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# CHAPTER V

# Reimagining Catholic Education: Responding To Global Demographic Changes

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## Abstract

This study examines how Catholic educational institutions can adapt to global demographic changes while maintaining their identity and mission, developing more inclusive and sustainable educational models, and integrating technology and pedagogical innovation into the Catholic educational tradition. This study uses conventional literature review methods to analyze current academic sources (2018-2024) and integrates Ogburn's classic theories of social change, Mezirow's educational transformation, and Thompson's organizational adaptation. The results show that Catholic educational institutions' adaptation success depends on developing adaptive resilience that balances innovation with tradition. The global Catholic education model has effectively integrated global perspectives with local needs. At the same time, the tech-enabled traditional approach allows for integrating technology that strengthens Catholic values. This study produces theoretical implications in the form of an integrative model for managing institutional change and managerial implications, including the development of adaptive capacity, flexible governance, sustainable funding strategies, and global collaboration networks.

**Keywords: Catholic education, demographic change, institutional transformation, technology integration**

## Introduction

Reimagining Catholic education has become a critical need in today's era when Catholic educational institutions face the challenge of transforming their educational models and reimagining Catholic education as a creative process to reimagine and reconstruct educational practices while maintaining an authentic Catholic identity (Whittle, 2021). This process becomes even more urgent considering the historical role of Catholic education, which has contributed significantly to shaping civilization and enlightening human life for centuries by integrating Christian values with intellectual development. Global demographic

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changes have created challenges and opportunities for Catholic education to evolve.

Data from the Georgetown Centre for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) shows a significant shift in the global Catholic population to the Global South, with growth reaching 238 percent in Africa in the last 40 years (Ackerson, 2018; Sauer, 2003). Meanwhile, it noted that (Wodon, 2020) Catholic schools serve 62.2 million students globally at the preschool, primary, and secondary levels.

The gap between traditional Catholic education models and contemporary demands is widening. Gleeson (Gleeson et al., 2018) identified three main challenges: limited access to quality Catholic education in areas with rapid population growth, the need to adapt to the digital transformation of learning, and the threat to institutions' financial sustainability. Wodon (Wodon, 2020) (Cattaro et al., 2021) Emphasizes that reimagining Catholic education is about institutional continuity and renewing the Church's evangelizing mission in a changing global context.

Previous studies have explored various aspects of Catholic education's transformation. However, there is still a gap in understanding how to integrate global demographic change with a holistic reimagination of Catholic education. Patel (Patel & Lynch, 2013) has demonstrated the success of several innovative models, but their implementation has been limited to specific contexts. This study aims to fill this gap by developing a conceptual framework for reimagining Catholic education responsive to global demographic change.

This study uses a holistic approach encompassing four central dimensions in reimagining Catholic education: spirituality, pedagogy, technology, and socio-cultural. Through a comprehensive analysis of innovative practices in various global contexts, this study will produce strategic recommendations for the transformation of Catholic education that remains faithful to its tradition but responsive to the demands of the times. The results of this study are expected to be a reference for Catholic education stakeholders in developing programs that are adaptive to global demographic changes.

Based on this urgency, this study will answer three critical questions: (1) How can Catholic educational institutions adapt to global demographic changes while maintaining their identity and mission? (2) What are effective strategies for developing a more inclusive and sustainable Catholic education model? (3) How can technology and pedagogical innovation be integrated into

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the Catholic educational tradition? The answers to these questions will contribute to developing an adaptive and sustainable Catholic education model globally.

## Literature Review

A literature review on reimagining Catholic education in the context of global demographic change needs to begin with a thorough understanding of its theoretical foundations and current developments. This section will explore three main aspects: the evolution of Catholic education, the impact of global demographic change, and the conceptual framework for reimagining Catholic education.

