

CATHOLIC INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

DISCUSSION PAPER ON EDUCATION

JANUARY 2007

Where possible, written comment and input would be appreciated.
All written comments/input received will be incorporated into a second draft which will lead to the development of a Position Paper on Education in South Africa to be adopted by the SACBC Administrative Board in May 2007 and the CaSPA General meeting in July 2007.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

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Twelve years after the advent of democracy in 2004, South Africa has been described as “a society in dynamic change, both materially and spiritually”¹ - grappling to overcome its legacy of discrimination, flagrant disregard for the dignity of the human person, extreme social and economic inequality, and institutionalised violence against the majority of its citizens.

In 1995, the position paper “Partnership for the Common Good” was prepared by the South African Catholic education authorities to prepare for the advent of a new era in the country’s education system. The South African Schools Act was approved by Parliament in 1996 with the intention of providing for a uniform system for organisation, governance and funding of schools; replacing the previous unequal system with one which will redress the wrongs of the past in a democratic manner; and upholding the rights of learners, parents and educators.

The education system has undergone extraordinary change in the 10 years since the passing of the South African Schools Act. To all intents and purposes, the aims of the Act as outlined above can be said to have been achieved. There is a uniform system for the organisation, governance and funding of schools, there have been attempts to address the wrongs of the past in a democratic manner, and there certainly has been a strong focus on upholding the rights of all stakeholders. It is, however, questionable as to whether there has been any improvement in the educational experiences of children in the classroom and whether the education they receive enables them to make a positive contribution to their families, communities and society in general.

The Catholic Education Congress held in Durban in 1991 and the Conference on Catholic Education held in Newcastle in 1995 identified the vision of Catholic Education as being a *Community Serving Humanity* in the context of the mission of the Church. Elements of this vision included:

- i. removing inequality,
- ii. restoring dignity,
- iii. forming partnerships,
- iv. teaching as ministry,
- v. developing leadership, and
- vi. strengthening structures in Catholic education.

There have been significant developments within the Catholic education network in the 11 years that have passed since the Newcastle Conference. It is however questionable as to whether some of the elements of the vision outlined above have been addressed as seriously as they ought to have been and in fact whether there has been commitment towards dealing with the legacy of inequality within the network.

The 2nd National Catholic Schools Congress, held in Johannesburg in September 2004, recognised the despair brought to communities by poverty and social pressures, in particular HIV and AIDS and growing economic disparity². The Direction Statements adopted at the Congress make clear commitments to addressing the challenges facing the community of Catholic Schools as a microcosm of South African society.

¹ Policy Co-ordination and Advisory Services, Social Sector, The Presidency (2006) **A Nation in the Making: A discussion document on macro-social trends in South Africa** (pg 93)

² Catholic Institute of Education (2004) **2nd National Catholic Schools Congress 2004** (pg 52)

Twelve years after a peaceful transition to democracy, South Africa's greatest tragedy is not poverty, crime, the HIV AIDS pandemic and other social ills important and serious as they are, but that its schools are not inculcating in its young people the values, attitudes and behaviours required to make a positive contribution in and for society.

2.0 PURPOSE

The Catholic Church, through its mission in Catholic schools, seeks to serve and participate fully as a meaningful partner in the ongoing development of South African society. This declaration of intent is consistent the call for society to “encourage forms of social organisation that promote social cohesion, especially better household environments and communities for the upbringing of children...”³.

This discussion paper is intended to provide direction and reflection on the role of the Catholic Church as a social partner in education. It highlights the significance of Catholic education of the highest quality, committed to the development of the whole human person in which every Catholic school is challenged to bring the light of Christ to every aspect of its educational enterprise.

Amongst other things this discussion paper attempts:

- i. To articulate the significant position of Catholic education in South Africa
- ii. To articulate the Catholic Church's philosophy and practice in the provision of education
- iii. To identify critical areas of need and the necessary adjustments required within the Catholic education network/community/system to fulfill its mission
- iv. To confirm security of mission in the context of significant need in the community
- v. To articulate the structural and other relationships between stakeholders in Catholic education required to pursue the Church's mission in education
- vi. To identify and comment on key social issues affecting education in South Africa – including amongst others: poverty, access, quality, morality, ethics, violence, quality, HIV and AIDS, etc.
- vii. To serve as the basis for engaging with government and other stakeholders in education
- viii. To articulate the Catholic Church position on the legislative, structural/organisational, governance, and resourcing arrangements for education – in particular general and further education and training

3.0 PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION

3.1 The nature and objective of Catholic education

The 1965 Declaration on Christian Education published by the Second Vatican Council⁴ provides the framework within which all Catholic educators understand the Christian ideals underlying Catholic education at all levels and in diverse situations. The Council's statement gives emphasis to education as being a life-long process for the formation of the whole person in the light of the Good News, and its goal of assisting people to fulfil their baptismal vocation in bringing about the Kingdom of God. The primary characteristics of Catholic education are its universality, perpetuity and emphasis on the worth of individual. Catholic education is not confined to any one nation, race or class, nor is it the exclusive possession of highly gifted minds.

The mission of the Catholic Church is “to serve people at all times and in all places, in order to guide them to an authentic all-round maturity.”⁵ This mission is based on principles outlining the

³ Policy Co-ordination and Advisory Services, Social Sector, The Presidency (2006) **A Nation in the Making: A discussion document on macro-social trends in South Africa** (pg 99)

⁴ A General Council of all the Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church held between 1962 and 1965

⁵ Catholic Secretariat (2004), **Policy Document for Catholic Education in Kenya** (pg 14)

rights and premises which all people involved in Catholic education should take account of. These principles include the right of all people to education. They underscore the right of Catholic parents to access schools to provide for their children's Catholic education. Catholic education by its definition includes Religious Education since it is through the acceptance of doctrinal teaching that people come to understand the fullness of their destiny. Catholic schooling is required as part of its service to Christian communities to offer a holistic education which prepares children for their secular and religious purposes.

