

Catholic

# Education

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*Teacher  
vaccinations  
&  
EMOTIONAL  
FATIGUE*

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS  
CONGRESS

GLOBAL IMPACT  
OF COVID

ART OF LIFE  
ORIENTATION

RACISM REARS  
ITS UGLY HEAD  
ONCE MORE



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In many ways after the disruptions of 2020, we expected 2021 to be a year in which the world would start to make sense and carve a new normal. As we enter the final months of the year, it is clear that the journey towards a post pandemic world is beginning even if that seems slow and frustrating at times. Teachers across the network have been vaccinated, the process of rebuilding the curriculum and education has begun, our understanding of online education both the positives and negatives has improved and most importantly the roadmap for Education beyond 2021 is clear. While we have become experts at diagnosing the problems, it is often more difficult to find solutions, yet you will see through the pages of this edition many solutions, most of them tried and tested and the impending hope against hope that Catholic education brings to our country.

We are delighted to report on the Catholic Schools Congress and take a trip down memory lane celebrating a decade of the Pastoral Letter on Education. We share stories on Education in these times, the vaccination rollout and importantly the findings of the Global Catholic Education report on the impact of Covid19 on Education. On a more sobering note, the issues that divide our society especially racism have come to the fore and we begin to tackle this issue and will continue to a dialogue that we must move forward together. When so much divides us, our role to be builders of peace becomes ever more important.

We celebrate the art of life orientation and share a book review on disruptive thinking, preparing our learners for the future.

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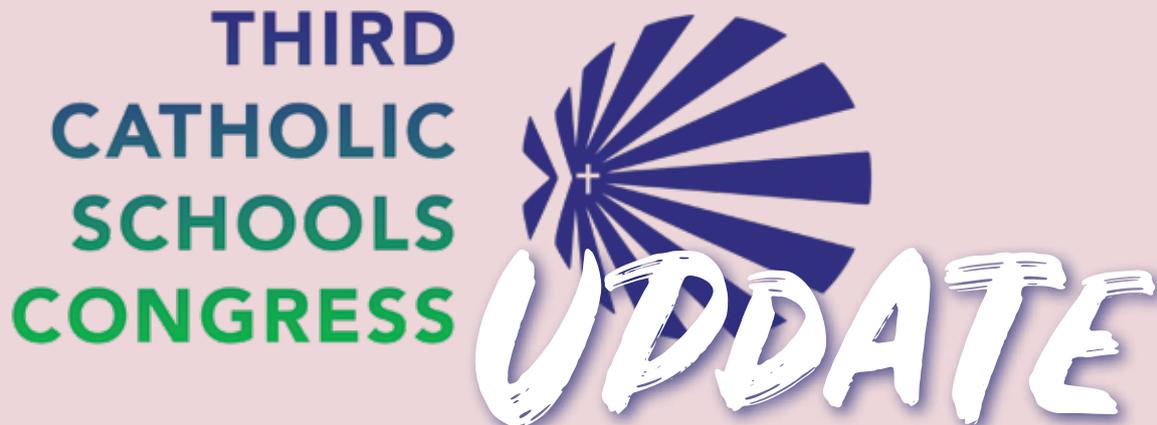
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Book Review

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# THIRD CATHOLIC SCHOOLS CONGRESS



While the Coronavirus pandemic continues to dominate all aspects of our lives, it is with great hope that this edition take us back to the vision of the Catholic Schools congress held in September 2019. Just like the rest of the world we had no idea at that time that the world would be changed forever by an invisible threat. The congress vision statement, despite this great unknown, held such a profound prophecy: “In fidelity to Jesus Christ and the call of his Gospel, we celebrate the uniqueness of our schools’ identity as part of the evangelising mission of the Church, honouring the past and welcoming the future. We recognise our responsibility to contribute to the transformation of our country, towards a society fit for the children of God”.

If the congress were to be held today, one can see that the vision statement would be the same, for fidelity to Jesus Christ and the Gospel is at the core of the work we do and cannot be locked down. As lockdowns closed religious gatherings, schools became the only places one could see the continued activity and mission of the Catholic church, making the uniqueness of our schools’ identity all the more important. The next statement on honouring the past and welcoming the future is even more pertinent as we recognize that

the world has changed and we have to embrace the future, not just a positive future but a future that can be challenging but simultaneously filled with hope and love. The vision statement then turns to the immense responsibility and the pledge that our schools will contribute to the transformation of our country and move us towards a society fit for the children of God.

At this stage the Catholic Board of Education at National and Regional levels at the service bodies, Catholic Institute of Education and the regional offices have adopted strategic plans and are implementing the congress directions.

In light of the above vision the following five directions apply and are a good source for reflection. We invite you if and when some time becomes available to spend 10 to 15 minutes reading through the statements and reflecting on what these mean to you and the school community in these times. If you, like many, are using social media in this physically distanced times, please consider liking the CIE Facebook page and post some of your reflections online should you feel ready to share.

### Direction Statement 1

#### *Catholic Education Today and Tomorrow: Identity and Mission*

Believing that Jesus Christ and his Gospel are at the heart of the Catholic school, we honour the vision, faith and care of those who founded Catholic schools, and undertake to bring these forward. We strive to educate for the Common Good, by including all, cultivating reciprocal relationships, building unity in our network, and addressing prejudice and injustices

We commit to the holistic education of our learners, grounded in the dignity of each person as created in the image of God - an education towards a meaningful and purposeful life, with a concern for justice and for the vulnerable, and where the integrity of creation is recognised and respected.

### Direction Statement 2

#### *Religious Education: Educating the Heart, Mind and Soul*

Believing that Religious Education permeates all aspects of the School's life, is at the heart of the curriculum, and gives learners the opportunity to learn about and encounter God; that the principal, supported by the staff, is the spiritual leader of the school

We commit to A Religious Education which is faithful to the Catholic tradition, is aligned with Fostering Hope, open to all, and which offers learners clear relevant programmes for each grade across the school, within a safe, reflective and contemplative environment that responds to their contexts and experiences.

THIRD  
CATHOLIC  
SCHOOLS  
CONGRESS



TOWARDS  
TOMORROW  
TOGETHER  
IN FAITH

### Direction Statement 3

#### *Liberating Education: The Catholic School response to the needs of the 21st century*

Believing that local, community and global concerns impel us to change our approach to education by striving “to promote a new way of thinking about human beings, life, society and our relationship with nature”, Laudato ‘Si’, 215; and that our children and their teachers are open to the exploration of different ways of educating and learning together.

We commit to welcoming appropriate change; holding a happy equilibrium between the best of what we currently have, and the required values of deep thought and reflection, responsibility, creativity, compassionate care, inclusivity, environmental awareness and solidarity for the Common Good; acknowledging the role of the educator in facilitating the acquisition of 21st Century skills.

### Direction Statement 4

#### *Governing and Leading Catholic Schools towards tomorrow*

Believing In the value of ethical, accountable, collaborative, accessible governance and leadership,

informed by the spirit of service; that Ownership, Governance and Leadership, while distinct in their roles, are all key to sustainability; that in the Catholic School, Governance is in the service of mission (rather than market or tradition).

We commit to Schools of Excellence that are led and governed ethically and effectively, with active commitment to the Catholic ethos; where Governors and Leaders are empowered with the necessary skills and knowledge, reaching out in care and prepared to protect the wellbeing of children.

### Direction Statement 5

#### *Sustaining and Growing Catholic Schools Today and Tomorrow:*

Believing that Catholic Schools are called to be beacons of hope and places of connection between home, church and community, we are convinced of the value of these schools

We commit to strengthening our ethos and distinctive Catholic character, especially with regard to service, inclusivity, and a particular care for the vulnerable; transforming our schools in all diverse ways necessary, re-aligning them in response to the needs of 21st Century South Africa; respectfully holding the Department of Education and Catholic structures, by strong advocacy, to their respective responsibilities.

## EVIDENCE OF THE SUCCESS OF THE BUILDING PEACEFUL CATHOLIC SCHOOLS PROGRAMME



# School *in a time of* Plague

*Sometimes at midnight, in the great silence of the sleep-bound town, the doctor turned on his radio before going to bed for the few hours' sleep he allowed himself. And from the ends of the earth, across the thousands of miles of land and sea, kindly, well-meaning speakers tried to voice their fellow-feeling, and indeed did so, but at the same time proved the utter incapacity of every man truly to share in suffering that he cannot see."*

- Albert Camus, The Plague

Today it's our TVs and smart phones that give us the news and insight into how our world is affected by the plague of our day, the Corona virus, COVID 19. News stations have counters telling us how many tested positive and how many have sadly died. In South Africa every night after about 10 pm the Department of Health releases the figures for the previous 24 hours. If one has followed these this past December and early January, they were the most frightening. By the time this article goes to press it is likely that 50 000 people will have died.

Numbers are meaningless. Each of these people has a name and was loved by family and friends. The loss of loved ones permeates the lives of teachers and children in our schools.

To say that the children and staff have been affected by the pandemic is an understatement. Who could have predicted in January 2020 that the entire country would shut down and that virtually overnight, schools would be required to shift their entire teaching structure to online les-

sons. Teachers scrambled to change their mode of teaching, parents struggled to cope with supervising their children's learning. And teachers with children of their own faced the double burden of having to teach their classes while simultaneously trying to keep their own children focused. Of course, not all schools were able to make this transition. Online learning continues in some schools but for the vast majority of the children in South Africa there has been little to no schooling. Even with the best efforts, those without access to technology and data, could at best get a printed worksheet from the school, effectively an education without context.

One year ago all schools closed having been given only four days' notice. It is here where the divide in South Africa became even more apparent. In spite of much effort our school system continues the entrenched divide that is our legacy from apartheid. For most independent schools, the break coincided closely with planned school holidays while for public schools across the country, these closures presented a huge disruption. At the most basic level, the country has multiple

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calendars dividing coastal schools from the interior and independent from public. These differences when affected by a pandemic inherently create unjust outcomes as some learners were affected by a merely one lost day of schooling while for others two weeks of schooling were lost.

As the pandemic progressed and we became aware that it was no longer a three week, then extended to five week process but an indefinite process that would cross 300 days of solid restrictions, schools were opened and closed based on the assessment of health advisors. In multi calendar schooling system, this would further increase the injustice to learners in public inland schools. Also due to extensive lobbying, independent schools who were best placed for online learning were also allowed to reopen at times when public schools were restricted making the inequality in influence and power even starker and more devastating. For some learners across the country, the closure of schools was also a hunger sentence and even in developed countries such as the United Kingdom the issue of feeding children raised the spectre of a compassionless society where even feeding children became a point of contestation.

Access to internet and digital platforms is largely available only in Independent schools and some public schools in well-resourced areas. Most have no access to these basic tools for teaching and learning online. Independent schools and well-resourced public schools were able to move to online learning fairly rapidly. Other schools had to experiment and discover which methods of communication were the most effective. Preparing packs for learners and keeping parents and learners informed through WhatsApp was

a common approach. But nothing lengthy could be done with the high data costs. Some free access platforms were developed with TV and radio programmes.