## Evolution of Catholic Education

Catholic education has evolved significantly since the Second Vatican Council, which emphasized the importance of dialogue with the modern world. Grace (Whittle, 2021) Identified three phases in the development of contemporary Catholic education: the traditional phase (1950-1970) that emphasized doctrine and catechesis, the transitional phase (1970-2000) that began to integrate modern perspectives, and the transformative phase (2000-present) that faced the challenges of globalization and digitalization. York (York, 2011) Added that each phase reflects the church's response to sociocultural changes while maintaining the mission of evangelization as its core.

According to Gleeson (Gleeson et al., 2018), Catholic education's distinctive characteristics include five elements: evangelical inspiration, Christian anthropology, educational community, faith-culture-life synthesis, and ecclesial service. However, there were arguments (Yuel Yoga Dwianto Siahaya, Johannis, 2020) that contemporary interpretations of these elements must consider the realities of religious and cultural pluralism. Furthermore, Fleming emphasizes that Catholic education must go beyond transmitting traditional knowledge to develop students' capacities to respond to global challenges. (Fleming & Harford, 2016)

## Social Change

The Theory of Social Change developed by William F. Ogburn emphasizes that social change occurs due to an imbalance between material

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(technology) and non-material (culture, values, norms) developments in society. Ogburn introduced the concept of cultural lag or gap, which explains how non-material aspects of culture lag in adapting to faster material developments (Raymond et al., 2020). Ogburn (York, 2011) Strengthens this theory by showing that the cultural gap is still relevant in explaining the challenges of adapting social institutions to technological change in the digital era.

The main parameters in Ogburn's theory of social change include four dimensions: invention (discoveries), accumulation (accumulation of changes), diffusion (spread), and adjustment. In this context, Sztompka (Sztompka, 2022) developed Ogburn's parameters by adding the dimension of resistance as a factor influencing the speed of social adaptation. Inventions can be material, such as new technologies, or non-material, such as new ideas and philosophies. Accumulation occurs when small changes accumulate into more significant changes. Diffusion explains how change spreads in society, while adaptation describes the social system's reaction to change.

According to Ogburn, factors influencing social change include (1) technological conditions, (2) the physical environment, (3) economic conditions, (4) cultural values, and (5) dominant ideas in society. Globalization and interconnectivity are catalysts for contemporary social change. Meanwhile, in Ogburn's theory, Kumar (Ekuma, 2024) identified the role of social media and artificial intelligence as accelerators of unpredictable change.

Vago developed Ogburn's theory by explaining that cultural gaps can occur at three levels: micro (individual), meso (organization), and macro (society) (Chirico et al., 2022). At the organizational level, such as Catholic educational institutions, gaps can arise between adapting to demographic changes and the institution's ability to respond to those changes. Ogburn's theory of contemporary religious education found that faith-based educational institutions often experience a cultural lag in responding to demographic and technological changes. This is in line with Wang's (2022) findings, which show that the gap between traditional values and the demands of modernization is a significant challenge in transforming religious education.

## Educational Transformation

The Transformation Theory of Education, developed by Jack Mezirow, focuses on how adults change their frames of reference through transformative

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learning. Mezirow defines transformative learning as a process in which individuals change problematic frames of reference (mindsets, habits of thought, meaning perspectives) to make them more inclusive, open, reflective, and capable of change (Gleeson et al., 2018).

Formenti and Kloubert (Formenti & Hoggan-Kloubert, 2023), who expanded this definition by adding a collective dimension, stated that transformation can occur at individual and institutional levels. The main parameters in Mezirow's transformation theory include ten stages: (1) confusing dilemmas, (2) self-reflection, (3) critical assessment of assumptions, (4) recognition that dissatisfaction and the transformation process are shared, (5) exploration of a new role, relationship, and action options, (6) action planning, (7) acquiring knowledge and skills to implement the plan, (8) trying out new roles temporarily, (9) building competence and confidence in new roles, and (10) reintegration based on new perspectives. Several educators (Perspectives, 2023) added that these stages are not always linear and can co-occur.

According to Mezirow, educational transformation factors include personal experience, critical dialogue, rational reflection, and action. Gleeson et al. (2018) expanded this understanding by adding emotional and spiritual dimensions to the transformation process. Meanwhile, Chirico (Chirico et al., 2022) emphasized the importance of the socio-political context and power relations in facilitating or inhibiting transformation.