The Catholic school provides a values-based education for all children whose parents have chosen to send them there. In its practice and ethos, the Catholic school is particularly concerned to help children develop intellectually, physically, spiritually, morally, and emotionally. Children are helped to develop values which promote justice; respect for all humanity; the ability to engage across diverse cultures and backgrounds, all the time seeking the authentic human being in the exchange; and the practice of human love as espoused by Jesus Christ. The Catholic school, in its approach and curriculum, helps children learn to make their own decisions in the context of a moral and Catholic framework.

As a consequence of the obligation to develop well-rounded individuals who will make a positive contribution to the world they live in, Catholic education has the challenge of working in antithesis to ideas and practices that run counter to Catholic social teaching. In the modern world constant reference is made to community, but the reality is that the world rewards a focus on and with self and it finds a consideration of other almost quaint and not really practised by those who are considered to be "mature". The modern world often conducts itself within a moral vacuum, increasingly attaching little value to the principles on which Catholic belief and living are based. Teachers in Catholic schools should teach children how to live truthfully to Catholic values in the world for which they are being prepared.

Catholic education is the responsibility of the family, the Church and the Catholic school. The Church recognises that parents are the first educators of their children. It is therefore the responsibility of Catholic parents to make sure that their children are educated in accordance with their Christian duty. It is to assist Catholic parents that the Church, through its schools plays a definite and important role in the development and education of the youth and prepares them to make a meaningful contribution to society.

Catholic education aims to:

- i. provide a stable moral and theological context for the education of children, preparing them for life in a world of little steadfastness and rapid and difficult changes;
- ii. help children develop their unique gifts to contribute constructively to their world by making a loving difference to those with whom they live and work;
- iii. help children learn to make decisions which endorse justice and Christ's love for all humanity, in all aspects of their lives; and
- iv. provide opportunities for teachers and others involved in Catholic education to explore their role in the Church's mission in education.

In pursuit of these aims Catholic schools:

- i. teach knowledge, skills and attitudes that will help children learn how to live responsibly in society;
- ii. foster moral and spiritual formation through Religious Education and guidance;
- iii. guide children to develop their capacity for critical thinking and discernment;
- iv. nurture a climate of self respect and respect for others;
- v. teach and practise basic principles of universal human rights and justice;
- vi. teach children how to love and respect the environment in which they live and how to take responsibility for the care of their environment;
- vii. provide an education which is socially oriented for the common good; and
- viii. teach children to trust in their final destiny of union with God.

3.2 The Catholic Church's contribution to education in South Africa

The involvement of the Catholic Church in formal education in South Africa dates back to 1849 when the Missionary Sisters of the Assumption opened the first Catholic school for white settler children in Grahamstown.

By 1953 there were approximately 688 state-aided and 130 unaided schools, a number of teacher training colleges and special schools, all through which the Church provided formal education for 15% of the African population in school at the time.

The passing of the Bantu Education Act of 1953 presented the first challenge to the Church's mission in education. This was true for all church schools, not only those operated by the Catholic Church. The Act intended to bring the education of the African majority under state control, to serve the purposes of apartheid. The Catholic Church authorities resisted this attempt and raised money to keep as many of the schools as possible operating as private schools outside the sphere of control of the Bantu Education authorities. The 1950s and 1960s saw the closure of many Catholic schools as a result of financial pressure. In addition some schools were "handed over" to the state when the church could no longer keep them operating.

Teacher training was also brought under state control and only African teachers who qualified in Bantu Education teacher training institutions could be employed as teachers in state schools for African children. This forced the churches to exit from teacher training for African teachers. In 1976, the Catholic Church led the way in opening what were then private schools for white children, to all race groups. This move represented the first step towards integration of firstly the private schools and ultimately the entire education system in South Africa. The state however imposed a quota system which meant that white private schools could not have black children (i.e. African, Coloured or Indian) making up more than 10% of their enrolment. The first moves to defy the quota system in the 1980s saw hard fought for subsidies to Catholic private schools being cut back drastically, precipitating financial crisis for many into the early 1990s.

At the same time, the declining number of teaching religious in religious orders meant that increasing numbers of professional lay people had to be appointed to teach in Catholic schools. The late 1980s and 1990s saw lay men and women being appointed to positions of leadership in increasing numbers.

With the advent of democracy and the legislative integration of education, public schools on private property were provided for in the South African Schools Act of 1996. A key provision of the Act guaranteed the recognition of the distinctive religious character of those schools where the property was owned by religious organisations. The required agreements between the owners of the property and the Member of the Executive Council responsible for education in each province, would recognise both the distinctive religious character and the manner in which it was to be maintained. In support of this provision, an instrument to appraise the distinctive Catholic character of schools was developed by the Religious Education department of the Catholic Institute of Education.

The 1990s also saw the emergence of local bodies and structures to support and co-ordinate activities for Catholic schools. Many of these arose out of the activities of the now defunct Catholic Schools and Teachers Associations in various dioceses around the country. Many also arose out of the need to engage in negotiation with the newly elected government in order to ensure the future of Catholic schools.

3.3 Demographic profile of Catholic schools

According to the most recent statistics⁶ returned by schools to the Catholic Institute of Education there are 349 Catholic schools in South Africa today. 258 are public schools on private property and the remaining 91 are independent in terms of the South African Schools Act. These schools are owned or situated on property owned by a total of 24 dioceses and 41 religious orders.

30.1% of all Catholic schools are in Kwa-Zulu Natal, more than 90% of these being public schools on private property. The Eastern Cape follows with 16.9% of Catholic schools, then Gauteng with 14% and of these approximately 95% are independent. 13.2% of Catholic schools are in the Western Cape. The Free State, North West and Northern Cape provinces have 6.6%, 6.3% and 5.7% of Catholic schools respectively. Limpopo has 4.6% of Catholic schools and Mpumalanga 2.6% with only 9 schools.

