

# World Catholic Education Day 2022



## Responding to the Call from Pope Francis: Seven Commitments for a Global Compact on Education

Edited by Quentin Wodon

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## Acknowledgment

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The report's editor works with an international development agency and serves pro bono as Distinguished Research Affiliate with the College of Business at Loyola University New Orleans. This report was produced on his volunteer time and should not be seen in any way as representing the views of his employer, its Executive Directors, or the countries they represent. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in the report as well as any potential omissions or errors are solely those of the authors of the various contributions and interviews.

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## FOREWORD

### Message from Pope Francis for the meeting with representatives of religions on the theme "Religions and Education: towards a Global Compact on Education" on October 5, 2021.

On World Teachers Day on October 5, 2021, Pope Francis and other religious leaders including Buddhist, Calvinist, Evangelical, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Orthodox, Quaker, and Sikh representatives met to discuss the idea of a Global Compact on Education. The Pope's address at the meeting is reproduced below.

Dear brothers and sisters,

I am pleased to welcome you on this significant occasion to promote a Global Compact on Education. On this World Teachers' Day instituted by UNESCO, we, as representatives of different religious traditions, wish to express our closeness and gratitude to teachers, and at the same time our concern for education.

Two years ago, on 12 September 2019, I appealed to all those engaged in various ways in the field of education to *"dialogue on how we are shaping the future of our planet and the need to employ the talents of all, since all change requires an educational process aimed at developing a new universal solidarity and a more welcoming society"* (Message for the Launch of the Compact on Education).

For this reason, I promoted the initiative of a Global Compact on Education in order *"to rekindle our dedication for and with young people, renewing our passion for a more open and inclusive education, including patient listening, constructive dialogue and better mutual understanding"*. I invited everyone *"to unite our efforts in a broad educational alliance, to form mature individuals capable of overcoming division and antagonism, and to restore the fabric of relationships for the sake of a more fraternal humanity"*.

If we desire a more fraternal world, we need to educate young people *"to acknowledge, appreciate and love each person, regardless of physical proximity, regardless of where he or she was born or lives"* (Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, 1). The fundamental principle "Know yourself"

has always guided education. Yet we should not overlook other essential principles: "Know your brother or sister", in order to educate in welcoming others (cf. Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*; Document on Human Fraternity, Abu Dhabi, 4 February 2019); "Know creation", in order to educate in caring for our common home (cf. Encyclical *Laudato Si'*) and "Know the Transcendent", in order to educate in the great mystery of life. We are concerned to ensure an integral formation that can be summed up in knowledge of ourselves, our brothers and sisters, creation and the Transcendent. We cannot fail to speak to young people about the truths that give meaning to life.

Religions have always had a close relationship with education, accompanying religious activities with educational, scholastic and academic ones. As in the past, so also in our day, with the wisdom and humanity of our religious traditions, we want to be a stimulus for a renewed educational activity that can advance universal fraternity in our world.

If in the past, our differences set us at odds, nowadays we see in them the richness of different ways of coming to God and of educating young people for peaceful coexistence in mutual respect. For this reason, education commits us never to use God's name to justify violence and hatred towards other religious traditions, to condemn all forms of fanaticism and fundamentalism, and to defend the right of each individual to choose and act in accordance with his or her conscience.

If in the past, also in the name of religion, discrimination was practiced against ethnic, cultural, political and other minorities, today we want to be defenders of the identity and dignity of every individual and to teach young people to accept everyone without discrimination. For this reason, education commits us to accept people as they are, not how we want them to be, without judging or condemning anyone.



If in the past, the rights of women, children and the most vulnerable were not always respected, today we are committed firmly to defend those rights and to teach young people to be a voice for the voiceless. For this reason, education impels us to reject and denounce every violation of the physical and moral integrity of each individual. Education must make us realize that men and women are equal in dignity; there is no room for discrimination.

If in the past, we tolerated the exploitation and plundering of our common home, today, with greater awareness of our role as stewards of the creation entrusted to us by God, we want to give voice to the plea of nature for its survival, and to train ourselves and future generations in a more sober and ecologically sustainable lifestyle. Yesterday I was impressed by something that was said by one of the scientists at our meeting: *“My newborn granddaughter will have to live, in fifty years’ time, in an unlivable world, if things continue as they are”*. For this reason, education commits us to love our mother Earth, to avoid the waste of food and resources, and to share

more generously the goods that God has given us for the life of everyone. I think of what one thinker, not a Catholic, used to say: *“God always forgives, we occasionally forgive. Nature never forgives”*.

Today we want to state that our religious traditions, which have always played a leading role in schooling, from teaching literacy to higher education, reaffirm their mission of integrally educating each individual: head, hands, heart and soul. To think about what we are feeling and doing. To feel what we are thinking and doing. To do what we are feeling and thinking. The beauty and harmony of what it is to be fully human.

Dear brothers and sisters, I thank you for taking part in this meeting. I also thank those who, due to the pandemic, could not be here today. And now I invite you to a brief moment of silence, asking God to enlighten our minds so that our dialogue will bear fruit and help us courageously to pursue the paths of new educational horizons.



Pope Francis and other religious and lay leaders attend the meeting, "Religions and Education: Toward a Global Compact on Education," at the Vatican Oct. 5, 2021. (CNS photo/Vatican Media).

## INTRODUCTION: CELEBRATING WORLD CATHOLIC EDUCATION DAY

Quentin Wodon

Catholic schools serve 62 million pre-primary, primary, and secondary school students globally, and close to seven million students enrolled in universities and other institutions of higher learning. While in some countries Catholic education is celebrated on a particular day or week, at the global level World Catholic Education Day is observed each year 40 days after Easter. The principle of observing the Day was agreed upon at a Congress of the International Office of Catholic Education (OIEC in French) in Brasilia in 2002. In 2021, for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Day, the Global Catholic Education project prepared in collaboration with OIEC a series of resources that could be used by Catholic schools to celebrate the day all over the world. This included a series of 25 interviews of Catholic education leaders and practitioners.

This year again, resources are being made available for the celebration of the Day, including this report based on interviews with educators. The theme for this year's report is *"Responding to the Call from Pope Francis: Seven Commitments for a Global Compact on Education."* This focus comes from the fact that in September 2019, Pope Francis suggested the need for a Global Compact on Education to renew our passion for a more open and inclusive education. He called for a broad alliance *"to form mature individuals capable of overcoming division and antagonism, and to restore the fabric of relationships for the sake of a more fraternal humanity."*

A year later, in a video message for a meeting on the Global Compact, the Pope called for seven commitments related to the Global Compact on education: (1) to make human persons the center; (2) to listen to the voices of children and young people; (3) to advance the women; (4) to empower the family; (5) to welcome; (6) to find new ways of understanding (the) economy and politics; and (7) to safeguard our common home.

To share examples of what educators are already doing to help implement the vision of Pope Francis, the first part of this report reproduces a text to be published (possibly with some minor changes) in the Spring 2022 issue of the *Journal of Global Catholicism*. The text builds on stories and insights from about 130 interviews conducted to date with educators for the Global Catholic Education project. Insights from those interviews are shared as they relate to each of the seven commitments called for by Pope Francis.

The second part of the report consists of seven interviews illustrating how Catholic educators and others are putting these commitments into practice. One interview is provided to illustrate each of the seven commitments.

The first interview with Sister María Antonieta García Carrizales from Peru is broad on the mission of Catholic schools. It illustrates how Catholic schools aim to fulfil the first commitment called for by Pope Francis, which is to make human persons the center.

The second interview with Sr. Antoinette Nneka Opara from the Africa Province of the Society of the holy Child Jesus illustrates the second commitment, which is to listen to the voice of children and youth. Sr. Antoinette shares the example of a survey implemented in two schools for girls in Nigeria to understand the nature of violence in schools and how to end such violence. These online surveys were a unique approach to give voice to children in confidentiality.

The third interview with Sr. Mickerlyne Cadet in Haiti relates to the commitment in the Global Compact to advance the women. Sr. Mickerlyne belongs to the FMA congregation which runs schools and other institutions globally with a focus on educating girls. She currently heads a vocational school in Haiti that prepares young women for work in the hospitality industry.

The fourth interview is with Cathy Low, a permanent volunteer of the International Movement ATD Fourth World in Switzerland. Cathy talks among others about street libraries, and how building on the aspiration of parents for their children is essential to the fight against extreme poverty. The interview relates to the commitment under the Global Compact to empower the family. The International Fourth World Movement for which Cathy works has long argued that the family is the first line of defense against extreme poverty. In the realm of education as well, parents and siblings have an essential role to play for children to learn.

The fifth interview with Father René Micallef, SJ, in Rome is about the commitment to welcome under the Global Compact. Catholic schools must be inclusive. This applies to children with disabilities, those from minorities or other religions, as well as the poor. It also applies to refugees. Fr. René talks about the importance of education for refugees, a topic that is especially relevant today given the dramatic increase in the number of refugees globally.

The sixth commitment under the Global Compact is about finding new ways of understanding the economy and politics. The interview with Idesbald Nicaise, a Professor of Economics at KU Leuven, Belgium, illustrates how this can be done. That interview is part of a broader series of interviews with Catholic economists.

Finally, the seventh commitment is about care for the environment. The interview with Myriam Gesché, also from Belgium, explains an initiative taken to promote a better understanding among Catholic school students of the need to safeguard our common home, with a particular emphasis on the energy sector. That interview is part of a series on digitalization in education.

These interviews are illustrative of the efforts already made by educators all over the world to “live” the commitments suggested under the Global Compact on Education. Rather than attempting to summarize the interviews in this introduction, it seems best to simply highlight some of the key messages of the interviewees as outlined in excerpts from the interviews. Two excerpts from each interview are provided below, with the interviews listed according to the

seven commitments of the global compact. The hope is that the stories and interviews in this report will inspire you in your own work to implement the vision and seven commitments suggested by Pope Francis towards a Global Compact on Education.

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**Sor María Antonieta  
García Carrizales,  
Presidenta del Consejo  
de la CIEC, Péru**



*“Tener el amparo del Concordato (Iglesia-Estado), favorece la existencia de las escuelas católicas en el Perú, cuya finalidad es la evangelización y obras de caridad. La escuela católica supone para las familias, no solamente una elección de valores culturales sino una elección de valores de vida que debemos hacer evidentes en cualquier circunstancia, buscando siempre servir al prójimo.”*

*“Estamos en momentos de pandemia y necesitamos profundizar en el desarrollo de la interioridad por el valor de la vida y fortalecer el espíritu de esperanza y trascendencia del ser y la certeza de que nuestras acciones deben estar orientadas a hacer el bien y todo lo demás será añadido.”*

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**Sr. Antoinette Nneka  
Opara, Society of the  
Holy Child Jesus,  
African Province**



*“Education is crucial; it is a fundamental human right. So, my worst nightmare is the children who do not get admitted into the schools. Africa is already notorious for too many out-of-school children, those who live either in rural areas with few educational facilities or in communities besieged by conflicts.”*

*“Fear of violence is widespread... To better understand what violence students were experiencing in school, I used an avenue (google form) that could provide anonymity to the students so that they would have the*

*freedom to express themselves and give me a clearer perspective on school discipline, disciplinary measures, violence and the result. I was interested in creating awareness...*

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**Sœur Mickerlyne  
Cadet, École Hôtelière  
Marie Auxiliatrice,  
Haïti**

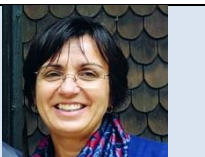


*« L'École Hôtelière Marie Auxiliatrice (EHMA) a pour objectif de former des techniciens de la restauration et de l'hôtellerie aptes à assumer avec responsabilité, compétence et honnêteté les différentes tâches dans la... Nos étudiants ont la compétence pour travailler dans n'importe quel hôtel au niveau national comme International. »*

*« Comme l'a dit notre Fondateur Saint Jean Bosco « Sans affection pas de confiance. Sans confiance, pas d'éducation. » Pour Jean Bosco, c'est seulement lorsque l'enfant ou le jeune prend conscience de son savoir-faire qu'il devient capable d'enrichir. »*

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**Cathy Low, Volunteer of  
the International  
Movement ATD Fourth  
World, Switzerland**



*“Father Wresinski’s core message engraved in the Trocadero in Paris [was that] “Wherever men and women are condemned to live in extreme poverty, human rights are violated. To come together to ensure that these rights be respected is our solemn duty.”*

*“We brought Sonia and the children to meet the President of the national council in Switzerland. They prepared intensively for this meeting. They talked about their life, what it meant to be separated from their family, growing up in poverty, and their dreams. Children and their words can change the world!”*

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**Father René Micallef SJ,  
Associate Lecturer at  
the Gregorian  
University, Italy**



*“Efforts focused on immediate needs that could evoke generosity when portrayed in a photo or short video... Yet refugees have little material capital (e.g. fertile agricultural land) and providing them with human capital and skills through education is the only viable way of helping them stand on their feet.”*

*“A holistic education of students about the current mass migration and asylum phenomena should weave together personal elements (encounters with the “stranger”), imaginative ones (art, movies), ethical and political reflection, as well as critical analysis of data from social science and economics.”*

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**Idesbald Nicaise,  
Professor of  
Economics at KU  
Leuven, Belgium**



*“Especially in the human sciences, research is always value-driven. The most ‘dangerous’ theoretical frameworks are those that claim to be neutral, disguised in mathematical models, without making their assumptions explicit.”*

*“For many years, I have felt like an outsider at university, frustrated by the terrible competition as well as the arrogance of some scientists. I kept doubting whether an academic career was my destiny. My friends convinced me that this was the way for me to follow my ideals. Today, I’m happy that I stayed.”*

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**Myriam Gesché,  
Déléguée épiscopale  
pour l'enseignement,  
Belgique**



*« En Belgique francophone, à l'instar d'autres pays, une Éducation à la Philosophie et à la Citoyenneté a été introduite dans l'ensemble cursus scolaire... Les responsables de deux disciplines [cours de religion et de géographie] ont décidé de créer ensemble un outil numérique qui permet de faire la jonction entre leurs cours ... en se centrant sur la problématique de la vulnérabilité énergétique. »*

*« Il me semble que l'outil est novateur de quatre manières : en raison de sa forme numérique, de son contenu, de l'activité proposée aux élèves, et de l'accessibilité et des interactions que l'outil permet. »*

#### **About the Global Catholic Education Project**

[Global Catholic Education](http://www.GlobalCatholicEducation.org) is a volunteer-led project to contribute to Catholic education and integral human development globally with a range of resources. The website went live symbolically on Thanksgiving Day in November 2020 to give thanks for the many blessings we have received. Our aim is to serve Catholic schools and universities, as well as other organizations contributing to integral human development, with a special emphasis on responding to the aspirations of the poor and vulnerable. If you would like to contribute to the project, please contact us through the website at [www.GlobalCatholicEducation.org](http://www.GlobalCatholicEducation.org).

