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CATHOLIC Education



Catholic Institute of Education

Three2Six refugee
education

**Dealing with
stress**

**The Catholic school
and policy**

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Cover photograph: Students from John Bosco College, Guatemala City

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Catholic Education strives to provide a forum for discussion, debate and information for and about education in South Africa. Our readers are invited to respond to articles and to send in articles which may be of interest to the broader Catholic education network. The views expressed in *Catholic Education* do not necessarily represent the views of the editor or the board of the CIE.



ANOTHER LOOK: Curriculum change Mark Potterton

THE NEW MINISTER of Basic Education has already spoken about simplifying the curriculum. Meanwhile, across the oceans in England the primary curriculum is destined to be revamped. Sir Jim Rose, a former chief inspector of schools, had the task of reviewing the curriculum – the main aim was instilling “a love of learning”. For the past 20 years teachers in England had to follow an over-prescriptive curriculum which spelt out exactly what to learn when.

The new philosophy is concerned that learners enjoy their lessons. Lessons will be structured around themes as opposed to narrow disciplines. Teachers will have the opportunity to apply their professional knowledge in the classroom again.

Professor Kader Asmal set out to review Curriculum 2005. The terminology was simplified, and the curriculum was streamlined. However, the academic performance of learners in the majority of schools has not improved. Surely any planned changes to the curriculum must be designed to improve teaching and improve academic performance?



Things are happening in Siloe By Anne Baker

WHAT DOES THE daughter of a Polish Count, named Roza Maria Czacka, who was born in 1876, have to do with a rural mission in Limpopo? The connection is the Franciscan Servants of the Cross who have come to South Africa to take over the mission at Vrederust in the Pietersburg Diocese which was originally established by the Sisters of Charity. Mother Elzbieta, as she came to be known, was the founder of this congregation, dedicated to service of the blind.

After a fall from a horse she was blinded at the age of 22 and her parents, who felt ashamed of her situation, sought the assistance of the very best European doctors of the time. She finally accepted both the diagnosis of a Polish optician and his advice – go and help people who have suffered a similar fate – the blind. Her deep faith helped her to accept her disability as a personal mission and life-long vocation.

The story of her early involvement in issues facing blind people makes fascinating reading; from her dedication in learning Braille to her many visits to European centres of ophthalmology, as well as researching British and American books on blindness. She established an Institute for the Blind at a time when most blind people were living in abject poverty and received neither care nor education. In a few years she had established an orphanage, a primary school, some workshops, a Braille library and a place which took care of the adult blind and their families in Warsaw.

Cut off from Warsaw during the First World War she discovered her religious vocation and the form of her life-long work for the blind was finally shaped. After taking religious vows as a member of the Third Order of St Francis she soon established a new religious congregation – the Franciscan Sisters of the Holy Cross – whose only mission was to offer all-round help to the blind to make up for the spiritual blindness of the world.

After receiving a donation of land near Warsaw she moved all the centres to this place, Laski, and established a modern centre for the blind which gave them skills which allowed them to live independently and to regain their human dignity. Not only did it provide education and workshops, it also became a centre of Franciscan spirituality – the similarities between Francis’s story and Rocza’s story don’t really need explanation.

The Second World War proved devastating and the bombardment of Warsaw destroyed Sr Elzbieta’s life’s work. However, undaunted, faithful and patriotic, she opened a military hospital and, after the war, rebuilt the centre at Laski, which is now the largest centre for the blind in Europe. After a lengthy illness

she died in 1961 leaving a congregation totally dedicated to improving the life of the blind.

It is with this vision that Sr Angelic and Sr Fides have come to South Africa. Vrederust has a workshop for the blind and two schools. The Sisters’ vision is already bearing fruit with a new Grade 8 class that brings together sighted and blind learners taught by an experienced and expert teacher. This type of inclusive education is groundbreaking and gives blind learners a feeling of being part of a bigger whole; it also gives both sighted and blind learners the opportunity of learning how to co-operate with each other. Already new buildings are in process and a visit to this Mission station brings a great sense of hope and new life for Catholic education.



Students at Siloe

SNIPPETS

All God's children

EXTRACT FROM *All God's Children*, the pastoral statement on education published by the Southern African Catholic Bishops' conference:

"We are deeply grateful to those who have founded, developed and sustained Catholic schools, and to the people who manage and govern them currently. As Bishops we give our unequivocal commitment to Catholic schools that are gospel-based, centred on Christ, and which strive to be communities of care, selflessness and sharing. These schools have maintained a record of service and educational excellence over many decades, some of them the most challenging in recent history. With our support, they will be able to continue this tradition into the future, but only with the committed support of the entire Catholic community."

Find the entire text on the CIE website: www.cie.org.za.

Learning behaviour

THESE POINTS ARE from a study entitled *Learning Behaviour* (Sir Alan Steer), just published in England. The following contributes to improving pupil behaviour.

- a consistent approach to behaviour management, teaching and learning
- school leadership
- classroom management, learning and teaching
- rewards and sanctions
- behaviour strategies and teaching of good behaviour
- staff development and support
- pupil support systems
- liaison with parents and other agencies
- managing pupil transition
- organisation and facilities.

Read more at www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications.

