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This first edition of Catholic Education for 2020 is rather late - not surprising considering the upheaval that COVID 19 has made in all our lives. In this issue we read Kyle Lauf's mini survey about educating during a pandemic as well as his article on developing leadership in an all-girls school. Dr Gloria Marsay offers us insights into how to be hope providers, a very real challenge for teachers and leaders at this time.

The focus on inclusion of visually impaired learners at Holy Family College, Parktown shows how a school becoming inclusive brings life and understanding to the school community.

Mark Potterton asks whether we can have authentic 'Catholic' education online as well as offering a review of a new book about how Catholic schools opened to all races in the seventies.

Paul Faller attended a Religious Education Conference in Australia before shutdown and he shares insights he gained there. Frances Correia offers us some guidelines on how to pray imaginatively which can help both staff and learners to experience some peaceful reflection at this stressful time.

Lastly Signs of the Times is a selection of thoughts on issues facing schools. With the increased use of webinars we have heard from around the world that Catholic education worldwide faces similar COVID 19 related issues. And so we stand in solidarity with the more than 210 000 Catholic schools worldwide with an enrollment of 41 million formal education pupils and 20 million non-formal pupils. We are not alone in our struggles and joys. The staff of Breda Farm School in the Free State sent us a prayer they wrote and have asked for us all to pray this together on Fridays. Let's all join in this effort.



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Can you have authentic 'Catholic' education online?



**Noble Character** 









on Catholic RE in schools

**Book Review** 





Prayer
Breda Farm School







Brutal School Ties
Book Review

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# EDUCATION after COVID=19

How will Catholic schools in South Africa respond to the education crisis posed by the coronavirus pandemic?

By Kyle Lauf

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) estimates that over 90% of the world's student population has been affected by school closures because of the impact of the Covid-19 Coronavirus pandemic. A global health and economic crisis, the pandemic is also therefore a major international education crisis, as almost 200 countries and over 1.5 billion learners are adversely affected by disruptions to their education.

In South Africa there are more than 170 000 learners in 330 Catholic schools, of which approximately 70% are government run public schools on church-owned land. The remaining 30% are independent schools. The Department of Basic Education has used its website to publish online resources to support learning at home, and the Minister will be required to provide ongoing guidance. But public schools are either implementing their own strategies to facilitate continued learning or not effectively engaging in this challenge at all. While remote learning could make use of radio and television lesson broadcasts for example, the online learning option is by no means a viable method for the majority of schools in South Africa.

While remote learning could make use of radio and television lesson broadcasts for example, the online learning option is by no means a viable method for the majority of schools in South Africa.

For many, but not all, independent Catholic schools, online learning is mostly viable. There are nevertheless a number of threats arising out of the crisis. What are these threats and how should Catholic school communities respond to them? And how do we identify any potential opportunities offered by this unprecedented national disruption?

In recent responses to a survey conducted for this article, several independent Catholic schools' principals responded with their thoughts and opinions about their schools' initial responses, the longer-term threats that they face, and some strategies to mitigate against these threats.

#### Educational challenges to remote learning

Atholl Murray, principal of De La Salle Holy Cross College said that it was impossible to transition overnight to remote learning without a lot of trial and error. He said that operating in the shadow of a global pandemic was both "daunting and exciting" for schools and educators, but that "business as usual" was an unrealistic expectation in the circumstances. He said the "immediate response by schools should be to aim to reduce the workload as pupils won't be able to work as productively."

Mike Thiel, principal of St David's Marist Inanda explained that their experience of speedy implementation from "a campus school to an online school for all grades" meant that they learned while they acted.

He pointed out that "data and connectivity issues had to be sorted out quickly for individual learners and teachers." These are issues many schools faced and will continue to grapple with.

Kirsten Smith, principal of Maryvale College Primary School said "it has happened so suddenly, as a school we did not have enough foresight to investigate this avenue and possibly implement smaller steps at a time". She added that they would have preferred to introduce remote learning in phases but that the pandemic made it "a matter of urgency." She said, "at the moment it is all experimental, we are trying out different avenues. It also depends on the teacher, some are more willing than others and are more comfortable with experimenting with the technology available." Many educators and school administrators all over the world have found themselves in similar situations.

Belinda Damhuis, principal of Holy Rosary High School felt they were able to make their DigiSchool a success. "We have been thrown in the deep-end regarding online learning," she said "and the staff have really embraced this difficult situation." Addressing the different approach to education that will be required, Thiel suggested that the important thing to remember is that "learning is different online and you need to re-focus your preparation as teaching online is not simply about taking your in-classroom methodology and doing exactly what you would have done there." This suggests a potential overhaul of current teaching methods – a daunting prospect to schools. Murray explained that their school would be conducting a

technology audit to establish which technologies the school already has and which technology the pupils have access to. His staff evaluated various online tools to identify which were most suitable for their immediate needs.

Smith continued that although their school had introduced a learning platform app (Seesaw), many parents had not responded to this at all, meaning that teachers were not reaching all learners. She emphasised the importance of perseverance in these circumstances. "Be willing to try," she said. "If you don't succeed, try again. Be open to look at different options. There are so many opportunities which we don't fully take advantage of." Although not all curriculum work can be accomplished by using a smart phone, she added that schools need to be pro-active and continue using them as "tools to enhance and enrich learners. Sometimes we are too scared to move forward or are stuck in our ways and methods we have used for many years. It is exciting to see the possibilities."

Murray was inspired by how his team of teachers had responded to the challenge. "To see debate around pedagogy and content delivery has been a privilege to be part of," he said, adding "I would suggest that Covid-19 has in fact forced schools to relook at their offering and how pupils learn. I find this exciting."

The reality is that schools' response to the crisis has been crisis management at best. "We still have some way to go in understanding digital pedagogy," he admitted, while recognising the other big issue. "Equity and access remain my biggest concern for the majority of pupils at schools throughout the country. We have a severe shortage of teachers in the country – those who embrace technology and collaborate to make it widely available will play a vital role in preparing children that the world needs."

Thiel said, "remote learning and teaching offers opportunities that can only enhance learning, particularly if used as a blended process to engage children in tech spaces they are comfortable in." He added that "it offers a new avenue for engagement, but only in a blended environment where teachers still engage face-to-face and build the relationships of trust and understanding that make for successful learning."

"Equityandaccessremain my biggest concern for the majority of pupils at schools throughout the country." Jacinta Lucas, executive head at Holy Rosary School said that costs would need to be managed very carefully and non-essential projects would need to be put on hold. She added, "there is no doubt that teachers will have engaged with technology in their teaching in a far broader way than would otherwise have been the case. Many teachers fear change and are reluctant to move to new methods of teaching involving technology. This crisis has forced them to embrace alterna-



tive teaching methods and they will have gained confidence. Hopefully this will have a positive effect on their teaching in the future."

principal of McAuley House. He added that they were expecting at least 20% of their school community to be unable to meet fee obligations.