# PART I

## Responding to Pope Francis' Call for a Global Compact on Education: Insights from Interviews for the Global Catholic Education Project

Quentin Wodon

This text was written for publication (possibly with some edits) in the Spring 2022 issue of the [Journal of Global Catholicism](#) on the theme of Catholic education, and is reproduced here with permission from the journal's editorial team. The Journal of Global Catholicism is a peer-reviewed scholarly journal dedicated to fostering the understanding of diverse forms of lived Catholicism with attention to their significance for theoretical approaches within and across multiple academic disciplines. The Journal is part of the Catholics & Cultures initiative to explore the religious lives and practices of Catholics around the world. It is administered by the Rev. Michael C. McFarland, S.J. Center for Religion, Ethics and Culture at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts, USA.



### Introduction

The idea of a Global Compact on Education was first suggested by Pope Francis in September 2019. The Pope announced plans for a meeting to be held in May 2020 to *"rekindle our dedication for and with young people, renewing our passion for a more open and inclusive education"*<sup>1</sup>. He believed in the need *"to unite our efforts in a broad educational alliance, to form mature individuals capable of overcoming division and antagonism, and to restore the fabric of relationships for the sake of a more fraternal humanity"*<sup>2</sup>.

The meeting was postponed to October 2020 and held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In his video message for that virtual event, Pope Francis reminded us that *"to educate is always an act of hope, one that calls for cooperation in turning a barren and*

*paralyzing indifference into another way of thinking that recognizes our interdependence... We consider education to be one of the most effective ways of making our world and history more human. Education is above all a matter of love and responsibility handed down from one generation to another"*<sup>3</sup>. A year later in October 2021, in a meeting held at the Vatican with other religious leaders on World Teachers' Day, the Pope further noted that *"our religious traditions, which have always played a leading role in schooling, from teaching literacy to higher education, reaffirm their mission of integrally educating each individual: head, hands, heart and soul. [...] The beauty and harmony of what it is to be fully human."*<sup>4</sup>

As part of the idea of a Global Compact on Education, the Pope has suggested a set of seven practical commitments for educators, communities, or even societies. These commitments were not related solely to education provided in formal settings: they referred broadly to *"every educational program, both formal and informal."* The seven commitments suggested by the Pope to renew our vision for education were: (1) to make human persons the center; (2) to listen to the voices of children and young people; (3) to advance the women; (4) to empower the family; (5) to welcome; (6) to find new ways of understanding (the) economy and politics; and (7) to safeguard our common home. These commitments are a call for action at the national, regional, and global levels, but they are also meant to guide the work of educators in their local communities. To inform this work, the Congregation for Catholic Education published a *Vademecum*<sup>5</sup> with for each of the seven commitments a brief explanation of what the commitment entails, ideas for reflection, and suggestions for action.

<sup>1</sup> Francis (2019).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Francis (2020a).

<sup>4</sup> Francis (2021).

<sup>5</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education (2021).

While the idea of a Global Compact on Education is new, most of the commitments suggested by the Pope Francis are likely to be familiar to readers. They are inspired by themes discussed in the Pope's encyclicals (especially *Laudato Si'*<sup>6</sup> and *Fratelli tutti'*). In several of his apostolic exhortations including *Evangelii Gaudium*, *Amoris Laetitia*, *Christus Vivit* and *Querida Amazonia*, and more broadly in a long tradition of Catholic social thought<sup>8</sup>.

Educators, Catholic or not, have already put these or similar commitments in practice all over the world in one way or the other. Sharing stories about those experiences can be helpful as challenges and opportunities faced by some can give ideas to others. To illustrate what educators can do to implement the vision set by Pope Francis for the Global Compact on Education, this article shares examples of actions based on interviews conducted with education practitioners and leaders as part of the Global Catholic Education (GCE) project. Most of the quotes included in the article come from these interviews, but occasionally other materials are used as well. All interviews are available individually on the GCE project website. In addition, interviews are combined into thematic compilations when enough interviews on a topic are available to draw some broader insights.

Seven compilations of interviews have been completed or are nearing completion to-date<sup>9</sup>. The first compilation was completed in March 2021 focused on projects supported by the International Catholic Child Bureau for reach children 'at risk'. This included children in poverty, but also those facing the criminal justice system and children with disabilities.

The second compilation was completed for World Catholic Education Day in May 2021. It is broader in terms of the themes it considers, but of note is a subset of interviews conducted with the Salesian Sisters of Saint John Bosco or FMA (*Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice*) sisters who manage

a wide range of educational institutions especially for girls.

The third compilation was completed in June 2021 on Catholic education in Africa and the Middle East. It provides perspectives from national leaders and is especially relevant for efforts to welcome children from all faiths in countries where Catholics are a minority.

The fourth compilation was completed in July 2021 with Catholic economists working in North America. It provides insights into how teachers and researchers live and practice their faith in their professional roles ((a separate collection is underway for other regions of the world).

The fifth compilation was completed in February 2022 on research in service of Catholic education practice. It consists of interviews about the influential work of Gerald Grace who recently retired from St. Mary's University in Twickenham, London.

The last two compilations were completed in May 2022, respectively on the dialogue between philosophy, theology, and science with winners of the Expanded Reason Awards, and on some of challenges and opportunities emerging from digitalization in education. Other compilations are being prepared, and completed interviews not yet included in a compilation are available online.

The structure of this article follows the seven commitments outlined by Pope Francis for the Global Compact on Education, with one section devoted to each commitment. A brief conclusion follows.

## **1- To make human persons the center**

In the *Vademecum* for the Global Compact, "to make human persons the center of every educational program, in order to foster their distinctiveness and their capacity for relationship with others against the spread of the throwaway culture", the Congregation for Catholic Education emphasizes the importance of an anthropological foundation for the vision of the person that informs education. The Congregation also notes the importance of the

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<sup>6</sup> Francis (2015).

<sup>7</sup> Francis (2020b).

<sup>8</sup> For an analysis of Pope Francis' conception of the role of education, see Klein (2021).

<sup>9</sup> Wodon (2021a, 2021b, 2021c, 2021d, 2022a, 2022b, and 2022c).

Charter of Universal Human Rights<sup>10</sup> and emphasizes the need to pay special attention to the most fragile. It further notes that integral formation should include attention to the spiritual dimension of the human person.

The mission of Catholic schools and universities is clearly articulated by the researchers interviewed for the compilation of interviews in honor of Gerald Grace from St. Mary's University. As Gerald Grace himself explains it, *"Catholic schools are committed to forming young people in spiritual, moral and social ways, understanding the importance of working for the common good and for helping to build a better world. There are many research issues raised here."* However, he also notes that *"In many countries, the commitment to education for the poor is not being realized effectively because of school budget problems... More research [is needed] not only into why this is happening but also, what new approaches ... can begin to change this situation."*

Father Cristobal Madero, SJ, notes that *"the work of Gerald Grace is fundamental for approaching the tension between Catholic schools benefiting from the rules of the market and at the same time risking their identity because of that."* He adds that *"to be meaningful and helpful, Catholic schools in today's society need to have ministers, teachers, and leaders who conceive of the school and its role not only as a creator of social, economic, or cultural capital, but who also serve as mentors of spiritual capital."* John Lydon, Gerald Grace's colleague at St. Mary's University agrees: *"the concept of 'spiritual capital', defined... as 'resources of faith derived from a religious tradition', in my opinion, represents one of Professor Grace's main contributions to research in Catholic education."*

In the curriculum of many Catholic schools, religious and moral education is one of the ways through which teachers explain to students the vision of the person held by the Church. How this can be done in schools that welcome students from many faiths will be discussed later, but a particular finding that emerges from interviews conducted under the GCE project is

worth mentioning. There is a need to better train teachers and principals so that they are indeed able to share this vision of the person with students. This is not a theoretical exercise. As noted by Sister Josephine Garza, FMA, the principal of a school in Manila in the Philippines, *"there is a need to strengthen in the religious education program ... conscience and character formation and ... commitment as active citizens... Many times, students have their heads filled with the doctrines of the faith, but their hearts and their hands remain underdeveloped... The faith they believe in is detached from the life they actually live... Modelling service and community and parish involvement ... becomes a strong lesson that teach the young about the school's commitment ... to promote justice and peace, care for creation."*

The Congregation for Catholic Education calls for paying special attention to the most fragile. Centers for literacy (*Centres pour l'alphabétisation*) were created in Djibouti to serve children who were not in school and were too old to start primary school. The Centers also welcome orphans, refugees, and children living in the street. As noted by Simone Pire, the Head of Catholic schools, a focused curriculum enables them over a period of three years to learn or improve their French and, if they are not too old, take the state examination to pursue their education further. Some have gone all the way to the university. The most fragile also includes children with disabilities. A milestone was the opening of the School for All (*école pour tous*) to welcome some of these children. David lacked motor skills and used to not talk, or would yell if upset. After one month in the school, he was able to use a pencil for the first time. He started to sing, learned the alphabet, and joined the classroom during mornings, while working on his motor skills in the afternoon. As his mother recounted, *"he successfully integrated into the 1st year class. He no longer has shifty eyes and he understands the instructions. He is no longer rowdy – the screaming has really diminished... He points to objects. He manages ... to follow rhythms. David knows how to dance!!! ... I would like through this testimony to pay a vibrant tribute to all the supervisory staff: the sisters, the mistresses. With very little means, they manage to satisfy our children. And the results are there. The fight goes on!"*

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<sup>10</sup> This refers to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



Finding ways to welcome children with disability will take time, but pilot initiatives are showing the way. In Burkina Faso, Father Hubert Kiemde, the Secretary General of Catholic Schools explains that for a decade, some schools have started to welcome students who are blind or deaf: *“These are enormous challenges, but we are committed to also going to this existential periphery and really opening our schools to children from all walks of life. People living with a disability are really left behind and this should challenge us. We are happy to have given or give this school education to more than 300 children to date.”*

The emphasis placed by the Congregation for Catholic Education on the most fragile echoes the preferential option for the poor. Apart from the scourge of income poverty, we also face a learning crisis. Even before the COVID-19 crisis, more than one in two children in low- and middle-income countries were learning poor according to the World Bank. This means that they were not able to read and understand a simple text by age 10. Making human persons the center requires teachers to ensure that children learn in school. A great role model is Brother Peter Tabichi, a Franciscan science teacher in a public school in Kenya who won the Global Teacher Prize. Asked about how he taught in practice, he responded: *“it is all about having confidence in the student. Every child has potential, a gift or a talent. I try to engage students in various activities and mentor them. It is not a matter of telling them “do this” and then walking away. You need to work with them closely...”* Public schools in Kenya have limited resources, but Brother Peter is creative: *“Unfortunately, in my school we have only one desktop computer and one projector. So, wherever I go, I usually carry my phone to take pictures to illustrate what I am teaching by projecting those images with my laptop in school... Suppose I go to the hospital and I see an X-ray machine. I am able to take a photo that I can then use when I teach the students about X-rays and physics. You also need to improvise.”*

In the sciences as in many other fields, there is often no better way to learn than by doing, but this requires again imagination when resources are scarce. As Brother Peter explains: *“Materials*

*are very expensive for practicums. So, I improvised picking up materials from surroundings. If I am talking about resistance, I can show a radio or another electrical gadget and explain how it is working, or not working. So that students can appreciate how resistances work in practice. This avoids learning to become too abstract or conceptual... When I was teaching about friction, I brought a match box... The matches will light with friction, but not without. When I applied paraffin or oil to the matchbox, it did not work anymore. Students can learn from these simple examples.”*

According to the scientific literature, one of the ways to improve student learning in the early grades is to teach in the students' native language. In some countries, Catholic educators influenced government policy. Gilberte Chung Kim Chung, the Executive Director of Catholic Education in Mauritius, notes that advocacy helped in the adoption of two important policies: *“(1) The recognition of prevocational schools by the Government in 2005, after our intense advocacy and showing by doing, that children whom the system failed can learn and can achieve - today, these students are in the extended stream of mainstream schools; (2) The recognition of our mother-tongue, Kreol Morisien, as a subject in the school curriculum by showcasing results of our action and research in the area during a period of 7 years.... Both examples above are linked because language is an issue. It is difficult for children aged 5 years old to learn all their subjects from books written in English (because English is our official language) when their mother-tongue is Kreol Morisien and they hear a lot of French in the media.”*

Making human persons the center also means ensuring that schools are safe. Violence in schools remains widespread, including in Catholic schools. In particular, the Church needs to come to terms with sexual abuse by priests and other staff. Father Hans Zollner, SJ, a Professor at the Gregorian University and the President of the Centre for Child Protection, argues that being effective in protecting children from abuse requires not only knowledge, but also *“a deeply felt mission to do everything possible to protect those who are most vulnerable”*. While much more remains to be done, progress is being made as *“[the] summit*

*on the protection of minors held in the Vatican brought concrete changes: norms on accountability of bishops..., greater involvement of the laity ... A Vademecum was published, detailing procedural issues... I have seen a very strong push ... to create safe spaces for children... Not only has the Church started to confront the reality that abuse of minors has been happening, but members are also dealing with... cover-up... It is an ongoing process, a commitment... to bring about deep long-lasting change and healing... Prevention of abuse... [must] involve the entire ecclesial community – not just a few experts.”*

## **2- To listen to the voices of children and young people**

Regarding the commitment “to listen to the voices of children and young people in order to build together a future of justice, peace and a dignified life for every person”, the Vademecum for the Global Compact empathizes the need to start by listening, noting that in Latin ‘e-ducere’ means “to bring out, to bring to light, to prepare the good soil, preparing it to welcome the seed of knowledge.” Educators are encouraged to empower students and young people, including through advisory and decision-making capacities in schools and other learning institutions.

The International Office of Catholic Education (OIEC in French), one of the international organizations that supported the launch of the GCE Project, launched several initiatives to give a voice to children and enable them to learn from each other across nations. One of these projects is I Can! As Juan Antonio Ojeda Ortiz, FSC, explains, “the program helps children ... identify ... problems in their own context and build appropriate solutions as a team.. in four ... steps: 1. Feel: Enable children to feel and identify a problem within their concrete realities; 2. Imagine: Help children consider potential solutions and choose one that [...is] viable, meaningful and with lasting potential; 3. Do: Act together with others and create change projects that contribute to improving the local and global contexts; and 4. Share: Tell stories of change with others to inspire them and create a worldwide chain of children and youth engaged in millions of small actions that change the world.” Thousands of children from over 40

countries attended a 2019 summit in Rome around the project inspired by *Laudato Si’*.