Everyone's sky through South American eyes

GALILEOMOBILE IS an itinerant science education project bringing the Year of Astronomy to young underprivileged people across South America, to foster a will of learning by exciting wonder about our Universe, while supplying local teachers with educational resources to sustain activities. GalileoMobile also extends its impact to a worldwide audience through the production of a documentary movie, conveying a message of interaction beyond borders and thus of "unity under the same sky", while raising awareness for the diversity of human cultures, and ultimately inspiring similar initiatives. Visit www.galileo-mobile.org.



What is Darwin200?

DARWIN200 PLANS TO celebrate the impact that Darwin's ideas about evolution, as well as his approach to the understanding of the natural world and his outstanding example as a scientist, continue to have on our lives. The celebrations are centred on the 200th anniversary of Darwin's birthday in February 2009, but began in July 2008 by commemorating 150 years since Darwin first presented his theory to fellow scientists. Darwin200 events will build up to November 2009, which is the 150th anniversary of the publication of *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*. Visit www.darwin200.org to find out more.



Cholera in Zimbabwe

HARARE, ZIMBABWE, 3 June 2009 – Zimbabweans continue to suffer through the worst cholera outbreak in Africa in 15 years. According to a new report by the Red Cross, nearly 100 000 cases of cholera have been reported throughout the country, and over 4 000 people have died – Read more at www.unicef.org.

“ The privilege of a higher education, especially outside Africa, broadened my original horizon and encouraged me to focus on the environment, women and development in order to improve the quality of life of people in my country in particular and in the African region in general. ”

– Wangari Maathai,
Kenyan environmentalist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate

A place of refuge and learning

By Maren Bodenstein

ESTHER IS A pretty 11-year-old from the Democratic Republic of Congo living in Yeoville. She is visibly skittish and almost too afraid to interact with anyone. She can also barely read or write. When Esther was two and a half years old a group of soldiers entered their home and shattered the little girl's sense of security. Shooting indiscriminately into the rooms, they destroyed everything while Esther watched from her mother's back. For many years the family lived in fear that the soldiers would return. Finally the elders advised them to head for South Africa. They were smuggled out of the country in the back of a truck and after a gruelling five-day journey were dropped off at the Department of Home Affairs in Pretoria. There they spent two weeks waiting for refugee papers. After receiving a little money from the Jesuit Refugee Services they made their way to the North West where they worked as casual labourers on farms in the Potchefstroom and Ventersdorp area. Esther's parents were forced to leave her alone during the long hours they spent working on the fields.

In July 2008, after the arrival of a healthy baby boy, the family decided to join the refugee community in Yeoville. Soon Esther's father, a trained artisan, found a job as a mechanic. Here they also heard about the Three2Six School for refugee children based at Sacred Heart College in Observatory. And so, finally at the age of 11, Esther's dream of going to school had come true.

Three2Six was started in response to a plea by Bishop Paul Verryn — a well-known refugee activist — to help with refugee education. The problem is that, while legally refugee children are entitled to an education in South Africa, often those with limited financial resources are refused access to state schooling due to xenophobia, an inability to pay fees and difficulties with language. Three2Six uses the classrooms at Sacred Heart College when the normal school day has ended — hence the name of the project, as the school operates between 3pm and

6pm. The aim is to enable refugee children to attend school until they can access state schooling. The idea is that each child is allowed to stay for a maximum of two years before being integrated into a state school. This is the biggest challenge for the project. Obviously the long-term solution to the current refugee education crisis is for place to be made at state schools so that the children can receive a formal education and integrate fully into South African society.

“We want the school to be a place of safety for the children while their parents find their feet.”

The school was started in March 2008 and by now it has 189 children from the neighbouring refugee communities in Yeoville, Berea and Hillbrow. It covers Grade R to Grade 6. At the beginning of 2009 the school had a waiting list of over 100 and community refugee services such as the Jesuit Refugee Services helped with selecting deserving cases. The school employs seven teachers — all are refugees themselves — who are trained in the South African curriculum by the highly skilled staff at Sacred Heart. The focus is on teaching literacy, numeracy, life skills and language readiness to the children.

“We want the school to be a place of safety for the children while their parents find their feet,” says Colin Northmore, the principal of Sacred Heart College. The College has a long and proud tradition of looking after those most in need. “Three2Six brings us closer again to the vision of the founder of the Marist Brothers, St Marcellin Champagnat. He did not envision our



Esther with her mother and brother

schools to be elitist. He wanted to bring education to the poor.” The Three2Six vision is a holistic one. Not only does it provide refugee children with an education, but children are also given one meal a day and a school uniform. After the xenophobic attacks in May 2008 the school decided that it was not safe for the children to walk to school so money was raised for two minibuses. The school hopes to immunise the children and their siblings with the help of the Jesuit Refugee Services in the near future.

“The school is beautiful,” Esther whispers as the children line up at a quarter to three to march into the classrooms. This is a sentiment shared by all the children. For many it is like home. A while back, on a rainy day, three siblings arrived at their school at nine in the morning. When asked why they were so early they explained that their parents had gone to the Department of Home Affairs that day and had told the oldest to make sure that they were not late for school.

“The children learn fast,” says Mwewa Kimbala, the Grade R teacher from the DRC. “They love the activities.”

Coming from countries such as Rwanda, Republic of Congo, the DRC, Burundi, Zimbabwe, Sudan, Cote d'Ivoire and the Cameroon, many of the children are probably just as traumatised as Esther. According to Elinor Kern, the fundraiser for Three2Six, when the children first came they were almost disturbingly quiet. Now there is laughter and teasing. Some are also acting out the anger and aggression they have experienced in their short lives.

