



## Post- and pre-Vatican II Council Perspectives on Church Education

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**Abstract:** Education is an essential matter for every individual to support both personal and social life. This has been an unchanged reality up to the present moment. The Church truly recognizes its significant role in education. However, with various changing contexts over different eras, the Church's response to education in each era also varies. Before the Second Vatican Council, the Church faced an educational situation influenced by Gallicanism, which sought to weaken the Church's influence on the state. The impact of Gallicanism on education was the existence of a state monopoly on education, leaving behind crucial aspects of education. Pope Pius XI, through *Divini Illius Magistri*, sought to address such a context. After the Second Vatican Council, the Church's stance, previously closed to the modern world, began to change. The Church became more open to the modern world, influencing its perspective on education. Education, which was previously more anti-modernism and anti-liberalism, has now become more open. This shift is conveyed in the document *Gravissimum Educationis*, published during the Second Vatican Council. The Church's development in responding to the evolving world of education is a tangible manifestation of its presence in the world.

**Keywords:** Church's mission; *Divini Illius Magistri*; *Gravissimum Educationis*.

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### 1. Introduction

Education is something that is very important for every individual, both for himself and for his relationships with others (Green, 2012). Education has a central value in human life. Because its role is so important, it is also important for the Church to pay attention to education and existing forms of education. Apart from that, education also has an important role for the church in efforts to form the Church's vision and mission towards the world. Therefore, the Church today has carried out many services in the field of education. This is done as the Church's role in forming a better society (Fraser, 2016; Parrett & Kang, 2009).

Historically, the church has had a significant role in the development of educational systems. In many societies, the church established schools to educate both children and adults, emphasizing moral and spiritual lessons alongside intellectual disciplines. This trend stems from the Christian concept that education is necessary for comprehending God's creation and the formation of moral citizens. The idea that "wherever the Church has gone, education has followed" emphasizes the critical role of religious organizations in encouraging learning and knowledge throughout history (Stonestreet & Smith, 2015). However, in its history, there has been quite a significant development in the Church in viewing and responding to the forms of education that exist in society. Prior to the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church's views on education were reflected in the context of the continuation of a deep Catholic educational tradition, in which religious teaching and the cultivation of moral values were the primary focus. Education was administered by the local church and was often clerical, with an emphasis on teaching religious doctrine and moral obligations. The Church plays a central role in determining curriculum content and managing Catholic educational institutions (Pillay, 2020).

After the Second Vatican Council, there was a significant transformation in the Catholic Church's approach to education. The Second Vatican Council highlighted the importance of interaction between faith and everyday life, recognizing the positive value of cultural diversity and emphasizing the active role of lay people. This view provided the impetus for updating teaching methods, promoting interfaith dialogue, and opening the door to collaboration with non-Catholic educational institutions.

This article will explore the development of the Catholic Church's views on education before and after the Second Vatican Council, exploring the differences in approaches, the values emphasized, and their impact on Catholic education systems in the world, especially in the documents *Divini Illius Magistri* (documents on education before the Second Vatican Council) and *Gravissimum Educationis* (documents on education after the Second Vatican Council). This article will discuss the differences and development of Church thinking through these two documents (Yewangoe, 2017).

## 2. Research methods

The method used to compile this research is to compare two Church documents that have different contexts. The first document is *Divini Illius Magistri*, which is a document written by Pope Pius. Then another document is a document issued by the Second Vatican Council, namely *Gravissimum Educationis*. Apart from having different writing contexts, these two documents also have several differences regarding their views on current education. Therefore, in this research, a comparative method was used with several discussion topics in order to make clearer the differences in views and also the similarities that exist. Even though, in the end, both documents maintain the same thing regarding the vision of education, the differences in practices and views that exist are interesting things to explore. This shows that the Church strives to continue to adapt to the world with various existing approaches, but the primacy within the Church remains unchanged and eroded by the times.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### a. His Divine Master

The document *Divini Illius Magistri* is Pope Pius XI's 1929 encyclical on Christian education. This encyclical is a series of encyclicals on social topics issued by Pius XI during his leadership. The Encyclical *Divini Illius Magistri* which in Indonesian means "Divine Teacher," emerged to deal with educational problems that had been influenced by Gallicanism (Gallicanism is a doctrine that originated in France in the Middle Ages which attempted to regulate the relationship between the Catholic Church and the state. This movement sought to reduce the influence of religion and make the Church part of the state), which sought to limit the papacy in the French Catholic Church (Bruno-Jofré & Zaldívar, 2017). In this context, Pope Pius XI issued the encyclical *Divini Illius Magistri* (Colless, 1967).