#### The Financial threat – 'a perfect storm'

A number of principals were in agreement, pointing to the economic threat posed by the crisis, as parents face a loss of income and livelihood. The question this poses is existential: 'would they be able to continue paying school fees at independent Catholic schools?' Heather Blanckensee, principal of Sacred Heart College explained that "many independent schools, and Catholic schools in particular, were already facing sustainability issues prior to Covid-19. This will push them further towards closing. Only those with sufficient reserves or the financial support of their (religious) orders will survive."

Neville Workman, principal of Assumption Convent School expanded on this point. "The economy was in serious distress before the onset of the virus; couple this with mass emigration, the incorrect perception that the online Cambridge programme is superior and the large 'chain schools' moving in to try to take ownership of the space where many of our Independent Catholic Schools operate, and we have a perfect storm."

The financial threat is pervasive. "The biggest challenge is financial. Many of our parents already struggle to pay fees and we have had to carry a number of matrics financially in previous years," said Ross Davis,

Bernard Langton, principal of CBC Mount Edmund in Pretoria felt that the economic recession directly impacts schools' affordability. He said, "financial pressures will continue and support packages will need to be negotiated but exactly how these will be structured remains to be seen."

Franc Sobreira, principal of Holy Family College echoed this, saying that they too had seen a "downward trend" with regards their collection of fees. They face the possibility of losing learners whose parents can no longer afford fees. He said that "online teaching doesn't teach all learners and some fall behind leaving our parents and learners anxious," before adding that the school's continued existence is a concern to them.

To mitigate against this, Workman proposed that schools establish a "crisis budget and revisit ways in which they can improve their comparative advantage and communicate." Davis suggested that schools would have to limit fee increases even if it means a zero increase at the end of 2020. Similarly, Sobreira said that they would be offering incentives to assist parents, keeping parents informed at all times, and reviewing their school budget. He also suggested that they would continue doing online tutoring through affordable platforms and implement Saturday classes and telephone counseling if necessary.

## "The move to online education will be the greatest positive impact on our schools"

#### The way forward – skills, collaborating, values and ethics.

There is a consensus that teaching remotely will not (and must not) replace face-to-face teaching. It is essential that teachers will need to upskill to reach new levels of competency and adapt to the new methods they have experienced. An anonymous respondent who is a principal at a Johannesburg Catholic school pointed out that despite the terrible reality of the Coronavirus pandemic and the stress and uncertainty prevailing in school communities no less than in society, the educational outcome will have improved teachers' skill sets – it will have allowed teachers to hone skills as to what other possibilities there are in educating learners.

"The move to online education will be the greatest positive impact on our schools," Langton said, adding that he believed the future will be a hybrid system where campus life and remote education can be combined. "I believe the future is exciting and the opportunities abound."

In the meanwhile, Blanckensee proposed a wide-ranging and ongoing collaboration between Catholic schools. This collaboration would include curating the many online resources such as lesson plans that are being developed in schools; centralising functions like human resources, marketing and financial services across all Catholic schools, and negotiating group procurement of services like insurance and medical aids to reduce costs and overheads to individual schools. But these proposals would require buy-in from leadership at many Catholic schools.

She added, "looking at online learning within a Catholic context gives access to a sound education based on Christian values." Workman concluded by saying, "we are told that with the onset of the 4th industrial revolution we need to move into coding, 3D printers and artificial intelligence – agreed. But none of this is going to secure a future for our children and grandchildren unless we teach ethics. Ethics is what our Catholic schools are good at; this is our comparative advantage."

# Educators, hope providers

espair cements us in the present. Hope enables us to move forward, trusting in a tomorrow we cannot see at present because of fear that is immobilising, and past habits we find difficult to change.

The premise that hope is more than one element in a list of possible strategies to overcome crises, overturns criticism that hope can be vague, unrealistic, ethereal, illusive and intersubjective. Hope can be used as an active, planned strategy to improve the lives of people and communities within context. Hope is much more than mere sentiment. Hope is a vision that demands small actions to transform darkness into light. Hope often arises in the wake of despair. Historically, when people make use of hopeful strategies, resilience is bolstered and they are enabled to overcome adversity.

#### Four constructs of fundamental hope

Scioli and Biller explain fundamental hope as a future-directed network, constructed from biological, psychological, and social resources. Hope, in its fullest sense, encompasses the four greatest needs of a human being, namely,

- Attachment be open to accept their wisdom and knowledge of experts, and connect with supportive colleagues
- Mastery acknowledge the skills we have and the skills we need to acquire to be competent in pursuing our way forward
- Survival self-regulation to ensure that we do
  what we need to do and make necessary changes
  to our lifestyle to keep ourselves and others safe.
- Spirituality refers to faith and meaning. The spiritual task of life is to feed the hope that comes out of despair.

Hope is a skill that can be learned. It is an active approach to ameliorating adversity.

In medicine and human services, we tend to refer to "health providers". Community leaders can all become effective in developing active hope. We can regard them as "hope providers".

by Gloria Marsay (PhD Psychologist

#### Three core characteristics of "hope-providers"

- Contact having regular consistent and sustainable contact with those needing assistance.
- Availability being accessible, reliable and anticipating the needs of others.
- Presence focusing on the person and the problem in an authentic way.

Hope is a practice that involves action. Passive hope relies on external agencies to bring about what is desired, while active hope requires personal agency to bring about the change that is hoped for. This active process requires concrete actions.

#### Three step process of active hope

Macy and Johnstone describe the process of active hope as involving three steps.

- to have a clear view of reality,
- to identify what is hoped for in terms of direction and values, and
- to take steps to move in a chosen direction.

Thus, hope can be operationalized and used as a strategy to improve the lives people and communities within context.

Nelson Mandela said: "Our human compassion binds us one to the other – not in pity or patronizingly, but as human beings who have learnt to turn our common suffering into hope for the future".

This is the challenge for each of us during this time of uncertainty: To become "hope providers" and develop a hope-filled plan of action, so that our tomorrows will be positive.

Hope is a skill that can be learned. It is an active approach to ameliorating adversity. It is self-perpetuating. Hopeful people tend to be more resilient, more trusting, more open and more motivated.

References available.

Dr Gloria Marsay is a registered Educational Psychologist working in private practice, and Research Fellow at the University of the Free State. She also works with caregivers of people suffering from mental and physical illness as a volunteer with the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG), teaching about doing hope as an active strategy. This is the challenge for each of us during this time of uncertainty: To become "hope providers" and develop a hopefilled plan of action, so that our tomorrows will be positive.

# Opening New doors for the Visually impaired

by: Suzie Bowling and Sr Fides Sperling

Despite vision impairment being the most prevalent of all disabilities in South Africa affecting 32% of the population, there are very few schools for the blind in the entire country and none whatsoever in Johannesburg until Holy Family College made history in 2019 with the inclusion of 5 blind learners into the school. This ground-breaking development was made possible through the school's partnership programme with 'Towards Integration', an NPO focused on running inclusive education projects.

'Towards Integration' promotes unity and integrity in diversity of culture, religion and ability. One of the platforms they established is an inclusive education programme for children with vision limitations in order to equalize their chances for a better future.

The programme focuses on two important components that make inclusive education successful:

- The rehabilitation of the blind children
- Comprehensive support for the mainstream school which includes supporting teachers, Braille material, teaching and technology aids, and provisions for the safety of the visually impaired.