This is all seen as part of the healing process and teachers continue to receive support in dealing with the children from NGOs who have experience in dealing with the symptoms of trauma.

“Esther is getting much better,” says her mother. Today she is even playing with some of the younger children. She runs up to me and then hesitates. “What do you want to tell me?” I ask her. She leans in close and smiles. “I can speak Afrikaans,” she whispers. “I learnt it at the farms.”

“Some are also acting out the anger and aggression they have experienced in their short lives.”

But it is not only the refugee children who have benefited from Three2Six. Some of the high school pupils at Sacred Heart have become involved in the project, helping teachers to line up the little ones and cataloguing library books on the computer. “We have definitely gained much as a school,” Colin Northmore expands. “If wealthy schools are to teach their children the true meaning of working for the common good, they have to give up their ‘safe’ projects and begin to engage in a far more comprehensive way.”



Class in progress



Getting aboard the minibus



Students from the Three2Six school

Notes from Guatemala

By Mark Potterton

I WAS AMAZED at the size of Guatemala City when the plane broke through the clouds. The guidebooks estimate the population as 3 million, but as with other developing world cities, there has been rapid urbanisation and rapid growth of huge informal settlements.

I felt as if I was in South Africa for a moment: armed security guards patrol the suburbs, razor wire adorns the walls and many of the small shops operate behind gates. The country has emerged from over three decades of civil war which claimed the lives of 200 000 people, and like us in South Africa the people are grappling with reconciliation and inequality.

But Guatemala is also very different; the travel brochures call it “the land of eternal spring”. The country is located in the tropics and the vegetation is lush. There is a lot of volcanic activity and a number of towns are located in the shadow of volcanoes. The Maya are the first people, and their culture and 22 languages are a story presence. The ancient Maya sites attract many tourists, as do the jungles and beaches.

Early in May I attended the 82nd meeting of the International Council of Catholic Education (OIEC) in the historic city of Antigua. The first day of the Council focused on identity issues in Catholic schools in Latin America. The speaker, Leonardo Rincon S.J., made the overall point was that Catholic schools should be modelled on Jesus Christ, and that Catholic schools should have a particular concern with the poor and promote justice. Four people from different continents responded. Fr Marc Boucrot from Morocco was one of them. Ninety percent of the children in schools are Muslim, and only 11 500 are Catholic. He felt that this ministry was important, and that they were creating a dialogue between Christians and Muslims, after all “if Catholic schools were only for Catholics then they would not be catholic.”



Cathedral in Chichicastenango

Area: 108 890 sq km (a bit bigger than England)
Capital: Guatemala City
Famous for: Mayan sites
Head of state: President Oscar Berger
Languages: Spanish, Mayan languages
Currency: quetzals
Population: 13.1 million



Famous market in Chichicastenango

Monte Maria College a place of care and learning



Experimental school at Monte Maria



Senior students

I WAS WELCOMED by the College principal, Rosa Beatriz Castafieda de Larios, who was enthusiastic and eager to speak about the College. The College is located in a suburb of Guatemala City and was founded by the Maryknoll sisters in the 1950s. The campus is open and designed with lots of grass space, very much like an American school. Rosa Beatriz tells the story of the founders and how they continue to live and celebrate the Maryknoll charism. Quality time is set aside for formation and teachers and students celebrate the four dimensions of the school charity, justice, environment and women’s issues.

The *Escuela De Aplicacion Monte Maria* is a separate school located on part of the campus. Here students from the college engage in practice teaching. Poorer children from the city are educated at lower fees. Structures in Guatemala give an option to engage in a teacher training programme in the last three years of high school. The teacher education programme is rigorous. Sitting in a feedback group I got the sense of the high expectations: “What happened Maria? You spoke for the entire period, isn’t there a better way to engage the students?”

Lily Maria Rajas de Henriquez heads up the Religious Education programme. A graduate in theology, she coordinates formation of religious educators. They meet regularly to discuss the curriculum and find ways to make it more relevant in a changing society. Social concern is a key element of the RE programme and children participate in different ways from preschool. Final year students complete 50 hours of community service. They also keep a journal of their experience. Lily, passionate about her work, has a gentle hand with her students and ensures that pastoral care remains a hallmark of the school.

Anna Josefina Fuentes heads the family office at the school. Programmes are arranged to engage the families in the life of the school. Regular courses also focus on parenting and the parental role in faith development.

Reflection characterises life at Monte Maria College. Teachers engage in dialogue and constantly seek ways of doing better. They are attentive to the needs of the community and are not afraid to go the extra mile. They embrace change – an example of this is a new mathematics programme and the new science facility – and they set out to celebrate their Maryknoll heritage. There’s certainly a lot one can learn from the people – the most important lesson being that people animate the ethos of the school.

An innovative way of training teachers

Ninth grade students can choose to do teacher training. The first year of the *magisterio* focuses on learning about pedagogy and methodology. The second year involves going into classrooms to observe and to write case studies. In the third year students visit families in their homes. They are learning to document a case in more detail and how to take action on a case. They also focus on didactics: social science, mathematics, language and catechism. Students are fully engaged in their teaching practice in their final year, taking up a place in a regular classroom under the supervision of a qualified teacher.

Extract from the Guatemala declaration

FROM THE HEART of the world of the Maya, we, the Board of Directors of the *Office International de l'Enseignement Catholique* (OIEC), gathered in our annual meeting on May 4-8, 2009 in Antigua, Guatemala, share our thoughts with our members.