In March last year the stark effects of COVID-19 could be clearly seen as Pope Francis spoke to a desolate St Peter's Square in his Urbi et Orbi address and was echoed in his words as he told the story from Mark's Gospel of the disciples - afraid and alone - in the boat in the storm. <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-03/urbi-et-orbi-pope-coronavirus-prayer-blessing.html>

Pope Francis likened us to these disciples: "We were caught off guard by an unexpected, turbulent storm. We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented." He used the refrain Why are you afraid? Have you no faith? And this continues to be a challenge to us now. While vaccines are now available we can still ask why are we afraid? Because a seemingly insignificant pathogen has invaded our lives? Because it has crippled our livelihoods; separated us from our friends and families; caused so many people to suffer and die? Because for so many life will never be the same again? Perhaps most of all because there is still so much that is unknown and that we have no way of predicting or planning for. Pope Francis' concluding words may help us:

"You ask us not to be afraid. Yet our faith is weak and we are fearful. But you, Lord, will not leave us at the mercy of the storm. Tell us again: "Do not be afraid" (Mt 28:5). And we, together with Peter, "cast all our anxieties onto you, for you care about us" (cf. 1 Pet 5:7).

However, Peggy Noonan in the Wall Street Journal challenged whether we are indeed in the same boat: “We are not all in the same boat. We are in the same storm... Some are in yachts... and some have just one oar... some will sail through, health and profession intact, some will lose one or both.” (Noonan, P. (2020, April 23)

This is the reality of the Catholic school network in South Africa. Some are in yachts and some are in boats without even one oar and perhaps even a hole in the bottom of the boat. For some others, the boat has long sunk and the occupants have been swimming in deep waters across turbulent currents. The truth is that many of these small boats were already sinking, buffeted as they were by poverty, government neglect and corruption, but COVID-19 made this even more apparent. For the swimmers, the state no longer exists and these schools operate in the loneliness as neglected and forgotten places in our education system.

So how did the network respond? CIE and local Catholic school offices value their relationship with schools and school leaders. Of equal importance is the quality of the relationship amongst those who serve our Catholic schools. This began an adventure into Zoom meetings which has proved an effective way of sharing issues and of leading formation events for staff. Early in these meetings we focussed on how to support schools and it was decided that it was vitally important to keep contact and offer support and encouragement throughout lockdown via digital means. While data costs are high, WhatsApp is inexpensive and widely accessed which meant some communication could happen. The response of mobile operators to provide data free services and cheap WhatsApp became a lifesaver.

What became clear was the fear and anxiety that this disease engendered especially amongst teachers and parents. To help schools deal with this fear and anxiety we partnered with Dr Gloria Marsay, an educational psychologist and researcher into emotional and social learning. Dr Marsay’s research has led her into researching how we *do* hope rather than just have hope. Dr Marsay ran online seminars first with the staff of the CIE and local office staff and then with school leaders and teachers. These seminars not only gave tools on how to do hope but added a personal spiritual aspect which participants found most helpful.

Preparing for schools to reopen added to the strain of school leaders and teachers. The Department of Basic Education issued, after in-depth consultation with stakeholders, excellent Standard Operating Procedures. These spelt out numerous safety aspects that needed to be implemented and which continue in our schools trying to keep staff and learners free from the virus. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), masks, sanitiser and thermometers were the order of the day. Public schools received PPE from provincial departments but independent schools needed to buy their own. CIE sourced these necessities for independent Catholic schools as well as funding to cover the costs for low-fee independent schools. Posters to encourage hand washing and mask wearing were developed.

One cannot underestimate the strain of COVID 19 compliance in schools. One only has to stand outside a school during learner arrival to see the responsibility teachers carry. Keeping children socially distanced is almost impossible and it’s very sad to see children eating their lunch far

apart. Physical distancing is very difficult for the little children. Human beings need physical contact with others and this pandemic has stopped this normal human action. The long term effects of this time will be studied for years to come. On the other hand, masks have become a way of life and children sanitise automatically.

The major challenge of course continues to be ways to assist teachers and learners who test positive for the virus. Concern for the well-being of the entire community creates stress for principals who become responsible for tracking those who have been exposed to the positive person. Some schools sought to reduce this risk by creating bubbles that limited the mixing of grades, while others staggered attendance to keep numbers within safe limits. All of these measures generated more work, planning and logistical stress for school leaders, administrators and teachers.

The most important aspect of being a Catholic school is gathering for communal prayer at assemblies and Mass. Schools with a good digital platform have found ways to overcome this and even had all learners online at once as well as streamed Masses.

A principal reflected on this time as follows:

*We need to trust in God at all times.*

*We need to be together and supportive to each other in times of difficulties and forget differences and stop blaming each other.*

*We need to be open-minded and un-*

*derstanding and not become rigid in our own thoughts and ideas especially in difficult times.*

*Be patient, open to advice, accept criticism, and avoid naivety and rigidity.*

*As a leader, no matter how difficult and challenging the situation and circumstances are, remain strong, focused, open and accept blame, insults and whatever is thrown at you.*

*Try not to be emotional though at times, this is very difficult or seems impossible. Pray often, do some meditation, go for debriefing and read the word of God. Your courage and strength which at times we think is not visible because of our weaknesses, might look very small and minute yet we do not know that it can make a huge difference and impact in other people's lives.*

In 1975 Pope Paul VI said: Modern [man] listened more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if [he] does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses. The teachers in our Catholic schools have been witnesses in care, compassion and the extra efforts they have

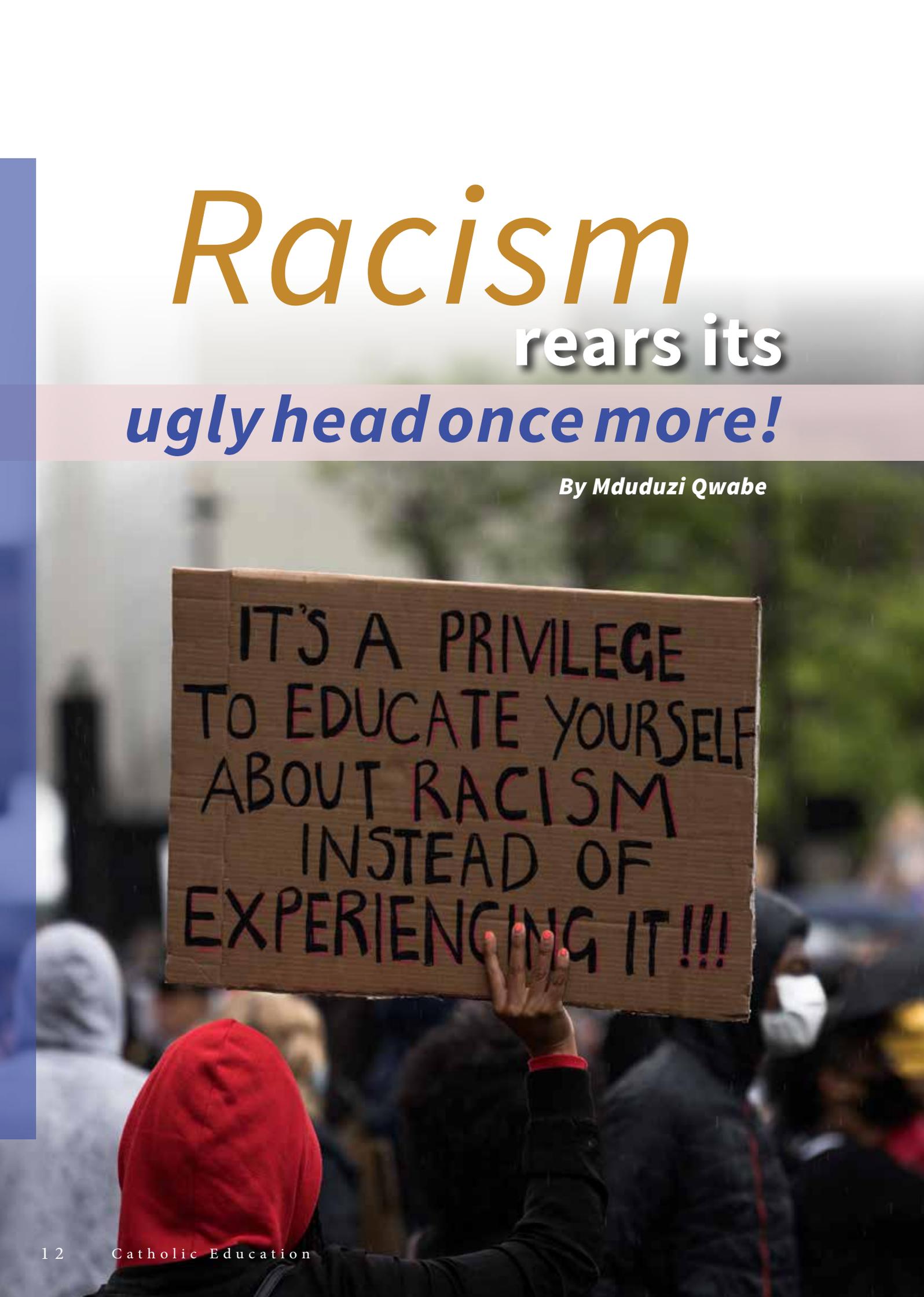
We honour those teachers, learners and family members who have sadly died from the plague of our time. May their souls rest in peace.

*We honour those teachers, learners and family members who have sadly died from the plague of our time. May their souls rest in peace.*

# Racism

rears its  
*ugly head once more!*

*By Mduuzi Qwabe*

A person wearing a red hoodie is seen from behind, holding a large, hand-drawn sign on a piece of cardboard. The sign is held up in a crowd of people, some of whom are wearing face masks. The background is slightly blurred, showing other participants in the demonstration.

IT'S A PRIVILEGE  
TO EDUCATE YOURSELF  
ABOUT RACISM  
INSTEAD OF  
EXPERIENCING IT!!!

In the midst of lock down in 2020 the issue of racism reared its ugly head again as what seemed like well coordinated uprisings happened in schools around the country. There were incidents of push back in some of our schools and from past learners who were already young adults. These followed the same modus operandi like the FeesMustFall protests that happened in our tertiary institutions and some would like to believe they were triggered solely by the Black Lives Matter movement in the US. Racism is one of our biggest problems in South Africa and indeed the world over – and to simply credit it to the happenings in the US is disingenuous and amounts to denialism.

It is disheartening to say the least that after so many years of democracy from a racially divided past – schools have failed to transform to racially inclusive practices and policies. This has been as a result of denialism that is most of the time perpetrated by school leaders and the general public. The racism cuts across all races but there is no doubt that the most adversely affected by this are Black people. I know that as I write this article there will be a lot of schools who will claim that they don't have this problem; they don't discriminate on the basis of race and that 'we were one of the first schools to accept Black people in our community'. This kind of denialism is a key driver of racism in our schools – intended or unintended. Let's look at some of the misconceptions that we encounter when talking about race.

***It is disheartening to say the least that after so many years of democracy from a racially divided past – schools have failed to transform to racially inclusive practices and policies.***

### ***Race is a Black problem...***

This is quite an unfortunate retort from many who claim to have transformed – they claim it's not our problem as White people but Blacks are affected so they must sort it out. In fact this is the same as saying to a victim of crime that it's your problem! Racism is actually a problem of White people who believe that Black people are inferior to them just because they are Black. Yes, it is a societal problem but let's face it – if we treated all people equally as White people there would be no racism.