Another initiative launched by OIEC is the Planet Fraternity Project. The project proposes to young people to work directly and hand in hand with a partner school from another country on themes related to *Fratelli Tutti*, *Laudato Si’*, the Global Compact on Education, and the United Nations’ sustainable development goals. Work is done in English, which helps participating students who are not native speakers to improve their language skills. As explained by Hervé Lecomte, “Planet Fraternity allows students and educational teams in Catholic schools all over the world to create bonds of fraternity. The project provides a range of online resources created by education professionals to build commitment towards safeguarding our common home and building fraternal humanism.” Within a few months, close to 2,400 students were participating from 15 different countries.

Documentaries are another way to give a voice to children and youth and tell their stories. Véronique Brossier of the International Catholic Child Bureau manages Children in the World (*Enfances dans le Monde*), a movie festival organized each year for World Children's Day. Choosing documentaries means “choosing to show reality, however difficult it may be, in order to raise awareness and ... make people want to act... The festival ...is aimed at middle and high school students during the day and the general public in the evening. Round tables and meetings with directors, experts, [and] witnesses are also organized ... [for] exchange and debate... Students ... award ... the Youth Prize to one of the films.” The team avoids documentaries with intrusive situations or staged settings. It aims for diversity in themes and regions of the world represented and it provides educational information for each film. “This is much appreciated by teachers to prepare students...” The core idea is that “it is important to start from the reality of what children experience, through their stories, their difficulties, their projects, anecdotes... It is these testimonies, these faces that are most likely to touch the public and make them want to get involved.”

The call by Pope Francis to listen to the voices of children and young people is not abstract. It

has a specific goal, which is *“to build together a future of justice, peace and a dignified life for every person.”* Multiple initiatives give opportunities to children and youth to do just that. In France, iniSia is a program for Catholic schools to act in solidarity with schools abroad. More than 250 schools have applied for small grants, with 52 schools being awarded funding. A technical school from Orléans supported helped build a vegetable garden in Madagascar that is self-powered with electricity and irrigation thanks to solar panels and hydroelectric dams. Today, the farm works independently and is run by a Malagasy association. A school in Tours created a two-hour module once a week on development and solidarity issues. Participants met with migrants, and a small group travelled to Togo. In Mulhouse, the project ‘Ecuador 2020: trees for living!’ to raise awareness about reforestation and sustainable development issues. As Louis Marie Piron and Marie Lopez explained, *“our approach is not to develop a top down solidarity or we would decide what is good for our partners in southern countries. We first seek to build a real relationship with our partners to choose together what we are going to achieve. We picture solidarity as two parts of the same frame, ... one cannot move without moving the other.”*

The Vademecum for the Global Compact also emphasizes the need to condemn all forms of disrespect and exploitation as one core component of listening to the voices of children and young people. In South Africa, the Building Peaceful Schools program contributes to a climate of justice and peace in schools through an understanding of restorative justice. Anne Baker, Deputy Director of the Catholic Institute for Education, suggests that the program helps *“promotes communication, conflict management and restorative practices. Thus it aims to enable the Catholic ethos of deep respect, care and a safe environment to grow.”*

### **3- To advance the women**

The third commitment for the Global Compact on Education is *“to encourage the full participation of girls and young women in education.”* The Vademecum notes that young girls and women are often marginalized by education and society. Suggestions for educators include encouraging girls’ education

and ensuring equal participation for women in schools, including for leadership position, while also condemning all forms of discrimination and violence against women.

Women congregations have long played an essential role in efforts by the Church to promote girls’ education. The largest of those congregations is the Salesian Sisters of Saint John Bosco, more formally known as the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (*Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice* in Italian, abbreviated FMA). The congregation was founded in 1872 and will soon celebrate its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Today, more than 11,500 FMA sisters work in 97 countries on five continents. Thoughts from Sister Josephine Garza, FMA, the principal of a school in Manila, were shared earlier on the importance of religious and moral education grounded in a practical commitment to social justice. But beyond a large number of traditional schools and universities, FMA sisters are also involved in other types of programs benefiting girls and women. Two examples are mentioned here.

Sister Joséphine Chulu, FMA, is the Director of the Laura Vicuña Center in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Laura del Carmen Vicuña Pino was a child in Chile who died at the age of 14. She was beatified and is considered the patron of abuse victims, having experienced abuse herself. The Center in the DRC was transferred to FMA sisters by the Provincial Government of Haut-Katanga in 2020 because of the expertise of the sisters in running this type of institution. The Center welcomes youth in situations of family breakdown, starting with children as young as 12. A major emphasis of the Center is to equip youth with the skills they need in the labor market. As Sister Joséphine explains, *“before, vocational schools tended only towards cutting and sewing, but for the moment, there are more or less innovative sectors here. We have the agro-food, conservation, hotel and catering, bakery and pastry, aesthetics, childcare section. We have initiated textile and agricultural cooperatives for the development of young women to lift them out of poverty by making them responsible and promoting in them the spirit of entrepreneurship, teamwork and cooperative learning.”*

In the Philippines, Sister Maria Victoria P. Sta. Ana, FMA, is Director of the Laura Vicuña Foundation (LVF) and in particular it holistic multi-staged center and community based program called the Journey of Hope. As Sister Maria explains, *“as a hands-on 24/7 nurturing mother of 20 to 30 sexually abused and exploited girls at a time, I have accompanied these deeply scarred girls transition, from childhood to adolescence to young adults and help them heal from their trauma with psycho-social spiritual interventions then guide them to blossom into women who can fully function in building their families and society.”* Sister Maria also launched a Child Protection Clinic on Wheels to bring services against child abuse, exploitation, and trafficking in high-risk urban poor communities. The Clinic *“currently aids nearly 2,000 children on average. We have also expanded our reach to 16,000 children per year with our Social Workers and Youth leaders championing child protection advocacies in public schools and highly vulnerable communities, either face to face or virtual during this pandemic.”*

#### **4- To empower the family**

The Vademecum for the Global Compact considers *“the family as the first and essential place of education.”* This is a principle that has long been held by the Church, with *Gravissimum educationis* clearly stating that parents are the primary and principal educators of their children. Suggestions for educators including involving families in educational activities and ensuring their representation in advisory and decision-making bodies, while also encouraging training for parents.

One organization that has forcefully advocated for the role of the family in efforts to reduce extreme poverty is the International Movement ATD Fourth World. The Movement was founded by Father Joseph Wresinski, but is inter-denominational. Cathy Low, a member of its volunteer corps, explains that *“our main purpose is to stay close to very poor families... These families are hard to reach ... very dependent on institutions and suffer a lot about it... [One] couple has four children and is on welfare. The parents are illiterate... Social services... put the children into foster care... Although I could understand the concerns of the institutions, the*

*voices of the parents were not really respected during the whole process and the parents were not considered as partners in the upbringing of their children... One of the main sources of suffering expressed by people living in poverty is to be denied to right to act by themselves, to be disempowered.”* Cathy ran for many years so-called street libraries which bring books and the love of reading to families in extreme poverty where they live. This is a great example of a family-focused program reaching the poor.

Supporting families in the education of their children must start at a young age. One of the organizations supported by the International Catholic Child Bureau is AINA Trust, which operates in the state of Karnataka in India, serving disadvantaged children, many of whom are from single parents living in slums. The trust runs more than 70 small early child care centers for slum-dwellers and rag-picker families, with each center enrolling five children. As Mary Chelladurai explains, *“the [centers] provide childcare, welfare and development. We ensure that children are handled with care and dignity. Their parents are taught to respect their children and their rights, and to provide a child-friendly environment. AINA does not differentiate between children or families based on cultural or religious identities. Poverty defines target groups for interventions.”*

For older children, many schools rediscovered the role of the family in the education of children during the COVID-19 pandemic. David Brandán, Director of an FMA school in Argentina, puts it poetically, *“in some educational spaces, daily life could be illustrated as a deep sea: immense, moving, dynamic, vital. [With] the pandemic ... the sea retreats, moves away, and we can see what is deep, we could see if we had stones, or soft sand, corals or pollution. It was a great revelation... It was the family who ... made a new alliance with the school in a reciprocal attitude of community and fraternal work... The school was and continues to be part of the family life of each student... Without this ... relationship, pedagogical continuity could not have been sustained... Educators... [had to] walk as in Emmaus with the students and their families.”*

Sister Josephine from the Philippines was mentioned earlier. She runs for her school a



Family Ministry program to ensure that families are included in the work of the school. Annual Family camps are also organized. Formation activities and initiatives empower families to respond to the issues and realities affecting them. Families helped draft *Laudato Si'* commitments that include planting mangrove and providing training on urban farming and gardening. As Sister Josephine explained, *"all these, I believe, promote the education and development of the girls and boys we serve because, aside from learning these in our schools, parents are empowered to take on their role as the primary educators of their children and our main collaborators in our work of educations."*

Families with children with disabilities face particular challenges to educate their children. Perspektivy in Russia is another organization supported by the International Catholic Child Bureau. It runs daycare centers in St. Petersburg, a Crisis Service Center, and a Guest House, while also helping schools welcome children with disabilities. Through support to families, the goal is to enable individuals with severe disabilities to have a normal life and prevent social orphanhood. As Svetlana Mamonova from Perspektivy put it, *"a child with severe developmental disabilities should be able to attend kindergarten or school... After graduation from school, when a person begins her adult life, s/he should be able to attend day care centers and workshops... S/he should also be able to have some form of employment. S/he should also have the opportunity to live in a family or an accompanying residence. Any person, regardless of their developmental problems, should have a normal childhood, adolescence, and adulthood."*

## **5- To welcome**

The fifth commitment called for by Pope Francis for the Global Compact is *"to educate and be educated on the need for acceptance and in particular, openness to the most vulnerable and marginalized."* Apart from the need to ensure quality education for vulnerable children, the Vademecum of the Congregation for Catholic Education also encourages intercultural and interreligious perspectives and cooperation programs aiming to build a more fraternal world.

Catholic schools operate in most countries of the world, including in countries where only a small proportion of the population is Catholic. This is the case in many countries in Africa and the Middle East. Several interviews with national Secretaries or Directors of Catholic education provide their perspective on serving mostly children who are not Catholic. In Lebanon Father Butros Azar explains that *"it is a tradition and it is even a request of many Muslim families to educate their children in our schools. All children thus benefit from an education in pluralism, a historical characteristic of Lebanon, and in human fraternity... A citizenship education is forged in our schools, based on a common set of values, foremost among which are the social values of mutual aid and solidarity."*

In Mali, Koundya Joseph Guindo notes that *"non-Catholic students represent approximately 80 percent of all students in Catholic schools. The time that non-Catholic students spend in Catholic schools allows many of them to understand Christian values and to put them into practice through their witness of life. Many non-Catholic former students who attended Catholic schools and who outnumber Christians in State decision-making bodies defend the cause of the Church in general and of Catholic education in particular and advocate the spirit of secularism and tolerance. These facts constitute an immense wealth for Mali because they promote cohesion and peaceful living together."*

In Morocco, the proportion of Muslim students in Catholic schools is even higher according to Father Marc Boucrot since *"nearly 98 percent of our students are Moroccan Muslims... At the level of their management, we have both heads of Catholic establishments and other Muslims. Our educational project was drawn up jointly between Catholic and Muslim directions. It is a project that is inspired by Gospel values but on which Muslims can also find themselves and it is an opportunity to be able to work together... on a common educational work."*

In Burkina Faso, Father Hubert Kiemde estimates that two thirds of students are Catholic, with most other students being Muslims. He considers this as beneficial for the schools: *"The presence of non-Catholic children in our schools is one of the characteristics and*

values recognized by all (Christians and non-Christians) since the foundation of the first schools by the missionaries. It is for us the sign of our 'Catholicity', that is to say our openness to all, and our universal spirit of welcome... It is the proof of a culture of living together and an apprenticeship of fraternity beyond religious affiliations, for mutual knowledge and a culture of acceptance... (letting go of certain prejudices)."

In Palestine, four in ten students in Catholic schools are Christian, but the proportion is at less than 10 percent in Gaza. In a similar vein to what others said, Father Jamal Khader argues that *"the presence of Christians and Muslims makes it possible to discover common values and to live from childhood in an atmosphere of equality and fraternity. When the catechist asked the Christian children to do the Lenten collection in favor of the poor, the Muslim children insisted on taking part...; all were very happy to share with the poorest of the community. Coexistence is experienced and practiced in daily life at school. When I once entered a class, I asked the students (17 years old): who is Christian and who is Muslim? And I added right away: I don't know, and I don't want to know. You are all our children, our students. I later discovered that among these students was President Arafat's great niece! It didn't change anything."*

A similar view is again expressed by Father Jawad Alamat for Tunisia: *"the students and staff of our schools are Muslim; we follow Tunisian state programs, including Islamic religious education; the Christian presence, provided by the religious communities in charge of the school, is at the level of direction, management and support. Consequently, Catholic students are very rare; in any case, their presence testifies to the existence and value of diversity, even at the level of religion, and thereby contributes to open-mindedness."*

In Benin, Father Didier Affobali mentions an interesting anecdote on support to schools by alumni who are not Catholic: *"our Catholic school structures welcome children from all religious denominations or not. And this constitutes a richness in the sense that living together does not constitute any handicap for the intellectual, moral and spiritual development of the learners. On the contrary, some students*

*who have finished their schooling or their academic career and who are in the public service in the country or elsewhere, whether Catholic or not, sometimes form an association to help their schools of origin."*

Finally, Father Alexandre Bingo in Burkina Faso has been experimenting with creative ways for Christian and Muslim students to support each other. One initiative is a religious education course that covers the main religions practiced in the country (Christianity, Islam, and traditional African religion) as well as other religions around the world. Local faith representatives are invited to share their experience of faith in the service of living together. In addition, an inter-religious dialogue committee called *balimaya* is set up with students from each grade to organize festivals and religious events. For example, *"during Christian holidays, 'balimaya' goes to greet some families of Christian students. It is the same for Muslim holidays or traditional religion. The committee is present both during happy events (holidays, baptisms, traditional festive funerals) and unfortunate events (deaths, painful events). At the beginning of Christian Lent or Muslim fasting, a message is written by the committee and sent to Christians or Muslims to wish them a good time of Lent or Muslim fasting. The message is read in the presence of all the students when the colors rise. The atmosphere of conviviality and mutual respect despite the differences of religion that reigns within the establishment is undoubtedly the observable fruit of this school of faith."*

While these various examples illustrate how Catholic schools aim to welcome children from all faiths, another focus is an emphasis on making schools affordable for the poor. In Mauritius, Gilberte Chung Kim Chung notes that *"we embraced the free education system and clearly stated in our admission policy a preferential option for the poor in the year 2000... There are some warning signals of a decline in interest for Catholic secondary schools by families, both Catholics and of other faiths, who are 'results-oriented' and do not want their children to learn with children of lesser academic abilities. But we consciously made the choice of having our 'five-star' schools which were in very high demand become schools with mixed abilities, inclusive of those children who*

*had failed in the system. We chose social mobility for those who had lesser opportunities.”*