We have been hosted by the Bethlehemite Sisters at Posada Belen. The name of this place appeared to us as a sign. Bethlehem (Belen) was the place where the Word of God was born, and the fact that we are here these days is an invitation for us to find ever new ways and forms of welcoming God and bringing His Word into flesh in our association and in our schools.

Bethlehem means the House of Bread. We saw how the Sisters, following the example of their founder, Santo Hermano Pedro de San José Bettancourt, the Apostle of Guatemala, served in their parlour the long lines of the hungry. This reminded us that we also must serve and satisfy the hunger for learning of our own lines of pupils coming to our schools. As Jesus said to His disciples: "You give them something to eat yourselves" (Luke 9,13). We understand that we cannot and should not rely on ourselves alone, nor even on God only. What we have, separately, but offer together to the Lord leads to miracle and life.

As Catholic educators, we continue to face personal and organisational questions on what it means and how it is to do our mission in this world of contrasts. Having spent valuable time with representatives of Catholic education in Guatemala reflecting on the theme of the Identity of the Catholic School, we learn and declare that the identity of the Catholic School depends on the women and men who, having committed their faith and life to Jesus, each in their respective historical contexts, confirm their ministry of teaching with the testimony of their lives.

So we confirm our mission to educate. We promise to continue in it and, even in the face of difficulties, not to turn people away. We pledge to see in every educational crisis, an opportunity to teach and learn; in every obstacle or even failure, a chance to succeed; in every problem in our hand, a prelude to a miracle from God's heart. After all, He who sent us to go and teach promised He would always be with us even to the end of time. He who knew and accepted that in the world we would have strife told us not to fear for He had already conquered the very same world.



OIEC board meeting, Antigua

Your ear in Parliament State of education

By Kevin Roussel

ON JUNE 3 2009, President Jacob Zuma delivered his maiden State of the Nation address to a joint sitting of the National Assembly. South Africa's parliament is made up of two chambers, the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces. The State of the Nation is a special occasion in that both chambers sit together. It is also a rare occasion in that the three arms of government sit together, that is the Judiciary, Legislature and Executive.

Ironically a joint session was called in 2005 in which then President Mbeki announced that he would let Deputy President Zuma go. For many South Africans who have supported Jacob Zuma, this State of the Nation was a triumphant return and the end of years of political infighting. The Cape Town weather joined in the occasion with a downpour of rain, believed to be a sign of renewal in some African cultures.

In his delivery, President Zuma outlined the need for unity as South Africa faces the global economic downturn. "For as long as there are children who do not have the means nor the opportunity to receive a decent education, we shall not rest, and we dare not falter, in our drive to eradicate poverty."

Education will be a key priority for the next five years and he will meet with school principals to share the vision for a revival of our education systems. Important non-negotiables have been outlined. "Teachers should be in school, in class, on time, teaching, with no neglect of duty and no abuse of pupils! The children should be in class, on time, learning, be respectful of their teachers and each other, and do their homework."

The President also recognised the challenge of school dropouts and has set out to ensure that pupils conclude their secondary education. Government intends to improve the secondary school enrolment rate to 95% by 2014. Importantly the issue of gender based sexual harassment was highlighted. In particular, concerns were raised around teachers who sexually harass and abuse children, especially girls. The guidelines on Sexual Harassment and Violence in Public Schools will be widely disseminated to ensure that teacher and learners observe the policy.

With recent reports on the state of vandalism and crime in schools, the President's tough stance on crime, intending to reduce serious crime by 7% -10% annually, is welcomed. He also made special mention of the need to stop crimes against women and children.

The speech was well received and marks some turning points on key issues (eg. crime and health). In general opposition parties



President Jacob Zuma delivering his State of the Nation address

have raised concern around the lack of detail and one party has argued that the speech indicates a shift to the left. These addresses usually do not provide the type of detail the opposition would like and we will have to watch the new ministers and government programmes of action in the coming months and years to see how far the vision is implemented.

Interesting numbers

19 State of the Nation addresses in democratically elected South Africa

96 References to education in the addresses

16 Speeches attended by Nelson Mandela (absent at 2006, 2008 and Feb 2009)

11 Speeches by Thabo Mbeki

6 Speeches by Nelson Mandela

1 Least number of speeches by a South African President (February 2009 Kgalema Motlanthe)

Finding peace and quiet in your day

TEACHING IS CONSIDERED one of the most stressful jobs in the world. Just think about your own life. The now famous educationalist Ted Wragg noted that some studies of teachers show that teachers engage in as many as 1 000 contacts with children a day, when they ask questions, praise or reprimand, assign tasks, or respond to demands for their attention. This is a busy life, and it may mean as many as 5 000 contacts a week and several million in a career! It's not surprising then that teachers have so little time during the term to reflect on professional practice and to spend time with their children.

A study reported in the *Times Educational Supplement* identified the most stressed teachers as the ones who spend every day in the classroom, not the principals and deputies who run the schools! Teachers in primary schools were more stressed than their secondary counterparts. The interviews with 780 primary and secondary teachers in London schools also found that women were more stressed than their male colleagues. Teachers under stress had higher blood pressure and faster heart rates than their less-stressed colleagues. The readings remained high late into the evening, suggesting that these teachers found it difficult to relax after work.