About 75% of the schools are rural or situated in townships and serve black communities. The rest are suburban and integrated or black. These schools serve 168,808 learners: 53.5% girls and 46.5% boys. 90.4% of the children in Catholic schools are black, i.e. either black African, coloured or Indian; and 33.7% are Catholic. 113,979 (67.5%) children are in primary school grades, i.e. Grades R to 7; and 2,720 children are in special classes in schools for children with disabilities. 6472 educators, 39.1% of whom are Catholic, teach in Catholic schools.

Catholic schools serve the entire range of socio-economic sub-sectors of South African society. In 2005, 83 schools (23.8%) charged fees of up to R50 per year with a further 16.9% charging fees between R50 and R100 per year. 23.8% of Catholic schools charge annual school fees between R100 and R500, and a total of 72.8% of all Catholic schools charge fees of R1000 or less per year. Only 14.3% of schools charge fees above R6000 per year, considered to be the middle income fee level in South Africa.

The physical infrastructure and facilities of schools range from run-down, totally inadequate rural facilities with sometimes close to 100 learners in a classroom; through simple, well maintained albeit simply equipped rural, township and suburban schools and township schools; to very well maintained and well equipped architectural masterpieces all over the country.

Catholic schools have a reputation for being centers of excellence, with the 98 schools offering matric maintaining senior certificate pass and university endorsement rates well above the provincial and national averages. It has to be accepted, however, that there may well be Catholic schools in which the quality of education provided as well as the general functionality of the school require attention.

3.4 Structures and service provision

3.4.1 Catholic Institute of Education (CIE)

The CIE was established as an Associate Body by the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC) in 1985. In terms of its constitution, the CIE is mandated to foster the ideals of Catholic education, with special reference to Christian formation through undertaking, amongst others, the following activities:

- i. promoting the religious, intellectual and professional formation of Catholic teachers and teachers in Catholic Schools;
- ii. assisting with the provision of such curricula and learning materials as may be required by teachers in Catholic schools;
- iii. being a service and resource body for local Catholic education structures and service providers, Catholic schools and people involved in Catholic education generally;
- iv. keeping informed about educational trends, policies and legislation, taking appropriate action and making a constructive contribution to education in all areas;

⁶ Catholic Institute of Education, Catholic Schools Statistics 2005

- v. participating in and supporting the structures and networks for consultation and joint action with other bodies involved in education in Southern Africa, the African continent and globally;
- vi. taking active steps to promote and evaluate the continuation of Catholic education and to preserve the freedom of Catholic schools with regard to appointment of principals and staff, admission of pupils and choice of curricula;
- vii. promoting continuous improvement in the quality of education provided by Catholic schools through quality assurance processes and the provision of relevant training programmes;
- viii. attending to matters such as annual statistics, bursaries, syllabi, assessment, and all other matters relevant to Catholic education.

The CIE is funded mainly by international donor agencies and local, corporate donors; with some generated income from contributions received from Catholic schools, Dioceses and Religious Congregations, and local Catholic education structures.

The CIE operates out of a National Office in Johannesburg and regional offices in the Free State (Bethlehem), Limpopo (Polokwane), North West (Phokeng), Northern Cape (Keimoes), with a Diocesan office in Kokstad. A project office for Literacy and Numeracy and HIV AIDS operates from Mariannhill.

In September 2006, a Skills Training Support Office was established to provide advice and support, and to play a facilitating role in relation to skills training projects operating under the auspices of the Catholic Church.

The CIE is registered as a public benefit organisation and is accredited by the Education Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority (ETDP SETA) as a training provider.

3.4.2 Catholic Schools Proprietors' Association (CaSPA)

CaSPA was established in 1997 in response to the need to negotiate collectively on behalf of Catholic schools and owners of Catholic school property with the national and provincial education departments after the first democratic elections in 1994.

65 owners of Catholic schools or property on which Catholic schools operate, both dioceses and religious orders, are members of CaSPA. These members hold direct collective responsibility for Catholic schools in South Africa.

CaSPA has the following objectives:

- i. Assist members to promote, encourage and protect the ethos and distinctive character of Catholic schools;
- ii. Promote, encourage and protect the interests of members, and to assist and encourage co-operative action;
- iii. Enable members to make policy decisions and, in matters of common interest, to make joint representations in negotiations with government and other agencies when necessary;
- iv. Regulate in such manner as may be deemed necessary, rates of payment, conditions of employment and other measures affecting employees of members;
- v. Assist members to meet their financial and other obligations by sharing resources as members choose to make available from time to time, and according to conditions which they shall jointly determine;
- vi. Promote leadership programmes for principals and educators in Catholic schools;
- vii. Provide guideline documents for good employment practices in Catholic schools;
- viii. Maintain close collaboration with the other partners and organisations involved in the provision and servicing of Catholic education, especially the SACBC

The CaSPA Executive consists of a directly elected chairperson and vice-chairperson, one elected representative from each of the nine provincial branches, a representative of the SACBC, the Leadership Conference of Consecrated Life (LCCLSA) and the Director of the CIE in an ex-officio capacity. It meets at least three times a year at present and a General Meeting of all members is held every two years.

3.4.3 Local Catholic Education structures

The past six years have seen the emergence of local Catholic education structures in the form of Catholic Schools Boards (CSB), established by CaSPA, to take responsibility for the stewardship of Catholic schools.

The CSBs are responsible for overall co-ordination of Catholic schools in a particular area, either a province or one or more dioceses. CSBs are operational in the Western Cape; the Archdiocese of Pretoria and Diocese Johannesburg; Kwa-Zulu Natal; the Diocese of Port Elizabeth; and Diocese of Umtata. The Diocese of Oudtshoorn has a Catholic Schools Coordinating Council.

Catholic Schools Offices (CSO) operate under the auspices of the CSBs and provide services to Catholic schools in their areas.

In many areas local Principals' Forums have been established and these meet on a regular basis to discuss matters of common interest. Other structures include a Coordinating Council in the Western Cape and a Council for Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of Pretoria.

As is the case with Catholic schools, the level of co-ordination and capacity of local Catholic education structures varies greatly across the country. Directors of CSOs and CIE Coordinators meet twice a year to consider matters of common concern and for purposes of joint planning and coordination.