Holy Family College has embraced the partnership because it aligns with its own ethos of creating an environment, spirit and atmosphere of 'family'. Franc Sobreira, the headmaster of Holy Family College, explains: "2019 saw the start of a new and exciting project at Holy Family College. We decided to become a truly inclusive school and educate visually impaired children in a good mainstream school as we discovered that children with disabilities were finding it challenging to enter a mainstream school. I strongly believe that every child should have the right to receive quality basic education and support. No child should be refused admission to a mainstream school."

Fortuitously, it turns out that visually impaired children can be included in mainstream classes with ease. Blind children can assimilate more than 80% of teaching and experience in the regular classroom if they are provided with the correct material, in the correct form, at the correct time. The only change is reading and writing technique and the adjustment of the curriculum to the blind and visually impaired so that all the children in the class participate in the teaching process.

Further support is offered after school when the non-sighted children participate in a rehabilitation Inashort period of time, we have seen how the entire school community has become more accepting, open-minded, caring and aware of others

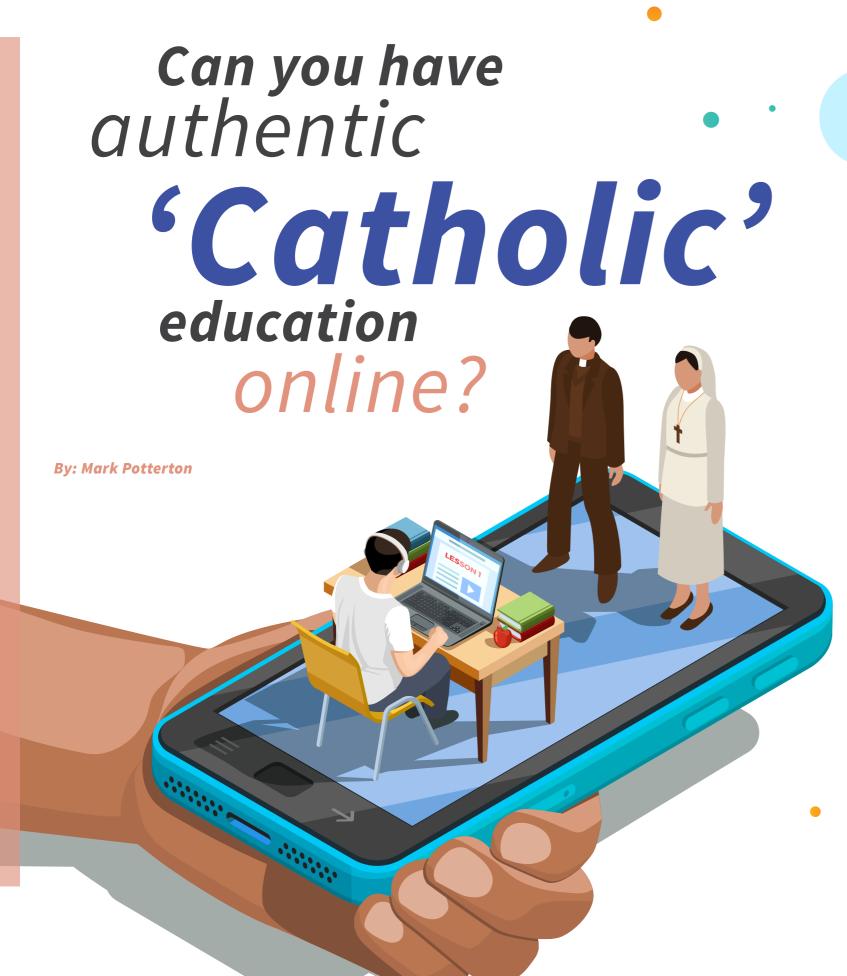
programme which includes Braille lessons, orientation and mobility, vision therapy and touch development.

What has been remarkable during the initial year of implementation of inclusion in education the combined effort of all of those who believe that inclusion is the best way to develop an all-embracing and whole society. "This year alone," says Sobreira, "we have seen how the four young children who pioneered the project and who were given the opportunity to mainstream into top quality education have grown. What was truly unexpected though was the reaction from our "able" learners. In a short period of time, we have seen how the entire school community has become more accepting, open-minded, caring and aware of others"

The long-term vision is that the Holy Family College will offer two to three placements of visually impaired learners per grade. Through Holy Family College, its teachers and its supporting specialists, these blind children may come to enjoy the everyday experiences essential to their development as healthy and stable young people with a keen awareness of the world around them.

For more details contact:

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The Coronavirus has caused major disruption to education around the globe. UNESCO reported that nine out of ten of the world's children were out of school at the start of April. The challenge around the world is how to ensure that the impact on children's learning is minimised. As soon as it became clear that the COVID-19 pandemic would impact on schooling at Sacred Heart College we began talking about how we would continue school using the online platforms available to us.

Can we still be a 'Catholic' school online? A lot has been written about the nature and purpose of the Catholic school. In fact, there is a myriad of books written on the subject. The best definition, in my view, was written by the late Professor Peter Hunter and Paul Faller, who argued that 'the purpose of the Catholic School is to provide a good all-round education in the spirit of the gospel of Jesus, aspiring in particular to live out its central message and challenge: to worship the God who loves us, to love and help our fellow human beings, and to learn to exercise responsibility for the world around us'.

Most of the descriptions of the Catholic school are really about the culture of a school. These descriptions speak about the lived values and attitudes which influences all aspects of the school's life. They include activities in and beyond the classroom, relationships among staff members, parents and students, and disciplinary procedures. The emphasis is around people and relationships and how they deal with each other. These dimensions are all very difficult to replicate online!

In the Church documents on the Catholic school the focus has largely been on the religious dimension of the school, and on its Religious Education programme. These documents are concerned with the development of the spiritual capacity for faith, hope and love. A major focus of some of the Church documents has been the upholding of the dignity of the human person, of all beings, and of all creation, with a special concern for the poor and the marginalised. Peter Hunter and Paul Faller argue that the essence of this is 'outreach to others, pastoral care for all, and celebration of the school's religious character'.

As soon as it became clear that the COVID-19 pandemic would impact on schooling at Sacred Heart College we began talking about how we would continue school using the online platforms available to us. In the High School and in Grade 6 the teachers were familiar with Google Classroom and that's the technology they went with. In the Preschool they had used a platform called Seesaw. In the end the preschool mainly used WhatsApp, and did so very creatively, sending videos and photos of what children were doing. In the Primary School study packs and workbooks were sent home and teachers made use of email, the school app, phone calls and WhatsApp.

The danger of running online education is that it is remote and that the primary concern becomes the 'transmission of knowledge', and this in my view this the anthesis of what Catholic education should be. It has to be about relationship and meaningful knowledge. The Church documents speak of preparing students 'to take their place in society as responsible,

honest and compassionate citizens'. Teaching and learning must be shaped by a Catholic vision of life.

At our school we decided from the outset that we would make it personal and include weekly phone calls to the parents, as well make the services of the school counsellor available. In getting feedback from parents it was the personalised dimension of the online learning that was appreciated by both the students and the parents.

