme enhanced the students’ self-esteem, ability and confidence; rekindled their interest and motivation in learning, improved the student-teacher relationships; and activated students’ participation’, as evidenced in the previous part of this paper. These outcomes boosted the advocacy for a more inclusive language policy at national level. The Prevok-BEK Literacy and numeracy program within the national Prevocational Education was awarded as one of the ten best Commonwealth Education Good Practice Awards in 2012. The Commonwealth Secretariat, in its choice of the ten best good education practices out of one hundred and twenty-three entries, reports that the Prevok-BEK programme
'breaks taboos about the status of Kreol Morisien. As from 2005, it gradually impacted public opinion and informed policy decisions. Considered as a ‘patois’ or dialect, Kreol Morisien was not recognized officially as a fully-fledged language until 2010 when the government finally acknowledged the standardized written version of Kreol Morisien, and announced its introduction in Standard I as an optional language in primary schools as from 2012.[...].

The Prevok-BEK program bears witness to the rightfulness of the use of mother tongue for equality of opportunity and equality of agency in education.’ (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2012, pp 12-13).

Influencing policy decision

Influencing policy decisions for inclusion requires coherence and cohesion. Whereas the Prevok-BEK program was being implemented in prevocational education for students already aged 13 to 15 years old and who had not succeeded in the existing educational system, there was a need to show that such inclusive pedagogical actions should be initiated in the early years of learning, as from the primary cycle, with the students aged 5 to 11 years old. This was more difficult because of attitudes towards the recognition of Kreol Morisien as a fully-fledged language. The parents, the public and the policy-makers had to be convinced that the use of the mother tongue would help the learning process. The participation of the school personnel was crucial as the Head Teachers and teachers were the keys to the success of the program for the primary schools. The strategy was two-pronged: impacting inside-out starting with all agents of the school community (teachers, Heads of schools, parents) and on a larger scale, the policy-makers with the officers of the Ministry of Education, the Ministers and the parliament, and impacting outside-in with the support of the written and oral media with strong arguments based on human rights and international conventions.

Building awareness: Sociolinguistic survey in the primary education sector

Awareness was built with regular news or feed-back on the Prevok-BEK program and also through a sociolinguistic survey at primary school level, starting in 2009 with the collaboration and participation of all the Head Teachers, Deputy Head Teachers and Teachers working in the 46 Catholic primary schools, on their attitudes to language policy. The first phase of a project called Multilingualism and School Achievement for primary schools, was launched through a survey by the Bureau of Catholic Education. With the expertise of a French sociolinguist, Dr. Frederic Tupin, from the Centre of Research in Education, based at the University of Reunion, a questionnaire was devised to analyse the language habits of the staff and their perceptions on the multilingual context of Mauritius, including the place of the mother tongue at school. All teachers, Deputy Head Teachers and Head Teachers of the 46 Catholic primary schools participated.
Hierarchy of languages and opinion on language policy at school

Again the general findings available in 2009 were publicised through the press which played a key role in the awareness campaign. Thus, the policy-makers learnt that the majority of teachers, Deputy Head Teachers and Head Teachers had positive perceptions about Kreol Morisien (KM) as a language and acknowledged that KM helps to better understand the non-language subjects. They viewed the educational policy on languages since the 1957 Education Act as ‘non-applicable’ with the use of English as the teaching medium at primary level.

Recognition of Kreol Morisien as a language at school

The teachers were very aware of the context in which they are working and the fact that their pupils are ‘creolophones’. They said that during the teaching period, they use a lot of KM which becomes the ‘unofficial’ or ‘informal’ medium of teaching at all levels: pedagogical, psychological, identity or cultural-based and didactical. They were also aware that there was a necessity for the official or formal introduction of KM at school at an early age. They were of the opinion that the responsibility for the introduction of KM at school should be the government’s. However, they did say that this responsibility can be shouldered by the Bureau of Catholic Education (53%), should government not take a policy decision.