3.4.4 Rural Education Access Programme (REAP)

REAP was established in 2001 as an associate body of the SACBC. REAP facilitates access to tertiary education for rural students who would otherwise not be able to continue studying after secondary school. Selected students are taken onto the programme in the first year of their tertiary study and can receive support till the completion of their undergraduate qualification. In 2006 support is being provided for 386 students, 131 being first years and the remaining 255 being continuing students. Students on the programme are required to do community service during vacation time and to assist new students.

Support provided by REAP includes:

- i. Access to a subsidized state study loan
- ii. A small grant for books, food, equipment, and other necessary costs
- iii. A dedicated student advisor for problem-solving and motivation
- iv. Monitoring of performance and well-being
- v. Workshops for life and academic skills development
- vi. Peer group support
- vii. Preparation for the world of work
- viii. Institutional liaison

REAP is based in Cape Town and its programme staff of 10 is supported by more than 60 volunteers in rural areas across all nine provinces.

REAP is registered as a public benefit and non-profit organisation.

4.0 THE STATE OF EDUCATION

4.1 An overview

While tremendous strides have been made since 1994 in ensuring that children of school-going age are able to go to school with approximately 12 million children enrolled in school, there are still enormous challenges that face the country in terms of access, quality and safety in schools.

One of the many submissions to the South African Human Rights Commission hearings on the Right to Basic Education⁷ stated that:

“It is not a crisis of disintegration ... We have a Department that is able to run exams, that can get exam papers out, that can get textbooks out. There are schools that are running, so it is not a disintegration, we do have certainly at government level and beyond that, lots of organisations and institutions that are able to tackle the issues, but somehow we are not finding the priorities and the means to begin to really feel that we are addressing the problems.”

The report of the African Peer Review Panel said that South Africa is failing its children⁸. The panel painted a bleak picture of childhood against a background of violence and deprivation, with an education system that is failing to offer the youth a way out of poverty that is their dominant experience.

According to the report, “The situation of children in South Africa has been worsened by the apparent decline of social support institutions such as the family. ... Not only has parental leadership failed, the overall societal leadership is far from being inspiring to children.” The panel also suggested that little or nothing was being done to replace disintegrating social-support institutions, including the family, school, kinship structures, and public institutions, with new forms of effective socialisation. The discussion document on macro-social trends⁹ suggests that there is a trend for the nuclear family to recede as the basic unit of social organisation, with an increase in single or extended households. The document suggests that, “On the one hand, this reflects the dynamism of a society experiencing social change; but on the other hand, it presents serious challenges of household subsistence in poor areas and the social upbringing of the young.”

While the higher education sector has been restructured and rationalised and hundreds of millions of rands poured into recapitalising the Further Education and Training colleges, the shortcomings of the primary and secondary schooling system and the social and economic inequalities within the country, makes post secondary education a privileged domain to which few have access and within which even fewer attain success.

4.2 Specific issues

4.2.1 Quality

Education has been and remains the largest budgetary item for government, currently about 6% of gross domestic product. However according to the Human Rights Commission¹⁰, “for what has been put in, the results are tremendously concerning for everyone.” While a lot has been done to transform the education system, the reality is that the majority of children are not being provided with education of quality or that instills in them the values, attitudes and behaviours required to make a positive contribution in and for society.

⁷ South African Human Rights Commission (2006), **Report of the Public Hearing on the Right to Basic Education** (pg. 18)

⁸ Sunday Times (11 December 2006), **SA gets F for its children.**

⁹ Policy Co-ordination and Advisory Services, Social Sector, The Presidency (2006) **A Nation in the Making: A discussion document on macro-social trends in South Africa** (pg 96)

¹⁰ South African Human Rights Commission (2006), **Report of the Public Hearing on the Right to Basic Education** (pg. 19)

In a paper delivered at a meeting of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation¹¹, Nick Taylor of JET Education Services suggests that, “Good schools are ordered institutions which cultivate a strong work ethic, the ability to perform under pressure, and a sense of initiative and responsibility; they teach children, both in the way they operate and in the values they espouse, that expertise and principle, not patronage and corruption, are the paths to sustainable success; they are places where future citizens learn to appreciate cultural diversity and to resolve their differences through the application of rational rules.” He goes on to say that, “Without these habits of mind and knowledge skills, school leavers do not have the wherewithal to make a constructive contribution to society: consequently, they are easy prey to a life of unemployment, crime, or corruption.”

In the same paper, Taylor suggests that close to 80% of South Africa’s schools are essentially dysfunctional, and that the overwhelming majority of dysfunctional schools serve poor black African communities.

The SACMEQ 2005¹² report on reading and mathematics at grade 6 level in South Africa states that the achievement of the average grade 6 learner in both Reading and Mathematics falls below the benchmark for the SACMEQ systemic study. The deficit is wider for Mathematics than for Reading. The study also showed that there appeared to be a convincing relationship between school location (city/town/rural) and achievement of learners in reading. In general, grade 6 learners in cities demonstrated higher level literacy competencies and achieved significantly higher Reading levels than their rural counterparts. For Mathematics the achievement was at about the same level, regardless of school location. The relationship between learners’ socio-economic status and their achievement also appears to be strong, more so in Reading than in Mathematics.

Recent research conducted by Professor Pam Christie¹³ and others at the University of Queensland, Australia, suggests that home background has the biggest effect on student learning. Nick Taylor’s paper supports this view, suggesting that language and home-related factors feature most prominently in distinguishing schools that perform better than expected given their disadvantaged socio-economic position. Of particular interest are the research findings that suggest that learning is greatly enhanced when the language of the home and that of the school coincide in the early years. Furthermore, where there is a dissonance between the two, children do better at school the more their parents speak to them in the language of instruction. Other critical factors influencing the performance of schools, identified by Taylor, include time management in schools, curriculum leadership on the part of school principals and management, and last but not least, teacher knowledge. The research conducted by Christie and others also shows that the individual teacher in the classroom makes a greater difference to the achievement of children, than the school as an institution.