### ***I don't see colour, I see people...***

This statement supposes that if you cannot see racism it doesn't exist. We all were socialized in racially divisive contexts whether we believe it or not and therefore colour blindness is disingenuous. In order for White people to challenge racism –they have to see colour otherwise how can they fight against an invisible enemy. The denialism about colour actually serves unconsciously to keep racism and White supremacy in place – difference must be acknowledged and not swept under the carpet. In a school diversity has to be celebrated and opportunities to learn from each other's cultures must be promoted through things like cultural days or even heritage day.

### ***Everyone struggles but if you work hard...***

Racism is what keeps White supremacy in place. The White supremacist attitudes and systems are entrenched in many institutions whether public or private. These have been systematically designed to exclude Blacks/people of colour using all sorts of strategies/tools like admission policies, behavioural codes, language policies, etc. Schools do not openly recruit White principals/teachers but inherent in their requirements it is always clear that a Black applicant will not be successful. The above statements implies that the playing field is levelled –which is not true. The playing fields favour a certain race and that is just the reality.

### ***Only bad people are racists.....***

This is another form of racial denialism that reduces racism to random individual acts. The fact is there is unconscious bias of which we are all guilty. It is not always intentional but when we reflect we realise that it can easily be interpreted as racist. An example would be a school that prohibits African learners to speak their home language at school to ensure that they learn good English. Many a times the school allows Afrikaans to be spoken and even other languages like Portuguese, Italian, French. We all harbour racial stereotypes that play out maybe occasionally because of how we were socialized.

Schools have been very good at riding the storms through incidents of push back by learners or even parents who challenge racist policies. They do all sorts of things like inviting a Black speaker, conducting an investigation into a supposedly racist event or even issuing press statements condemning racism. However it is imperative that schools begin to genuinely deal with racist attitudes by changing their policies, organisational culture and practices. This has to be a whole school development drive including all stakeholders. This not the time to bury our heads in the clouds and pretend all is well – this is the time to do our prophetic duty and confront whoever in our midst who perpetuates these stereotypes. The incidents last year were really heart breaking and it begs the question as to what kind of adult are we giving to society from our schools.

#### SOURCES

*Diangelo, R. 2018 White Fragility. Penguin*

*Eddo-Lodge,R. 2017 Why Am I no Longer Talking To White People About Race. Bloombury Publishing*

This article might actually elicit a lot of anger from some within our network and some might find it offensive and accusatory. If it elicits anger then it is good – just sit with the discomfort and reflect why. The article is also not meant to insinuate that only White people are racist- all of us are guilty to a certain degree. There are many Black parents who would rather prefer their child to be taught by White/Indian teachers as they believe those are the best. There are many Coloured or Indian people who believe they are closer to Whiteness and should therefore not be classified with Black people.

We all have work to do and the time for pointing fingers is over – let's get on with it!



# ONLINE LEARNING: what is the fallout?

**By Mark Potterton**

The COVID-19 pandemic is changing society in profound ways, often exacerbating social and economic inequalities. To curb its spread, governments around the world moved to suspend face-to-face teaching in schools, affecting some 95% of the world's student population - the largest disruption to education in history.

Switching back to online learning at the start of this year was a lot easier than last year. The infrastructure was in place and teachers and families were familiar with the learning platforms. However, both children and teachers were less excited than last year - the novelty had worn off.

Children were keen to return to school to see their friends, and many became reluctant online learners. They were good at navigating Google Classroom and Google Meet, and could switch to Zoom with ease when they had to. Some participated willingly in online discussions while others remained silent in the background. There were moments when the microphones did not work, or when children were not online because of load shedding.

Keeping up with the work and submitting tasks was a challenge for a lot of children. Time management and organisation skills were a real problem for many children. It was difficult for some to balance priorities in their lives. Asynchronistic approaches require children to have even more self-direction.

One leading expert on online education argued that the online education being deployed is best described as a form of "temporary distance education". He says that what we have seen cannot be compared to the sophisticated and deliberate forms of online education described in the research literature. He says that teachers, students and parents were forced into quickly developing ways of studying and teaching as best as they could.

Children were excited to return to school, and their excitement has been more palpable in the lower grades. Children have enjoyed engaging face-to-face with both their teachers and peers. They have found it meaningful sitting next to their teacher (with masks and all) with the teacher explaining a concept to them.

***In South Africa the online experience has reminded us of the inequality in our country. Most students did not have the technology to go online.***

In South Africa the online experience has reminded us of the inequality in our country. Most students did not have the technology to go online.

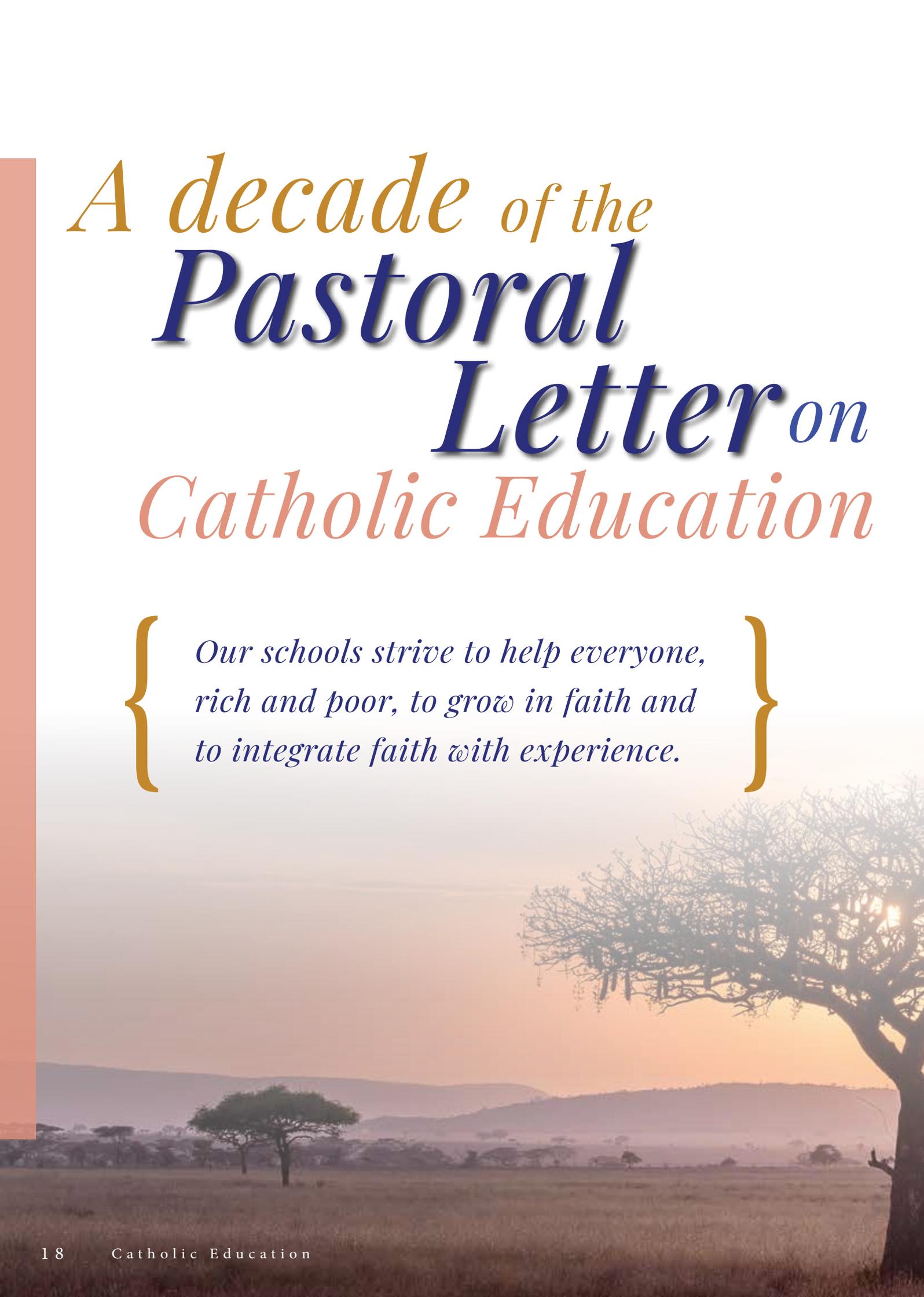
In another survey by McKinsey which looked at teachers views on the effectiveness of remote learning during school closures, teachers agreed that while the education response to the pandemic has varied widely, there was a high cost of remote learning, especially for vulnerable students. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/teacher-survey-learning-loss-is-global-and-significant#> .

The emotional side of COVID-19 cannot be underestimated. Teachers have had to display high levels of digital empathy, care and compassion to students. There has been a lot of illness, and even death, and this has created upheaval and fear. Economic pressures have also exacerbated the tensions. Many students have experienced loneliness during lockdown and were affected by lack of physical contact with their friends, families and peers, as well as boredom and frustration associated with a loss of the activities they have been used to taking part in. Children have also been worried about their education and returning to school.

In a Lancet article (<https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S2352-4642%2820%2930109-7>) focusing on children with mental health needs, such closures mean a lack of access to the resources they usually have through schools. School routines are important coping mechanisms for young people with mental health issues, when schools are closed, they lose an anchor in life and their symptoms could relapse. With children with depression, there are difficulties adjusting back to normal life when school resumes.