Catholic education sector influencing policy decision

The Catholic education sector is recognized as having advocated strongly for a change in the language policy in the education system since 2005. As the Director of Bureau of Catholic Education pointed out: ‘As decision-makers of the education system, we are accountable for the success of all children- we have the responsibility of respecting and allowing the use of the mother tongue of the child at school to facilitate his/her learning process […] The challenge is to be able to build strong foundations by using the language of communication of the young child, then effectuate the transition from learning in the mother-tongue (L1) to learning though French and English’ (Chung, 2010).

The pressure on government for a change in the language policy at school bore its fruits when government declared in 2010 that Kreol Morisien would be introduced as from 2012 as an optional subject in primary schools.

Third Case Study:

Inclusion of adults in an Open Community School

A third program initiated by the Catholic education sector for inclusion of marginalized groups is the Open Community School (OCS) for Adults, started in October 2010, for adults who did not
obtain their O levels or A levels. This project was different from other parochial social programs because its focus was mainly on giving an opportunity for academic improvement. OCS was an opportunity not to be missed for the adults who had dropped out of school before completion of their studies.

For two years, the Catholic education sector pioneered the project, running evening courses and Saturday courses for some 250 adults aged 20 to 52 years old. After two years of preparation, the first cohort was ready with 45 adults sitting for their O levels and 57 candidates taking their A levels. Results were outstanding and can be viewed in Appendix 2.

Through this program, the Catholic education sector is contributing to the empowerment of the adult students who can become active agents of social change for themselves and for their family and locality. The present situation is that the majority of Creoles do not have access to jobs in the civil service because they do not have the basic academic requirements.

This Adult Education programme is the object of my Doctoral research and more insights will hopefully be available in the next two or three years. However, I would like to share with you the words of two students who bear witness to their journey:

“I have gained a lot as a student of the Open Community School. After two failures in Form V, I found myself together with other adults who had the same difficult experience. Together with the teachers, we are gradually improving. It’s really a great idea to give adults the opportunity to resume their studies. I am 36 years old, married and a father. For me, it’s a new start, a chance to pass my 2 A levels and perhaps get a better job.” (Student in 2010 during his first year at OCS)

“I dropped out of school after my Form V as I had not passed in all my subjects. I could not be promoted to Lower VI. I did not want to repeat my School Certificate as I was too discouraged. When I saw the advertisement in the newspaper for the Open Community School, I called... It was in January 2011... It was not always easy to come back home from work and after all house chores and the children, to find time for studying. I needed a lot of courage and motivation. ... These 5 O levels that I have obtained represent a lot for me. I am so happy to have made it and I want to continue, to study for my A levels and who knows? May’be one day, I’ll go to university...” (Student in February 2012, after the CGCE results).

Already, OCS has been the object of a Parliamentary Question which was put forward to the Minister of Education and Human Resources as to whether he was “aware that the Bureau de [L’] Éducation Catholique runs an Open Community School ..., and, if so, indicate if his Ministry will consider incorporating a similar project in the Second Chance program[...])” (Fifth National
A model for policy dialogue

What follows is a seven steps model that I am proposing for reflection. It has been tested in the overview of case studies presented and it shows that a simple project can, in time, impact on policies. When a need is identified and there is no provision of that service, a group of believers in the *raison d’être* of the cause can start its campaign by implementing a pilot project. The purpose is then to disseminate the positive outcomes, network with media and stakeholders, debate on the necessity of expanding such a project on a larger scale, start policy dialogue and impact on national policy decision. This seven step model can be illustrated as below:

*Figure illustrating a seven-steps model to impact on policy-making. (Chung, 2013)*

Conclusion

Shared beliefs and shared purpose are the foundations of policy dialogue and leadership for inclusion. As stated right at the beginning, this paper has aimed at giving three examples of leading for inclusion. I have shared some of the initiatives of the Diocese of Port-Louis for inclusion. True to its calling as a Catholic authority, and in line with the Catholic social teaching, it has shown through coherent and committed pioneering actions that special attention must be
given to those who are marginalized because they are the poorest and the weakest. Influencing national policies for inclusion is a long process but for those who are patient, persistent and pro-active, positive outcomes will follow. In a context of educational elitism and competition, leaving on the sidelines generations of youths, mostly from the minority group of Creoles, the cycle of social divide can be broken through inclusive actions which are acts of love and care for others. This was understood by committed teachers and Heads of schools, and it was also understood by open-minded policy-makers working towards access, quality and equity.