The context in which this document was written makes the nuances of the encyclicals on education issued by Pope Pius XI. In addition, the document *Divini Illius Magistri* condemns naturalism, which emphasizes the importance of nature or the physical world in understanding reality and emphasizes the development of physical and intellectual aspects alone; it can be seen that the Church's response at that time was more closed towards modernism. This is because naturalism can endanger the integrity of Christian teachings and values (Bruno-Jofré & Zaldívar, 2017).

Apart from that, there is also another context, namely the theological movement, which was influenced by philosophy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In that century, modernism and industrial development began to emerge, and the development of empirical science, such as physics, had a special place in the world of education (Huijbers, 1982). In an effort to reduce the age's questions regarding rational matters, a theological attempt was made to reconcile faith with reason by theologians, but this attempt was later condemned during the nineteenth century because it was not on the right track. Due to the "failed" efforts of theologians, the need for the magisterium to revive the work of Thomas Aquinas has become stronger. It is because of this that the writing in the *Divini Illius Magistri* document, which uses a Neo-Thomist approach, can be understood.

### **b. The importance of education**

The Gravissimum Educationis document is one of the documents resulting from the Second Vatican Council, which was held in 1962-1965. This council was opened by Pope John XXIII on 11 October 1962 and closed by Pope Paul VI on 8 December 1965. The Second Vatican Council became a new way or new approach for the Church towards the world. If previously the Church had mostly closed itself to the world, as was the case in the writing of the Divini Illius Magistri document, the Second Vatican Council is often said to be a new step for the Church to open itself to the world. The Second Vatican Council brought the wind for modernism, which had previously been often rejected, to enter. This council opened a new way of looking at the world for the Church (Yewangoe, 2017).

In the Second Vatican Council, which had a more open approach, the document Gravissimum Educationis was published. Gravissimum Educationis is a document that discusses education. This document is a continuous document with the document of His Divine Master. With a different approach, the Gravissimum Educationis document has a more open style towards modernism that occurs in the development of the world of education. This is explicitly stated in the document that the Church accepts the use of all advances in science in pedagogy and in practice to help children and young people develop their physical, moral and intellectual talents (GE 1). In this case, it can be said that there is a development of views, and there are also similarities in these two documents regarding education. After this, several main views on education contained in these two documents will be discussed.

### **c. Approaches to the Modern World**

As has been briefly mentioned in the previous discussion, there are quite clear differences in the two documents regarding approaches to the modern world. Divini Illius Magistri, with the various contexts behind it, is more conservative and focuses on Catholic teachings by returning to neo-Thomism thought. This view of the Church trying to protect its children from the influence of modernism appears in Divini Illius Magistri number 23, which contains:

"Once again, it is the inalienable right and indispensable duty of the Church to supervise the entire education of her children, in all institutions, public or private, not only in respect of the religious instruction given there but in respect of every other branch of learning and every rule as far as religion and morality are concerned."

In this quote, it can clearly be seen that the Church is trying to be more involved in an individual's education and rejects the complete takeover of education by modern education for an individual. Moreover, one can see the Church's suspicious and wary attitude towards the nuances of modernism in the world of education in Divini Illius Magistri number 24.

"The exercise of this right should also not be considered an unnecessary interference, but a motherly care on the part of the Church in protecting her children from the great danger of all kinds of doctrinal and moral evil."

However, after the Second Vatican Council, the Church's attitude became more open to the modern world. As previously stated, the Church's view of modern education has become more open. Apart from that, neo-Thomism thought began to be abandoned after the Second Vatican Council (Bruno-Jofré & Zaldívar, 2017). This is done in order to embrace the modern world. This open attitude towards developments in the modern world in the world of education is shown in Gravissimum Educationis number 1.