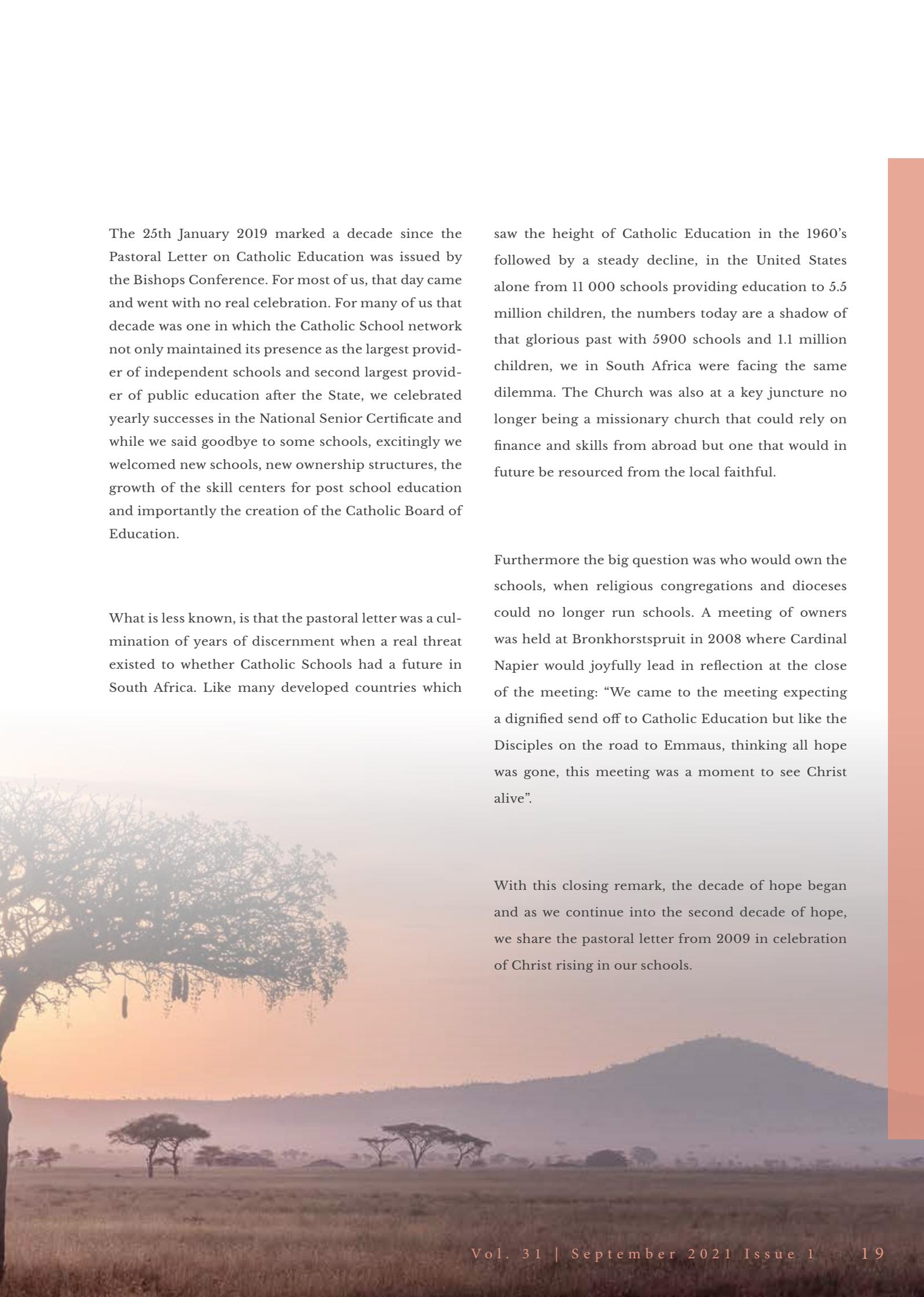
In reflecting on “online learning” I am not convinced that the teacher can be replaced by a “machine”, as B F Skinner argued in the last century. The interrelationships and the social dimensions of the teaching cannot be underestimated. In his incredible book “Natural Born Learners” Alex Beard explores the future of education around the world. He concludes that education is a lifelong process and that teaching purpose, values, and ethic, and developing wisdom is an essential part of education which cannot easily be taught online.





*A decade of the  
Pastoral  
Letter on  
Catholic Education*

*Our schools strive to help everyone,  
rich and poor, to grow in faith and  
to integrate faith with experience.*



The 25th January 2019 marked a decade since the Pastoral Letter on Catholic Education was issued by the Bishops Conference. For most of us, that day came and went with no real celebration. For many of us that decade was one in which the Catholic School network not only maintained its presence as the largest provider of independent schools and second largest provider of public education after the State, we celebrated yearly successes in the National Senior Certificate and while we said goodbye to some schools, excitingly we welcomed new schools, new ownership structures, the growth of the skill centers for post school education and importantly the creation of the Catholic Board of Education.

What is less known, is that the pastoral letter was a culmination of years of discernment when a real threat existed to whether Catholic Schools had a future in South Africa. Like many developed countries which

saw the height of Catholic Education in the 1960's followed by a steady decline, in the United States alone from 11 000 schools providing education to 5.5 million children, the numbers today are a shadow of that glorious past with 5900 schools and 1.1 million children, we in South Africa were facing the same dilemma. The Church was also at a key juncture no longer being a missionary church that could rely on finance and skills from abroad but one that would in future be resourced from the local faithful.

Furthermore the big question was who would own the schools, when religious congregations and dioceses could no longer run schools. A meeting of owners was held at Bronkhorstspuit in 2008 where Cardinal Napier would joyfully lead in reflection at the close of the meeting: "We came to the meeting expecting a dignified send off to Catholic Education but like the Disciples on the road to Emmaus, thinking all hope was gone, this meeting was a moment to see Christ alive".

With this closing remark, the decade of hope began and as we continue into the second decade of hope, we share the pastoral letter from 2009 in celebration of Christ rising in our schools.

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**Care, concern, and challenge for Catholic Education 25 January 2009**

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To the Catholic Community, Catholic Schools, Educators, Learners, Supporters and Beneficiaries of Catholic Education:

We, the Catholic Bishops of Southern Africa, want to express our deep appreciation for the work people are doing in Catholic schools. 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.

Schooling has been, and remains, an important part of the mission of the Church. Our schools strive to help everyone, rich and poor, to grow in faith and to integrate faith with experience. Inspired by the gospel, Catholic schools respect the freedom and dignity of every human being and develop the qualities of personal integrity, moral courage and social responsibility that are marks of authentic Christian personality.

Religious Education programmes in Catholic schools set them apart from other schools. Our programmes are based on the gospel and on sound educational principles. We need to ensure that prayer and liturgy remain central in the life of our schools.

Teachers in Catholic schools are called by God to participate in the teaching ministry of Jesus. Their vocation involves vision, conscientious work, professionalism and care for the children entrusted to them. Teachers in our schools witness to the mission of Christ in bringing about a society based on the principles of love, peace, truth and justice. More than this, teachers are called to prepare their learners to be active and responsible members of society who have purpose and meaning in life and who are capable of being agents of social change.

In the past, we have depended on religious congregations and overseas sources to finance our schools. This is no longer the case. South Africa and its neighbours have grown beyond the stage of being missionary countries, and the time has come for us to take on the responsibilities of an established and self-reliant church. Catholic schools should now be able to rely on the lay faithful to rise to this challenge.

We call on all members of the Catholic community to value our schools, and encourage Catholic parents to send their children to Catholic schools. We urge parents to be actively involved in school life, particularly in governing bodies. Parents play a central role in supporting and promoting the vision of education on which our schools are founded.

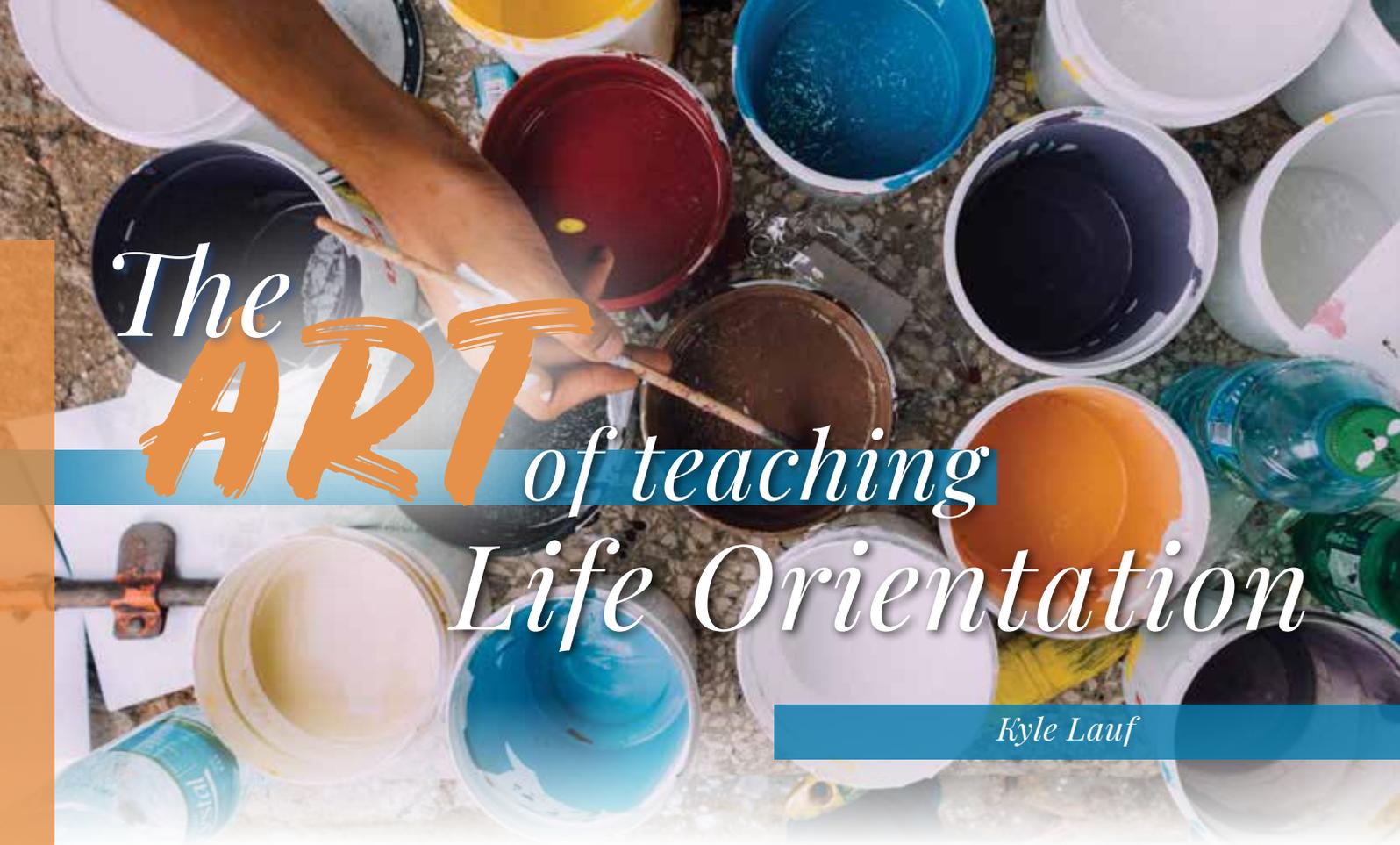


Parishes are natural homes for Catholic schools and we need to re-establish closer links between priests and school communities where the links have been lost.

We are mindful that most Catholic children are not in Catholic schools, and we encourage both teachers and pupils to witness to the values of our faith in the public school system. We need to explore new ways of establishing schools in the future to meet the educational needs of Catholics. Our vision must embrace not only the maintenance and strengthening of the schools we have, but also the establishment of new ones. We invite those Catholics who have chosen the teaching profession to consider seriously the option of working in Catholic schools.

At the start of this school year, we invite Catholics across the region to join us in praying for all those involved in our schools. May this be a good year for pupils, staff, parents and governing body members, as well as the communities in which the schools are located. May God bless our schools so that they may be places of hope” (Archbishop Buti Tlhagale OMI).

We thank all the Catholic Community, Catholic Schools, Educators, Learners, Supporters and Beneficiaries of Catholic Education who have responded to this call.



# The **ART** of teaching *Life Orientation*

*Kyle Lauf*

A colourful globe decorated with pictures and symbols; a neon human brain sculpted out of play dough; a message in a bottle; a brightly painted squash racket festooned with butterflies and flowers; a cardboard violin in a basket – what do these things have in common? And what do they have to do with Life Orientation?

Life Orientation is a subject like no other in South African high schools. Some think it's only a 'soft touch' or light-weight subject, an 'interesting' diversion from real academic courses, while to others it is possibly even irrelevant. A quick Google search throws up a number of revealingly confusing or dismissive opinions about the subject: 'Basic Education rejects misleading reports on Life Orientation', 'In 5 years, Life Orientation will no longer be compulsory' (published in 2018), and 'Life Orientation – an important but neglected school subject'.

For LO teachers, there have been some shocks. In 2018, the Minister of Basic Education, Mrs Angie Motshekga announced that LO would be phased out, in favour of History as a compulsory subject in all schools.