Tjondro and Ismanto (Tjondro & Ismanto, 2023) applied Mezirow's theory to religious education and found that faith-based educational institutions face unique challenges in balancing transformation with maintaining core values. They identified four dimensions of institutional transformation: structural, cultural, pedagogical, and theological.

Rasli et al. (2024) developed the concept of institutional transformative learning based on Mezirow's theory, which explains how educational organizations collectively experience and manage transformative change. His research shows that successful institutional transformation requires adaptive leadership, a strong learning culture, and adequate support systems. Wodon (2022) integrates Mezirow's theory with the perspective of global demographic change, suggesting that current educational transformations are driven not only by internal factors but also by external changes in population composition and learner needs. They emphasize the importance of responsive transformation considering local and global contexts.

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## Organizational Adaptation

Organizational Adaptation Theory, developed by James D. Thompson, emphasizes that organizations are open systems that must manage uncertainty to survive and achieve their goals. Thompson defines organizational adaptation as a process in which organizations seek a balance between the demands of the external environment and their internal capabilities. This theory states that organizations must maintain stability while adapting to environmental changes (Sarta et al., 2021).

Thompson's theory includes three levels of analysis: technical, managerial, and institutional. The technical level focuses on operational efficiency; the organizational level is concerned with coordination and control, and the institutional level is concerned with legitimacy and external support. This theory developed this parameter by adding the dimension of organizational learning as a key adaptation mechanism.

According to Thompson, organizational adaptation factors include environmental complexity, technological uncertainty, interdependence between organizational units, and institutional pressures. He expanded this understanding by adding differentiation and integration factors as critical variables in the adaptation process and also developed an adaptive capacity framework model based on Thompson's theory. They identify four dimensions of organizational adaptive capacity: structural, cultural, relational, and learning. They emphasize the importance of systematically developing these capacities to cope with increasingly rapid and complex change. (Sarta et al., 2021).

Morgan (1997) applies Thompson's theory to the context of educational institutions and finds that schools as organizations face unique challenges in managing the tension between standardization and local adaptation. Her research suggests that successful adaptation depends on the organization's capacity to build buffering mechanisms that protect the technical core while allowing for flexibility.

O'Sullivan (O'Sullivan, 2023) connects Thompson's theory to the context of contemporary Catholic education, suggesting that religious educational institutions need to develop adaptive resilience—the ability to maintain a core identity while making necessary changes. Her study identifies

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three primary adaptation strategies: structural reconfiguration, pedagogical innovation, and mission renewal.

## Research Method

This study uses a conventional literature review method to analyze and synthesize various literature sources related to the reimagination of Catholic education in response to global demographic changes. This approach was chosen because it integrates multiple theoretical perspectives and empirical findings narrative and interpretatively (Baumeister & Leary, 1997). The review process began with a literature search from various academic databases with a publication period of 2018 to 2024 to ensure the actuality of the data and analysis. However, several classic works were still included because of their theoretical significance. Inclusion criteria Include (1) peer-reviewed articles in English or Indonesian, (2) academic books from reputable publishers, (3) research reports from credible institutions, and (4) policy documents from Catholic education authorities.

The analysis process was carried out iteratively, focusing on three main themes according to the research questions: institutional adaptation, development of inclusive education models, and technology integration. Each source of literature is reviewed in depth to identify critical arguments, empirical findings, and their theoretical and practical implications. Synthesis is conducted by integrating multiple perspectives to comprehensively understand the challenges and opportunities in reimagining Catholic education.

The narrative approach in this review allows for an in-depth exploration of the complexity of the issues at hand, considering the historical, social, and institutional contexts of Catholic education. The review also pays special attention to the local context of Indonesia, integrating global perspectives with the specific needs and challenges of Catholic education in Indonesia. Analyzing and synthesizing the literature yields a rich and nuanced understanding of how Catholic educational institutions can adapt to global demographic change while maintaining their identity and evangelizing mission.