In the Philippines, Sister Josephine who was mentioned earlier notes that Catholic education is often accessible only to those who can pay tuition. But programs have been put in place to increase access for the poor. One initiative targets boys and girls 18 years and older who did not complete high school. They can enroll for free in the REACH Ed program (Rekindling A Child’s Hope Through Education). As Sister Josephine explains, *“with the help of volunteer teachers..., staff, parents and senior high school students, boys and girls in R.E.A.C.H. Ed prepare for the equivalency and placement examination given by the Department of Education which, when passed, will give them eligibility to pursue higher education or take on ... employment or entrepreneurship with better educational qualifications.”* As for the school as a whole, it also aims to *“involve the parents, students and teachers in activities that will increase the school’s capacity to welcome and help the poor. In addition, formation is always geared towards sensitizing the families who make up the school as well as our lay mission partners to their duty, as members of a catholic school community, to share their resources and support programs that uplift the quality of life and nurture the dignity of those who are poor and marginalized.”*

Another category of children that Catholic schools have tried to reach is refugees. In Lebanon, the Fratelli project serves more than 1,000 refugees from Syria, Irak, and Palestine as well as vulnerable Lebanese children. This is done through centers operating in Rmeileh and Bourj Hammoud. As explained by Rana El Khoury, *“we have premises consisting of a ‘model’ socio-educational space which includes sports fields, lessons for early childhood, young people and adults, outdoor games, gardens, work rooms, equipped and secure spaces , all this for the implementation of programs covering educational, sports and psychosocial activities. Each time we end up with a positive transformation in the lives of children, young people and women. We realize how much these projects bring strength, hope, to improve the living conditions of the most vulnerable people.”*

In South Africa, Anne Baker, who was already mentioned before, talked about an interesting initiative in a local Marist school to serve refugee children who may not be able to enroll in the normal primary school programs: *“[The innovation is] called ‘3 to 6’. It has enabled many children who cannot get into South African schools to still get a primary school education. A normal school opens its classrooms from 3 o’clock to 6 o’clock for these children.”*

Efforts to serve refugees are important not only because the number of refugees is increasing in the world, but also because education plays a key role in their future. As noted by Father René Micallef, SJ, from the Gregorian University, providing quality education to refugees is especially important because they often have no other resources on which to build a livelihood: *“refugees have little material capital (e.g. fertile agricultural land) and providing them with human capital and skills through education is the only viable way of helping them stand on their two feet and not become dependent on aid for generations.”* Father René also notes that *“education also prepares them to return to their country when the persecution or conflict is over with the skills needed to support themselves and to build healthier institutions and a vibrant civil society, capable of unrooting the evils that created the refugee situation in the first place, so to avoid new cycles of violence and oppression that may cause new cycles of flight.”*

## **6- To find new ways of understanding (the) economy and politics**

The sixth commitment relates to *“finding new ways of understanding the economy, politics, growth, and progress that can truly stand at the service of the human person and the entire human family, within the context of an integral ecology.”* This is a broad agenda, but the *Vademecum* also calls for a social covenant for the common good. As a start, schools should integrate values such as participation, democracy, justice, equality, fraternity, and peace in the curriculum.

Several interviews are relevant for this commitment and the role that education can play. This includes insights from the interviews with Catholic economists and with the winners of the Expanded Research Awards. Consider first

what some of the Catholic economists who were interviewed shared. Education is essential for individuals and families to be able to avoid poverty or emerge from it. Maria Marta Ferreyra at the World Bank explains that *“Education is the only hope that most people in the world have for social mobility. The day laborer in rural Mexico, the street vendor in Colombia, and the maid in Chile all have one thing in common – they desperately want something better for their children and firmly believe that education is the only way out of poverty.”*

Education and economics are also essential to understand and interpret how the world works, or perhaps could work, beyond simple facts. Clara Jace, then at the Catholic University of America and now at Samford University, explains that *“the ‘facts’ of economics don’t speak for themselves any more than the data ‘speaks for itself.’ We use our values to identify and adjudicate between costs and benefits. Toward this end, I ask students to write reflection papers each week where they work through their own analysis of the tradeoffs.”*

There is a role for Catholic economists to help inform the views of the Church and vice versa. As Joseph Kaboski from the University of Notre Dame puts it: *“We need to foster the dissemination of nonideological and legitimate economic knowledge within Church conversations of the economy. At the same time, we need to help baptize the secular discipline of economics with Catholic values. Most economists, even practicing Catholics, don’t have an appreciation of Catholic social doctrine.”* Several Catholic economists interviewed found ways to support the work of the Church, including by serving as representatives, which can lead to funny situations as Charles Clark from St. John’s University recalls: *“[For an intervention of] the Holy See Permanent Mission to the United Nations, ... I was nervous. I heard the Chair announce: ‘We will now hear from the representative of the Holy Spirit’ (instead of Holy See, what the Vatican is called at the United Nations). Not surprisingly the mistake drew a lot of laughter. When it died down, I thanked the chair for the promotion, and proceeded to read.”*

Many Catholic economists work on topics that matter for the less fortunate and social justice.

As Ademar Bechtold from Notre Dame of Maryland University put it: *“I am passionate about education as a tool to grow economies and improve the standard of living around the world. Millions of good ideas that could solve major problems and challenges facing the world today may be lost forever when children cannot go to school.”* Or as Camila Morales from the University of Texas at Dallas shared, *“My research is largely motivated by my own lived experience. I moved to the US with my family when I was a teenager. I spoke little to no English and attended school in one of the poorest counties in the Metro Atlanta area. So, I enjoy working on topics that can help divulge a better understanding of the experiences of immigrant children and young adults.”*

Eric Scorsone from Michigan State University explains that: *“My values impact the type of research I work on and how I teach. I am interested in doing work on issues that impact local communities and in particular marginalized communities. I am very drawn to the teaching of Pope Francis and wish to emulate the kinds of issues he emphasizes... I reach out and work with local public officials in communities where economic and social distress is widespread.”* In a slightly gruesome anecdote, Bernhard Gunter at American University suggests that this commitment to social justice often starts at a young age: *“I have always been passionate about fairness and justice. When I was about six years old, I went to my aunt asking her for a kitchen knife and a cutting board. Obviously, she asked me for what. My explanation was that one of their two cats had caught a mouse. I needed the knife to cut the already dead mouse in two to make sure that both cats got their fair share of the ‘jointly owned’ mouse!”*

Finally, in economics as in other social sciences, it is important to recall that research may not be value free. As Robert Whaples from Wake Forest University reminds us, *“I believe that all scholars’ values affect their research. How could they not? They guide every decision we make. Economics is all about weighing costs and benefits in making decisions. Moral values are about what we consider to be costs and what we consider to be benefits.”*

Beyond economics, Catholic philosophy and theology should enter in dialogue with science.



This is the premise of the Expanded Research Awards which “*seek to humanize the sciences by returning to a deeper understanding of the purpose of science, technology and professional work through a dialogue with philosophy and/or theology; to understand the sciences as human efforts at the service of society and the common good,*” according to Max Bonilla from the Expanded Reason Institute at University Francisco de Vitoria.

Interviews with recipients of the awards show how this dialogue is taking place in many areas. For Robert Enright from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, one such area is a better understanding of forgiveness: “*I began to ask myself: What in the area of moral development might make a major impact on the lives of adults and children, families, and communities? The idea of forgiveness kept coming up for me. Forgiveness occurs when people are treated unfairly by others. Might forgiveness be a way of people working their way out of resentment and hatred to reclaim their psychological well-being?*”

A focus on ethics is natural for Catholic social thought, but ethical considerations must be made palatable to the professions, including for engineers. This was the goal of Gonzalo Génova and Maria del Rosario González in courses that they created at Complutense University of Madrid: “*Ethics is often presented as a brake, a barrier, a series of annoying limits and prohibitions. But we are convinced that ethics is not the brake, but the real engine of technological progress... We share the view that the teaching of professional ethics has to be completely founded on ethical rationality, with our feet grounded in concrete practice and in the mental and vocational form of each profession. Otherwise, they will be overlapping schemes and not committed professional lives.*”

An ethical life is also a life of character, with James Arthur from the University of Birmingham sharing an interesting anecdote: “*A recent story was when I met the Queen who awarded me the title Officer of the British Empire – she asked me ‘How does one measure character?’ – I responded, ‘Your Majesty, one does not measure character, one recognizes it.’ She was amused!*”

It was mentioned earlier that there is a need for a dialogue between Catholic economists and the Church. The same point is made John Slattery from the American Association for the Advancement of Science about the Science for Seminaries that he leads: “*The idea for the project was simple: how can we help religious leaders better understand modern science, and how can we do it in a way that affirms a healthy dialogue between and among scientific and religious communities? Because there were so many examples of unhealthy science engagement with faith communities, a proper engagement ... was imperative... ‘The world will always need people who can articulate a clear sense of Catholic thought... No one knows what scholarly work will look like in 50 years, but we will always need interpreters of tradition, and we will always need scholars!’*”

One of the practical issues for Catholic education related to economics and politics is whether there is a social covenant whereby countries support education pluralism so that parents can choose the type of education their children receive. A major constraint faced by Catholic schools in many countries is a lack of (or insufficient) state funding. Father Hubert from Burkina Faso notes that for Catholic schools, “*the greatest risk is the loss of support in the funding of our schools. Families cannot pay enough to cover the running costs of schools and establishments. We count on the contribution of the State. However, the State itself is under pressure to lower its subsidy to Catholic schools. With the frequent cash flow tensions, the risk of a decline in state support exists. The State also assists destitute students by assigning students to private... establishments to which it pays part of the school fees... These two forms of state support enabled many of our establishments to have sufficient staff. [But] a drop in this support will cause more operational difficulties for establishments in poor areas.*”

When asked the same question, Father Didier’s response for Benin was even more concerned: “*in terms of opportunities, there are practically none, especially since there is no substantial aid from the State. The lack of financial resources sometimes handicaps the proper functioning of Catholic education. Teachers who are unable to support themselves financially because of their*

*insufficient salaries go instead to public education. In addition, some schools are threatened with closure due to lack of staff and financial means to meet the living and working conditions of both learners and teachers.”*

As to the broader economic environment in which schools operate, there is awareness of the challenges that students may face in the labor market. A sobering assessment is provided again by Father Hubert in Burkina Faso: *“having taken up the challenge of excellent results in school examinations, we must now take up the challenge of the employability of graduates...; we need to move towards more science, more technique and more professionalism in our educational offerings. Current students in the scientific series go so far as to pass the baccalaureate without experience of handling in a scientific laboratory...The same is true for the digital domain. They do not have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the computer tool; therefore, they have weaknesses in everything related to research or computer manipulation. We will have to find a way to improve science teaching and familiarize students more with computers. Finally, there is very little connection between real life and what is taught in class. Students find themselves poorly equipped to face the world of work.”*

Interesting initiatives are being piloted to respond to those challenges. Father Alexandre in Burkina Faso launched an entrepreneurship education project in his school with 25 students holding various positions to manage a business club center (B2C) serving the needs of students in the school. Examples include procuring sports uniforms with the name of students, the making of jewelry with the school's motto, a mini-market at the end-of-term party, the organization of a high school event. In addition, local entrepreneurs are invited to come to the school to share their experience. As noted by Father Alexandre, *“it is a modest initiative that aims to kindle the flame of creativity and entrepreneurship among young people... who later can start their own business. It is a nascent experience whose effects can only be appreciated in the long term. But for sure, this initiative has already sparked creativity in the student members of the workshop who have*

*already made private enterprise as their professional choice in the future.”*

Preparing youth for the labor market through vocational training while also instilling core values is also the focus of several projects run by La Salle brothers around the world. Brother Nestor Anaya Marin recounts several projects in his interview: *“In Ivory Coast I visited a shelter for street children and youth... [who] learn to read, write and count.. [while] becoming ‘masters’ in carpentry, blacksmithing, or electronics. The most important thing is that they are instilled with order, respect and organization, among other qualities, recovering their dignity and discovering opportunities for growth and development...In Kenya, I visited three educational centers where formal (academic) education goes hand in hand with agricultural education. Therefore, the educational centers are schools, farms and cultivation plots; all in one campus. Naturally, the students are those responsible for taking care of the animals and the production of the fruits.”*

Brother Nestor also shared experiences at universities that encourage service to others while also helping students practice their newly acquired skills: *“In the Philippines, ... [students at] a La Salle University implemented a graphic design program for the deaf... [so] many teachers and young people... learned signed language... In Mexico I have seen universities that ask their students to develop social projects... Young engineers have built houses for people who have suffered floods, brigades of dentists who walk for many hours in the mountains to reach the simplest people and offer them their dental services for free. Whether in formal or informal education, and from basic to higher education, there is always room for creativity and to connect people based simply on what is purely human.”*

## **7- To safeguard our common home**

The last commitment suggested by Pope Francis is *“to safeguard and cultivate our common home, protecting it from the exploitation of its resources and adopting a more sober lifestyle marked by the use of renewable energy sources and respect for the natural and human environment.”* The reference is of course the encyclical *Laudato Si’* which highlights that

the environmental crisis is also an inner crisis due to broken relationships with the environment, as well as with others and society. Suggestions for educators focus on raising awareness to the need to care for the common home and providing opportunities for students to act.