In a recently published UNESCO document on online learning the authors argue that distance learning doesn't have to mirror learning as it normally happens in school. In fact, they argue that trying to replicate the pace and type of work that would be done at school is unrealistic. Schools must decide on a daily structure, a timetable, or a to-do list of what the staff want for students. The authors strongly suggest that less is more when it comes to the scope of work teachers set in distance learning, especially in times of uncertainty and instability. The three weeks that we have had teaching from a distance has allowed us to see what works and doesn't for both our students and parents. It has also allowed us to better understand the pace at which work gets done. We learnt that teachers need to be flexible and need to adapt wherever possible.

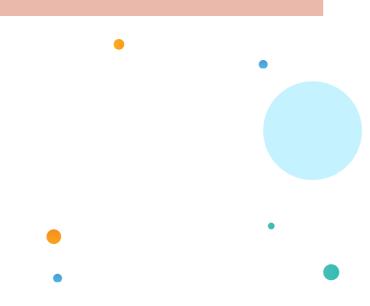
The UNESCO document provides instructive guidance for Catholic schools, reminding us to focus on the 'whole child.' The authors argue that children at

home don't just need education, but that they first and foremost need to be fed and protected. They go on to say that health, safety and wellbeing must always come first, and that schools need to understand the complexities of home lives and the mental, emotional and physical strains that families are facing.

These are indeed unprecedented times and Catholic schools are urgently called to respond as best we can. It is vitally important that in addition to worrying about the impact on teaching and learning, we think about the spiritual, psychological and social needs of children too.

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Mark Potterton is primary school principal at Sacred Heart College.





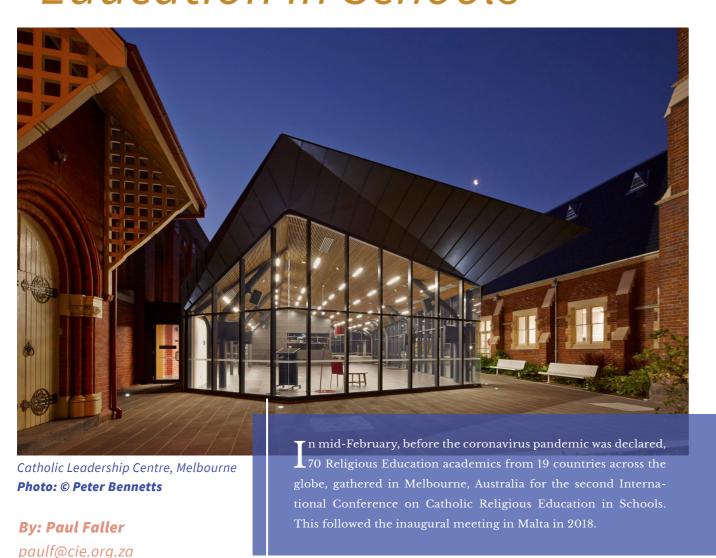






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# 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on Catholic Religious Education in Schools



The conference over four days addressed a myriad of topics but, on closer analysis, a few major themes stood out. 18 papers addressed curriculum and curriculum development issues; 15 were concerned with classroom methodology; 13 addressed the formation of teachers; and 9 were concerned with the realities of students today. Looking at these altogether suggests that Religious Education as a curriculum option in Catholic schools is, as always, under construction, trying to meet the needs for clarity, rigour and relevance in a fast-changing world.

An Australian colloquium had identified five interdependent characteristics of future Religious Education in the Catholic school, namely formation, pedagogy, curriculum, research and partnerships. In this short article, I'll attempt to give a synthetic overview of the first three of these themes and the questions they address. As far as the other two go, research is evident in the wealth of papers and presentations offered at the conference, and the question of partnership at various levels is implied in many of the issues that this article will report on.

#### Formation

The formation of religious educators was a critical concern of the conference. A keynote address stressed that one cannot advocate and prepare a path for students to travel unless one has walked that path oneself. At the same time one has to walk the student's chosen path as companion and this means developing a complex set of understandings, attitudes, practices and skills. Included in these, and raised at the conference

are, first on a personal level: living out the school's values, providing a confident faith witness, and developing a vision of an outgoing Church. Then, on a professional level, the teacher needs to be in touch with the students' spirituality, to develop a sound personal understanding of Scripture, and grow in their ability to integrate theological and didactic competences. Returning to the personal level, all of this points to a teacher's need for a sense of self-efficacy or self-belief in her or his ability to organize and execute the courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context.

An Australian colloquium had identified five interdependent characteristics of future Religious Education in the Catholic school, namely formation, pedagogy, curriculum, research and partnerships.

On a more general note, the nature and form of adult formation appropriate to the 21st century was discussed, and an Australian team reported on the development of the Catholic School Formation Index, an instrument which provides participants, facilitators and school leaders with initial data to support personal and group renewal, inform formation practices; and meet accountability requirements.

In terms of formation practices, two presentations focused on the need to fashion effective instruments such as communities of practice to support beginning teachers and teachers new to Catholic school.

#### Pedagogy

Judging by the number of presentations dealing with the realities of students and the consequent need for inclusive and effective ways of teaching in the very diverse classrooms of today, this was the area needing perhaps the greatest discernment. How does Religious Education meet the real needs of students regardless of their faith or gender orientation? How does it ensure that all feel included – students of deep faith, those who seek, and those who openly doubt?

The key, included in a number of papers, is the hermeneutic-communicative model or approach originating in Leuven University, Belgium. The term 'communicative' refers to the idea that Religious Education is not a one-way street. More than engaging students in learning about religion, students are encouraged to bring their religious or other worldviews with them into the respectful classroom where their beliefs and questions will be honoured. Through enquiry, exploration, reflection and action, they are invited into a transformative learning experience in conversation with tradition, with each other and with the world around them.

Apart from this general approach, some specific suggestions were offered around effective means, such as the use of art memes, photography and film, and the adaptation to the classroom of traditional processes such as mystagogy and lectio divina.

#### Curriculum

Religious Education (RE) as a curriculum area in its own right always finds itself challenged to demonstrate its relevance and, consequently, two shifts were advocated – one towards a closer connection with the realities of the classroom and young people's spirituality, and the other towards an embedding of its theology in contemporary cosmology.

New curriculum is all well and good but the question of its implementation is fraught with difficulty. It's a relatively simple matter – though it requires much time and effort – to develop a curriculum model and its accompanying documentation, but the next phase of appropriation in the multireligious school context is challenged by a number of different factors, among which might be the school's vision and sense of identity, the cultural context, the set ways of established teachers, the need for formation in new subject areas and methods, or the inter-religious tensions in a given society.

A number of relatively new subject areas or focuses for Religious Education were reported on or put forward for discussion in the conference. I'll comment on a few of the more novel ones. A Marist school in Australia offers electives in RE among which is a class-based liturgical choir subject. Questions explored within the course include: why we sing; how and why particular music is chosen and where to find appropri-

ate resources; who sings, where, and why; what are key features of liturgical music; how does music serve the liturgy and an ongoing lived immersion in the paschal mystery (and what that is); and how the rich liturgical music tradition of the Church is to be maintained, while also allowing for new pieces to be created and included.

to sport that underlines the benefits of sport for individuals and school communities, the central tenet that sport must serve the human person, the belief that sport must have a social justice component, and the understanding that sport is a positive place of engagement between faith and secularism.