Complete this quick quiz to see what your stress levels are:

1. Do you feel that your get up and go has gone? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	8. Do you have to deal with more and more discipline issues at school? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	15. Do you find it difficult to relax at home in the evenings? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no
2. Do you have lapses in concentration? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	9. Do you feel that your work never ends? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	16. Do you wake up feeling tired and reach straight for the caffeine? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no
3. Are you more irritable? Do you snap at colleagues or learners? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	10. Do you feel listless and uninterested in what you're doing? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	17. Do you feel that no one really understands your work situation? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no
4. Are you more irritable with your own family at home? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	11. Do you worry a lot about your own safety? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	18. Do you feel that no one really appreciates what you do in your job? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no
5. Do the smallest instances of misbehaviour irritate you? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	12. Do you fall asleep during the day, especially after lunch? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	19. Do you need school holidays to keep you sane? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no
6. Do you feel that learners are getting naughtier by the day? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	13. Do you have headaches, muscular aches & pains, especially in the legs? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	20. Do you fail to see the funny things in your job? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no
7. Do you enjoy going to work each day? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	14. Is there just too much change at your school today? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	

If you answered yes to more than 15 questions, well then you're stressed!

Beating stress

Robert E. Thayer wrote an interesting book in the late 1990s called *The Origin of Everyday Moods: Managing Energy, Tension and Stress*. He provided a set of simple suggestions that he sometimes gave his students when they asked him how they could achieve more calm-energy. These suggestions may be extreme departures from your current lifestyle, and it may not be possible to follow them exactly. But why not consider some of them?

- Allocate at least two hours each day entirely for yourself. These are times to be used for your own pleasure. In this fast-paced achievement-oriented society, people often crowd in much more than they should for optimal mental health.
- Modify your schedule and personal problems to manageable proportions. Your goals should be to eliminate or reduce stress. Ask yourself questions like: Is this job too stressful? Should we abandon a relationship? Should we seek professional guidance?
- Set aside seven to eight hours each night for sleep. Too little sleep inevitably contributes to negative moods.
- Eat three nutritious and balanced meals each day. Try to reduce your intake of fat and avoid simple sugars and caffeinated drinks. Also avoid snacking between meals, but eat often enough to maintain your energy.
- Follow a regular exercise programme that lasts 15 to 30 minutes each day or at least every other day (an hour of moderate exercise every day pays great dividends).
- Develop expertise with one or more stress reduction exercises (e.g., breathing, muscle relaxation, meditation, visualisation), and practise them daily.
- Schedule demanding activities during calm-energetic times, and avoid these activities, including arguments and unpleasant social interactions, during tense-tired times.



- When you have negative thoughts, remember to ask yourself questions like: What time of day is it, have I eaten recently, when did I exercise last, and how much sleep have I had?

Small lifestyle changes can help reduce stress. Remember always to allow yourself plenty of time for each thing that you do, and complete each task with complete attention before going on to the next. Cultivate an attitude of patience. Time demand is a major source of stress, and the effects of this are directly experienced as increased tension.

Time management books reveal a central principle – spend your time doing those things you value or that help you to achieve your goals:

- Know what your values and goals are. You can clarify these by imagining what you would like a close relative, or friend or work colleague to say about you.
- Write down your personal statement of values and goals so that you can refer to them often.

Learning how to relax

You can learn how to relax. Practising relaxation will give you more energy, decrease anxiety and irritability, and reduce pains due to tense muscles, such as neck-ache, backache and headache.

Learning to relax involves four steps:

- Preparation
- Practice
- Application
- Extension

Teaching is a really stressful job and unless you commit yourself to deal with stress, your life can easily be swallowed up by tension. Watch yourself, adopt a relaxed posture, and release the tension in your shoulders. Apply the following principles and start working towards a life of less stress:

- Stop rushing about
- Do things that you find relaxing
- Seek out pleasures and treats
- Try to share your work with other people
- Give yourself breaks.

A good way to start is to commit to five minutes' quiet a day, at the time of your choice. Find a peaceful place and just sit and breathe quietly, being conscious of the tensions described above. Once you are comfortable with this time of quiet you can extend it by a few minutes a day. This can also become a time to connect with God and to reflect on your life.

Doing small things that you really enjoy also gives energy and helps you to relax, especially if it is creative or a sport. The main thing to remember is that the less stressed you are the more peace you will find and the more focus you will have for those with whom you work and live.

Learning together:

Opening up learning

By HM Inspectors of Education

This extract is from a useful guide just published in Scotland by the *Scottish Inspectorate*. The aim of the guide is to stimulate professional reflection, dialogue and debate about learning and how to improve it, at this time of important curriculum change. It draws together themes, features and characteristics of effective improvement through self-evaluation, and descriptions of good practice. It is a reference point for teachers who are working together to improve the impact of their work and plan for the changes which will be necessary as Curriculum for Excellence is adopted.

CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE defines the curriculum as the totality of experiences which are planned for each child and young person. The “getting it right for every child” approach places increased emphasis on child-centred partnerships and collaborations. The curriculum and support for some children may involve contributions from a wide range of staff. It is important that all contributors to a child’s or young person’s education are fully involved in self-evaluation and improvement.

Teachers use both informal and formal ways to elicit and share learners’ views: informally as they work with individuals in lessons; in learning experiences with the classroom; or by gathering views more formally through daily, weekly, monthly or longer-term arrangements.

“Encouraging learners to discuss their views about learning with each other and with their teachers can provide powerful evidence for self-evaluation.”