Life Orientation teachers were shocked and confused at this revelation and anxiously awaited further information. Would all of our jobs be in jeopardy? But to date, no decision has been made to discontinue the subject – it is still being taught.

The next controversy occurred in 2019 when LO was again at the centre of a furore. This time there was an outcry from religious groups among others who were extremely concerned over the potentially explicit nature of comprehensive sexuality education to be taught within the Life Orientation curriculum. The storm died down after the department of education distanced itself from images that had been circulating amongst parents, supposedly showing the explicit nature of the content.

At least this revealed that our subject is relevant. The high school LO curriculum includes six broad themes namely: development of the self in society, social and environmental responsibility, democracy and human rights, careers and career choices, study skills, and physical education. All of these key themes are educationally relevant and applicable to teenage students' lived experience in one way or another, as they navigate their way from adolescence to adulthood.

As a Life Orientation educator myself, I have made it my mission to teach classes that are interesting, relevant, thought-provoking and unique. I believe it is a subject that can change lives, and even save lives. One of the ways I aim to change and save lives is through what I call 'the art of Life Orientation.'

### *The Art of LO*

I encourage creativity, lateral thinking, independence, and problem solving in addition to many participative class discussions. Creative expression is a key component of unlocking each learner's individuality, insights and ideas. And it is thoroughly empowering.

I start the Grade 8 curriculum, not with the theme of goal setting, but with something that is needed even more than goals – and that is 'hope'. The class discussion usually starts with a sharing of anxieties, concerns and fears, then leading on to hopes and dreams for the year ahead and their high school careers. It culminates in a creative task for which learners must visually show their hopes for the future – whether these are academic, relational, personal, post-matric, or even hopes for the country and the world we live in. Or indeed, any combinations of the above. Learners can show this in any way whatsoever – with or without words, using pictures, images, drawings, symbols and layout, as long as it is inside their books.

Embarking on an artistic task like this is a creative yet disciplined way to think and order your thoughts. It requires learners to stop and consider what their inner, perhaps unexpressed concerns and hopes are. Thoughts and ideas are coaxed towards the surface. Then, to express this in a practical, aesthetic way can be a very fulfilling and clarifying educational experience.

First, they learn to express themselves, then they express themselves to learn. In creating something new, they learn more about themselves.

Grade 8s and 9s are encouraged to consider their LO class books as 'works of art-in-progress'. I am surprised anew each year at how many of my learners internalise and own this process. It is not about who is the most artistically proficient, but rather about allowing for a space in which the process of thinking creatively is encouraged and valued. They are also permitted to use their LO books as journals in which they can write down their feelings at any point during the year.

Creative tasks need not be time consuming projects – they can be small and manageable for a routine class period, like drawing a short cartoon sequence with stick-men to summarise a piece of work.

By Grade 10 I like to showcase learners' creative work on the walls of the classroom. Restricting tasks to no larger than an A4 sheet of paper allows for more learners' work to be posted, while encouraging clarity and focus. Recently, we talked about human rights and the need for justice in our societies. The creative output task required them to make a poster about a topic near to their hearts. Work of high quality becomes a norm. Designs included work on gender equality and the fight against gender-based violence, environmental issues, freedom of speech, or even practical issues closer to school, such as a learner yearning for exams to be abolished.

Another powerful theme that highlights the value of art in Life Orientation is in challenging society's concept of beauty. Young people, especially girls, feel a heavy burden to live up to falsely unrealistic expectations of beauty, and the issues that surround this include body shaming, eating disorders, or narrow racialised beauty standards. A way to challenge thinking on this is to design a parody advert for a product to 'enhance' beauty in some way. By exaggerating certain features or conditions it becomes apparent how the media, society or businesses exploit insecurities in order to sell products or advertising space.

As they mature, learners must consider their life values and evaluate how or if they live up to these values. Grade 11s come up with a personal mission statement that summarises who they are and what they stand for. This task requires self-reflection and goes to the very core of a person's identity. A written task is accompanied by a creative project that can be in any form or shape whatsoever. This task has now become a tradition at Assumption Convent.

A number of years ago I had decided to change the task but Grade 11s urged me to reconsider. They also wanted to do what previous years had done. Since Grade 8, they had seen these creative tasks exhibited upon the shelves in my class and they too wanted to be a part of that.

Each pupil has an opportunity to creatively depict who she is as a person and what she stands for. Because the entire grade's work is displayed together it also becomes a beautiful visual statement of who that year's Grade 11s are as a united group. It has become an avenue of individual as well as collective self-expression for young people finding their feet and voices in this world.

Many other aspects of Life Orientation are about practical, useful life advice; like calculating APS scores for university application, or choosing a career to job-shadow, honing of time-management skills, opening a bank account, or researching how to devise a healthy eating plan. But there are many other themes that allow for exciting ways to incorporate creativity and artistic expression within this subject. LO teachers have a unique opportunity not afforded to educators in many other subjects. I am grateful that I can be a part of it.



*Each learner expresses her own identity, values and ideas.*

*But placed alongside the rest of the group, the art becomes a collective statement about who that year's Grade 11s are.*



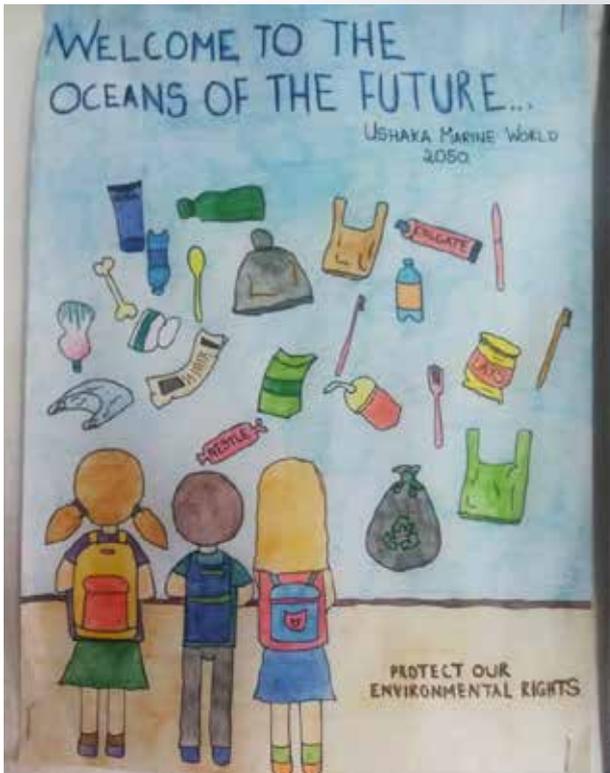


*Previous Grade 11 projects*

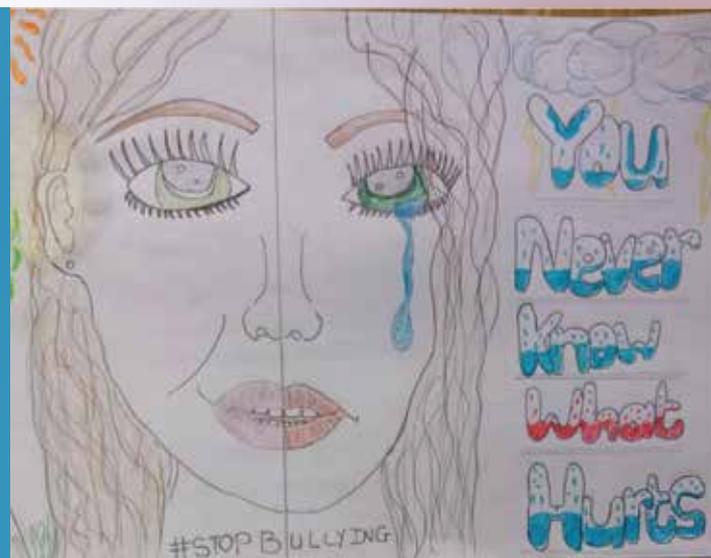
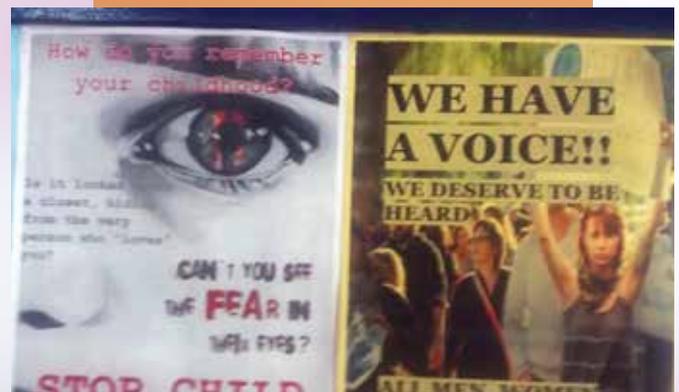


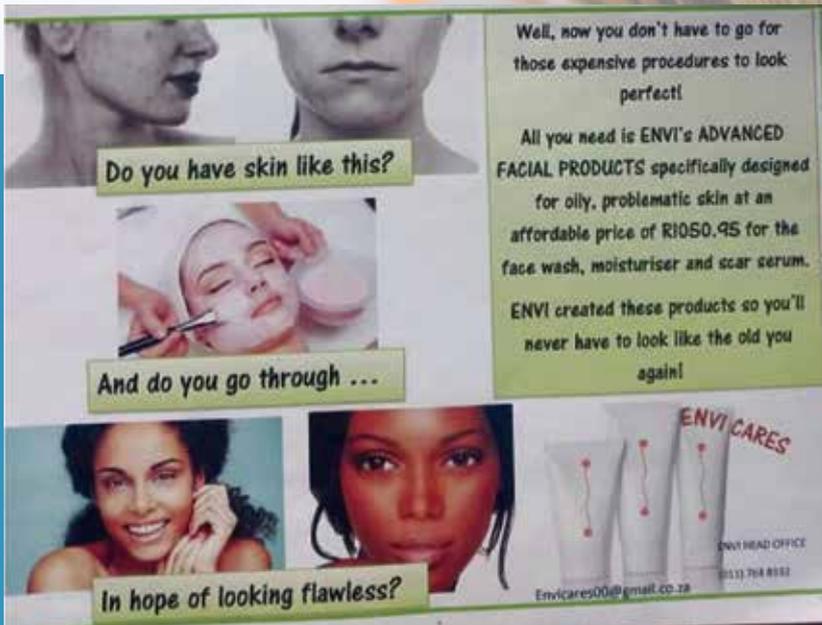
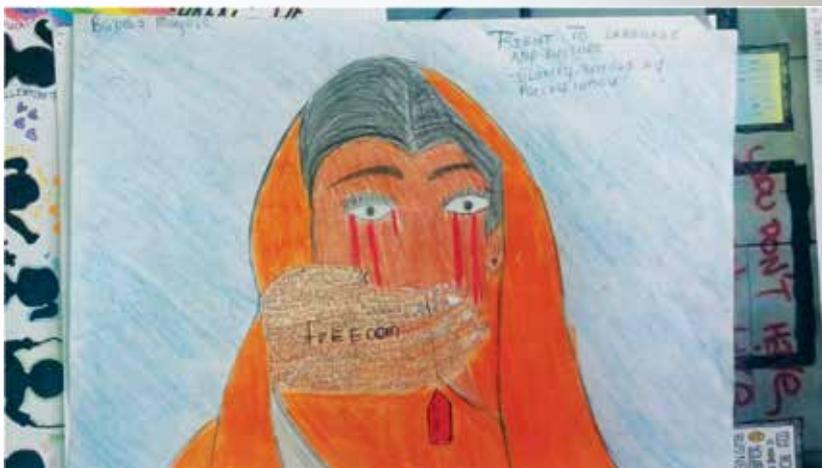
*Previous years' work*





Grade 11s design posters to highlight human rights or protest against abuses.