In the Republic of Congo, Raoul Sika helped launch the Green School project whose objective is to raise awareness and train students in environmental protection. The project has four aims: Help students adopt a responsible attitude towards the environment; Make students messengers of the ideals of environmental protection; Promote active participation by local communities in environmental protection and restoration activities; and Train a generation of global citizens. In addition, as Raoul explains, *“Catholic school actors would like that in the next 3-5 years, our schools become ‘little windows open on Eden’, by the planting of trees (fruit trees), living hedges, flowers, grass and the creation of vegetable gardens wherever possible... This project is innovative because it provides a small answer to the question that ...Pope Francis asks himself on a planetary scale in the encyclical Laudato Si’, namely: ‘What kind of world do we want -leave us to those who come after us, to the children who grow up?’”*

In Palestine, several schools founded environmental clubs. Also relevant are Model United Nations (UN) activities for youth ages 15-18. A few hundred students participate every year in a three-day congress where they function like the UN with a General Assembly, a Security Council, and various committees to discuss and adopt resolutions. As Father Jamal Khader remarks, *“the seriousness of the discussions and the questions dealt with make this congress an admirable event, especially since it is prepared and organized by the students themselves. These are the leaders of tomorrow who begin to exercise their leadership now!”*

In Senegal, a school farm is being planned in the diocese of Kaolack. It will welcome students from all schools, Catholic or not. As explained by Brother Charles Biagui, *“we also want to cultivate in them the joy of producing at the local level in the spirit of eating healthy by producing*

*healthy foodstuffs. The breeding of hens, guinea fowl, goats and others will serve as a framework and educational and didactic support for teachers, children and young people. The sale of the products will be used for the maintenance of the premises and the payment of the employees... Awareness of respect for the environment and the promotion of healthy food must be widespread... Farm workers will be supported by teaching assistants from other schools as part of the reflection to improve theoretical and practical teaching methods on ecology.”*

In Belgium, the federation of Catholic schools for the French-speaking part of the country created an interdisciplinary digital tool for an educational journey inspired by *Laudato Si’*. The tool aims to combine the values of the Gospel and skills related to the philosophy and citizenship curriculum. As noted by Myriam Gesché, *“this tool is freely available online. It allows interactions with Internet users through comments on the blog. It promotes sharing ideas and critical reflections. It can participate in development of a collective educational culture and give ideas to other teachers to carry out such tools on other themes.”*

Education for sustainability (EFS) has also been a priority for Catholic schools in Mauritius. The program started in 2011 in 18 Catholic secondary and some 12,000 students have been engaged to-date. As noted by Gilberte Chung Kim Chung, lessons have been learned from the experience: *“First, to reach the set objectives, school leadership must share the vision, drive the EFS program or at least delegate the right person for its coordination... Second, teachers must play a key role... Students will follow when they are well guided. Third, ecology is not about one-off activities ... but the interrelatedness between the environment, society and economy, as well as values and beliefs, and our way of living... Fourth, education for sustainability must be mainstreamed at the individual school curriculum level across disciplines... Finally, we have yet to strategize on the best way forward, but there is hope as we continue to search for the best way to educate for sustainability... on the journey of transformative learning.”*

## Conclusion

The objective of this article was to share a few insights from interviews conducted under the GCE project about efforts already made today in the seven areas for which Pope Francis called for renewed commitments as part of the Global Compact on Education. About 130 interviews have been conducted to date under the GCE project since it was launched at the end of November 2020. While the interviews discuss a wide range of topics related to Catholic education and integral human development, the commitments called for by Pope Francis emerge strongly from the stories that interviewees share. This is not surprising, and it is encouraging. Apart from educators in Catholic schools and universities, most educators in other types of schools also share those commitments and do their best to educate children and youth towards fraternal humanism and sustainability. Hopefully, some of the stories shared in this article and the interviews they are collected from will serve as a source of inspiration for your own work.

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## **PART II**

### **Seven Interviews Illustrating the Commitments of the Global Compact on Education**

In calling for a Global Compact for Education, Pope Francis suggested seven commitments for all those working in education: (1) to make human persons the center; (2) to listen to the voices of children and young people; (3) to advance the women; (4) to empower the family; (5) to welcome; (6) to find new ways of understanding (the) economy and politics; and (7) to safeguard our common home. To share examples of what educators are already doing to help implement the vision of Pope Francis, the second part of this report consists of seven interviews illustrating how educators are putting these commitments into practice. The focus of these seven interviews broadly matches the commitments suggested by Pope Francis.

List of interviews:

1. Sor María Antonieta García Carrizales, Presidenta del Consejo de la CIEC, Péru
2. Sr. Antoinette Nneka Opara, Society of the Holy Child Jesus, Kenya
3. Sœur Mickerlyne Cadet, École Hôtelière Marie Auxiliatrice, Haïti
4. Cathy Low, Volunteer of the International Movement ATD Fourth World, Switzerland
5. Father René Micallef SJ, Associate Lecturer at the Gregorian University, Italy
6. Idesbald Nicaise, Professor of Economics at KU Leuven, Belgium
7. Myriam Gesché, Déléguée épiscopale pour l'enseignement, Belgique

## ENTREVISTA CON SOR MARÍA ANTONIETA GARCÍA CARRIZALES, PRESIDENTE DE LA CONFEDERACIÓN INTERNACIONAL EDUCACIÓN CATÓLICA DE AMÉRICA LATINA



Entrevista realizada por Quentin Wodon  
Mayo de 2021

### EXTRACTOS:

- “Tener el amparo del Concordato (Iglesia-Estado), favorece la existencia de las escuelas católicas en el Perú, cuya finalidad es la evangelización y obras de caridad. La escuela católica supone para las familias, no solamente una elección de valores culturales sino una elección de valores de vida que debemos hacer evidentes en cualquier circunstancia, buscando siempre servir al prójimo.”
- “Estamos en momentos de pandemia y necesitamos profundizar en el desarrollo de la interioridad por el valor de la vida y fortalecer el espíritu de esperanza y trascendencia del ser y la certeza de que nuestras acciones deben estar orientadas a hacer el bien y todo lo demás será añadido.”

#### ¿Podría explicar sus responsabilidades actuales y cómo se dedica a la educación católica?

Paz y Bien estimados, actualmente me desempeño como Superiora General de mi congregación, Directora del primer colegio mi Congregación de la cual soy ex alumna. A nivel nacional soy la presidenta del Consorcio de Centros Educativos Católicos del Perú. Asimismo, soy la Presidenta del Consejo directivo de la Confederación Internacional Educación Católica de América Latina y Vicepresidencia en la OIEC.

Mi aporte a la Educación Católica ha consistido en fortalecer el marco teórico doctrinal, pedagógico y de gestión en las instituciones que represento, motivando a los agentes a responder a los retos que la sociedad y la Iglesia nos presentan. Animar y propiciar espacios de capacitación y actualización con los enfoques y documentos eclesiales. Los invito a ver las páginas web de nuestras organizaciones: [www.ccec.edu.pe](http://www.ccec.edu.pe), [www.ciec.edu.co](http://www.ciec.edu.co), y [www.oiecinternacional.com/es](http://www.oiecinternacional.com/es).

En cuanto a mi gestión como Presidenta del Consorcio de Centros Educativos Católicos comienza el año 2014 y concluirá si Dios lo permite, el año 2022.

#### Recuadro 1: Serie de entrevistas

**¿Cuál es la misión del sitio web de Educación Católica Global?** El sitio informa y conecta a educadores católicos de todo el mundo. Les proporciona datos, análisis, oportunidades de aprendizaje y otros recursos para ayudarlos a cumplir su misión, incluida la opción preferencial por los pobres.

**¿Por qué una serie de entrevistas?** Las entrevistas permiten compartir experiencias de forma accesible y personal. Esta serie incluirá entrevistas con profesionales e investigadores que trabajan en educación católica, ya sea en aulas, universidades u otras organizaciones que apoyan a las escuelas y universidades católicas.

**¿De qué trata esta entrevista?** Esta entrevista es con Sor María Antonieta García Carrizales, Superiora General de su congregación, Presidenta del Consejo directivo de la Confederación Internacional Educación Católica de América Latina, y Vicepresidencia en la OIEC. Ella discute de su aporte a la educación católica.

Visítanos en [www.GlobalCatholicEducation.org](http://www.GlobalCatholicEducation.org).



Durante este tiempo he impulsado fuertemente:

a) La integración de muchos de nuestros colegios afiliados, y sus comunidades educativas, (convocatoria entre dos a tres mil personas), a nivel nacional en un evento anual, tanto en presencialidad como en virtualidad, en la CONVENCIÓN NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN CATÓLICA, donde se reflexiona sobre temas de formación a partir de la escuela católica.

b) El sostenimiento de las asesorías clave para el manejo de nuestros colegios, como la Asesoría legal y la Asesoría Contable, con profesionales que puedan apoyar a nuestras IIEE afiliadas

c) La publicación mensual de una revista que se ofrece a todos los colegios e instituciones interesadas donde se difunden artículos formativos para todos los agentes que conforman nuestras escuelas, por este medio se refuerzan los principios cristianos y se hace propuestas pedagógicas y de formación.

d) El fortalecimiento de las familias de todos los colegios afiliados, mediante el Programa de la Escuela Familiar Católica, con cursos y congresos de padres de familia.

e) El impulso de la calidad educativa de las Instituciones Educativas afiliadas, mediante la Acreditación Internacional con el modelo SACE Perú-México, donde se privilegia la transversalidad de una Escuela en Pastoral.

f) El compromiso de la capacitación y formación en servicio de los Directivos, docentes, administrativos y personal de mantenimiento, mediante conferencias, seminarios, talleres, cursos independientes y Diplomados de especialización, para alcanzar el mejoramiento continuo del desempeño de los trabajadores en general en cada especialidad y tarea. Siempre transversalizando el eje de su formación cristiana.

g) La evaluación muestral de los aprendizajes de los estudiantes en las áreas principales del currículo, donde no puede faltar el Área Religiosa.

h) La búsqueda de alianzas con instituciones educativas, así como editoriales y organizaciones educativas diversas, que favorezcan el mantenimiento y crecimiento del Consorcio en sus múltiples proyectos.

### **¿Cuáles cree que son los puntos fuertes actuales de la educación católica en el Perú y la CIEC?**

En el Perú, es un país creyente, existen muchas familias católicas, que eligen la formación y educación de sus hijos en escuelas católicas. Hasta la fecha la Constitución peruana, apoya a la Iglesia Católica y es la razón por la que muchos de nuestros colegios, denominados de

"Acción Conjunta", son apoyados por el Estado, posibilitando que las pensiones sean de costos bajos ayudando a las familias de bajos recursos. De igual manera existen colegios públicos, totalmente gratuitos pero con gestión de la iglesia, permitiendo la evangelización a través de proyectos, planes o programas. Y también tenemos colegios privados católicos, que son obras educativas de diversas Congregaciones religiosas que cobijan a niños y familias acrecentando y gracias a las facultades que nos permiten ofrecemos propuestas educativas con un formación integral en las dimensiones persona, social, cognitiva y espiritual.

Tener el amparo del Concordato (Iglesia-Estado), favorece la existencia de las escuelas católicas en el Perú, cuya finalidad es la evangelización y obras de caridad. La escuela católica supone para las familias, no solamente una elección de valores culturales sino una elección de valores de vida que debemos hacer evidentes en cualquier circunstancia, buscando siempre servir al prójimo, servir a los demás. Al existir muchas familias creyentes, hay frecuente cercanía de los fieles a la iglesia y parroquias, donde además de la escuela, se preparan a los niños, jóvenes y familias para los sacramentos así como prácticas religiosas que ayudan a fortalecer la fe y la doctrina de la Iglesia.

En la CIEC, nuestro secretario y el equipo que conformamos este organismo, son confederaciones que denotan un gran interés por mantenernos unidos y de una manera organizada y capacitada y a través de planes de trabajo buscamos fortalecer y enriquecer la educación católica en nuestras obras. Venimos trabajando la transversalidad de la evangelización mediante el currículo y pastoral educativa que involucre a todos, se promueven capacitaciones para responder los retos sociales que se presentan en nuestros respectivos países atendiendo de esta manera las invocaciones y los documentos eclesiales de nuestra Iglesia católica. Estamos propiciando en nuestros estudiantes un auténtico liderazgo y compromiso con la humanidad y espíritu fraterno.

### **¿En qué aspectos de podría mejorar la educación católica en el Perú?**

Es necesario revisar nuestras prácticas de fe en la familia que es un factor fundamental en el fortalecimiento de la fe, luego la escuela se convierte en una aliada directa para la evangelización, bien hace la Iglesia en considerarla como la plataforma de la fe católica. Pero no en todas las escuelas públicas se enseña Religión y cuando se da, muchas veces no se evangeliza adecuadamente, se carecen de metodologías adecuadas.

En las escuelas primarias públicas, y de educación inicial, no se programa el curso de religión, a no ser que los

maestros sean católicos, y es allí donde existen los desfases. La primera infancia es una etapa clave para el desarrollo de la espiritualidad y la religiosidad. Después es muy difícil.

Muchas familias les derivan la formación religiosa solo a la escuela y no continúan la misma formación en casa. Muchas veces las malas prácticas de algunos religiosos y religiosas, alejan a las familias de su fe cristiana. Hay mucho sincretismo religioso, por la ausencia de una cultura de fe. También la falta de sacerdotes y religiosos ha hecho que las sectas religiosas se proliferen haciendo que nuestros hermanos católicos con una fe débil por la falta de autenticidad adopten doctrinas equivocadas lo cual ustedes lo han evidenciado en las estadísticas informadas en las reuniones de la OIEC.

**¿Ha observado recientemente iniciativas innovadoras interesantes en la educación católica? ¿Si es así, cuáles son y por qué esas iniciativas son innovadoras?**

En mi Congregación hemos innovado la actividad pastoral utilizando las redes sociales y las plataformas que utilizamos en la educación sincrónica y asincrónica, estamos organizando módulos para diversificación del currículo en la ERE. Se están realizando proyectos que involucren el espíritu y carisma de nuestros fundadores, algunos canales de Facebook de nuestras obras están siendo dedicados para la evangelización.

**¿Cómo entiende el llamado del papa Francisco a un nuevo pacto mundial sobre la educación?**

Todos estamos de acuerdo con el papa Francisco en comprometernos con el pacto mundial. Además de trabajar con la conciencia de las personas y los pueblos, debe trabajarse las políticas de los gobiernos. Las políticas públicas, muchas veces se alinean más con aquello que deberíamos cambiar y no con lo que deberíamos fortalecer. Durante mucho tiempo hemos privilegiado el enfoque de la centralidad en la persona, pero se convierte solo en discurso cuando privilegiamos la economía, la producción, el progreso sobre la persona.

Todos los principios y compromisos, no son ajenos a los principios de Jesús y el Evangelio, lo que ocurre es que ponemos en práctica algunos y otros los pasamos por alto y es allí donde se deteriora el mensaje. Por ello en cada país, debe trabajarse todas estas propuestas planteando estrategias y acciones concretas a llevarse a cabo desde la escuela e invitar a toda la sociedad a llevarlas a cabo.

**¿Cuáles son algunas de las prioridades en términos de capacitación y desarrollo de capacidades para directores de escuelas, maestros, ex alumnos, padres, u otros grupos para fortalecer la educación católica en su país?**

Debemos centrarnos en lo que hasta el momento observamos de crucial importancia:

a) Estamos en momentos de pandemia y necesitamos profundizar en el desarrollo de la interioridad por el valor de la vida y fortalecer el espíritu de esperanza y trascendencia del ser y la certeza de que nuestras acciones deben estar orientadas a hacer el bien y todo lo demás será añadido.

b) Desarrollar la formación personal de todos los actores es indispensable. El desarrollo de los valores, la acogida por el otro, su valoración, sea cual fuera su situación y circunstancia. Todos debemos aprender a valorarnos, a respetarnos y darnos oportunidades de mejorar su calidad de vida.

c) Sentirnos personas y que los demás nos respetan y nos aman, sin importar las diferencias. Esto es desarrollar en mí y en los otros, el sentido de humanidad.

d) Contribuir en el desarrollo de sus competencias directivas y gestoras a todos los niveles, dándoles oportunidades para demostrar, verificar y evaluar como acciones reales.

e) Su formación profesional es importante y ello le ayuda a estar atento a los retos que se presentan y a donde está conduciendo con su gestión a las instituciones que lideran.

f) Trabajar el liderazgo compartido y transformacional, es un enfoque que estamos difundiendo en nuestros agentes.

g) Formación artística y creativa para estos nuevos tiempos.

h) Capacitarlos para hacer frente a la gran cantidad de legislaturas que en lugar de ayudar son obstáculos en el proceso.