The findings of such conversations can be used to help improve learning and teaching. The process helps learners to reflect on their own learning and so develop their learning skills as well as their communication skills and confidence. Encouraging learners to discuss their views about learning with each other and with their teachers, including their successes and disappointments, can provide powerful evidence for self-evaluation.



Blending of learners’ individual and collective views with other information can help to ensure high-quality and improving experiences for them.

The combination of staff views together with those of learners and their parents, and a range of other information, enables staff to gain a better understanding of a school’s strengths and aspects where changes are needed. Cross-sector professional dialogue and visits to lessons should be part of a formative approach to improvement in learning and teaching and for evaluating the impact of changes in practice. Successful approaches to direct observation of learning depend upon careful preparation and discussion about sensitivities or potential misunderstandings. It is important that learning visits are constructive and have a positive impact. Professional dialogue is essential in all cases and it needs to be both exploratory and formative. It is important to focus a learning visit clearly on outcomes for learners and to avoid becoming overly engaged by processes.

Before a learning visit, teachers will find it beneficial to have discussed the purpose and intended outcomes of the visit, and may have explored how the visit will be carried out, for example:

- how they will manage the visit and engage in constructive professional dialogue that leads to improvement;
- how the visit might be complemented by future learning visits, perhaps with visits to and from the teachers involved to other classes or subjects;
- whether the nature of the lesson will enable the visitor to work alongside a colleague, for example in a cooperative teaching approach; and
- ensuring a shared understanding and expectation about key aspects of teaching, such as recognising and addressing learning needs.

Starting a learning visit to class: ‘what is it like to be a learner in this lesson?’

Initially, staff visiting lessons may find it helpful to identify and consider the likely impact of important contextual features which can influence the quality of learners’ experiences; features such as the environment for learning, or ethos.

Then, by moving quickly to focus directly on learners themselves, they can recognise the extent to which each is engaged in learning, perhaps autonomous in learning or, on the other hand, when they might have withdrawn from learning. As an example of the kind of things staff may want to consider in an initial lesson visit, here are a few prompts that might be used in a visit to a lesson in mathematics.

Not all of these features are straightforward, and staff would want to ensure they focused directly on the impact on learners of each of these aspects.

- The classroom is well managed, with resources that are readily available, well organised and appropriate to the activities being carried out.

- The lesson has a clear objective. It is well structured with an introduction to share the objective with young people, and explain the main points clearly, and an ending to review the key ideas and issue any homework.
- The pace of work is brisk. Young people’s interest and attention is sustained through interactive teaching and group and individual work.
- Young people are well motivated and work conscientiously.

“It is important to focus a learning visit clearly on outcomes for learners and to avoid becoming overly engaged by processes”

- Teachers use questioning effectively to: involve as many young people as possible; give young people time to think before providing an answer; seek extended explanations rather than one-word responses; allow time to explore reasons for wrong answers; and take account of prior learning when questioning individuals.
- Teachers set high standards for young people’s work.
- Where appropriate, teachers take opportunities to ensure that learners develop skills in mental calculation and in solving problems, practise and apply mathematical skills in real life contexts and situations across the curriculum, and use ICT effectively.
- Teachers listen carefully to young people’s answers to questions and modify their teaching accordingly. They give constructive feedback on oral and written work.
- Young people are supported according to their needs, groupings are appropriate, the work is sufficiently challenging for all young people and they are helped when they experience difficulties.

As staff visit each other’s classes, they will be analysing how well learning and teaching is leading to the development of the skills, attributes and capabilities embedded within the experiences and outcomes. They will want to consider, for example, how the learning activities are addressing the development of: skills in literacy and numeracy; being creative; learning independently and in groups; evaluating; reasoning; self-awareness; assessing risk; critical thinking; developing informed, ethical views; applying learning in new situations; problem solving; using technology; taking the initiative and leading; and understanding their own and others’ cultures.

Find out more about this approach at www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk.

The Catholic school

and policy

by John McCormick

IN THIS, THE second article in this series on working with *Signs of God's Presence*, I'd like to continue with the focus on "Statement 1: The Catholic school ensures that its policies and procedures are in line with, and give effect to, its distinctive religious character." As stated, I'll be considering duty, what policy can and cannot do, and the school mission statement.

Policy and compliance

Recall that both the Church and the State place policy obligations on Catholic schools. Typically this requires the school to adhere to certain prescribed frameworks – the Constitution, national policy, and Church-related policy – and to develop internal policy statements and procedures that are consistent with this. When these policy obligations concern the carrying out of activities for the common good – the core activity being the provision of education – this in itself is an expression of the school's distinctive religious character. In legal terms, adherence to these requirements is often called "compliance." Recall too what this means is that the school has the responsibility to put policy and procedures in place – Statement 1 covers the essentials in this regard. It also means that institutional compliance points to the need for internal compliance on the part of staff and students, particularly with regard to employment practice (no. 7), codes of conduct (no. 2), and disciplinary procedures (no. 6).

“Policy helps to establish a relationship with staff teaching at the school, as well as with parents who wish to enrol their children in it.”

Sometimes we resist words like "compliance", "obligation", "duty" – we don't like being told what to do, or we find it an imposition or inconvenience. However, if one looks at a history of usage for the word "compliance" then it's about more than meeting a legal minimum – "comply" means "to fill up", "to complete", or "to carry out". Nor need it carry a sense of "compulsion" – it also has the possible connotation of "consent". So, while policy may frame or guide our action, it is nothing but words-on-a-page unless I, you, or we, do something to enact the vision or intention of it. If we see our role as "filling up" or "filling out", or "giving effect to" then it leaves a lot of responsibility and space for initiative in our hands. And if we can move from a position of being instructed ("You will...") to one of collective responsibility ("I/We will...") then



Book cover for "Signs of God's Presence"

we are likely to find our institution a much happier place to work in.