"So, by utilizing advances in psychology, pedagogy and didactics, it is necessary to help children and young people to develop in harmony their physical, moral and intellectual talents. In this

way, step by step, they will achieve an increasingly full awareness of responsibility, and this awareness will appear in continuous efforts to carefully develop their own lives."

In an effort to embrace modernity, the Church opened itself to developments occurring in the world. Recognition that modernity also has positive values is a good step to show that the Church is open to modernity as it occurs. Therefore, if you look at the document quoted above, there is a recognition that modern education is able to shape a person in a more mature direction. This openness to the modern world also shows that the Church is willing to adapt to increasingly developing social and cultural realities (II, n.d.).

#### **d. The Role of Parents in Education**

One of the points maintained in the encyclical *Divini Illius Magistri in Gravissimum Educationis* is the importance of the role of parents in an individual's education. This is due to the state's monopoly on education, which takes the main priority from parents in their children's education. In the *Divini Illius Magistri* itself, this is conveyed in several forms, one of which is in number 35.

"In this respect, the common sense of mankind is so in harmony that they are clearly at odds with those who dare to assert that children belong to the state before they become part of the family and that the state has absolute rights. on their education. The reason they put forward is untenable, namely that humans are born as citizens and therefore belong to the State, without remembering that before becoming citizens, humans must exist; and its existence does not come from the State, but from parents..."

Then continue with number 36.

"It must also be remembered that the family's obligation to raise children includes not only religious and moral education but also physical and civic education, especially as far as that education touches on religion and morality. "

This encyclical also discusses the three communities that are necessary for the education of an individual, namely the family, civil society and the Church. The family and civil society belong to the natural order, while the Church belongs to the formation of the supernatural order. These three, although different, are harmoniously combined by God. Of the three, the most important is family. Because family is what God intended for the generation and formation of offspring (Lamb & Levering, 2008). Even though it is also acknowledged that civil society is more perfect because it has the advantage of realizing all that is necessary for the temporal welfare of the community, it still cannot replace the role of the family (Febriyani et al., 2020; Huriani et al., 2021; Lamb & Levering, 2008).

Discussions regarding the importance of the role of parents and family are still continued in *Gravissimum Educationis*. In *Gravissimum Educationis* number 3, it is stated that the main and first educator is the family. Apart from that, it was also conveyed about the relations between the three societies that *Gravissimum Educationis* tried to renew.

"The task of providing education, which is primarily the responsibility of the family, requires the help of the entire community. Therefore, in addition to the rights of parents and those who are entrusted by parents to participate in the task of educating, society also has certain obligations and rights insofar as it is its duty and authority to regulate everything necessary for welfare. generally, in this world... Finally, education is a special task of the Church, not only because a society must also recognize its ability to provide education, but especially because the Church has the task of proclaiming the way of salvation to all people, channeling the life of Christ to the faithful, and continuously being attentive to helping them so that you can achieve the fullness of

life. So it is for her sons and daughters that the Church as Mother is obliged to provide education so that their entire lives are imbued with the spirit of Christ..." (GE 3).

This quote clearly conveys the relationship between three parties, namely family, society and the Church. These three parties have their respective roles in forming and educating an individual. Regarding educational monopolies discussed in the *Divini Illius Magistri*, it is also mentioned in *Gravissimum Educationis*, that monopolies are contrary to human personal rights, collective peace and the pluralism of modern society (GE 5). Family is a very important thing in individual education. This is still something that is held tightly by the Church today. Therefore, it is also important for the Church to enter families so that the teachings of the Christian faith can be preached within the family.

#### e. Religious Diversity

If you look again, the main focus of the encyclical *Divini Illius Magistri* is Catholic identity and the formation of Christian moral attitudes. There is no discussion regarding responses to religious differences in education (Fitriani et al., 2023). Apart from that, because there is a lot of focus on naturalization issues and joint education methods, discussions about the existence of religion are given less place. Not only that, but this could also be due to the fact that, at that time, the nature of the Church was still not open to developments in the outside world, so this topic might not be interesting enough to be discussed in this document.