## INTERVIEW WITH SR. ANTOINETTE NNEKA OPARA, SOCIETY OF THE HOLY CHILD JESUS, AFRICAN PROVINCE



*Interview conducted by Quentin Wodon*

*May 2022*

### EXCERPTS:

- “Education is crucial; it is a fundamental human right. So, my worst nightmare is the children who do not get admitted into the schools. Africa is already notorious for too many out-of-school children, those who live either in rural areas with few educational facilities or in communities besieged by conflicts.”
- “Fear of violence is widespread... To better understand what violence students were experiencing in school, I used an avenue (google form) that could provide anonymity to the students so that they would have the freedom to express themselves and give me a clearer perspective on school discipline, disciplinary measures, violence and the result. I was interested in creating awareness...”

### Would you describe your work, and some of the particularities of your organization?

I am a Sister of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus (SHCJ), and I am currently in the last phase of a sabbatical program of renewal and transformation in Nairobi, Kenya. From 2014 to 2020, I was on my congregation's Province Leadership Team and the Coordinator of Education for the Sisters for three years.

Currently, during my sabbatical, my only formal responsibility for the SHCJ is as a member in the Education Committee of the SHCJ African Province and privately mentoring some teachers. Because it is a time of renewal, I have used the opportunity to study a bit of spiritual and formation at Tangaza University College, got a certificate program on counselling psychology and another certificate program on Spiritual Guidance. These have produced the needed renewal for ministry that I desired. After the sabbatical, I hope to teach at the university and I will spend the holidays creating awareness among Religious who teach in secondary schools on 'restorative justice practice'. I hope to develop capacity to institutionalize restorative justice through a group of Religious in their schools and apostolates.

### Box 1: Interview Series

**What is the mission of the Global Catholic Education website?** The site informs and connects Catholic educators globally. It provides them with data, analysis, opportunities to learn, and other resources to help them fulfill their mission with a focus on the preferential option for the poor.

**Why a series of interviews?** Interviews are a great way to share experiences in an accessible and personal way. This series will feature interviews with practitioners as well as researchers working in Catholic education, whether in a classroom, at a university, or with other organizations aiming to strengthen Catholic schools and universities.

**What is the focus of this interview?** In this interview, Sr. Antoinette Nneka Opara, from the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, talks about her experience in running Catholic schools for girls in Nigeria and in particular implementing a survey to better understand violence in schools from the point of views of the students.

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**Until recently, you were working in Nigeria as the principal of a Catholic School for girls. What were some of the challenges you faced?**

We all agree that education is crucial; it is a fundamental human right. So, my worst nightmare is the children who do not get admitted into the schools. Africa is already notorious for too many out-of-school children, those who live either in rural areas with few educational facilities or in communities besieged by conflicts. I wish that I could admit every child that applied to the school or sustain attendance for those in the schools, but this is not feasible, and our schools face a wide range of challenges that I can only briefly mention here.

Some challenges are internal. They include a lack of basic infrastructure, issues related to the fact that many schools tend to focus only on high achieving students, which leaves other students unable to join our schools, and a context of exacerbated competition. Competition can be a good thing, but when competition becomes an end in itself, it defeats the purpose of learning. External challenges include a lack of skilled teachers, insecurity which remains pervasive in Nigeria, and at times discordant priorities due to financial pressure to ensure schools are sustainable. A lack of discipline is also an issue, and how to deal with this issue is not always straightforward. The fact that teacher pay is low is also a major issue, as is the fact that many students learn in a "foreign" language as opposed to their native language.

**And what are some of the opportunities that you see for Catholic Schools?**

I have an addictive positive mindset, so I tend to see opportunities everywhere. For example, during COVID-19 restrictions, in Nigeria Catholic schools were among the few schools that could avail learning opportunities to their students through various online learning platforms. When schools reopened, our student population scaled up.

I think we have several opportunities and some are underutilized. Pope Francis' leadership and his teachings on education, community, solidarity, etc. provide the impetus for reinventing educational pedagogies for Catholic schools. Catholic schools in Africa see their role in educating young people as preparing leaders, family makers, nation builders, and society role models and trailblazers. Therefore, staff leave no stone unturned in the holistic formation of the students. We have the resources to enable such formation to happen. Catholic schools enjoy the trust of parents, governments and the public to have the capacity to deliver results. You find out that even Muslims and people of no religion still bring their

children to Catholic schools. We cannot and should never take this trust for granted but must work hard to justify it.

Other assets include networks as well as a pool of highly educated and experienced religious men and women. In Nigeria, there are multiple religious congregations with an envious educational tradition. They include the Society of Jesus, the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, St Louis Sisters, School Sisters of Notre Dame, etc. The nation stands to benefit tremendously when we effectively harness these resources. Alumni are another asset. These individuals are often willing to support school development projects and programs. Most schools connect with them, but we should do more.

**In Nigeria, you conducted an interesting survey about violence in two schools. How did this idea come about?**

As a principal and administrator, students could speak directly with me or send feedback notes. Despite these communication links, I knew that some students felt not heard, especially in discipline matters. I learned school discipline to be like this: a student misbehaves, and you discipline them in whatever appropriate way the school management wants. We need to do better, but for this we need to understand what students go through. Students need to be able to comfortably voice their perceptions and views on school discipline.

The fear of violence is widespread, including violence external to the schools. In Lagos, one day, a student played a prank by lighting a bunch of fireworks in the hostel. The explosion was unexpected that I thought terrorists had invaded the college. I called the Army and the police for security support before realizing that it was fireworks. I was not alone in this fear of attack, every student and staff that heard that sound felt the same way. The counsellors had sessions with the students to rid them of the attendant stress from that experience. Violence is a real threat to education in Nigeria. When I left the college and had the chance to revisit vital moments and experiences in that school, I realized that this could be just one instance of the impact of violence, minor or critical, on learners in a school community.

So, to better understand what violence students were experiencing in school, I used an avenue (google form) that could provide anonymity to the students so that they would have the freedom to express themselves and give me a clearer perspective on school discipline, disciplinary measures, violence and the result. I was interested in creating awareness on discipline as well as violence.





Photo: First graduation at LN school, Oghara.

**What did you learn from the survey? How was it useful for the schools?**

The survey was an eye-opener. The students and staff responded honestly and confidently. It was an inspirational project because it revealed feelings and perceptions on management actions concerning discipline. If the school management team felt that their procedures were adequate, the survey created loopholes and questions seeking answers. Students may view things that the Management team would consider minor as critical; our actions, thoughts, words, and inactions offend people more than we imagine. Secondly, students in Catholic schools experience violence and are concerned about and understand the impact of violence on themselves and others. Issues around safety and security are majorly external but can lead to deep-seated socio-emotional crises for some individuals. So every infringement that harms another must be given adequate attention through a well-thought-out relationship healing and restoration process. Simple technology can support an important project like this one. Some people might consider Google forms an eccentric part of academic research, but it served the purpose in this case and

effectively. Relationships among teens need support, and the school community must be alert to the prompts indicating that it needs attention. Bullying is one of the prompts, and 'suicide attempt' is another.

After we implemented the surveys to better understand students' experience with violence in the schools, the schools received the survey results as a working document to improve the school culture and learning environment. The disciplinary committee and the Management team studied the responses and identified areas of conflict in school procedures and students relationships. In one of the schools, the students' Council also discussed some aspects of the survey to create awareness of available techniques for resolving conflict. The document proved to be worthwhile for creating awareness of the issues that can lead to violence in the school and how the available strategies can enable the resolution and rebuilding of strained relationships among staff and students.

**What is your advice to other school principals or teachers on finding ways to listen to the voice of children and youth?**

Listening and giving a voice are critical aspects of empowering young people. Most teens would complain that their parents do not listen to them, and therefore the school has to be intentional and regularly listen to their feelings by creating the right atmosphere. It is the responsibility of the principal to ensure this happens. I thought that a pastoral counselling office would resolve this issue considerably for us. And it did, when I set it up. A pastoral counsellor, if well trained, provides an active and empathetic listening to students' problems and liaises with the principal and parents in a manner that satisfies students' needs.

During the study on violence, I encountered the expression 'restorative justice', and I delved into it. I believe it is one of the strategies that would build the skill and attitude of open conversation around delicate issues, such as relationships and violence, solidarity, deliberate harm and human dignity. Restorative justice is an area I would like to work further on, and if I get support in terms of grants, I hope to develop a training package for Religious who work in the classrooms to learn the principle and practice of restorative justice. With all the socialization of young people into wars and conflict, Africa needs more of this strategy in our classrooms.

After conducting the survey, I was excited and convinced that if this is replicated in other Catholic schools, the results might be similar. I have contacted some colleagues and have encouraged them to permit me to repeat the survey for their schools. We need these opportunities to hear our students and staff on such and many other issues.

Another piece of information I want to share with other school principals relates to our understanding of the essence of schooling. Scores and grades are critical, but children also need the education to cultivate social and emotional skills. That is why any place, person, or situation that enables you to acquire a skill is an educational experience. Many schools may not have realized that successful people did not rely solely on their certificates, i.e. their cognitive abilities, but also on skills. We often hear of soft skills necessary for the workplace. Some experts have broken these skills into effective communication and negotiation skills, compassion and empathy, learning continuously, ability to manage relationships with others, and adaptability and flexibility. I will also add resilience. I insisted that our students learn and practice effective communication, critical thinking and supportive collaboration. We must enable them to actively connect with other children, learning to cooperate, support and be in solidarity with others. How a school is structured will enable its students to imbibe and practice these skills.

They are not in books, but the school can tweak its curricula to accommodate activities, projects, and research work that will generate these skills.

In addition, a vigorous supportive network of fellow professionals is crucial if you want to succeed. No one can do it alone and do it well. As the saying goes, if you want to travel fast, you go alone, but you go with others if you desire to travel far. I connected with principals interested in school improvement. This connection was not just for excellent exit records but for producing skilled individuals confident about improving the world. I also had links with educational businesses that create programs and services. Presently I am a member of the Board for CogniLearn Limited, as a non-executive director. This group develops student skills for assessment in English and Mathematics. The school was a beehive of learning events and programs outside the traditional curricula.

Finally, Catholic educational institutions work towards human flourishing. Everyone who attends Catholic schools in Africa is enabled to rise from poverty. The quality of education – the whole package – ensures that life improves tremendously for that individual and, through them, the family members. Policymakers understand this education cycle – life improvement, more education, more improvement. The more people get educated, the more they access knowledge, rights, especially education, and privileges. Leadership is one of those privileges that the poor who become well educated may access. We must continue to take this task seriously!

There is an issue that Catholic school principals need to evaluate and reinvigorate for students. African children do not question real or perceived reality. But the new narrative must include serious questioning of educational content and assumptions, supposed facts about people, and their rights and privileges. This is an aspect of the education that African children need – searching and seeking truth – the truth that sets one free - to rise out of the deplorable situation. The global community is contending with diversified problems such as the pandemic, global warming, political instability and conflicts, financial insecurities and unequal distribution of wealth. Our children must be trained to grapple with world issues to prepare themselves for communion, collaboration and stupendous global impact. Think of Pope Francis' Global Compact on Education.

**Could you please share how you ended up in your current position, and what was your personal journey?**

Joining an educational, religious order cut short my dream of majoring in Parasitology. My first degree was in zoology and I wanted to continue to parasitology to research the causes of ill health. After my first profession, in September 1996, I was sent to a school to teach at



Loyola Jesuit College (LJC) Abuja where I taught Science and Mathematics. That environment groomed me so I was sold on teaching, although not just teaching but also knowledge production. At LJC, the principal and vice-principal were excellent. I noted and replicated some of their strategies when I became principal for the first time. They introduced me to 'Reflection on Action' in teaching and learning. That has stayed with me since then. I employed and practiced this outstanding learning and improvement tool for school leadership. The 'reflection on action' principle motivated me to write my first book - a memoir of my schooling experience. In between my years as a teacher, I worked at the Centre for Renewal Jos, where the Sisters organized workshops on Spirituality and Formation. I learnt the skills of facilitation from there. After some years as a teacher, the sisters sent me to study Educational management and policy studies at King's College, London in 2005. While studying, I visited some schools in London and Milton Keynes and expanded my knowledge base of school leadership. On my return to Nigeria in 2007, I became the principal of Our Lady of Nigeria School – an all-girls boarding school in Oghara Delta state. It was an exciting and fulfilling first time in school leadership. The staff and students and parents supported all my initiatives for the growth of the school. I knew every child by first name and surname; knew their parents and some siblings. It was like a family school. Later I was re-missioned to begin another school, Holy Child College Asa – Benue state, in the middle belt region of Nigeria. It was a poor area but I knew that the SHCJ Education paradigm could work there too.

I had the opportunity of participating in Educational conferences and I was one of the delegates to the Education Conference of 2017 in Rome, where outstanding educationists like Professor Grace of St Mary's University were featured. At that conference, Pope Francis charged us to 'go to the peripheries' 'stop looking at the world from the balcony' and teach the students the language of 'head, heart and hands.' From then I have continued to unpack what these expressions entailed for me as a principal. After all these years in school leadership, I want to teach again and directly offer teachers what I have been privileged to receive!

**Is there anything else you would like to share with readers?**

I would like to conclude with the following suggestions regarding access to education for school children in Africa. We must tinker with establishing free community day schools in partnership with whoever is willing to help

– whether at the primary or secondary level. Imagine the situation where we would have one free school in each Diocese in Africa! How do we provide staff for these free schools? We either have a Catholic schools graduate scheme to serve these schools or initiate a voluntary teaching program. Voluntary service is an excellent source of happiness for a Christian. We may be surprised that a voluntary teaching scheme will attract many Catholic professionals, even retired ones and young people with no faith orientation. Also, while we do what is possible as a Church, we must also lobby the government and policymakers to increase the budget for the education sector yearly. Although budget increment does not translate to more action for education, we would continue to hold each other accountable for our actions or inaction concerning the welfare of young people.