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How does Religious Education meet the real needs of students regardless of their faith or gender orientation? How does it ensure that all feel included – students of deep faith, those who seek, and those who openly doubt?

In the USA, a university and a high school have partnered in a community-based, participatory action research to develop a pedagogy by which students become reflective practitioners of change by collaborating with service providers for the sake of social impact.

A third example comes from Canada where the paper presents direction for Catholic schools and their spiritual inspiration for sport: an educational approach

#### Postscript

Some of the papers presented at the conference will be published in journals in due course. However, if any reader is interested to know more about the conference's discussion on a particular issue, the writer of this article is in a position to put you in touch with the relevant conference participants.



F or many of our Catholic schools one of the core mandates from our founders is to help young people come to have a personal relationship with Jesus.

The best way I know of to facilitate any person coming to have their own relationship with Jesus is through contemplating the Gospels. Gospel contemplations are a very old way of praying in the church, St Ignatius of Loyola uses them in his Spiritual Exercises, St Theresa of Avila and St John of the Cross refer to them when they write about dialogical prayer in the Carmelite tradition. Saint Pope John Paul II encouraged us to use Gospel contemplation with the rosary to grow in our relationship with God in his apostolic letter Rosarium Virginis Mariae.

So what is this as a way of prayer, and how can I best introduce young people to this as a way of praying?

Firstly it is a way of praying that uses our imagination and our senses. We want to enter imaginatively, as much as possible, into the Gospel text. I want to feel the chill of the river Jordan, to taste the wine at the last supper, I want to imaginatively rub shoulders with disciples as they walk with Jesus. This way of prayer is like asking Jesus to open his memories to us, allowing us to see, hear, touch, smell and taste everything that is mentioned or alluded to in the Gospels.

Small children learn this way, they imagine themselves fully into the stories that they hear. They are Superman, or Cinderella. In their imaginative play they are fully immersed in whatever story has caught their fancy. Their 'trying on' of different personas helps them to grow in a sense of themselves and of others. As we grow, our imaginations remain fertile ground for our ability to understand and interact with ourselves and the world.

In our life of prayer, imaginative prayer leads us into a deeper relationship with God, and helps us to experience the gospels as an entry into a deep relationship with Jesus Christ.

Here is an example of a guided Gospel contemplation that might be offered to children from grade 5 to 9.

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by Frances Correia

#### Script for guided Gospel contemplation

To begin with, get the children to lie down in a hall, or perhaps to sit in the chapel. It can be helpful to choose a day when they are wearing their sports clothing, so that they can be comfortable, and so that the girls can be less self-conscious.

Spend a few moments helping them to become calm. Breathing exercises are an excellent way to settle and centre a group. (It is normal that not all the learners are lying quietly at the beginning, especially if contemplation is a new way of praying, they may initially fidget. The breathing exercise at the beginning should help the group to come to stillness. If there is a particularly fidgety or talkative learner, standing beside them, or just gently placing you hand on their shoulder for a few moments often helps them to settle.

All the instructions for the facilitator are in italics, (don't read them aloud).

#### Facilitator:

Let's begin by finding a place where you can comfortably sit or lie down on your backs (some of the learners may roll to their sides or onto their fronts in the contemplation, just allow this to happen).

For this exercise it will be very helpful if you close your eyes.

We're going to start by focusing on our breath. Breathe in deeply, (pause) and breathe out *(pause)* 

Again breathe in deeply, (pause) breathe out relaxing into the chair/ ground beneath you. (pause)

Again take a deep breath in (pause) and again breathe out, this time consciously relaxing your neck and shoulders. (pause)

And again, deep breath in, (pause) and again breathe out, this time gently move your spine and release any tension you may feel. (pause)

Today we are going to contemplate the Baptism of Jesus, using the Gospel of St Mark. I will begin by reading the Gospel story to you:

#### Read the text:

It was at this time that Jesus came up from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised in the Jordan by John. And at once, as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit, like a dove, descending on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you.' (Mk 1 9-11)

Now imagine yourself back in time about 2000 years. To begin with imagine the gentle sound of the river (pause), imagine the sounds of bird song, *(pause)* what other sounds can you hear? *(pause)* 

Now imagine what you can smell, the scent of water (pause), what other scents can you smell on the air? (pause)

Imagine what you can feel? The cool of the breeze, the warmth of the sun on your body (pause). Imagine the feeling of the water, of putting your feet in the water, what does it feel like? (pause)

Look around, notice the scene, people have come to listen to John and to be baptised, as you watch and listen, what do you notice? (pause)

Become aware of Jesus, he is here, part of the group that has gathered. Watch him as he walks down into the river Jordan to where John is baptising people. (pause)

What do you think Jesus was feeling as he walked down into the water? (pause)

What do you think John felt as Jesus came to him? (pause)

Imagine watching Jesus being baptised, imagine him kneeling down in the water. Imagine his feelings as he did this. (pause)

As he comes up out of the water, scripture says he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit, like a dove, descending on him. Imagine watching this happening in front of you. What do you think Jesus felt? (pause) What do you think and feel? (pause)

Hear the voice from heaven saying, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you.' What do you think Jesus felt as he heard these words? (pause)

What do you feel as you hear them said to Jesus? (pause)

Now imagine God saying these words to you in your own heart, 'You are my Child, my Beloved; my favour rests on you.' How do you feel? (pause) What would you want to say to God in response? (Longer pause)

Imagine walking with Jesus along the river bank, after the baptism and talking to him, what would you want to say to him? What might he say to you? (Longer pause)

To end the meditation, re-read the passage of scripture.

You may open your eyes now, stretch your legs, point your toes, and stretch your arms above your head to the ceiling. If anyone has fallen asleep, I will come and wake them up.

Some learners may go to sleep during this kind of prayer. That is normal, and can be for various reasons. Gently wake them and reassure them. Even if they go to sleep during a contemplation, God's is still at work in their heart.

#### Reflection post a Gospel Contemplation

It is very helpful for learners to write a reflective exercise after praying a Gospel contemplation. These letters should not be for marks, but will help learners to deepen and grow in their own life of prayer.

At the end of this Gospel Contemplation the teacher may like to suggest that learners do one of the following:

Write a letter from Jesus to his mother Mary about his experience of being baptised.

Write a letter from St John to his mother St Elisabeth about his experience of baptising Jesus.

Remind them that God also says to each one of us: 'You are my Child, my Beloved; my favour rests on you.' What letter might the learners write in response to God saying this to them.

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#### God, our Loving Father,

We, at this school, are all your beloved sons and daughters.

We humbly come to You, our only hope.

We are nothing without You.

We thank You for the gift of life.

We acknowledge Your mighty power.

We place all the people of the world under Your mighty power during this time of pandemic. Your Beloved Son Jesus said: Ask and you will receive, knock and the door will be opened to you,

seek and you will find.

Therefore we humbly come to You with trust and hope.

We ask You to protect the whole world which is in trouble with Covid-19.

Your apostles were once in trouble during a storm at sea. Immediately they turned to You because they knew You would save them.