Policy and local application

At Church or national level the main function of education policy is to provide a general framework and direction for the local school to follow. In this sense, it safeguards institutional space and also builds in a set of values and aspirations. Moreover, both Church and State enjoin schools to develop their own set of internal policies, at once aligned with the larger framework and incorporating a local understanding and practice that will meet the needs and aspirations of the school and its community. Among other things, the school policies are public statements that:

- identify the Catholic school as such – pre-eminent, here, are the school's mission statement and Religious Education Programme policy
- regulate governance structures at the school – for example the School Governing Body or Board of Governors (although the Constitution for each of these is not listed in *Signs of God's Presence*)

- address sensitive issues, such as the policies covering HIV/Aids and Sexuality Education
- establish norms for acceptable behaviour on the part of staff and students, and
- provide fair procedures for managing staff and student discipline.

Policy helps to establish a relationship with staff teaching at the school, as well as with parents who wish to enrol their children in it. It helps to frame behaviour and shape the school culture – but as with school culture (and culture in general) it outlasts any of the individuals or groupings who were involved in its drafting and amending. While policy is not set in stone, it is durable, and changes must be done procedurally and, usually, over a period of time that allows for proper consultation. In this way, policies are kept in touch with changes in the school or wider society. But it also makes it important that staff, parents, and students are made familiar with school policy, and that ways are found to invite each of these constituencies to identify with, and give their support to, the Catholic identity of the school, its values, and educational philosophy.

The school mission statement

The document that encapsulates in a short, readable way the identity, values, and educational philosophy of a school is its mission statement. In the Catholic school, the mission statement typically contains commitments to the following:

- the person and teaching of Jesus Christ, the reign of God, and the charism of its founder / founding congregation

- the place of the school in relation to the evangelising mission of the Catholic church
- the education of the whole person
- the delivery of quality educational and extra-curricular programmes
- the carrying out of work that serves the common good by addressing needs in the wider community
- the maintenance of harmonious relationships between members of the school community – particularly among staff, and between staff and students
- the development of responsible citizens with a concern for social justice and the natural environment.

The process of arriving at a mission statement should involve the whole school community. However, it is likely to need frequent discussion and, if necessary, some revision, because each statement results from a negotiated agreement between the members of the school community. Each year, members of this community leave, and new members join, so as much of a common understanding as possible needs to be renewed. When misunderstandings and sharp disagreements arise, it is best, in my view, to see these tensions as helpful ways of deepening debate and understanding, even when consensus seems elusive.

Next step

In my third article, I'll complete consideration of Statement 1 by locating responsibility for aspects of these indicators with various internal management structures in the school.



Keeping the Dream – a prayer

The American hip-hop composer and singer Tupac Shakur had a short and difficult life that led him to prison and eventual death in a drive-by shooting at the age of 25. Here are the lyrics of one of his songs:

*Did you hear about the rose that
grew from a crack in the concrete?
Proving nature's law is wrong it
learned to walk without feet.
Funny it seems, but by keeping its
dreams, it learned to breathe fresh air.
Long live the rose that grew from
concrete when no one else ever cared.*

According to this urban poet, in the midst of violence, injustice, loneliness, loss, or desperation, in the concrete reality of urban life, roses may grow!

The spiritual life is about recognising that reality and making that reality possible.

Let us pray:

Lord, we pray that the work of our school may bring peace, justice, friendship and hope to the people we serve.

Amen



Helping young people to adapt

The school as a constant in young lives

by Madeleen Gorst-Allman, Principal, St Paulus School

ONE OF THE symptoms of the pressures modern society exerts on the family structure is the increasing number of children who are being forced to negotiate the divorce and ultimate separation of their parents. Divorce is the death of a shared life, with all its experiences and memories.

Sadly, in those times when people most need support and love, the world seems to be turning its back and judging, rendering them vulnerable and lonely. For many children in these circumstances, the school becomes an escape from pain and loss; things that had formerly belonged to all suddenly have a price-tag, a “his” or “hers” label, as the spoils of the relationship are apportioned.

Separation often leads to an immediate change in environment, with its concomitant scaling down as the result of the financial implications of running two households. Those little victims, not consulted in this most important decision in terms of their security, and who just wish someone would explain why, often lose material comforts, their homes and prized possessions. As their little world crashes around them, many are made to move to a cheaper school.

*“For many children the school
becomes an escape from
pain and loss.”*

While cutting back may be necessary, adults involved in painful decision-making need to acknowledge that a school is far more than just a building. It offers security, friendship, love, support, acceptance, the comfort of routine and sameness, and it is often the only place where a child experiencing trauma can feel safe. When identifying essentials and non-essentials, a safe environment, the only constant in a child’s changing world, should top the list.

Personal circumstances can change in the blink of an eye, resulting in the loss of loved ones, and the world as we once knew it may never again be the same. Just consider the victims of floods, massacres, or a tsunami. In any circumstance, whether the loss is the result of death, disaster, illness, moving countries, schools, or divorce, all who feel pain are suffering victims, and we are all deserving of love, support and practical assistance.