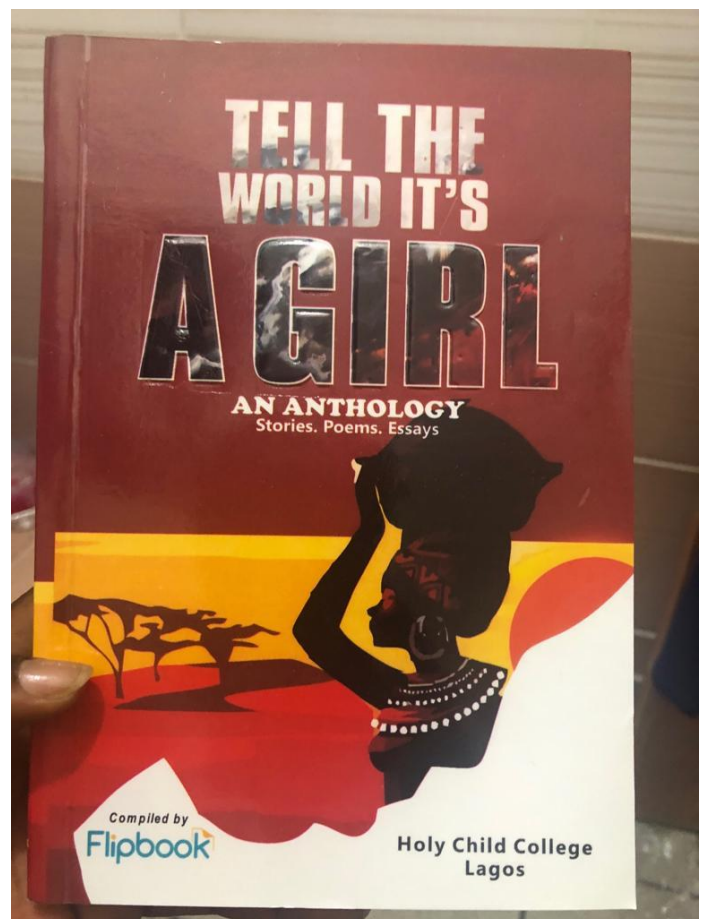


Photo: Holy Child College Knowledge Project.

## ENTRETIEN AVEC SR. MICKERLYNE CADET, FMA, DIRECTRICE DE L'ÉCOLE EHMA À HAÏTI



Entretien réalisé par Quentin Wodon  
Janvier 2022

### EXTRAITS:

- « L'École Hôtelière Marie Auxiliatrice (EHMA) a pour objectif de former des techniciens de la restauration et de l'hôtellerie aptes à assumer avec responsabilité, compétence et honnêteté les différentes tâches dans la... Nos étudiants ont la compétence pour travailler dans n'importe quel hôtel au niveau national comme International. »
- « Comme l'a dit notre Fondateur Saint Jean Bosco « Sans affection pas de confiance. Sans confiance, pas d'éducation. » Pour Jean Bosco, c'est seulement lorsque l'enfant ou le jeune prend conscience de son savoir-faire qu'il devient capable d'enrichir. »

Cet entretien réalisé en mai 2021 et a été légèrement modifié pour inclusion dans le Bulletin Educatio Si.

**Vous êtes directrice de l'École Hôtelière Marie Auxiliatrice (EHMA) à Haïti. Pourriez-vous expliquer l'origine et l'objectif de l'école?**

Bien avant le séisme du 12 janvier 2010, les Filles de Marie Auxiliatrice ou Salésiennes de Don Bosco, n'avaient pas vraiment une option préférentielle pour les écoles professionnelles. A ce moment-là, elles avaient des écoles classiques et des centres sociaux. Les centres sociaux n'avaient pas de grande envergure, mais à travers ces centres, elles formaient des jeunes filles qui n'avaient pas vraiment un niveau d'étude avancé. Elles faisaient de la cuisine ménagère, de la broderie, du crochet et de la couture. Ces jeunes filles étaient toujours recommandées pour aller travailler comme ménagère chez les bourgeois, les Congrégations Religieuses ou dans des familles aisées ....

Post Séisme 2012, les Sœurs Salésiennes ont eu la Visite de l'ONG ACTEC qui a comme objectif « un métier pour tous » et comme vision « Un monde juste où chaque personne a l'opportunité d'être protagoniste de son propre développement ». Cette organisation travaille beaucoup dans la formation professionnelle des jeunes.

### Encadré 1: Série d'entretiens

**Quelle est la mission du site Web Global Catholic Education?** Le site informe et connecte les éducateurs catholiques du monde entier. Il leur fournit des données, des analyses, des opportunités d'apprentissage et d'autres ressources pour les aider à remplir leur mission, y compris l'option préférentielle pour les pauvres.

**Pourquoi une série d'entretiens?** Les entretiens permettent de partager des expériences d'une manière accessible et personnelle. Cette série comprendra des entretiens tant avec des praticiens que des chercheurs travaillant sur l'éducation catholique, que ce soit dans les salles de classe, les universités ou d'autres organisations de support aux écoles et universités catholiques.

**Sur quoi porte cet entretien?** Cet entretien est avec Sr. Mickerlyne Cadet, FMA, Directrice de l'École Hôtelière Marie Auxiliatrice (EHMA) à Haïti. Sr. Mickerlyne nous explique les sources de sa vocation et la nature de son travail, certaines des innovations mise en œuvre par l'école hôtelière, ainsi que ses espoirs pour l'école.

Visitez-nous à [www.GlobalCatholicEducation.org](http://www.GlobalCatholicEducation.org).

Elle a fait la proposition aux Sœurs qu'elle voulait aider en vue de fournir une formation professionnelle de qualité aux jeunes pour les habilitier à s'insérer sur le marché du travail. Ainsi, Sœur Marie Claire Jean, la Provinciale d'alors et les Sœurs de la communauté Marie Auxiliatrice de Port-au-Prince ont opté de mettre sur pied une Ecole Hôtelière baptisée « Ecole Hôtelière Marie Auxiliatrice » (EHMA), puisqu'en cette époque il y'avait qu'une seule école existante (Ecole Hôtelière D'Haïti).

EHMA a pour objectif de former des techniciens de la restauration et de l'hôtellerie aptes à assumer avec responsabilité, compétence et honnêteté les différentes tâches dans la profession de façon à contribuer à la qualité de la main d'œuvre sur le marché de ce secteur. L'idée a été géniale, c'est ainsi qu'en octobre 2012, l'école a ouvert ses portes à 84 jeunes qui s'étaient inscrits. ACTEC a fait un changement du système que nous avons. Maintenant, nous avons des professeurs qualifiés capable de former des étudiants qualifiés pouvant travailler dans l'industrie d'hôtellerie. Nous remercions grandement ACTEC et les autres ONG qui, jusqu'à présent continuent à épauler EHMA dans ses initiatives et ses projets.

**Quelles sont vos principales responsabilités en tant que directrice de l'école?**

En étant Directrice de l'EHMA, ma tâche principale est l'administration de l'école avec d'autres obligations réparties comme suit : Veiller sur la bonne marche de l'école ; Prendre des décisions de concert avec la Directrice de la communauté et aussi le conseil professoral certaine fois ; Assurer la coordination nécessaire entre les professeurs ; Organiser des séances de formations pour les professeurs et les étudiants dans le but de donner continuité à leur formation ; Avoir une bonne relation avec nos partenaires ; et Rédiger les rapports narratifs et financiers chaque semestre pour les soumettre aux bailleurs.

**Quels sont les forces de l'école, et dans quels domaines pensez-vous avoir particulièrement réussi?**

Les forces de l'école sont les suivantes :

- Grâce aux bailleurs, plus particulièrement ACTEC, nous avons une école bien équipée par rapport aux autres Ecoles Hôtelières qui se trouvent dans le pays.
- La formation continue pour les professeurs afin d'assurer une formation professionnelle de qualité des étudiants.
- Nous avons les supports de nos Bailleurs qui ne nous manquent pas : ACTEC, Association Liège

Aide Haïti qui accueille et finance chaque année quatre étudiants qui vont en Belgique pour leur stage de fin d'études et Misiones Salesianas qui donnent toujours son petit support financier à l'EHMA.

- La formation professionnelle que nous donnons aux étudiants leur permet de faire la différence aux autres étudiants venant d'autres écoles hôtelières dans un milieu de travail.
- L'EHMA est placée parmi les meilleures écoles hôtelières, si je me permets de le dire, elle est une école de référence. Jusqu'à présent les hôtels, les restaurants, les hôpitaux et des particuliers nous ouvrent toujours leur porte pour le stage des étudiants et ils les embauchent également.

L'EHMA possède les trois filières de base pour un hôtel : Cuisine/Pâtisserie, Bar/Restaurant et Hébergement (Réception et Housekeeping). Les jeunes avant de faire leur spécialisation doivent passer dans ces trois filières en première année. Ils acquièrent donc des connaissances sur ces trois filières. Je peux dire que nos étudiants ont la compétence pour travailler dans n'importe quel hôtel au niveau national comme International. L'école offre aussi la possibilité d'un cours d'entrepreneuriat. Les étudiants qui s'organisent eux-mêmes en petit groupe ou de manière individuelle pour mettre sur pied leur petite entreprise.

**Quelles sont les difficultés que vous rencontrez, en particulier suite à la pandémie de la COVID qui a affecté tant l'enseignement que le secteur hôtelier?**

Ce n'est pas seulement la COVID-19 qui représente les difficultés, mais aussi la crise socio-économique et politique du pays. Ces grandes plaies paralysent presque toutes les activités publiques et privées en Haïti. A cause de ces difficultés, nous ne pouvons pas accueillir le même effectif d'étudiants qu'on a l'habitude d'avoir, car les mesures d'hygiènes sont très importantes pour empêcher la propagation de la COVID. Beaucoup de gens ont perdu leur emploi. Tout cela a des impacts négatifs sur le budget de l'école et son fonctionnement. Nous manquons de moyens économiques pour les jeunes qui fréquentent l'établissement. Pour faire face à cette situation délicate, nous avons essayé d'utiliser d'autres stratégies pour faciliter l'apprentissage des jeunes, comme la plateforme en ligne et le travail en équipe. Comme autre difficultés, les touristes ne rentrent pas dans le pays, les hôtels diminuent consécutivement leur nombre d'employés. Je crois que l'apparition de cette pandémie affecte tous les secteurs, particuliers l'industrie d'hôtellerie.





Photos : étudiantes à l'EHMA.

**Une des innovations de l'école a été le lancement des produits PROSOLMA. De quoi s'agit-il et quels sont les acquis?**

PROSOLMA c'est une AGR (Activité Génératrice de Revenu) de l'EHMA. En ce qui concerne l'atelier de production de l'EHMA, en 2016 l'ACTEC a conseillé aux Sœurs de mettre sur pied cet atelier de production sous le nom de PROSOLMA au sein de l'école. Il permet de :

- Fournir du travail à quelques jeunes diplômés en recherche d'emploi, ce qui leur permettra de développer leurs compétences et les rendra compétitifs sur le marché du travail.
- Donner une occasion aux étudiants de première et deuxième année de se plonger dans l'ambiance d'une entreprise et de respecter des « impératifs de production »
- Développer la production d'aliments transformés locaux, pour valoriser les produits haïtiens. De plus la direction offre un encadrement aux jeunes désireux de lancer leur micro entreprise de production ;
- Contribuer à la diversification des revenus de l'école et à l'augmentation de son degré d'autofinancement.

Après un an de fonctionnement sous une version très provisoire, l'évaluation est positive: l'atelier productif emploie trois anciens élèves et écoule ses produits dans quatre supermarchés. Un solide Business plan a été mis sous pied. Aujourd'hui PROSOLMA compte cinq employés et ses produits sont écoulés dans plusieurs supermarchés et des Institutions privées et publiques, aussi à l'extérieur du pays. Les produits de PROSOLMA sont très appréciés et demandés. Malheureusement à cause de la crise politique du pays et suite au manque de matières premières PROSOLMA a des difficultés d'employer plus d'étudiants. Nous sommes en train de travailler pour la certification de PROSOLMA au niveau

international pour l'exportation de ces produits dans d'autres pays.

**Quels sont les opportunités et les risques que vous percevez pour les trois à cinq années qui viennent?**

Opportunités :

- Avoir des professeurs qualifiés pour assurer la pérennité de l'EHMA.
- Placer les étudiants de l'EHMA en stage dans des hôtels en Haïti comme à l'étranger.
- Trouver un partenariat avec les écoles professionnelles et hôtelières des Salésiennes du monde entier, permettant à nos étudiants d'avoir un diplôme international.
- Ajouter la gestion hôtelière à l'EHMA permettant aux jeunes de décrocher un diplôme technique.
- Augmenter d'autres filières qui s'intéressent beaucoup les hôtels comme la cosmétologie et le spa (pour arriver à tout cela il faut que l'école soit agrandie).
- Implanter un laboratoire de langue à l'EHMA.
- L'école est placée au centre de la capitale, ce qui donne la possibilité aux étudiants des quatre coins de la capitale à bien profiter de la formation (transport facile).

Les risques : l'environnement de l'EHMA se situe dans un ghetto. Lorsqu'il y a des affrontements entre les bandits, toutes les activités scolaires sont paralysées. Cependant c'est un milieu qui donne vraiment la possibilité aux jeunes d'arriver avec facilité à l'école. Si on sort dans les quatre coins de la Capitale du pays les moyens de transport ne sont plus accessibles. Mais s'il n'y pas de l'amélioration, dans trois à cinq ans la zone où nous sommes implantés risque de devenir impraticable.

**Comment comprenez-vous le concept de développement humain intégral, et comment cela affecte-t-il les orientations de l'école?**

Le Pape Paul VI en faisant cette proposition a vu le futur de l'homme. Le développement humain intégral, c'est voir l'homme dans toute son intégralité, ce qui implique une croissance de l'homme jusqu'à la maturité. Pour arriver à cela, l'homme doit avoir le droit à la santé, à l'éducation et à une vie décente. Dès que ces trois capacités sont comblées il serait capable de faire un choix dans la vie. Le développement humain met l'homme au centre de tous les aspects du processus de développement ; en un mot l'homme doit collaborer pour son plein épanouissement à tous les niveaux : spirituel, moral et professionnel. Comme l'a dit notre Fondateur Saint Jean Bosco « Sans affection pas de confiance. Sans confiance, pas d'éducation. » Pour Jean Bosco, c'est seulement lorsque l'enfant ou le jeune prend conscience de son savoir-faire qu'il devient capable d'enrichir. Notre Charisme est basé sur l'éducation intégrale des jeunes. Ces derniers se considèrent protagonistes de leur formation. Nous leur donnons la chance de s'épanouir pour aboutir à de meilleurs résultats.



Photo : cérémonie de graduation à l'EHMA.

**Pourriez-vous s'il vous plaît partager comment vous en êtes arrivée à votre poste actuel, quel a été votre parcours personnel ?**

Après mes études classiques, je suis entrée directement à l'Aspiranat pour commencer mon expérience de jeune en formation pour devenir Religieuse dans la Congrégation des Filles de Marie Auxiliatrice (Salésiennes de Don Bosco). J'ai passé quatre ans en formation. J'ai prononcé mes premiers vœux le 5 août 2004 et mes vœux perpétuels le 5 août 2010. J'ai donc plus de 17 ans de vie religieuse vécue dans la foi, la joie et la fidélité. J'ai eu pas mal d'expériences dans plusieurs communautés Salésiennes en Haïti. J'ai pu travailler comme aide assistante des Benjamines à la Maison

Provinciale communauté Notre Dame du Perpétuel Secours (2004-2005).