4.2.2 Poverty

The impact of poverty on the quality of learning and the achievement of children at school is well documented. The report of the Human Rights Commission¹⁴ notes that the greater the poverty in a province, the greater the inequality in the quality of education experienced. The report also noted that the mere reallocation of resources did not produce quality education.

Inability to pay school fees has been identified as a major cause of social exclusion and isolation both in the family and between the family and school, preventing children from going to school and creating tensions between poor families and schools. While the recently

¹¹ JET Education Services (2006), Dr Nick Taylor, **Schools, Skills and Citizenship**

¹² Southern and East African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (2005), **The SACMEQ II Project in South Africa: A study of the Conditions of Schooling and the Quality of Education.**

¹³ Umalusi Seminar (July 2007), Prof Pam Christie, **Teachers and schools making a difference: lessons from the classroom.**

¹⁴ South African Human Rights Commission (2006), **Report of the Public Hearing on the Right to Basic Education** (pg. 19)

introduced “No Fee Schools” policy may go some way to addressing this problem, it is not only school fees that impacts on access to quality education and learner achievement. In South Africa, many children attend school on a daily basis having had little or nothing to eat. Information gathered by the CIE in a survey on nutrition in schools, suggests that poor nutrition is one of the major barriers to learning. The Human Rights Commission noted that “School meals support physical accessibility and are a major incentive for children to go to school”.

4.2.3 HIV and AIDS

A study conducted by the Actuarial Society of South Africa (ASSA)¹⁵ found that 250,000 young South Africans between the ages of 15 and 24 were infected with HIV in 2006. It was estimated that by June 2006, 5.4 million people (11% of the population) were infected with an estimated 530,000 new infections this year according to the ASSA 2003 model of the scale of the pandemic.

The ASSA study estimates that 1 million children under the age of 18 have lost their mothers to AIDS, with a further 500,000 children being maternal orphans due to other causes. With the current death rate due to HIV and AIDs of 300,000 adults per year, 500 children are being orphaned daily or 200 000 children per year¹⁶. 300,000 HIV infected mothers give birth per year with 85,000 babies being born HIV positive. It is estimated that another 20,000 will be infected with the virus through breast milk.

A study conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council in 2005 found that of more than 21,000 teachers surveyed 12.7% were HIV positive (21.8% in Kwa-Zulu Natal; 19.1% in Mpumalanga and 13.8% in the Eastern Cape.

The South African National HIV Prevalence, HIV Incidence, Behaviour and Communication, 2005 Survey, reported that 2.6% or 180,433 of children aged between 12 and 18 identified themselves as heads of households. An estimated 1 in 6 children of school-going age, go home to child-headed households.

These statistics raise serious concern for the education system in South Africa with the impact of HIV and AIDS on both teachers and children making for an uncertain future. The decline in the social capital provided by the family and kinship structures noted in the report of the African Peer Review Panel can to a large extent be attributed to the decimating effect of AIDS. Schools are being called upon to be not only places of teaching and learning, but centres of care, social and individual support.

4.2.4 Violence and substance abuse

The extraordinarily high levels of violence, sexual as well as physical, and drug abuse in South African schools have featured prominently in media reports in recent months. There is no doubt that these are related to the exclusion of the teaching of values and moral principles from the classroom and the subsequent decline in personal and social morality.

The report of the African Peer Review Panel notes that girls continue to be raped, sexually abused, harassed and assaulted at school by male classmates and teachers, with violence becoming an inevitable part of the school environment for many.

The unacceptably high levels of violent crime experienced in South Africa spills over into schools and playgrounds with virtually daily reports of children being assaulted and even killed by the classmates on school property. In a submission¹⁷ to the Human Rights Commission hearings on School Violence, the CIE stated that:

¹⁵ Business Day, 30 November 2006

¹⁶ Mail and Guardian (1 to 7 December 2006), **Little Heroes Volume 22 Number 47**

¹⁷ CIE National Schools Office (September 2006), **Public Hearing on School-based Violence: Submission to the South African Human Rights Commission.**

“South Africa’s past and present is one that is trapped in a cycle of violence. There has been a creation of a fortress mentality amongst South Africans. The starkest example of this is the view that people need to own guns to protect themselves, even though, statistically gun owners are at higher risk to be victims of crime. In addition to this the figure of approximately 4 million firearms in private hands suggests a high rate of paranoia amongst the populace. The growth of the private security sector and the events of this year’s security guard strike also bear testament to this.

It can be argued that we are in a period of reconciliation, although state involvement in this regard has waned since the end of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In order to achieve democracy in its highest forms in South Africa, we will need to end the cycle of violence and this requires the winning of the hearts and minds of all South Africans. Freedom is not ever possible in a state of fear.”

The following is an excerpt from “Countering bullying by creating caring schools: A study of Catholic Schools in South Africa”

“Porteus (1999) noted the historical roots of violence in South Africa, and that State influence was largely achieved through violent means. She argues that violence in South Africa continues to be a means of achieving influence, both on an interpersonal and broader social level. She sees violence as being widespread and more ‘normalised’ for children as an ‘acceptable’ avenue for expression and conflict resolution. Harber argues that the nature of schools as agents of social control, the way that they are organised, the size of schools and racism and ethnic violence play a role creating violence.

Though not as lethal as school shootings and not as physically aggressive as fights and weapon violence in schools, bullying is seen as a pre-cursor to more lethal and aggressive forms of violence, and is therefore seen as a starting point for violence prevention in schools. While government schools are beginning to address bullying, private Catholic schools have been the most forthright in their attempts to deal with bullying.

Bullying in schools is a form of low level violence that can escalate and become physical and even lethal, and can be a direct or indirect form of violence (Olafsen & Viemerö 2000). Numerous studies have shown that both primary and high school learners are bullied (Boulton & Smith 1994; Cowie 2000) and that bullying is a worldwide problem which can adversely impact on school climates and have negative lifelong consequences for pupils (Banks 1997; Krahé 2001; Smith & Brain 2000; Rigby 2002b).