God understands that which humans cannot fathom, and God’s compassion acknowledges human frailty, so necessary to help us to grow. We are invited to mirror Christ in offering compassion, love and practical support, and it is both a responsibility and a privilege to be called to assist our friends during difficult times.

The special privilege, and ordained duty, of every member of a community is responsibility for children. Unconditional love enables our adults of tomorrow to develop spiritually, physically and intellectually. When children need to negotiate and assimilate loss and pain, the person who is in a position to do so should make every endeavour to avoid unnecessary changes, and to give children the gift of spending happy hours with friends and teachers; learning, growing, loving and experiencing the joy of becoming the unique person God has created us each to be.



Schools can be a place of peace and quiet

Book reviews

Educational Leadership: Key challenges and ethical tensions

Patrick Duignan

Cambridge University Press

PATRICK DUIGNAN IS the Foundation Chair of Educational Leadership at the Australian University. *Educational Leadership* is based on his groundbreaking research which provides leaders, including teachers, with ways of analysing the challenges they face. A strong recommendation of the book is that those in formal leadership share responsibility by building leadership capacity of all stakeholders. He also challenges leaders to become more authentic human beings – so as to meet the challenges of the day.

In the first chapter Duignan explores the global and societal trends that leaders face. He notes the growing trend of “intense individualism” and a disengagement of the self from a sense of the collective. Duignan argues that there is a particular challenge for schools to create learning environments that assist students to develop interests and the common good.

In Chapter 2 Duignan highlights the key leadership challenges identified in the three-year research study.

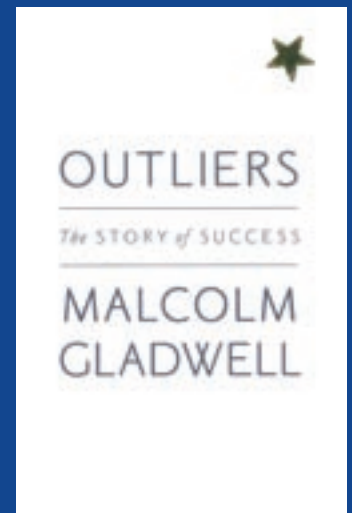
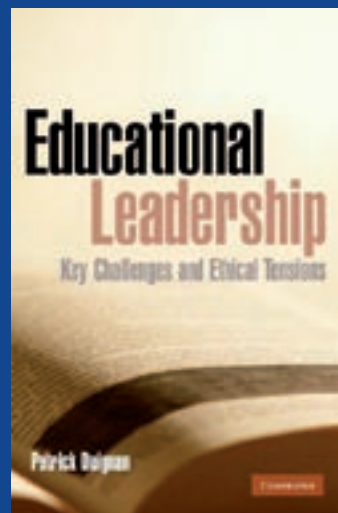
In Chapter 3 he argues that many of the challenges facing educational leaders involve leadership in situations where values and ethics are contested even in Catholic schools. Some of these challenges constitute “ethical dilemmas”. These dilemmas keep many principals awake at night – cause them to take stress leave and / or even retire early. One of the most frequently discussed tensions is deciding whether to support decisions promoting the good of the group or the rights of the individual. Another tension is the tension between a concern for either “care” or “rules”. Care encompasses compassion. This may involve looking at the individual circumstances and making a decision that puts care and concern for the person above rules and policies.

In chapter 6 leaders are assisted in considering the ethical dimensions of tension situations and making informed decisions. Ten steps are provided to help leaders make more effective decisions in difficult situations:

1. Determine the nature of the situation.
2. Clarify the facts.
3. Identify the players.
4. Think of several options for action.
5. Evaluate the options using different ethical approaches.
6. Choose the best option.
7. Explain your choice.
8. Work out how to implement the option.
9. Take action carefully.
10. Reflect and learn.

Duignan also reminds readers that the laws and customs of our society also guide decision-making. Duignan advises leaders to build cultures of shared and distributed leadership. He argues that leaders need to be authentic human beings and emphasises the importance of both presence and responsibility.

Patrick Duignan provides us with a book that answers the call for leaders



who are both authentic and capable. Duignan reminds us here in South Africa that leadership formation is more than ring-bound manuals and intensive training; but rather about trying to make sense of complex situations in a caring and responsible manner.

Outliers: The story of Success

Malcom Gladwell

By Anne Baker

THIS ENGAGING BOOK is a must-read for every educator. Gladwell examines, through exploration, a variety of “successful” people’s or communities’ lives, while asking the question “*Why do some people achieve so much more than others?*”

He calls these people outliers and in the two sections entitled *Opportunity* and *Legacy* he provides a fascinating set of hypotheses. He explores success at sport, individual “genius” and the “ten thousand hour rule.” The latter being how long someone has to practise to become an expert in something. Here he means that it is more than an individual’s talent – it’s plain hard work.

Gladwell draws on research to support his argument but it is the manner in which he brings his theories to life that proves fascinating and compelling reading.

The chapter on the *Ethnic Theory of Plane Crashes* makes some very challenging observations around leadership and language and it would be good to hear a South African perspective on how language in our multi-lingual society affects communication of leadership messages and responses.

Of equal importance to teachers are the chapters on *Rice Paddies and Math Tests* and *Marita’s Bargain*. Here he examines why Asian children are better at Mathematics and looks at why learners in the West spend so little time at school and how this shortened academic year affects their reading ability.

All in all a highly recommended book that will not only inform but entertain as well.