Be merciful to us by blessing us with Your all-powerful Hand.

Bless all our doctors, nurses and health-care workers who risk their lives
to save those infected with the Coronavirus.

Help our scientists find a vaccine to bring the virus to a swift end.
Give healing and recovery to all who are suffering from the virus.

Bless all our teachers who are helping us to prepare for our end of the year exams.

We thank them by co-operating with them in doing all our school work well.

Bless all our staff who clean our school and provide our meals. Bless also our parents who worry about us when we are at school that they may trust in Your care and protection for all of us.

Console the families who have lost their loved ones and give them hope of life.

Those who have passed away please accept them in Your heavenly place.

To those who have not yet been infected please protect them with Your powerful hand.

Mary, our Mother, please intercede for us with your son Jesus, as you did at Cana of Galilee so that joy and celebration may return after this moment of trial.

Finally, help us to be ever mindful to love and care for one another.

May we protect not only ourselves from getting infected but also those we come into contact with by regularly washing our hands, the wearing of our face masks and while doing social distancing may we never distance ourselves from Your love, for our hearts are restless,

O Lord, until they rest in You.

Amen

## Leadership through Noble Character

Teaching and inspiring leadership qualities in girls at
Assumption Convent School

by: Kyle Lauf

Ex sola virtute honor" is the motto of Assumption Convent School, given by the school's founders the Missionary Sisters of the Assumption back in 1946. It means 'it is only from virtue that honour can be attained.' As a Life Orientation teacher I was looking to identify a leadership curriculum for my learners with content that would do justice to our motto and ethos of Gospel values espoused in our school's "Fully Alive" approach.

During an assembly one Monday morning in 2013 one of our matric pupils read an astonishingly beautiful passage from the book of Proverbs. The scripture described the actions and character features of a virtuous and worthy woman of faith. It immediately prompted me to further, deeper thought.

I started to contemplate this passage and came to realise that these noble attributes contained personal traits that could be applied and put into regular practice. And what's more, they related directly to the principle of 'honour through virtue' held dear by our founders.

The text in question, Proverbs 31:10-31, is a beautifully descriptive passage of an ideal woman of faith. Though thousands of years old, the text describes noble and virtuous values that are as applicable to the 21st century context as they were back then.

I extrapolated the 'noble' or 'virtuous' values highlighted in the text restating them as teachable leadership skills aimed at the young women in my Life Orientation class.

These are values-inspired skills for leaders. I believe they apply to anyone interested in self-development, whether male or female, but there is a specific feminine emphasis. They can be summarised as follows:

- She is productive and hard-working, clearly not lazy or idle.
- She is 'entrepreneurial' she is business-minded and takes calculated risks



- She is strategic, thoughtfully planning for the future, not merely the short-term
- She is diligent
- She is compassionate and caring
- She is wise and instructs others, passing on what she learns
- She is intentional, i.e. not passive, she takes initiative
- She is both respectful and respected
- She creates beauty, looking for practical ways to bring beauty into her life and home
- She builds healthy relationships, both personally and socially
- She redefines beauty her beauty stems not from transient values or charm, but from her feminine character rooted in these Godly virtues

A criticism of these values could come from a modern perspective in that they describe a capable wife, or a wife of noble character. Does this mean to say a woman's highest role is being a successful wife? Critics might say this is an outdated patriarchal mindset.

Another criticism of using this as a leadership curriculum for young women could be that I, a male teacher, could be accused of using the text to prescribe what should be valued by my female students. Perhaps readers of this magazine, men and women alike, whether they are Life Orientation teachers or not, could respond with their thoughts and critiques.

Catholic Education

### BOOK REVIEW

Pieterse, J. in collaboration with Picus, R. (2020)

The Open Schools Era (1976 -1986) Johannesburg:

Marist Brothers 124 pages.

By Mark Potterton

he Open Schools Era **1** by Brother Jude Pieterse was published in April 2020. Brother Jude, a Marist brother, was one of the central figures in the desegregation of Catholic schools. Brother Jude was appointed chair of the Education Council of the Association of Religious in 1975. In the ten years he served in this role he was integrally involved in

government for change in Catholic schools. During this time Brother Jude participated in countless meetings and consultations with Bishops, principals, teachers and government officials. Brother Jude kept

negotiating with the

3 2

THE OPEN SCHOOLS ERA (1976-1986)

St Aldysius School, Cape Town

Assumption Convent, Cape Tow

meticulous minutes and resolutions, and he also wrote several letters corresponding with the different parties at the time. These events and records became the source material on which this historic book is based.

The purpose of the book is to tell the story of what the Catholic Church in South Africa

did to ensure that Open Schools became a reality. It develops a deeper understanding of the challenges and struggles faced by the owners of the former white Catholic schools. The book acknowledges the role played by the archbishops, the congregations of teaching sisters

and brothers and above all captures the anecdotal and human stories behind the events and meetings that happened. Working with Robyn Picus, Brother Jude has managed to richly describe both the excitement and angst of the time. *The Open Schools Era* is an important historical record of the work done to bring about one aspect of a New South Africa.

The historical context of the time is captured in the first chapter. Here the historical roots of Bantu Education are considered. The main ideas of Verwoerd that education should stand with both feet in the reserves with its roots in the spirit and being over "Bantu" society was established. Verwoerd argued that good regulations cannot exist when the education is given to the "control of people who create the wrong expectations on the part of the native himself". He wanted "native" education to be controlled in such a way that it should be in line with the policy of the state.

The impact of the Bantu Education Act is described, and it is made clear that the State wanted to obtain full control of the training of teachers. Verwoerd argued that for many decades the Church used the training of teachers for the furtherance of their own particular interests, and said that teachers should not feel above their community or have a desire to become integrated the life of the European community.

In her history Sr Brigid Flanagan observed that this provoked a crisis in the Church because Bishops regarded the school as a pivotal part of the Church's evangelising mission. The majority felt that, without schools, the church would lose its influence, vocations would diminish, and many Catholics would fall away from the Church. Religious instruction given in state schools would be incapable of combating the conse-

quence of secularised education, and there was no guarantee that the Church would have free access to state schools for the teaching of religion to Catholic pupils

The strength of the book lies in chapters 3 to 8 where the negotiations with the State come alive with documentary richness. The pioneering role of the religious sisters is highlighted and particularly their eagerness to open their schools as soon as possible. Brother Jude notes that the religious teaching brothers were much more cautious than the sisters. An extract from a newspaper article by Sister Margaret Kelly OP captures the feeling of some of the sisters:

"We rejoice that at least we have a Catholic school with the staff and pupils from all the parishes in the city. Both staff and pupils experienced Christian community in all its richness of language, colour, gifts and sharing.

In this atmosphere it is easy to learn the Christian virtues of understanding, tolerance, respect and love in the interaction within the microcosm of the school forces us to look out on the city and country around us and to see the problems in the macrocosm.

The integration of Catholic schools was difficult and Sister Evangelist Quinlan RSM notes that some white parents removed their children from open schools and wrote letters of complaint to the government. According to Sister Evangelist the Convent did not lose many children but enrolments were impacted upon. One parent wrote and said" "We admire you. We know it must happen. But not with our children".