*Exaggerated parodies of fake beauty products that exploit young people's insecurities.*

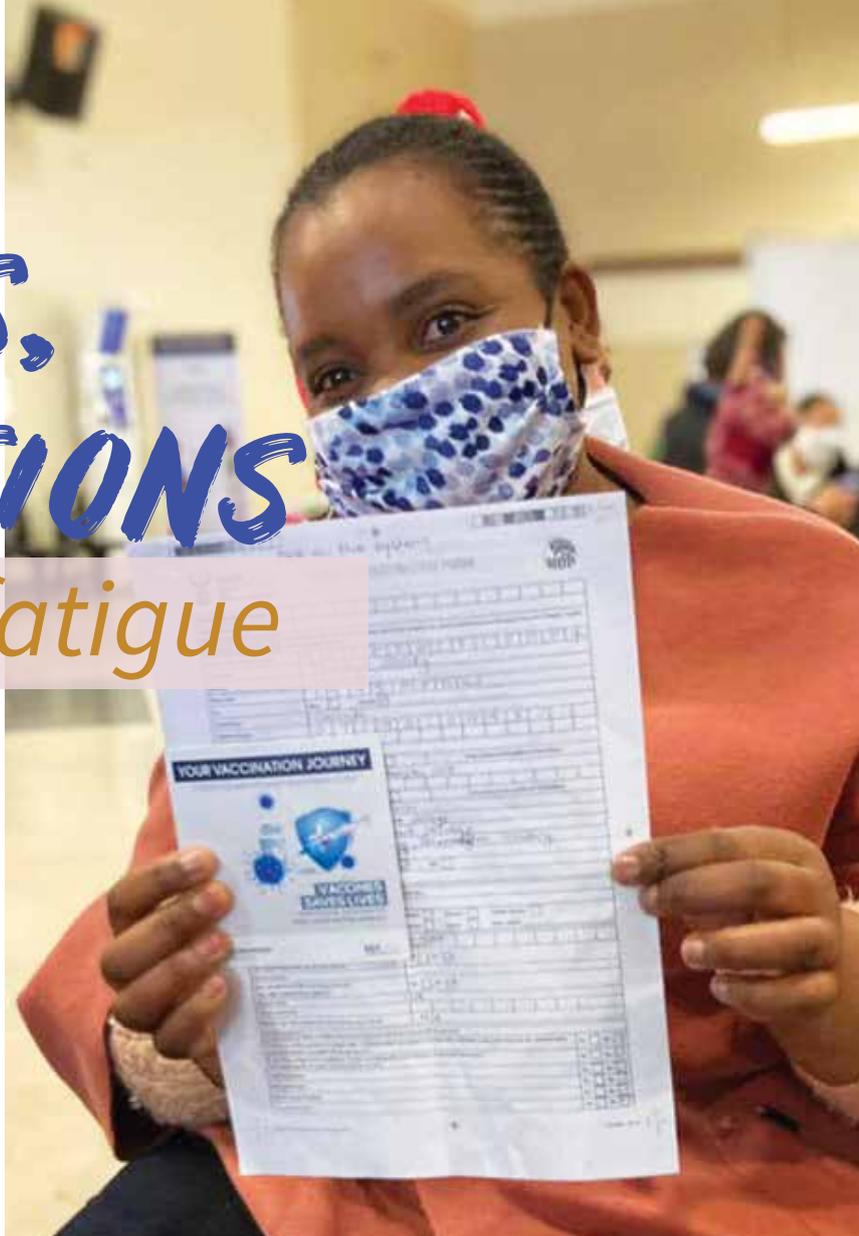
# TEACHERS, VACCINATIONS & emotional fatigue

By Kyle Lauf

As spring arrived after a chilly winter, almost 14 million South Africans had received at least one dose of a Covid-19 vaccine, while 6,5 million people were fully vaccinated, according to [sacoronavirus.co.za](http://sacoronavirus.co.za) (6 September 2021). The 6,5 million fully vaccinated South Africans represent over 11% of the population. On 6 September over 200 000 vaccines were administered in a single day.

This is one of the highest vaccination rates in Africa, but it is still a long way from the herd immunity target of 67% set by the Department of Health. Herd immunity (or as President Ramaphosa says, ‘population immunity’) would occur when enough people in the general population have been vaccinated or successfully recovered from the virus so as not to become infected by the virus again, thus interrupting the chain of new transmissions.

Teachers were amongst the first to get vaccinated in large numbers, after the over 65 age group and the medical professions, thanks to the Department of Basic Education’s vaccination drive



*Thandiwe Sikhonde — Sacred Heart College*

which started on 23 June. Many teachers received the single dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine, while others have received at least the first of two jabs of the Pfizer vaccine.

Covid-19 continued to cause disruptions to education and society in 2021, where many schools shut mid-term or returned to lockdown with weeks of online teaching and learning. Others experienced disruptions to scheduled examinations, while those schools following the four-term structure had school holidays brought forward.

Of the seven Catholic Schools contacted for this article, six reported that “most teachers had been vaccinated”, and



that “most support and ground staff had also been vaccinated.” The vaccination effort was characterised by school administrations assisting with the registering of teaching and support staff, disseminating information to them, and often arranging transportation to vaccination venues.

But while many were anxious to get vaccinated, there was also a lot of hesitancy across the country – in fact there still is – and not everyone rushed to get vaccinated. Joan Schmidt, principal of Maris Stella School in Durban said that their approach was not to press for vaccinations, and that she did not know which teachers were or were not vaccinated. Upon advice, she had not asked about or questioned any educator’s decision whether or not to receive a vaccine. “I have deliberately stayed out of vaccine discussions,” she said. However, she added that the school had assisted teachers by registering them on the Coronavirus electronic vaccination data system (EVDS), informing them of their vaccination dates and venue, and also providing transport where needed.

Mark Potterton, principal of Sacred Heart Primary School in Johannesburg said he also believed that there should be no compulsion to take a vaccine. “I believe teachers should have a choice – this is true for all medical ethical choices,” he said. However, he pointed out that the roll-out of the vaccine amongst staff was experienced positively, and that parents were keen for teachers to be vaccinated.

Depending on the location of schools, some experienced a great deal of assistance and support from their liaison in the Department of Education. Grant James, principal of St Dominic’s Priory School in Gqeberha said that the Department had been of assistance in helping his staff get vaccinated at Livingstone Hospital and that most teachers had been enthusiastic about getting vaccinated. He emphasised that, “vaccinations

will reduce the number of seriously ill persons and deaths from Covid-19.” Nevertheless, he added that educators must not be compelled to be vaccinated, and that their school had clearly communicated that it was optional.

Dr Roger Looyen, principal of Maryvale College in Johannesburg reported that their experience with the vaccination process had been effective, and most teachers had been positive about the vaccine. “The vaccine roll-out was positive and fairly well administered,” he said. “I think there is an overwhelming desire to be vaccinated, and vaccine hesitancy seems to be low in the community. Educators must be vaccinated to protect themselves and others. The research is overwhelming in that the vaccines are effective and lower the risks of potential deaths,” Looyen added.

Neville Workman, principal of Assumption Convent School, near Bedfordview said that educators must be informed and encouraged to be vaccinated rather than compelled. He had experienced “plenty of cooperation from staff” but unfortunately the bureaucracy and red tape leading up to registration and go-ahead had been a painful experience

Similarly, Dennis Maritz, head of school at St Catherine’s in Germiston experienced the roll-out as “erratic, confusing and incoherent”, yet parents and educators were generally supportive despite the initial long wait and frustration. Now that it is possible to do so, he feels that 18-year-old students should also get vaccinated because it promotes protection of the school community.

A principal who declined to be named said that a minority of his staff had opted to abstain from being vaccinated, while those who did get a vaccine received a high degree of professionalism and care from the



*Marlie van der Vyver - St Thomas Aquinas*

medical staff at their local clinic. When asked about the availability of vaccines for 18-year-old learners he said “it is free will, I do not support any compulsion in this regard”.

Initially, there was overwhelming demand from the general public for vaccines, but more recent news reports have indicated that most vaccination sites around the country now have more supply than demand. Vaccine hesitancy and skepticism contributes to uncertainty among many people. Some people have a wait-and-see approach while not necessarily being against vaccines per se. Meanwhile, conspiracy theories – like newly identified variants of Covid-19 – seem to keep cropping up. Myths and misinformation proliferate. The [sacornonavirus.co.za](http://sacornonavirus.co.za) website contains information addressing virus myths, under the frequently asked questions (FAQ) tab, as well as regular updates, news and statistics surrounding infections and vaccinations in every province.

### ***Emotional Wellness of Teachers and Pupils***

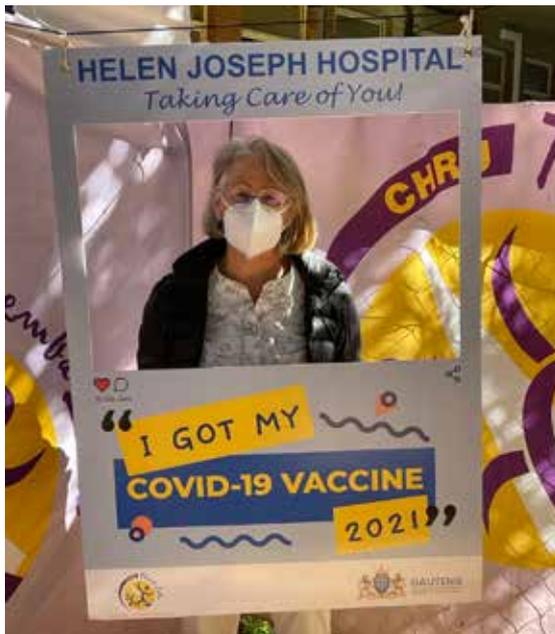
Catholic school leaders contacted for this article were unanimous in identifying a rise in emotional fatigue and stress among teachers and pupils alike. Maritz said that he felt they had met the challenges of 2021 in terms of responding to disruptions but that teachers felt “fatigue, uncertainty, and a lack of motivation.”

Looyen said, “Schools are generally more prepared for the 2021 disruptions as our state of readiness to deal with these were heightened, affording greater development in the use of technology for teaching and learning.” But he added that the emotional impact was taking a toll. “Emotionally it is a period of great strain for all. The rise in deaths and near-death experiences has impacted considerably on all.”

“Staff are frazzled and anxious, some pupils are anxious,” James pointed out, while adding, “I believe that learners have lost out on education, and that this will need to be caught up. There will be gaps in the pupils’ knowledge and skills, and this may take many years to remedy.” Potterton made a similar observation: “Staff have been stressed, they are also not motivated. Children have also

been uptight. There is an underlying fear of what might happen next.”

Covid-19 continues to pose serious challenges to education in South Africa. The key question is how schools will adapt and respond to these challenges.