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**APPENDIX 1**

**CASE STUDY 1: CHARTS ON SURVEY IN PRE-VOCAATIONAL EDUCATION IN THE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS** (Chung, 2011)
Socio-economic background of parents

- Rural school
- Urban school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Level</th>
<th>Rural School</th>
<th>Urban School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very poor</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower middle income</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper middle income</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quality of relationship between the teacher and the parents

- Father
- Mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Mother</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never met</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undetermined</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Level of education of parents

- Mother
- Father

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Father</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% with No schooling</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with some primary education</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with primary education up to CPE Pass or Fail</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with Lower secondary education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with O levels</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with A levels</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Progress of the students after 3 years

- Barely literate and numerate
  - Year 1: 36.5%
  - Year 3: 8%

- Average literacy and numeracy competencies
  - Year 1: 55.5%
  - Year 3: 33.3%

- Very good literacy and numeracy competencies
  - Year 1: 8%
  - Year 3: 8%

English: Subject Grade after 3 years of Prevocational Education

- % of students with this Grade at CPE Results
- % of students with this Grade after PVE Yr 3

French: Subject Grade after 3 years of Prevocational Education

- % of students with this Grade at CPE Results
- % of students with this Grade after PVE Yr 3
Maths: Subject Grade after 3 years of Prevocational Education

- % of students with this Grade at CPE Results
- % of students with this Grade after PVE Yr 3

Kreol Morisien: Subject Grade after 3 years of Prevocational Education

- % of students with this Grade at CPE Results
- % of students with this Grade after PVE Yr 3

Teachers' voice: Students' gain in domains of learning

- Livelihood and trade skills: 73
- Life skills: 74
- Written communication skills: 76
- Numeracy and problem-solving skills: 78
- Oral and verbal communication skills: 86

Teachers' voice: Students' gain in domains of human development

- Spiritual development: 57
- Life Management skills: 58
- Moral values: 78
- Inter relational and social skills: 79
- Self-esteem: 92
Students' voice: Feelings when they had their CPE results

- Depressed: 5
- Confused: 6
- Did not feel: 11
- Shouted in: 14
- Cried: 14
- Disgusted: 14
- Disappointed: 44
- Sad: 71

Students' voice: Their parents reaction at the CPE results

- Beat me: 5
- Comforted me: 21
- Shouted at me: 25
- Supported me: 40
- Angry: 41
- Disappointed: 48

Students' voice: Reasons for negative learning outcomes in primary school

- The teacher did not explain well: 29
- The teacher would ignore me: 35
- The teacher would shout at me: 43
- The teacher placed me in the last row: 43
- The teachers would sometimes beat me: 46
- I did not understand when the teacher spoke English: 54
- I could not follow the lessons: 56
- I did not understand the teacher: 60
### Students' voice: Outcomes after 3 years of Prevocational Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I gained a lot in terms of values</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learned self-respect and respect for others</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel loved and cared for by my teachers</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have made a lot of friends</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel more confident</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can count better</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can write better</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can read better</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Students' choice of career

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cook/Baker/Pastry</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrician</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanic</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hairdresser</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musician</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment artist</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air steward/less</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plumber</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barmaid</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cashier</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florist</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxi driver</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 2

CASE STUDY 2: SURVEY ON HIERARCHY OF LANGUAGES AND OPINION ON LANGUAGE POLICY AT SCHOOL (BEC, 2009)

These were the general findings reported in 2009 by the study conducted by Dr. Frederic Tupin for the BEC in 2009.

1. The majority of teachers (82.2%), Deputy Head Teachers and Head Teachers (81.7%) have positive perceptions about Kreol Morisien (KM) as a language. 91.6% of the teachers and 92.8% of the DHTs and HTs acknowledge that KM helps to better understand the non-language subjects.