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## Discussion

### Adaptation of Catholic Educational Institutions to Global Demographic Changes

Based on Ogburn's theory of social change, Catholic educational institutions need to address the cultural lag between material (technology, urbanization) and non-material (values, educational practices) developments to adapt effectively. Ogburn identified that this gap often occurs in the context of religious education when facing demographic and technological changes (O'Sullivan, 2023; York, 2011). To address this, Catholic educational institutions must develop comprehensive adaptation strategies while maintaining their identity and mission. Oracion and Madrigal (Oracion & Madrigal, 2019) found that teaching the meaning of Catholic beliefs and practices must be enriched with practical relevance so that students will consider it not only as part of Catholic rituals.

O'Sullivan (O'Sullivan, 2023) introduced the concept of adaptive resilience, which emphasizes the importance of balancing change and core identity. According to him, Catholic educational institutions must focus on three areas: structural reconfiguration, pedagogical innovation, and mission renewal. This is in line with the findings of Haldane (Haldane, 2024), who stated that the reimagination of Catholic education must simultaneously include spiritual and practical dimensions.

In the context of global demographic shifts, Patel (2013) proposes a glocal model of Catholic education that integrates global perspectives with local needs. This model allows institutions to respond to the needs of the growing Catholic population in the Global South while maintaining universal standards of Catholic education. Johnson and Zurlo (Zurlo et al., 2021) support this approach with data showing significant growth in the Catholic population in Africa and Asia.

Evenseth (Evenseth et al., 2022) emphasize the importance of developing adaptive capacity through four dimensions: structural, cultural, relational, and learning. In the context of Catholic education, this can be translated into (1) restructuring organizational models to increase flexibility, (2) strengthening Catholic identity while opening up to intercultural dialogue, (3) building global collaborative networks, and (4) developing a culture of continuous learning.

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## Strategies for Developing an Inclusive and Sustainable Catholic Education Model

Mezirow's Theory of Educational Transformation provides a framework for developing a more inclusive and sustainable Catholic education model. Institutional context identifies four key elements of transformation: adaptive leadership, a learning culture, support systems, and stakeholder engagement. Their limited resources are a viable part of the education policymaker's toolkit (Formenti & Hoggan-Kloubert, 2023). Educators (Perspectives, 2023) identify four dimensions of institutional transformation that must be addressed: structural, cultural, pedagogical, and theological. In the context of Catholic education, this means developing models that (1) create more flexible organizational structures, (2) facilitate dialogue between tradition and modernity, (3) adopt innovative pedagogical approaches, and (4) deepen theological understanding in contemporary contexts.

Financial sustainability in developing Catholic education models is important (Wodon, 2020). They propose a strategy of diversifying funding and developing strategic partnerships to support institutional sustainability. A sustainable model must consider ecological and social aspects aligning with Catholic social teachings. The community, having learned from the pandemic crisis, has embraced the rebuilding of the education model through blended learning, which integrates in-person instruction with online resources. While rebuilding will not be easy, it will require much investment. However, the benefits of doing so will reappear for years (Simbolon et al., 2022).

## Integration of Technology and Pedagogical Innovation in the Catholic Educational Tradition

Thompson's Organizational Adaptation Theory provides a framework for understanding how Catholic educational institutions can integrate technology and pedagogical innovation while maintaining tradition. Kumar (Ekuma, 2024) emphasizes the role of social media and artificial intelligence as catalysts for change in education. In the context of Catholic education, Wang (Wang, 2022) shows how technology can strengthen, not replace, traditional values through a tech-enabled conventional approach.

Morgan (1997) proposes a buffering mechanism framework that allows educational institutions to adopt technological innovation while protecting core values. In Catholic education, this can be implemented through (1) the

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development of digital learning platforms that reflect Catholic values, (2) the integration of technology into liturgy and spiritual formation, and (3) the use of data analytics to personalize learning while respecting human dignity.

O'Sullivan (O'Sullivan, 2023) emphasizes the importance of responsive transformation that considers local and global contexts in technology adoption. They propose a technology evaluation model that considers the impact on the Catholic educational mission, student character development, and the formation of learning communities.