*Janice Seland — CIE Director*



*Volente Naidoo — Sacred Heart College*



*Lynda Wilkinson — Sacred Heart College*



*Monika Hammond - St Thomas Aquinas*

# COVID-19

## CRISIS, CHALLENGES, & OPPORTUNITIES



The first Global Catholic Education Report published in June 2020 provided an early assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on education systems, and in particular on Catholic K12 schools and their students. Much of what was discussed in that report remains current, but at the time of writing this report, the situation is worse than it was eight months ago. New vaccines provide hope that the pandemic will be managed at some point in the future, but this will take some time, especially in developing countries where access to the vaccines is likely to be more limited in the coming months and possibly even years.

Initial analysis based on experiences in previous health crises such as the Ebola outbreak in West Africa suggested that the consequences of the crisis for children could be severe<sup>1</sup>. This has since been confirmed (see Box 5.1 for recent estimates from UNICEF).

The crisis is having major negative impacts on students and education systems, including those in

Catholic schools and universities. Some impacts relate to the fact that many schools and universities had to close temporarily or move to online learning. Others relate to the implications for education of the economic crisis unleashed by the pandemic.<sup>2</sup>

Initial predictions of economic impacts were dire<sup>3</sup> for both developed<sup>3</sup> and developing countries<sup>4</sup>. Over time many projections were further revised downward.

The first estimates of impacts on poverty by the World Bank suggested that more than 100 million people might fall into poverty due to the crisis<sup>5</sup>. In the latest estimates<sup>6</sup>, the figure is at 150 million more poor people by 2021. Of those, about half are children. Apart from losses in labor income, many households are suffering from a drop in international remittances<sup>7</sup>. According to the World Food Programme, the number of people suffering from acute hunger may have doubled<sup>8</sup>.

1 See United Nations (2020a) which mentions the Ebola epidemic in West Africa and research by Bandiera et al. (2019), Ribacke et al. (2016), Wesseh et al. (2017), Kamara et al. (2017), Rizzo-Grill and Finnegan (2015), and Bardou-O'Fallon et al. (2015). See also United Nations (2020b).

2 International Monetary Fund (2020).

3 For Europe, see European Commission (2020).

4 For sub-Saharan Africa, see World Bank (2020a).

5 Vos et al. (2020).

6 World Bank (2020b).

7 World Bank (2020j).

8 Food Security Information Network (2020). School lunch programs were also affected. These programs serve many children (World Food Programme, 2013).

## Box 5.1: Impacts of the Crisis on Children

In November 2020, UNICEF released a report with estimates of a range of impacts of the crisis on children. At the time of the report, these estimates including the following:

- Children and adolescents under 20 years of age account for 1 in 9 of COVID-19 infections.
- In part due to fear of infection, in one-third of countries, coverage for health services such as routine vaccinations, outpatient care for childhood infectious diseases, and maternal health services dropped by at least 10percent.
- There is a 40 per cent decline in the coverage of nutrition services for women and children.
- Some 265 million children are missing out on school meals globally and 65 countries reported a decrease in home visits by social workers.
- More than 250 million children under 5 could miss the life-protecting benefits of vitamin A supplementation programs.
- Some 572 million students are affected by school closures (33 percent of all students).
- An estimated 2 million additional child deaths and 200,000 additional stillbirths could occur over a 12-month period with severe interruptions to services and rising malnutrition.
- An additional 6 to 7 million children under the age of 5 will suffer from wasting or acute malnutrition, translating into more than 10,000 additional child deaths per month.
- Globally, the number of children living in multidimensional poverty – without access to education, health, housing, nutrition, sanitation or water – may soar by 15 percent or an additional 150 million children by mid-2020.

Source: UNICEF (2020).

Student learning suffers during recessions<sup>9</sup>. For schooling, based on past experiences with crises, girls are especially likely to be affected<sup>10</sup>, leading to higher risks of child marriage<sup>11</sup> with major implications for the rest of their lives<sup>12</sup>. Temporary school closures were near universal at the peak of the crisis, affecting 1.6 billion students. Today, hundreds of millions of children are still affected by school closures.

According to research in the US<sup>13</sup>, losses in learning can be substantial during the summer when schools are closed, especially for disadvantaged students. The length of the school closures due to the pandemic was much longer than a summer in most countries. Early estimates for the US suggested that the pandemic could lead to large losses in learning<sup>14</sup>. Such losses have been confirmed by more recent research especially for the poor.

UNESCO estimates that globally, schools were fully closed for an average of 3.5 months (14 weeks) since the start the pandemic. However, the estimate increases to 5.5 months (22 weeks) when localized school closures are taken into account, as many countries implemented local closures in areas with particularly high infection rates. This represents two-thirds of a typical school year.

*At their peak, temporary school closures were near universal, affecting 1.6 billion students. Many schools remain closed today.*

9 Shores and Steinberg (2019).

10 See UNDP (2015), Onyango et al. (2019), and Bandiera et al. (2019). See also World Bank (2020g) for a review, as well as Asfaw (2018) on Ethiopia, Dureya et al. (2007) and Cerutti et al. (2019) on Brazil, and Lim (2000) on the Philippines.

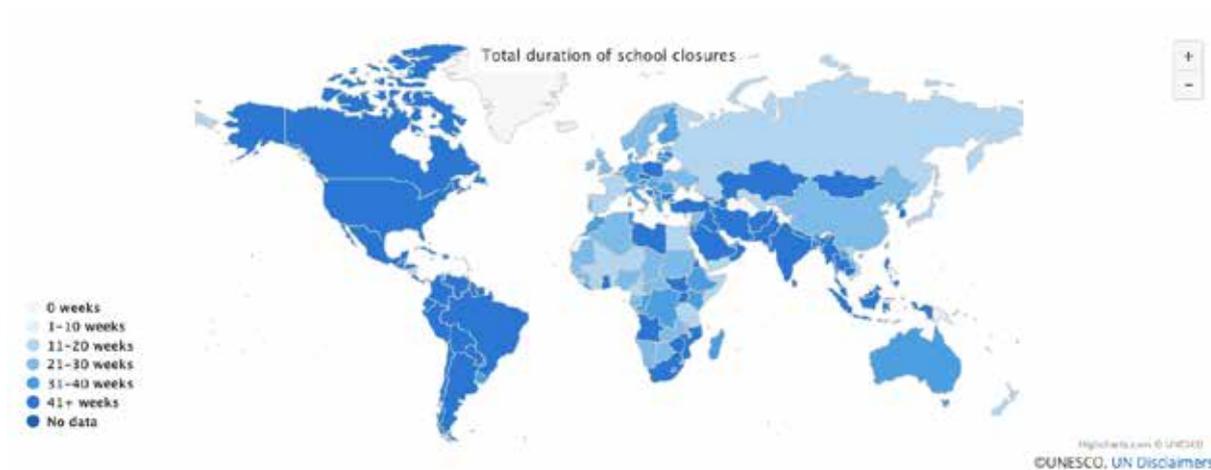
11 Wodon et al. (2016, 2017); Kassa et al. (2019).

12 Wodon et al. (2018).

13 Cooper et al. (1996); Alexander et al. (2007); Gerhenson (2013); Quinn and Polikoff (2017).

14 Kuhfeld and Tarasawa (2020).

**Figure 5.1: Duration of Complete and Partial School Closures by Country (Weeks)**



The map in Figure 5.1 shows that the duration of school closures varied between countries and regions. They were longer in Latin America and the Caribbean than in Europe. In Oceania where infection rates are lower, they were even shorter. At their peak in April 2020, national school closures were in effect in 190 countries. This is down at the time of writing to about 30 countries, but localized school closures remain in effect in many countries.

How many children may have dropped out of school or not enrolled due to the crisis? It will take some time to know the answer, but simulations by UNICEF suggest that the number of out-of-school children may have increased by

24 million due to the crisis. In addition to children dropping out of school, many more may have been affected adversely in terms of mental health (data from school health surveys suggest

that even before the crisis, many students suffered from poor mental health)<sup>15</sup>.

Finally, many children may have been affected by the loss of school lunches and other programs that matter for nutrition<sup>16</sup>. In the US, results from the COVID-19 Impact Survey suggest that the pandemic increased already high levels of food insecurity, making the loss of school lunches especially worrying<sup>17</sup>.

Given the above context, in this chapter, the focus is for discussing the impact of the crisis on educational outcomes and education pluralism as the two key components that affect the fulfillment of the right to education as defined in chapter 4. For the impacts on educational outcomes, the focus is on effects on learning poverty. The crisis is also having negative effects on educational outcomes at the secondary and tertiary levels, but these are discussed more briefly. After discussing impacts

15 Wodon, Fèvre et al. (2021).

16 On the importance of school programs, see Alderman and Bundy (2012).

17 See <https://www.covid-impact.org/results>.

on learning poverty, the focus is on impacts on education pluralism at various levels of education. This is followed by a discussion of policies that could help fulfill the right to education and ‘build back better’.

*In this chapter, the focus is first on the impacts of the crisis on learning poverty, next on impacts on education pluralism at various levels, and finally on policies to fulfill the right to education and ‘build back better’.*

## Impact on Learning Poverty

The COVID-19 crisis is having a major negative effect on both basic (pre-primary to secondary) and higher education. Because of the focus in this report on learning poverty, the impact of the crisis on basic education is discussed in more details, but a few insights on impacts on higher education are also provided.

As mentioned in chapter 4, a child is considered to be learning poor if s/he cannot read and understand an age-appropriate text by age 10<sup>18</sup>. Estimates of learning poverty are based on two main data sources: (1) the performance of students who are in school on international student assessments; and (2) the share of students who are out of schools and therefore assumed to be learning-poor. The pandemic is likely to have affected both components of the measure.

The target set by the World Bank in partnership with UN agencies was to reduce learning poverty by half by 2030. Because of the pandemic, that target is unlikely to be achieved<sup>19</sup><sup>130</sup>. The magnitude of the impact of the crisis on learning poverty will not be known for some time, but simulations suggest it may be large. Three such simulations were implemented<sup>20</sup>. In all three scenarios, schools are closed for 70 percent of the school year. The differences between the three scenarios related to the ability of education systems to implement mitigation measures to reduce learning losses.

Mitigation refers to the ability of governments to provide alternative learning options when schools are closed. This ability is itself a function of whether governments are offering alternative distance learning options and whether households have the ability to benefit from those alternatives, which itself depends on the type of alternatives provided (online resources, radio, television, etc.) and the effectiveness of those alternatives as a function of access by households to various media.

In addition, remediation measures are also considered to reflect the potential benefits of programs implemented after schools have reopened, although for simplicity and due to lack of data, remediation parameters in the simulations are the same for all countries within each scenario (they differ between scenarios).

In the optimistic scenario, 60 percent of learning losses during school closures are remediated. As for mitigation, it enables 40 percent of the learning loss to be avoided in high-income countries,

18 World Bank (2019b).  
19 World Bank (2020b).  
20 Azevedo (2020).

while the share is 30 percent for developing countries. In the intermediate scenario, only 30 percent of the learning loss is remediated, and mitigation measures enable countries to avoid only 20 percent of learning losses in high-income and 15 percent in other countries. Finally, in the pessimistic scenario, there is no remediation, and mitigation only reduces learning losses due to school closures by 10 percent in high income countries and 7 percent in the developing world. While these assumptions could be debated, they provide an order of magnitude of the learning losses that may occur.