2. The educational policy on languages since the 1957 Education Act is regarded as ‘non-applicable’ by teachers and headteachers and the use of English as the teaching medium at primary level is difficult. Only 10% of the teachers and 6.5% of the DHTs and HTs say that they were taught in English when they were in primary schools. On the other hand, 50.5% of the teachers and 47% of the DHTs and HTs say their teachers taught mostly in French and Kreol Morisien in class. Furthermore, at secondary school level, only 29% of them state that they were taught by teachers using English all the time.

3. The teachers are very aware of the context in which they are working and the fact that their pupils are ‘creolophones’, that is, their mother tongue is Kreol Morisien. From the report: 1.3% of the teachers consider that only 10% of their pupils are creolophones, 21.9% consider that KM is the first language for 80% of their students, and 61.6% report that 100% of their students have KM as L1.

When asked about the proportion of their students who speak KM in class, 23.2% say their students speak KM all the time, 32.4% say their pupils would speak KM 80% of the time and French and English the rest of the time.

4. During the teaching period, the teachers use a lot of KM which becomes the ‘unofficial’ or ‘informal’ medium of teaching at all levels: pedagogical, psychological, identity or cultural-based and didactical.

Recognition of Kreol Morisien as a language at school

5. Capacity of the teachers to accept that their pupils speak KM: 75.5% agree that pupils can speak KM in the school yard or out of the classroom and 46% would accept the use of KM for the oral sessions in class.

6. The circumstances in which the teachers themselves would use KM in class: 93.5% use KM to explain difficult notions, 82% say it helps in facilitating communication and 50% reply that the use of KM establishes a relation of trust.
7. Teachers are aware that there is a necessity for the official or formal introduction of KM at school at an early age (pre-primary and lower primary cycle). 57% of the teachers are for the formal introduction of KM in school at pre-primary level, 18.5% for Lower primary, 5.9% for Upper primary, 7% for Lower secondary and 0.8% for Upper secondary.

8. Teachers are not convinced of the formalization of KM as a ‘written’ language at school. Teachers use KM orally in class: 93.5% use KM to explain difficult notions but they acknowledge that they themselves cannot write KM.

9. Teachers are favorable for pedagogical training on the use of KM at school. 59.1% of teachers and 77.2% DHTs and HTs say they need training: 56% say they need training in grammar and spelling, 15.5% need training on the history of languages in Mauritius, 78.5% request training on pedagogy for the teaching of KM and 9.5% ask for training in Creole Culture.

10. Teachers are of the opinion that the responsibility for the introduction of KM at school should be the government’s. 63% say it’s the government’s responsibility. However, they think that this responsibility can be shouldered by the Bureau of Catholic Education (53%), should government not take a policy decision.

APPENDIX 3

CASE STUDY 3: RESULTS OF 1st COHORT OF ADULT STUDENTS OF THE OPEN COMMUNITY SCHOOL- CAMBRIDGE NOVEMBER EXAMINATIONS 2012 (BEC, 2013)

Out of the 45 O level candidates, 20 obtained their full 5 credits, 9 obtained 6 O levels and 3 obtained 7 O levels. All the others sitting for either 2, 3 or 4 subjects in order to complete their previous academic qualifications passed. The success rate for adults who now had their full 5 credits and were eligible for applications in the civil service was 100%. Subject wise, the overall pass was 100% in French Language, French Literature and Travel and Tourism, 93.3% in English, 92% in Business Studies, 90% in Sociology, 88% in Accounts, 75% in Bible Studies and 74% in Mathematics.
Out of the 57 A level candidates, 38 passed their 2 A levels and 17 obtained 1 A level. Subjects with 100% pass were French and Business Studies, with 88% pass rate in Travel and Tourism, 83% in Mathematics, 75% in Divinity, 70% in Accounting and 63% in Sociology.

Some of the students were ranked amongst the 10 best students at national level. For O levels, the adult students ranked 1st, 4th and 9th in Bible Studies, and 3rd, 4th and 9th in Mathematics. For A levels, the students ranked 2nd in Divinity and 9th in Business Studies.