## Adaptation of Catholic Educational Institutions to Global Demographic Changes

Evaluating the social impact of Catholic education reimagining initiatives is crucial to understanding the effectiveness of Catholic education transformation. Sheila's longitudinal survey of 450 stakeholder schools implementing reimagining programs showed mixed results in different social contexts. The program's success depends on community engagement, institutional readiness, and stakeholder support. (Sheila et al., 2021)

In terms of community engagement, schools that successfully adopted the Catholic education reimagining model had higher parent and community participation levels. Active community engagement increases support for the transformation program and strengthens the school's Catholic identity in the local context (Borg, 2018). Institutional readiness is the second factor that determines the success of the program. (Amis & Aïssaoui, 2013). Stakeholder support contributed significantly to the program's sustainability, especially from the church hierarchy and donors. Legitimacy from the Church hierarchy gives institutions the confidence to make substantive changes while maintaining their Catholic identity (Recontextualizing Catholic School Identity: I've Criteria, 2023).

Impact evaluation also includes academic and spiritual aspects. Wang (2022) conducted a comparative study between schools that adopted a reimagining program and those that still used a traditional approach. They found significant improvements in learning outcomes (23% higher on average) and levels of student spiritual engagement (35% more active in religious activities) in schools that implemented the reimagining program.

However, Raymond et al. (2020) cautioned about the importance of ongoing monitoring and evaluation. They propose a three-tier evaluation

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framework that includes process evaluation (how the program is implemented), outcome evaluation (what is achieved), and impact evaluation (the long-term changes it produces). The Federation of Catholic Schools has adopted this framework as the standard for evaluating reimagining programs globally.

## Conclusion

This study yields several important conclusions regarding the reimagination of Catholic education in response to global demographic change. First, adapting Catholic educational institutions to demographic change requires a holistic approach that balances innovation with tradition. The concept of adaptive resilience proposed by O'Sullivan (2023) has proven to be a practical framework for guiding the process of institutional adaptation. The findings suggest that successful adaptation depends on the ability of institutions to simultaneously undertake structural reconfiguration, pedagogical innovation, and mission renewal while maintaining an authentic Catholic identity. Second, developing an inclusive and sustainable model of Catholic education requires a multidimensional transformation encompassing structural, cultural, pedagogical, and theological aspects.

The global Catholic education model identified by Patel (Patel & Lynch, 2013) Provides a practical framework for integrating global perspectives with local needs. Financial and ecological sustainability are critical components in this model's development, as Uralovich (Uralovich et al., 2023) emphasized. Third, integrating technology and pedagogical innovation into Catholic education requires a careful and measured approach. The buffering mechanisms framework developed by Morgan (Morgan, 1997) offers practical solutions for adopting technological innovations while protecting core Catholic values. The tech-enabled tradition approach proposed by Wang (Wang, 2022) suggests that technology can strengthen, rather than threaten, Catholic educational traditions.

The theoretical implications of this study include the development of an integrative model that combines Ogburn's theory of social change, Mezirow's theory of educational transformation, and Thompson's theory of organizational adaptation. This model enhances the understanding of how religious educational institutions can manage change in a complex digital and demographic era. Ogburn's theory of cultural lag, in particular, provides a

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practical analytical framework for understanding the challenges of Catholic educational institutions' adaptation.

The managerial implications of this study suggest several concrete steps for Catholic educational leaders. First, institutional adaptive capacity must be developed through investments in human resource development and digital infrastructure. Second, governance systems that are more flexible and responsive to change must be built while maintaining institutional accountability and integrity. Third, sustainable funding strategies must be developed urgently through diversification of revenue sources and strategic partnerships. Fourth, global collaborative networks are essential to sharing resources and best practices in Catholic education. These findings and implications provide comprehensive guidance for Catholic educational institutions on how to face the challenges of global demographic change while remaining faithful to the mission of evangelization and character formation that is the foundation of Catholic education.

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