In the first South African National Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (Reddy et al, 2003) of grade 8 to 11 learners, 41% of them said that they had been bullied. Around 22 % of the learners felt unsafe on their way to and from school, and 32% felt unsafe at school. In the six months preceding the survey just over 19% of the learners reported that they had been in a physical fight involving punching or hitting on the school property.

A total of 2 414 students completed the survey in 15 schools. 1290 were girls and 1124 boys. The average bullying index across the schools in this evaluation was 13.19, which is fairly high when measured against the scores in Britain where anything above 11 would be considered very high. Boys (index of 13.79) experienced higher levels of bullying than girls (index of 10.03) did. These overall high levels of bullying may also point to the high levels of violence within South African society as a whole.

The high levels of school violence can be related to high levels of alcohol and substance abuse in communities, with schools being a mirror of the communities they serve. The Ministry of Education has recently announced proposals for voluntary drug-testing in schools in an attempt to control the problem of rising substance abuse even among primary school children. Increased security measures, such as metal detectors and armed security guards, have also been proposed for identified high risk schools in order to reduce school-based violence.

5.0 THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO THE CRISIS IN EDUCATION

It would not be incorrect to say that the education system in South Africa has failed as a key agent of socialisation and social cohesion. The discussion document on macro-social trends correctly identifies religion as a critical social force among all communities in South Africa.¹⁸ The report states that religion is seen by many as a critical instrument of social intervention, especially in relation to matters of nation-building and reconciliation. It further calls on society to encourage forms of social organisation at the basic level that promote social cohesion, especially better household environments and communities for the upbringing of children; in partnership with civil society, including faith-based organisations – while employing state leverage where appropriate. A key remark in the report relates to the need for the outlook of social partnership to achieve national objectives to permeate all of government's work and to be encouraged across society. This is recognition of the fact that the achievement of national objectives is not possible without the support of key partners such as religious groups.

The Catholic Church's involvement in education is an integral part of its evangelising mission and places the Church and its resources at the service of humanity. The Church needs to find public ways to express its commitment to social partnership in education, through the provision of Catholic schools in particular, but also in its general contribution to and support of the provision of public education. In this regard:

“Catholic schools share a common purpose with the Catholic Church, in bringing about the biblical concept of the ‘reign of God’. This implies a working towards a transformation of person and society, characterised by relationships of justice, love, liberty and peace. Catholic schools aim to bring about this transformation by providing the embodiment of a relevant and coherent view about the meaning of human persons and human life; by attempting to facilitate a holistic and integrated education acknowledging this; and by promoting religious and moral formation congruent with Kingdom values and the Catholic tradition.”¹⁹

The Church needs to engage with government on the recognition of its contribution as a key social partner in education. In particular, the legal status of public schools on Church-owned property is a matter for critical attention. It is well-known that there is opposition within government circles to the notion of public schools on private property, particularly in the case of farm schools. It is also true that the recognition of the distinctive religious character of public schools on property owned by religious organisations has been challenged in legal opinion provided to some of the provinces. There is an urgent need to take this matter up at the highest possible level, most probably through the National Religious Leaders' Forum, in order to secure the concept of social partnership in education in Church or faith-based public schools and to have its property rights as well as the distinctive character of Church schools recognised in appropriate legislation.

The Direction Statements adopted at the 2nd National Catholic Schools Congress²⁰ provide key pointers for the Church's response, particularly in relation to Catholic schools. These include:

¹⁸ Policy Co-ordination and Advisory Services, Social Sector, The Presidency (2006) **A Nation in the Making: A discussion document on macro-social trends in South Africa** (pp 97, 99)

¹⁹ Denis McLaughlin (1999)

²⁰ Catholic Institute of Education (2004) **2nd National Catholic Schools Congress 2004** (pp. 53 to 55)

- i. Promoting closer collaboration between the school and the Church (diocese and parish) - Direction Statement 1
- ii. Pastoral care in the school community and beyond – Direction Statement 1
- iii. Addressing the HIV AIDS pandemic and its consequences – Direction Statement 2
- iv. Ensuring that Religious Education is not compromised and committing to appropriate training for teachers of Religious Education – Direction Statement 4
- v. Ensuring that Catholic schools implement systems to assure and ensure the quality of teaching and learning – Direction Statement 6
- vi. Ensuring the ongoing formation of all members of the school community through effective formation programmes for parents, teachers, School Governing Bodies and Boards and School Leadership/Management Teams – Direction Statement 7

The theme for Catholic schools in 2007, agreed by CaSPA and supported by the SACBC Administrative Board, is *Parents and Schools Building Community*. The theme provides an opportunity for the Church to make a statement about the primacy of parents in the education of their children and on the importance of community, recognising that Catholic schools are not immune to and unaffected by the social ills and challenges facing society in general. This is particularly important in view of the fragility of family life and the breakdown of social support structures for children, and the impact this has on their education and preparation for adulthood. In this regard, parish-based structures and processes should be harnessed to bring this critical issue to the attention of teachers in Catholic schools, Catholic teachers in general, as well as parents. Existing parish and community programmes to strengthen parenting skills should be utilised to encourage and provide parents and care-givers with the skills needed to fulfill their obligations towards the education of their children.

Regarding the quality of education, CaSPA and the SACBC should approve a policy on the quality assurance of Catholic schools as a matter of urgency, and to ensure that appropriate systems and processes are in place for quality assurance. The Church should also intensify efforts to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning in Literacy and Numeracy in Catholic primary schools receives attention and to assist the CIE and other Church structures in identifying and approaching suitable funders for these projects. Attention also needs to be given to the promotion of mother-tongue instruction at least in the first three years of schooling particularly in schools serving township and rural communities in which English, being the preferred language of teaching and learning, is often the second or third language for children.