However, in the *Gravissimum Educationis* document, there is a discussion of religious diversity in formal education. Seen in *Gravissimum Educationis* number 7

"The Church praises the authorities and civil society, which, taking into account the pluralism of today's society and guaranteeing the appropriate freedom of religion, helps families so that children's education in all schools can be carried out in accordance with the moral and religious principles adhered to by the families itself."

In this quote, it can be seen that the Church is truly aware of the plural conditions that occur in the world where the Church and Christians live. In addition, in the educational methods presented in the document, the importance of dialogue and cooperation between religions is also conveyed to promote shared moral and ethical values. Therefore, the Church supports an attitude of respect for diversity that exists in society. This happened because of developments in the way the Church faced the world after the Second Vatican Council was implemented. In this way, existing forms of education can be more open to existing diversity.

#### f. Forms of Religious Education

In these two documents, religious education is an important thing in character formation. The form of religious education established in the *Divini Illius Magistri* document is religious education as a subject or education specifically for study. For example, in number 23, as stated in the previous quote, religious teaching seems to be placed differently from other teachings and has a different place from other branches of knowledge.

Different nuances can be found in the *Gravissimum Educationis* document. In the *Gravissimum Educationis* document, religious learning remains an important thing, but in the application and implementation of religious learning, apart from being a separate subject, it must be integrated into the entire curriculum (Briel, 2008). This means that religious learning, which was previously something that needed to be studied and memorized, must now be more closely linked to students' daily lives. The expected goal of integrating religious education into other curricula is so that all knowledge and culture studied can be directed towards preaching salvation so that the knowledge received by students about the world, life and humans is illuminated by the light of faith (GE 8).

Not only in Catholic schools, but this also needs to be done in non-Catholic schools. In this sense, the Church has an obligation to serve the religious needs of Catholic students in non-Catholic schools. This can be achieved through the profound witness of Catholic teachers and by the apostolic activity of

fellow Catholic students. In addition, the Church must provide the services of trained priests and laity who can convey to these students the doctrine of salvation (Briel, 2008).

#### **g. The Importance of Justice Aspects in Access to Education**

Divini Illius Magistri with the context of the times faced, as discussed earlier, focuses more on the form of education and on the application of the teachings of the Christian faith in education. Therefore, social justice in accessing education is not explicitly discussed in this document. Social justice in accessing education referred to here is about equal rights for all people in every social or economic status. In the Gravissimum Educationis document, the discussion of access to education for all groups is something that receives quite strong emphasis. This can be seen in Gravissimum Educationis number 1.

“All people of whatever race, condition or age, based on their dignity as individuals, have the inalienable right to education, which is suited to their aims and characteristics, takes into account differences of gender, and is in harmony with the traditions of culture and society. ancestors, while also being open to fraternal alliance with other nations to foster true unity and peace in the world.”

At the beginning of the Gravissimum Educationis document, the emphasis on the importance of education for all humans is a quite serious topic. This is due to awareness of the importance of education in ensuring a person's life, not only guaranteeing knowledge but also guaranteeing the formation of personality and the implementation of one's duties in society. In other words, education plays a very central role in a person.

Education is indeed the main and first task of the family (Ginting, 2021). However, in its implementation, the synergy between the family, the wider community and the Church must also be taken into account; this is due to the context of people's lives, which prevents them from getting a good education. The context of that life is poverty. Poverty makes an individual unable to obtain the same education as others. So the next question is how can the quality of life be met? How can he reach the same level as those who can afford formal education? This is also one of the discussions in the Gravissimum Educationis document, that priests (Church Pastors) (Katolik, n.d.) and all the faithful need to help those who are poor or live without help or family love (orphans and abandoned children) (GE 9). By paying attention to the poor and neglected, this document, once again, shows the style of the Second Vatican Council, which, in one of its teaching themes, also discusses preferential options for the poor.

#### **h. Teacher's Role**

The role of teachers in education is very important. In the Divini Illius Magistri document, because this document discusses a lot about the nature of the Church, which opposes naturalistic education taught by the state, the role of the teacher is highlighted more regarding its teachings, which are in accordance with the teachings of the Church. This can be seen in Divini Illius Magistri, number 57.