The estimates are provided in Table 5.1. Globally, under the pessimistic scenario, learning poverty may increase from 48.0 percent to 57.6 percent, an increase of 9.6 percentage points. Under the intermediate scenario, the increase is at 6.4 points, and under the optimistic scenario, the increase is at 3.2 points.

*Estimates under a pessimistic scenario suggest that learning poverty may have increased from 48.0 percent to 57.6 percent globally. Increases are smaller under the two other scenarios.*

It could be that after a few years, children manage to catch up on the materials that they were not able to learn during school closures. In that case, these estimates of learning losses would be reduced over time. In addition, the learning losses are measured for children who are ten years old today. As the crisis subsides, new cohorts of children reaching 10 years of age in a few years would not have been affected by the crisis, there-

fore the measures of learning poverty should go back to their steady-state trend fairly quickly.

Still, the children who are now in primary school are affected, and not all of them will be able to catch up over time. Older children too are being affected, even if this does not show up in the measures of learning poverty provided in the Table<sup>21</sup>.

The large increase in learning poverty in some of these simulations relates in part to lack of access to distance learning media, especially for children who live in poverty and/or in rural areas (UNICEF 2020). Without options to learn at home during school closures, disadvantaged children have fallen behind further. The COVID-19 crisis has thus magnified existing educational inequalities not only between countries, but also within countries.

*Source: Wodon, Q. 2021. Global Catholic Education Report 2021: Education Pluralism, Learning Poverty, and the Right to Education. Washington, DC: Global Catholic Education, OIEC, IFCU, OMAEC, and UMEC-WUCT.*

*Full report can be accessed on <https://www.global-catholiceducation.org/global-reports>*

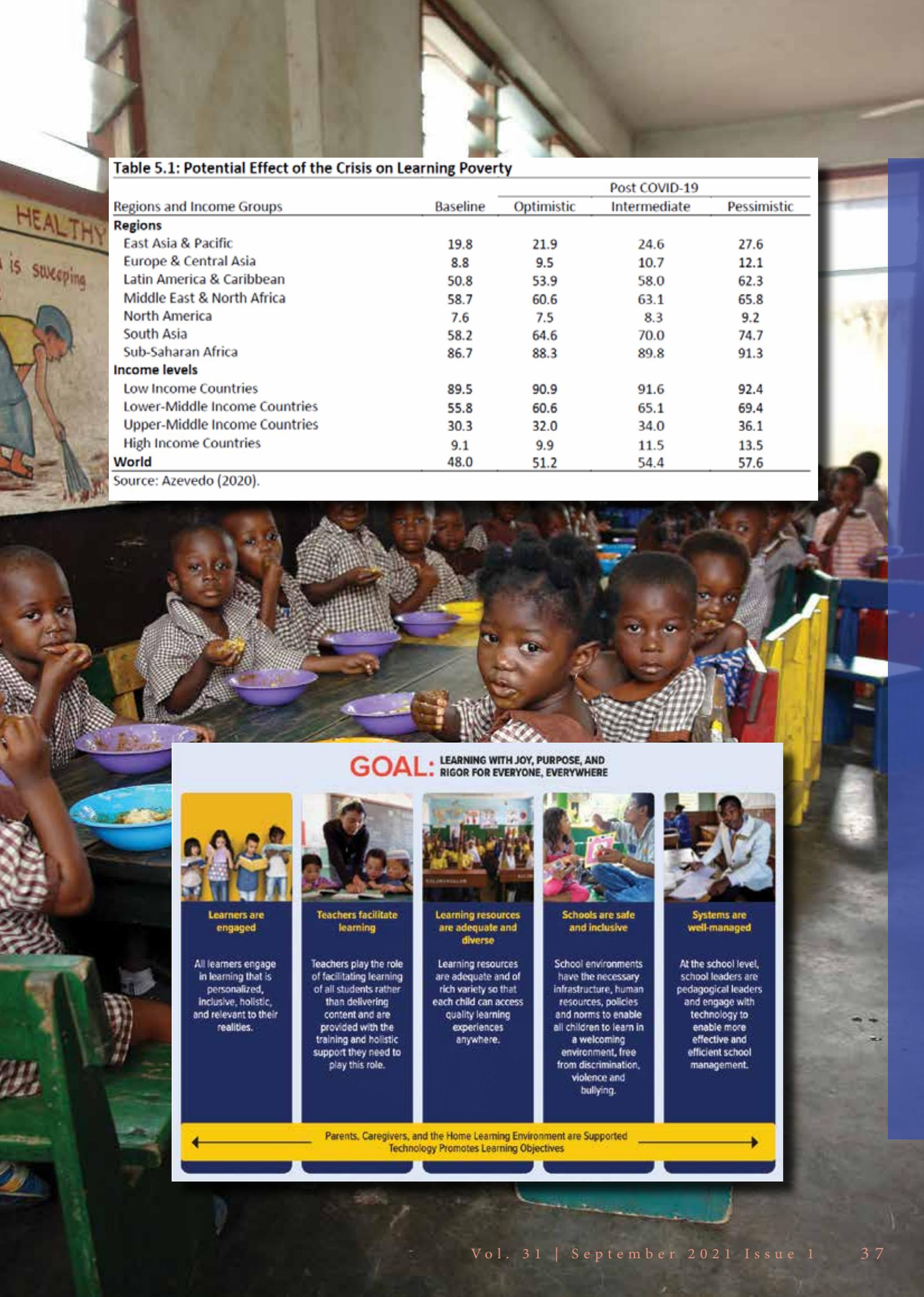
<sup>21</sup> For estimates of potential effects of the crisis on the number of years of schooling that children are expected to reach and their learning performance using the learning-adjusted years of schooling approach, see Azevedo et al. (2020).



**Table 5.1: Potential Effect of the Crisis on Learning Poverty**

Regions and Income Groups	Baseline	Post COVID-19		
		Optimistic	Intermediate	Pessimistic
<b>Regions</b>				
East Asia & Pacific	19.8	21.9	24.6	27.6
Europe & Central Asia	8.8	9.5	10.7	12.1
Latin America & Caribbean	50.8	53.9	58.0	62.3
Middle East & North Africa	58.7	60.6	63.1	65.8
North America	7.6	7.5	8.3	9.2
South Asia	58.2	64.6	70.0	74.7
Sub-Saharan Africa	86.7	88.3	89.8	91.3
<b>Income levels</b>				
Low Income Countries	89.5	90.9	91.6	92.4
Lower-Middle Income Countries	55.8	60.6	65.1	69.4
Upper-Middle Income Countries	30.3	32.0	34.0	36.1
High Income Countries	9.1	9.9	11.5	13.5
<b>World</b>	<b>48.0</b>	<b>51.2</b>	<b>54.4</b>	<b>57.6</b>

Source: Azevedo (2020).



**GOAL: LEARNING WITH JOY, PURPOSE, AND RIGOR FOR EVERYONE, EVERYWHERE**



**Learners are engaged**

All learners engage in learning that is personalized, inclusive, holistic, and relevant to their realities.



**Teachers facilitate learning**

Teachers play the role of facilitating learning of all students rather than delivering content and are provided with the training and holistic support they need to play this role.



**Learning resources are adequate and diverse**

Learning resources are adequate and of rich variety so that each child can access quality learning experiences anywhere.



**Schools are safe and inclusive**

School environments have the necessary infrastructure, human resources, policies and norms to enable all children to learn in a welcoming environment, free from discrimination, violence and bullying.



**Systems are well-managed**

At the school level, school leaders are pedagogical leaders and engage with technology to enable more effective and efficient school management.

← Parents, Caregivers, and the Home Learning Environment are Supported Technology Promotes Learning Objectives →

# BOOK REVIEW

*Eric Sheninger*

***Disruptive Thinking in Our Classrooms***

***PREPARING LEARNERS FOR THEIR FUTURE***

Eric Sheninger's book aims to challenge thinking around traditional teaching. The title disruptive thinking in our classrooms clearly states the aim of the book. How can we think differently? A glance at a thesaurus lists words like troublesome, disorderly, disturbing and unsettling as definitions for disruptive. However in modern parlance this is regarded as a positive. This aims to challenge our thinking around traditional teaching. The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that education needs to change but unfortunately we see little positive change in South Africa. More pressure is heaped on schools to 'catch up', something that world education experts say is impossible. Firstly, what is the future of our learners? Much has changed in greater society but how much are we considering the future of work?



Here Sheninger states that 'Millions of jobs have been, and will be, lost in the face of the numerous disruptive forces that are constantly changing the job market'. This is largely due to exponentially rapid technological development taking many simple tasks and sometimes entire jobs out of the hands of people and making them the domain of machines.

Sheninger calls on teachers and schools to empower learners to think critically and solve real-world problems. Do our South African Catholic schools do this? With a few notable exceptions the answer is no, and even in some which have tried to do this, time constraints and finances inhibit its proper implementation. Instead, most schools are focused on assessment and particularly the National Senior Certificate.

What Sheninger calls in his context ‘infatuation with standardised test scores’ is also present in our own South African context: our obsession with the National Senior Certificate results and standardised exams across grades in provinces. An example of this obsession is Grade 11 and 12 study camps and classes which have continued these past months in spite of the pandemic. These camps also beg the question about what is happening in our classrooms – this is not education – this is merely drilling and preparing learners for examinations.

Sheninger says that if we continue the ‘track of sustaining outdated practices in education, we will continue to churn out a population of students who may be good at “doing school” but may not be prepared to do well in life’. He further suggests that schools need to re-integrate trade-based courses and programmes into schools. The world still needs plumbers, electricians etc, but even here there needs to be disruptive thinking to allow for new areas of exploration.

We often hear talk of 21 Century skills but we are 21 years into the 21st Century and we continue in the same patterns while the world rapidly changes around us. Sheninger proposes that it is the job of the teacher to help find and develop the hidden greatness in each child. He says that a culture of excellence is created through relationships that ‘are built on trust and are sustained through empathy.

One of the 21st Century skills which we often hear about is empathy. Building relationships is central

to the CIE’s Building Peaceful Schools programme in which trust and are empathy essential values. Sheninger confirms the importance of empathy from teachers and gives tips on how to develop this. He says that empathy builds trust and creates a culture where learners want to learn.

Sheninger states that we are at a crossroads in education and that the traditional measures of success often blind us to the truth. So just how does one disrupt an archaic system? Sheninger offers five key learner mindsets: critical thinking, reflection, cognitive flexibility, complex problem solving and analytical and computational thinking. He develops this further through apportioning each under the headings of Creativity, Connection, Application and Storytelling. Disrupt the system as we know it by embracing a "business as *unusual*" model.

His exploration of the difference between teaching and learning is significant and he states that learners should be more actively engaged. He affirms the notion that we teach as we were taught. It requires school staff to reflect on their current practice and be offered staff development that allows for change.

None of this is easy but Sheninger’s book is very accessible and engaging. A must-read for school leaders and teachers. The four sections to the book give an idea of its richness: Re-Thinking “Normal”; Re-thinking Learning; Re-Thinking the Learner and Re-Thinking our Mindset.

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*Published by ConnectEDD Publishing*

*The book can be ordered from Exclusive Books, is available on Amazon.com both electronically and in paper. Eric Sheninger can be followed on Twitter @E\_Sheninger and his website is ericsheninger.com*

# *We are Catholic Schools*