The Church is uniquely privileged to make a significant contribution to building a values-based and moral culture in South African society through the Religious Education programmes offered in Catholic schools. Practical and constructive ways should be explored to insert the approach, methodology and content of both the *Lifebound* and *CORD* curricula into the Life Orientation learning in primary and secondary schools. Ways should also be explored to make a contribution to the development of Religion Studies in the National Senior Certificate programme and to ensure that faith-specific studies are included as a significant elective component of the course. The development of professional courses for teachers of Religious Education, to be offered by St Augustine College from 2007 represents significant progress towards ensuring that teachers of Religious Education are properly trained and that the subject is placed on a sound professional footing.

6.0 SPECIFIC ISSUES FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

6.1 Declining social capital

Research conducted in the United States by Peter Bryk²¹ and others over a period of ten years from 1981, suggest that Catholic schools are able to simultaneously achieve relatively high levels of student learning, distribute this learning and achievement of learning outcomes more

²¹ Synthesised in a publication titled **Catholic Schools and the Common Good**, published by Harvard University Press

equitably with regard to race and class than in the public sector, and sustain high levels of teacher commitment and student engagement. One of the key factors to which they attribute what they call the “common school effect” is the fact that Catholic schools functioned within a larger communal organisation with a set of shared beliefs about what students should learn, about proper norms of instruction and about how people should relate to one another. These beliefs are all underpinned by a set of general moral commitments. The Catholic school sees itself as a community that respects the dignity of each person, where members are free to question within a commitment to genuine dialogue, and where an ethos of caring infuses social encounters.

Professor Gerald Grace²² more explicitly identifies the larger communal organisation referred to by Bryk, et al, as being provided by networks of religious communities and congregations. Grace specifically refers to the social capital provided by the network of support and trust relationships that exist within religious communities and congregations. He argues that the decline in the numbers in religious congregations and the increasing age of religious represents a decline in the social capital on which Catholic schools are dependent. This also represents a decline in spiritual capital – the resources of faith and values derived from commitment to a religious tradition. The effect has been an increasing reliance on lay people, both teachers and parents, to maintain the ethos and assets of Catholic schools.

For Catholic schools in South Africa, as is the case in the rest of the world, this represents the challenge of finding practical ways to ensure greater collaboration and mutual empowerment between religious and lay people involved in Catholic education. This should be part of a broader, long-term strategy to ensure the sustainability of the education offered by Catholic schools and must include well-devised and executed strategies for the spiritual and professional formation of people for future leadership of Catholic schools and the broader Catholic education community. These programmes should offer a significant component on the social teaching of the Catholic Church as well as in-depth study of Church teaching on education, in addition to content aimed at development of sound management skills.

Discussions should be entered into with the Department of Education in order to ensure that appropriately trained people with grounding in the philosophy and practice of Catholic education are appointed to senior positions in Catholic public schools. The same principle should apply to the appointment of staff to senior positions in Catholic independent schools.

6.2 Inequitable distribution of resources

Catholic schools are a microcosm of South African society with regard to the distribution of resources and the state of school infrastructure. The vision statement approved at the 2nd National Catholic Schools Congress recognises that Catholic schools experience the social and economic realities of our society, in particular the growing economic disparity. The Congress Direction Statement 3 makes a commitment to addressing this reality – “Acknowledging that within our Catholic education network there are schools with abundance of resources and those with limited resources – human and material - we commit ourselves to share our resources and put them at the service of those in need.”

In order to translate this commitment to action, an audit of school infrastructure should be undertaken to identify critical infrastructure and resourcing needs. This should be followed by a practical, long-term plan to ensure that all schools have the basic infrastructure required and that the standard and condition of school buildings contributes to an environment of dignity and which is conducive to a high standard of teaching and learning.

At the level of structures for the support and service provision to Catholic schools, it must be recognised that there are also glaring resource inequities. Other than the Gauteng, Kwa-Zulu Natal and the Western Cape, because of favourable financing arrangements or the economic

²² Routledge Falmer (2002), Grace Gerald, **Catholic Schools: Mission, Markets and Morality**

position of the schools themselves, the Catholic school communities are not able to ensure financial sustainability of local Catholic Schools Boards and Offices. It is also true that the better resourced regions are able to access donor funding more successfully. This further exacerbates the resourcing inequities. A more just and equitable financing mechanism has to be found to ensure that Catholic Schools Offices in all areas are able to offer a basic level of service provision. In this regard, it will be necessary to develop a very clear definition and understanding of what constitutes core services required by the Catholic school community both at a national and regional level and to ensure that all support and service bodies are able to provide this level of service.

6.3 Financial sustainability of independent schools

Most Catholic independent schools serve relatively poor communities. The following table²³ illustrates the levels of fees charged by the 91 Catholic independent schools.

Fee level	Schools	% of Total
R500 and less	12	13.2%
R501 – R1000	5	5.5%
R1001 – R3000	14	15.4%
R3001 – R6000	12	13.2%
R6001 – R10000	5	5.55
R10001 – R15000	14	15.4%
R15001 – R20000	10	11.0%
More than R20000	19	20.9%

Two factors have contributed significantly to the rising trend in fees charged by Catholic independent schools. Firstly, the increasing numbers of professional lay people appointed to the teaching staff and in leadership due to the decline in the number of teaching religious has led to sharply increased costs. Secondly, the overall effect of subsidy policy over the years, from before 1994 to the present, is that many Catholic schools have had to raise their fees in order to cover their costs and to continue to provide a high standard of education. This has resulted in these becoming inaccessible to the communities they were originally established to serve. It is a fact that many Catholic families cannot afford to send their children to Catholic independent schools. However, it must also be recognised that some Catholic families choose to send their children to independent schools charging fees much higher than Catholic schools.

Recent changes in subsidy policy, in particular the change to the reference year for the categorisation of schools for subsidy purposes, has once again raised the question of the financial sustainability of Catholic independent schools. Schools in the middle fee brackets appear to suffer the greatest risk of decreased subsidy income. While it is true that provincial average expenditure per learner has increased in most instances, the recategorisation will see many schools serving middle income and poorer families drop by at least one subsidy category and thus receive much lower per capita subsidies than they currently do.