Catholic Education

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R250

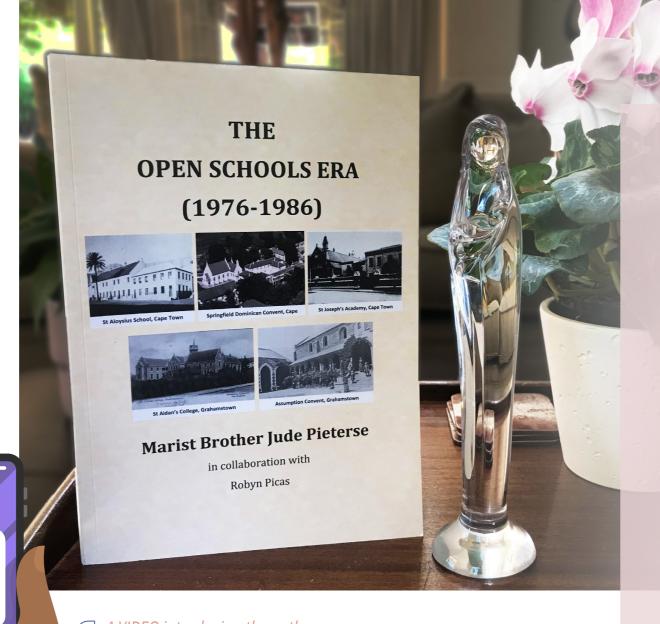
The authors include several newspaper clippings which reflect the feeling of the time. Numerous articles were published about Sybrand Van Niekerk's position and the threats he was making in the Pretoria news. One headline read: "Schools threat sparks new row". This article explored the tension within the nationalist government at the time particularly between the conservatives and progressives.

The timelines at the start of each chapter are useful in gaining a sense of the timing of the process of opening the schools. The photographs of the different role players make the book very human, and the extracts from letters, conversations and other documents add to the authenticity of the book. The book written with Robyn Picus reads easily and will prove to be a valuable resource for both teachers and students. I reiterate that *The Open Schools Era* will prove to a be a valuable text documenting both a difficult and tumultuous time in the history of South Africa.

WATCH

SCAN

Mark Potterton is the current principal of Sacred Heart College primary school.



A VIDEO introducing the authors and outlining the contents of the book is available on YOUTUBE at https://youtu.be/XYhUoPjEoMY or scan this QR code.

Please contact mario.colussi@marist.org.za to arrange collection of your copy of The Open Schools Era, alternatively we will courier it to you.

### Gauteng courier cost: R100 Nationwide courier cost: R150

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Catholic Education

# Signs Income

{ By Anne Baker }

As I write this schools across the country have begun their phased re-opening with all the attendant COVID-19 compliance requirements and public schools are now closed again for four weeks. To say that the children and staff have been affected by the pandemic is an understatement. Who could have predicted in January that the entire country would shut-down and that virtually overnight, schools would be required to shift their entire teaching structure to online lessons. 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 during this second closure while the vast majority of the children in South Africa once again face little or no schooling.

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But for many, schooling is the least of their worries right now. There is a real and justifiable fear of this illness, particularly for loved ones who are at greater risk and for aged parents. The stoic optimism of the early days of lockdown was short-lived. As the lockdown has been gradually lifted, the curve that we thought we had flattened has started to creep inexorably upwards again. Infection numbers are soaring and the spectre of illness and death is becoming a far more tangible reality as many people move from merely reading about numbers to actually knowing someone who has tested positive or passed away.

"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."

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 is perhaps the greatest challenge to us now. Why are we afraid? Because a seemingly insignificant pathogen has invaded our lives? Because it has crippled our livelihoods;

3 8

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 challenges 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. 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 has made this even more apparent.

As if the situation were not already bad enough, many of the schools that have been trying to support both their staff and children have faced a new but not unfamiliar onslaught in recent weeks. The ever-present issue of racism once again reared its head as the brutal deaths of African Americans triggered the latent outrage of many young people in South Africa. The seeds

## The Building Peaceful Schools Programme ... provides schools with the tools to cultivate a culture of peace and justice

of the American race narrative that filters through to South Africa through popular media has always found fertile soil in the racially sensitive South African society but this was exacerbated even further when social media became one of the only points of contact with the outside world for scores of young people during lockdown. Sadly, this narrative either entrenches the belief that South Africa shares the same racial issues as the USA or it triggers a denial of the existence of these issues, both of which are untrue. Our history of legislated racism has left a legacy of systematic racism which few schools have dealt with since 1994.

When Catholic schools opened to all races in the late 1970s sincere efforts were made to confront and deal with this issue. School leaders were more conscious of facing the immediately apparent damage created by years of systemic racism. Subjects such as African Studies were offered. Some Catholic schools taught an alternate History curriculum. Die Stem was replaced by Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika long before parts of this hymn formed the new national anthem. Somewhere along the way, perhaps lulled into a false sense of comfort by the Rainbow Nation delusion, schools stopped addressing the very real issues which enable systemic discrimination. It may also be true that many schools have in fact studiously avoided facing the reality of their racial dynamics for a variety of reasons; denial, discomfort and - as ever - fear. The current social media storm, aimed especially at the more affluent independent schools by black past pupils sharing the pain of their school experience is a wake-up call to us all.

Real dialogue about race needs to be facilitated sensitively and courageously, and on an ongoing basis. Without this skilled facilitation, the often overwhelming and understandable temptation to lay the blame somewhere, anywhere, triggers a reflexive defensiveness and ultimately results in those who should be listening the most, carefully not hearing what is being said by those who most need to share their experiences of the very real effects of systemic and institutionalised racism. Real dialogue means examining every aspect of a school environment in order to determine together what needs to change. This applies equally to issues of gender which cannot be separated from racism.

The Building Peaceful Schools Programme developed by the CIE is the kind of initiative that allows these dialogues to take place. It provides schools with the tools to cultivate a culture of peace and justice that spreads through the students, teachers, leaders and parents. Notably, one of the central themes of the programme is entitled Affirming identity – Challenging racism and is at times like these when one realises how unfortunate it is that this programme has not reached as many schools as it could have.

So as schools across the country struggle to weather these storms we must ask what the costs of the struggles with both the virus and with diversity will be. What does it mean for our schools and particularly for school leaders? Each of these challenges has

both a personal and an organisational cost. On a personal level the pain of the illness has affected families in a myriad of ways. Bread-winners have lost income and hunger has soared. Many children have lost more than just their education as school closures mean that those learners lose the meals they received through school feeding schemes and sometimes also basic health care obtained through school nurses. For others the loss of connection with loved ones and friends also has an impact. More broadly, organisations are tasked with ensuring that all COVID-19 requirements are met - a complex and costly task - while also helping learners and teachers navigate the new circumstances in which they find themselves. Social distancing keeps learners apart when they most seek contact and masks make the usual interpersonal communication that takes place in a school environment even more fraught with uncertainty, confusion and discomfort. Many learners are unable to return to school at all and must remain isolated from their friends and peers. Similarly, many teachers cannot return which often places an extra burden on those teachers who do. How, in the midst of all of this, is a school then also expected to address longstanding, deep-seated issues of systemic racism?