“The norm of just freedom in scientific matters is also an inviolable norm regarding just freedom in didactic matters or for freedom properly understood in teaching; Therefore, it must be adhered to in any instructions given to others. Its obligations become even more binding in justice when there is a question of educating the younger generation. Because in this work teachers, whether public or private, do not have absolute rights over themselves, but only rights that have been communicated to them by other people. In addition, every Christian child or youth has the strict right to instruction that is in harmony with the teachings of the Church, the pillars and foundation of truth. And whoever disturbs the faith of his pupils in any way commits a grave error, for he abuses the trust which children repose in their teachers and takes unfair advantage of their lack of experience and their natural desire for unrestrained freedom, which at the same time it is a delusion and a falsehood.”

In this quote we can see the Church's alert attitude towards teachers who teach, if there are teachers who teach teachings that are not in accordance with Christian teachings. Apart from that, there

is an element that teaching Christian children must remain based on Christian teachings, which means that teachers who teach Christian children must understand Christian teachings or teachers who teach must not at all disturb their students' faith because it is not in accordance with Christian teachings. The trust that has been given. The alert attitude shown in this document is based on the awareness that teachers have an important role in education.

In Education, Teachers are also recognized as having a fairly central role in education. However, what is different is that in this document, it is explicitly discussed that teachers must be able to collaborate with parents in educating a child (Fatkhurahman, 2016). This collaboration is important so that the education a child receives can be more holistic and the child can find his calling in life in accordance with his nature, whether it is in accordance with his inner calling or in accordance with the child's nature, whether as a man or as a woman.

In addition to teachers who are in charge of teaching and imparting knowledge in the classroom, in documents, Education Also discussed the other role of a teacher, namely as a model and moral guide. Teaching is not only seen as a profession to generate income alone but teaching is seen as a form of apostolic calling that really requires knowledge of the needs of the times and service to society (GE 8). Therefore, this document also discusses teacher preparation, which must be carried out well so that he can receive knowledge and religious provisions and so that he is able to guide children in a better direction in life (GE 8).

In today's world, integrating education into church missions is a challenging subject. Many churches struggle to effectively integrate educational programs into their ministries. Some claim that education is frequently underestimated or disregarded in religious settings, resulting in a misalignment between spiritual beliefs and educational practices. For example, conversations about the role of education in church contexts emphasize the importance of churches actively engaging in educational discourse, particularly in terms of fostering the next generation (Cadge et al., 2020). Furthermore, there is an ongoing dispute about the nature of Christian education and whether it is consistent with biblical teachings. Some researchers advocate for a theologically based educational approach, arguing that churches should play a more active part in their communities' educational development. This includes meeting the educational needs of children and teens through structured programs that reflect Christian values and beliefs (Jura, 2021; Thomas Massaro, 2023).

#### **4. Conclusion**

The development of responses that occurred in the *Divini Illius Magistri* and the Document *Gravissimum Educationis* shows that the Church is willing to continue to renew itself in order to remain contextual, in line with developments occurring in the world. Even though it is said that the Church only opened up at the Second Vatican Council, even before that, there had been direction and movement that showed that the Church was trying to continue responding to the current context of the times, apart from that, the nature of each existing document does not mean that each pope negates each other; the existence of views that are maintained shows that the main things are maintained, and the differences that exist show the attitude of the Church, which is willing to always be contextual with the increasingly developing times.

Even though these two documents have different views, there is one thing that remains the same, which is still held by the Church. There is an unchanging priority that the Church still maintains today. This priority is that education is an important thing for every human being and all humans have the right to receive a comprehensive education for the development of their lives. Comprehensive education means education that develops all aspects of life, including cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects. All these aspects are developed in the light of true Christian faith, which makes a person a person who develops according to the uniqueness and skills he has. Therefore, to this day, the Church supports this comprehensive education, either through building schools or helping non-Catholic schools and also paying attention to Catholic students who do not attend Catholic schools so that they can get a good religious education. Correct.

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