Direction Statement 10 of the 2nd National Catholic Schools Congress calls on the State to review its funding policies and to provide State funding to ensure the accessibility of Catholic independent and public schools. Simply calling on the State in a statement is not enough. The sustainability of the values-based education offered by Catholic independent schools is at risk. It is necessary to undertake a strategic review of the financial position of these schools and to develop a long-term strategic plan, which will of necessity include negotiation with the State regarding the categorisation and funding of the schools. All of this is dependent on the extent to which social partnership is recognised in future legislation governing school-based education.

6.4 Relationships within the Catholic education community

²³ Source: Catholic Institute of Education, **School statistical returns for 2005**

The development, over the past 10 years, of various bodies and structures to support and serve Catholic schools has led to a lack of clarity regarding relationships between various bodies. Direction Statement 9 of the 2nd National Catholic Schools Congress was very clear in calling for clarity regarding the names, functions and responsibilities of all structures. It further called for the development of policy regarding roles and responsibilities and clarity regarding levels of accountability.

6.4.1 The SACBC, CaSPA and the CIE

There is a need to clarify the role and mandate of the CIE as an Associate Body of the SACBC. If the CIE's role is to be the "education arm" of the SACBC, in effect acting as the equivalent of an education secretariat in other conferences, the meaning of the following statements in the CIE Constitution²⁴ needs to be fully explored and the implications for the scope of CIE's activities understood:

- “1.3 being a service and resource body for local Catholic education structures and service providers, Catholic schools and people involved in Catholic education generally;
- 1.4 keeping informed about educational trends, policies and legislation, taking appropriate action and making a constructive contribution to education in all areas;”

In particular, this will require clarity about the relationship between the CIE, CaSPA and the SACBC, the authority of CaSPA and the SACBC in relation to the CIE, and the accountability of CIE to each. It is clear that the highest authority in all matters pertaining to the Church's mission in education resides in the SACBC. The responsibilities of CaSPA, as a collective of owners of Catholic schools, are clearly associated with a level of authority. The critical question is how CaSPA and the SACBC relate and how the responsibility and authority of each is appropriately recognised and exercised.

The establishment of the Skills Training Support Office within the CIE has broadened the scope of the CIE's activities to include skills and adult basic education and training. Early childhood development, further education and training (outside of the formal school sector), and higher education represent gaps in the scope of interest. However, these represent critical areas of interest for the Church and the SACBC.

6.4.2 Local Catholic Schools Boards

The Catholic Schools Boards have been established by provincial or regional CaSPA structures with responsibility for stewardship of Catholic schools. The relationship between CaSPA and the boards and the accountability of the boards to CaSPA structures is clear. The principle of subsidiarity is important in this regard.

However, in the longer term there may be a need to consider the relationship between the various Catholic Schools Boards. At present, the boards do not operate within a collective structure since CaSPA provides the collective. All that may be needed is an information sharing and coordinating mechanism in order to ensure consistency and coherence.

6.4.3 Catholic Schools Offices (CSO) and the CIE

Catholic Schools Offices fall under the authority of local Catholic Schools Boards. At present a coordinating mechanism between different CSOs and CSOs and the CIE is provided by a bi-annual meeting of CSO Directors, CIE management and coordinators. The key principle should be co-ordination of activities, sharing of information and workloads in order to minimise duplication and overlap.

²⁴ Constitution of the Catholic Institute of Education (2003), **Section 1: Aims and activities**

However, there may be a need to ensure quality management systems for CSOs. This could range from common employment policies and practices, conditions of service, etc., to actual quality assurance of the work of Catholic Schools Offices.

The high variability in capacity and financial sustainability of CSOs is a key concern. This must be addressed as a matter of urgency and may have to include cross-subsidisation of running costs between offices.

The role of the CIE in supporting CSOs and the services CIE should provide to CSOs requires clarification.

6.4.4 CIE and the Catholic Education Trust (CET)

The CET was established by the SACBC in 1985 to receive funds intended for the activities of the CIE. The objects of the Trust enabled it to obtain donor deductibility status in terms of the Income Tax Act and to issue tax exemption receipts to donors who required it. Changes to income tax legislation have now made it possible for the CIE to have donor deductibility status.

The CIE's reserves, in the form of a sustainability fund, are held in the CET. The CET is the fundholder for a restricted capital grant amounting to approximately R4.5 million received by the CIE for activities in support of teacher development and school improvement in South Africa and Lesotho.

There is no formal relationship between the CIE and the CET. Traditionally the CIE Director has been responsible for administration of the CET and the CIE has provided financial administration services. However, there is no formal accountability mechanism between the CET and the CIE Board regarding the funds held on behalf of CIE.

The Trustees have recently approved a new Deed of Trust, consistent with the new provisions of the Income Tax Act. Amongst others, the composition of the Trust has been changed to include the appointment of lay people with skills and expertise specific to the objects of the Trust. This may well provide the mechanism for establishing a relationship in terms of governance with the CIE.

An organisational review of CIE conducted by an independent consultant during 2006, identified a weakness in the leadership of the CIE Board and recommended that the Board elects a Vice Chair to play a more active role in terms of governance. It may be appropriate to consider the appointment of one of the lay people on the CET to the CIE Board to be designated as the Vice Chair. This would ensure a formal link and accountability between the two organisations while maintaining the degree of separation required for the exercise of fiduciary responsibility for the fund managed by the CET.

6.4.5 Rural Education Access Programme (REAP) and the CIE

REAP's primary object is to provide access to higher education for rural students. It is not clear whether this includes being an "advisory body" for the SACBC on all matters related to higher education or whether this is the responsibility of the CIE.

A member of CIE management serves on the REAP Board. The provision in the REAP constitution is related to the fact that the SACBC Educational Assistance Scheme (originally administered by the CIE) was discontinued and its functions, together with those of the Catholic Educational Aid Programme of the Archdiocese of Cape Town, absorbed into REAP on establishment.

There may be a need to convene a review committee to consider the relationship between CIE and REAP particularly in relation to the higher education sector as a whole and to make recommendations as to the formal and/or structural relationship between the two organisations.