There are no easy answers to these challenges. So how does the Catholic school community respond to this time?

Our main call is the call to care, to be people of care – firstly to care for self as the energy required to be a leader and teacher is immense. It is helpful to have someone to turn to when times seem really tough and we should not be afraid to both offer support and ask for support when

we need it. Then care for each other, as some school staff who may be experiencing fear of returning to school, and may even have experienced the loss of a loved one, illness or the loss of income through family members losing their jobs. And of course our primary task is to care for the children and their families who are experiencing these issues to and help them with their fears and concerns. We have to be cognisant that during this period of trauma members of the school community may have witnessed violence, been abused themselves or be suffering from anxiety and depression.

Sr Kathy Gaylor OP, chairperson of the CBE, said in her pastoral letter to schools:

And yet, reopening our schools is an act of hope. Education orients us towards the future of our children and our society. If our hearts are open and full of compassion, we may yet hope, and move for that change that can be for the better – for all humanity and the societies we live in, and for the one world that is our common home. Let us remember: "Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary." (Benedict XVI).

Let us be people who read the signs of the times and who live in the hope and faith that we can all make a difference to the lives of children and their families.



## BOOK REVIEW

Sam Cowen.

Brutal School Ties. The Parktown Boys' Tragedy

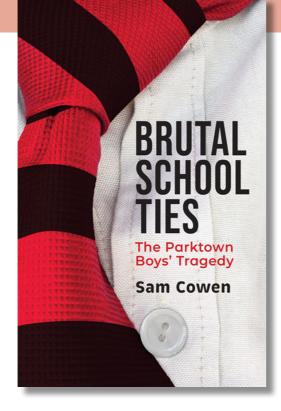
By Mark Potterton

Sam Cowen is a former TV and radio presenter who has been in the media industry for over two decades. She revisits the Parktown Boys High School abuse tragedy in her recent book, Brutal School Ties: The Parktown Boys' Tragedy released earlier this year by Melinda Ferguson Books.

The book opens on the night of 3 November 2016 when the police arrived at Parktown Boys High School to arrest the assistant water polo coach,

Collan Rex. Rex had been caught on CCTV camera footage fondling a 15-year old pupil from the boarding house. In the year that followed Rex was charged with 327 offenses: 110 counts of attempted murder, 199 of sexual assault one of rape and two of sexual grooming and eight of assault. He pleaded guilty to 144 charges of sexual assault and stood trial for the remaining 183.

In November 2018, Rex was found guilty of 144 four counts of sexual assault and 12 of common assault. He was sentenced to an effective 23 years in prison.



The story captured a lot of media interest and made front page news.

#### Public knowledge vs right to privacy

Brutal School Ties is based on Cowen's interviews with the victims and their families, the perpetrator, teachers, hostel parents and experts. Cowen also visited Rex in prison and interviewed his former girl-friend. The accounts are sensitively written up and reveal the abhorrent behaviour that had

become normalized at the institution. The interviews also reveal, to some extent, the kind of pressure that young boys were under to remain silent.

One of my central concerns is that despite Cowen's attempt to anonymize some of the people, their stories remain identifiable. The controversial nature of issues Cowen investigated makes the process problematic. There is an ethical concern over the tension between building trust and sharing very personal and private conversations.

The other concern is the conflict between the individual's right to privacy and the public's right to know. Cowen probably had to weigh up each circumstance and assess how much information was already in the public domain. However, individuals should have the freedom to say to what extent they want their personal attitudes, fears, doubts views and beliefs to be shared.

Academic researchers are required to establish whether the right to privacy has been violated. In these cases, an ethics board also needs to authorize the research. Generally, the principle employed is that the greater the sensitivity of the information, the greater the safeguards that need to be put in place to protect the privacy of the participants (especially the victims).

Much more could have been done to analyze the detailed accounts that Cowen assembled. It would have been beneficial to map out the various abuse-related themes and establish how the school perpetuated a culture of silence. Although Brutal School Ties is not an academic text, reference to the body of literature on the issue of abuse in school could have added weight to the content.

For example, Cowen could have referred to policies and awareness programmes that inform students about the dangers of hazing. It is important to understand why hazing continues to happen on college campuses and in high schools, and how this threatens the health and safety of many students. The organisation www.stophazing.org argues that there is still a lack of awareness about hazing and its causes, and that this continues to be a major impediment to effective intervention and prevention strategies. It has conducted a study throughout the United States to collect baseline data that tracks hazing-related trends across different student groups and educational institutions.

#### Abuse in schools likely to be far more pervasive

Reading Cowen's book, I was reminded of some of the testimonies in the Ryan Commission's Report (Ireland), which demonstrated that "the entire system treated children more like prison inmates and slaves than people with legal rights and human potential, that some religious officials encouraged ritual beatings and consistently shielded their orders" through a culture of self-serving secrecy, and that government officials failed to stop the abuses.

Cowen veers off to deal with the Enock Mpianzi drowning tragedy towards the end of the book to show that the school again neglected its duty of care. However, it detracts from the focus of her book. Brutal School Ties is a sobering reminder of how much harm can be perpetuated in institutions that should be wholly dedicated to the formation of whole persons.

Cowen's book is a wake-up call for South Africans involved in the closed-world of boarding schools. Perhaps the next edition will include an endnote that outlines the key child safeguarding principles that every boarding school should adhere to.

Parktown Boys High School has been in the media spotlight for years, perhaps to the relief of many other similar schools. Sadly, I believe that if you scratch below the surface of similar institutions you will uncover similar stories. It is from this perspective of generating greater awareness that I would recommend the book.

Mark Potterton is the current principal of Sacred Heart College primary school.

This review first appeared on spotlight.africa, 16 September 2020, and is shared with their permission.

#### **MARIST MERCY CARE**

## Celebrates 100,000 MEALS during COVID-19

**We** did it! Together in solidarity, Marist Mercy Care has accomplished a fantastic goal. In just two months we have passed the **100,000 meals** mark of food distributed during COVID-19.

This number will increase as we continue distributing food parcels to poor and vulnerable families in need during this crisis.

Our footprint extends to many formal and informal settlements consisting of thousands of families in the Sundays River Valley, Addo, Eastern Cape, South Africa.

A BIG thank you to every volunteer, corporation, business, organization, Marist South Africa, Marist Worldwide and to every person who helped and continues to contribute to our mission.

A video of **thanks and celebration** for accomplishing this milestone has been made involving **Marist Alumni** of South Africa, Germany, Brazil, Australia as well as the current **Marist Student Leaders** of the five South African Marist Schools.

#### **Our Impact**

Our beginnings to present in numbers

Years	14
Children Educated	20,230
Meals	789,250
Clinic Patients	435
Teachers	25
Local Volunteers	50
Marist Alumni	30
Marist Students	110

COVID-19 Response

100,010

meals and counting...

900

fabric masks and counting....

Link to Marist Mercy Care 100,000 Thank You Video https://youtu.be/gHGNhYrb7WU

Join us virtually on Facebook and Instagram @Maristmercycare
Or our website <a href="https://www.placeofmercyandhope.com">www.placeofmercyandhope.com</a>