Ensuite j'ai été transférée au Cap Haïtien où j'ai passé deux ans (2005-2007) accompagnant les internes et aussi assurant la catéchèse des enfants. Puis au Noviciat Marie Auxiliatrice où j'ai vécu seulement une année (2007-2008), comme aide économe. Après cette expérience au Noviciat, on m'a donné l'obédience pour les Cayes à la Communauté Notre Dame du Perpétuel Secours. J'ai eu la chance de travailler comme assistante Directrice à l'école Professionnelle des Sœurs où j'assurais l'économat de la communauté et de l'école et je donnais des cours de catéchèse en classe de 8ème année fondamentale. Là j'ai passé quatre ans (2008-2012). Ce fut une belle expérience pour moi au milieu des jeunes. En 2012 la Provinciale d'alors, Sœur Marie Claire Jean m'a donnée l'obédience pour la Communauté de Pétion Ville Marie Dominique Mazarello. J'avais comme tâche l'économat de la maison, catéchèse en classe de 7ème et du coup j'avais commencé avec mes études universitaires.

J'ai entamé mes études universitaires en Sciences de l'administration à l'Institut des Hautes Etudes Commerciales et Economiques. Après ma première année à l'Université, on m'a transférée à la communauté de Port-au-Prince Marie Auxiliatrice où je donnais un coup de main à l'EHMA sous la direction de Sœur Dieudonne Jean Louis. J'y ai passé une année et quelques mois. Ensuite, la Provinciale Sœur Marie Claire Jean et ses Conseillères ont vu la nécessité de préparer quelqu'un pour prendre la charge de l'EHMA après la fin du mandat de l'actuelle Directrice. Elles m'ont fait bénéficier d'une bourse d'études en administration hôtelière à l'Universidad Sagrado Del Corazón de Puerto Rico. J'ai passé deux ans à I.H.E.C.E. De retour en Haïti on m'a placée comme Directrice de l'EHMA. Je suis fière de travailler à l'EHMA pour donner le meilleur de moi-même dans la formation des jeunes.

**Enfin, pourriez-vous partager une anecdote personnelle sur vous-même, ce qui vous passionne ?**

J'ai tellement d'anecdotes que je ne sais pas par où commencer, mais je vais essayer de relater celle qui m'a beaucoup plus marquée. Avec le « Pays Lock » en Haïti à la fin de l'année 2019, la Saline était impraticable à cause des bandits qui avaient occupé la zone. Avec la permission de la Provinciale Sœur Aline Nicolas l'EHMA a travaillé provisoirement à Pétion Ville à la communauté Marie Dominique Mazarello. Déplacer une école Hôtelière à un autre endroit ce n'est pas une chose facile, vu le manque de matériels, d'espace etc... C'est ainsi qu'au matin du 16 décembre 2019 j'ai décidé d'aller à La Saline pour récupérer quelques matériels à l'école afin de faciliter le travail des jeunes et pour vérifier aussi ce que font les employés du PROSOLMA.



À bord du véhicule il y avait le chauffeur, les deux membres de la direction et moi-même. J'étais assise à droite du chauffeur. Mais pour vous dire, les hommes armés faisaient leur patrouille dans la zone. Arrivés à la Saline, nous avons pris les matériels dont nous avons besoin pour retourner à Pétiou Ville. En sortant de la barrière, l'une de nos employés qui m'accompagnait dans la voiture me disait : « Ma Sœur, nous n'avons pas encore prié ! », alors j'ai fait la prière. Toute de suite après, j'ai entendu un bruit et quelque chose qui frappait la porte droite de la voiture. Je croyais que c'était une pierre, ensuite un autre coup. À ce moment-là, je sentais comme du feu dans mes pieds, j'ai compris que c'était des projectiles. J'ai dit au chauffeur d'accélérer la vitesse

de la voiture car on est en train de tirer sur nous. Nous nous sommes rendus à Delmas 2 à côté d'une boulangerie pour remettre une commission. C'est à ce moment-là j'ai pu constater que c'est sur moi qu'on avait tiré. L'un des projectiles avait traversé ma robe. Grâce à Dieu nous en sommes sortis sains et saufs.

En dépit de tout je suis retournée avec plus de vigueur et plus de confiance à La Saline. À travers cette expérience Dieu me parlait. Il veut quelque chose de plus de moi. Je sentais ses mains qui nous protègent et la Vierge Marie qui veille constamment sur nous. Ce fut une expérience qui m'a fait découvrir d'avantage la grandeur de l'amour de Dieu. Ma foi devient plus solide et je suis encore plus déterminée à donner ma vie pour le bien des jeunes.



Photo : apprentissage à l'EHMA.



## INTERVIEW WITH CATHY LOW, MEMBER OF THE VOLUNTEER CORPS OF ATD FOURTH WORLD



*Interview conducted by Quentin Wodon*

*March 2021*

### EXCERPTS:

- “Father Wresinski’s core message engraved in the Trocadero in Paris [was that] “Wherever men and women are condemned to live in extreme poverty, human rights are violated. To come together to ensure that these rights be respected is our solemn duty.”
- “We brought Sonia and the children to meet the President of the national council in Switzerland. They prepared intensively for this meeting. They talked about their life, what it meant to be separated from their family, growing up in poverty, and their dreams. Children and their words can change the world!”

**You are a member of the volunteer corps of the International Movement ATD Fourth World. What are the Movement and its volunteer corps?**

ATD (All Together in Dignity) is a Movement that gathers people from all backgrounds to think, act and live together differently for a world without extreme poverty. Since the foundation of the organization 60 years ago, ATD Fourth World has been inspired by Father Joseph Wresinski’s own experience as a child in a poverty-stricken family and his daily contacts with very poor families. His purpose was to unite all sections of society around those in extreme poverty.

When he joined a homeless camp near Paris where more than 300 families lived in 1957, he asked women and men from diverse social and cultural origins to join him on a long-term goal to overcome extreme poverty. The volunteer corps consists of full time staff working with the organization and rallying around Father Wresinski’s core message engraved in the Trocadero in Paris: “Wherever men and women are condemned to live in extreme poverty, human rights are violated. To come together to ensure that these rights be respected is our solemn duty.” Today, we are around 400 full time volunteers in 30 countries. Although we have different missions, our main purpose is to stay close to very poor families.

#### Box 1: Interview Series

**What is the mission of the Global Catholic Education website?** The site informs and connects Catholic educators globally. It provides them with data, analysis, opportunities to learn, and other resources to help them fulfill their mission with a focus on the preferential option for the poor.

**Why a series of interviews?** Interviews are a great way to share experiences in an accessible and personal way. This series will feature interviews with practitioners as well as researchers working in Catholic education, whether in a classroom, at a university, or with other organizations aiming to strengthen Catholic schools and universities.

**What is the focus of this interview?** In this interview, Cathy Low, a member of the volunteer corps of the International Movement ATD Fourth World, explains the aims of the movement and her own experience in working with families in extreme poverty.

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### **What kind of work do you do in the Movement?**

For more than eight years in Geneva, Switzerland, my focus was on reaching poor families with young children, facilitating street libraries, and developing a network of organizations and friends through the October 17<sup>th</sup> committee (International Day to Overcome Extreme Poverty) and advocacy at the United Nations.

### **Families in extreme poverty are hard to reach. How do you manage to meet them and work with them?**

It is true that these families are hard to reach, especially in a country like Switzerland because poverty is hidden. They are very dependent on institutions and suffer a lot about it. It takes time for people to understand that we are not an institution and not a threat to them. Being in Geneva for more than 30 years, we have established links with families and their children, sometimes even their grandchildren through street libraries and creative workshops and by accompanying them in their daily struggles.

Some of these families have become activists and have been very much involved in ATD for many years, but it is also important that we try to reach out to new families with young children. The families we have known for some time helped me to reach younger families, like Michelle who insisted that it is through their children that I could reach these young families. I ran a street library in a neighborhood with families living on welfare and asylum-seekers. Each week, little by little, as they enjoyed reading books, the children and their parents opened up to me. They trusted me and opened their doors to me. I understood their lives better, the challenges they face, the hope for their children to have a better future.

I also began to share with them our concerns about reaching other families living in poverty. As a result, some families introduce me to other families. Reaching these families requires time and humility but also support and training. Some of them today participate in our projects, including week-ends of respite or research using our merging of knowledge approach whereby the knowledge of all, and especially the poor, is valued.

### **Could you share an example of a family whom you worked with and how her experience may have affected you?**

I got to know a family through the street library. The couple has four children and is on welfare. The parents are illiterate. They had quite a difficult relationship with the Swiss social services. I first met them eight years ago and the father was quite wary of me. But the mother and the children loved the books I was bringing and the time we spent together. I could see that their life was chaotic and uncertain. But we shared very beautiful moments in their

home, usually around a book with the children. The eldest daughter, Sonia, is now 17. She shared a lot about her own life to me, her difficulties between the expectations of her family and the Swiss society, the values she learnt from her family, the exclusion she experienced at school. It was a lot for her to deal with.

Eventually, the social services decided to put the children into foster care. They recognized the love for each other that the family members had, but they thought that the parents could not provide a good education and upbringing to their children. I accompanied them to court to try to defend them. After the verdict, Alex, the father, told me that although they lost the case, my support for them had given him his dignity back during the hearing, and that was important for him. Although I could understand the concerns of the institutions, the voices of the parents were not really respected during the whole process and the parents were not considered as partners in the upbringing of their children. It was even said that they were not « a normal Swiss family ».

I also think of a young Swiss couple, Jean and Sophie. Their life has been very chaotic, as they had to live in one hotel after another. Sophie was discriminated against at work because she is Swiss in a context of low-paid jobs where many of the other workers were foreigners. Jean has learning difficulties and he was excluded at school because of his inability to learn how to read and write. He had endured the violence of this exclusion on a daily basis. I see his rejection of institutions as a resistance, in order not to be told by others what to do. It made me think of the research done by ATD Fourth World and Oxford University on the hidden dimensions of poverty in 2019<sup>1</sup>. One of the main sources of suffering expressed by people living in poverty is to be denied to right to act by themselves, to be disempowered.

### **What are the main challenges that families in extreme poverty face today because of the pandemic?**

In the beginning of the pandemic, one of the main difficulties we faced was to keep in contact with the families. We could see that social distancing had put mental stress on people, especially as their children were not able to continue to learn in schools. And for parents who had children in foster care, it was nearly impossible for them to be in contact with their children. Not being able to participate in various activities had an impact on the families' mental health. Some people we know, even young persons, died of COVID-19 because their health was already poor before the pandemic.

Paul Uzell, an activist in Ireland summarized quite well what many families we know would say. *"In this period of*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.atd-fourthworld.org/international-advocacy/dimensions-of-poverty/>



lockdown we have all in many ways been made aware of what it means to lose your freedom... to live in isolation... to have reduced choices... to have a finger pointed at you. This is giving people an insight into what we are living – me and many people struggling in our own community live this reality day-to-day.” Another activist in France says “Maybe we could also teach people to live with little, it is something that we know how to do.” They could also help society to face the pandemic if we listen to them.

**How can we respond to these challenges? What is needed?**

We first need to recognize that people living in extreme poverty are the first to fight it. Instead of blaming them for their poverty, we need to find a path together. Extreme poverty is a challenge for the whole society, but it is not a fatality. Answers are diverse and everyone can play a role where he/she is, given his/her own responsibilities. Father Wresinski’s vision was to unite all, from citizens to

politicians and organizations around people in poverty as the first partners to end it. We can find solutions to promote a society respectful of all people and of the earth as a pre-condition for peace.

**Could you share your personal journey? How did you end up joining the Movement's volunteer corps?**

I grew up in a farm in a rural area. My father was close to travelling families even though his neighbors were always telling him not to be. He and my mother were also very much involved in the community through sports, their parish, and a cooperative. Growing up in the village, I could see the gap between people from different social backgrounds and the exclusion some experienced. This questioned me. Meeting ATD Fourth World changed my life. It provided me with a space where this issue could be discussed. We can be close to those living in exclusion and try to understand them and also find some support when needed. Still, today, it is a school of life for me.



Photo: Cathy Low animating in a street library in Geneva.



**Could you finally share a personal anecdote with our readers? What else are you passionate about, or particularly interested in?**

I am passionate about working with children. The street libraries have always been an opportunity where I found myself so at ease, even if they are challenging. In 2019 in Geneva, we worked with the children on the rights of the child. I could see that over the years, the children gained in confidence. They started to speak for themselves in the street libraries. I decided to use the story of Nobel Laureate Malala, the young girl who fights for education in her country Pakistan. Children were really interested by

her story and her commitment. I could see how important it is to give them opportunities to discover people who are models of inspiration. That year, we brought Sonia and the children to meet the President of the National Council in Switzerland. They had prepared intensively and seriously for this meeting. They talked about their life in their community, what it meant to be separated from their family, growing up in poverty, and their dreams. They experienced speaking in front of a public and being listened to. It was a memorable moment for all of us and they gained so much confidence and pride. I really love being part of that. I know that children and their words can change the world.



Photo: Children share their options with the National Council in Switzerland.

## INTERVIEW WITH FATHER RENE MICALLEF SJ, ASSOCIATE LECTURER AT THE GREGORIAN UNIVERSITY



*Interview conducted by Quentin Wodon*

*May 2021*

### EXCERPTS:

- “Efforts focused on immediate needs that could evoke generosity when portrayed in a photo or short video... Yet refugees have little material capital (e.g. fertile agricultural land) and providing them with human capital and skills through education is the only viable way of helping them stand on their feet.”
- “A holistic education of students about the current mass migration and asylum phenomena should weave together personal elements (encounters with the “stranger”), imaginative ones (art, movies), ethical and political reflection, as well as critical analysis of data from social science and economics.”

**Dear Fr. René, you teach at the Gregorian University. Could you tell us a bit about the university's history and its role today?**

The Pontifical Gregorian University is a prestigious institution in the Catholic world, since it is the major university in Rome entrusted by the Holy See to the Society of Jesus, that is, to the Jesuits, a religious order famous for its standards of excellence in tertiary and secondary education since the 1500s, and for its network of secondary schools and universities all over the world.

The “Greg”, as it is fondly called by students and professors, traces its history back to an experiment in free education launched in a house in Rome in 1551, where the first Jesuits taught poor youths grammar, humanities, and Christian Doctrine at a time when quality education offered in a pedagogically effective manner was sorely needed in Europe. The “Jesuit recipe” was immensely successful, and the tiny school rapidly grew into a centre of learning that provided secondary and tertiary education to lay persons and Jesuits in formation. Already in 1552 it was authorized by the Pope to grant academic degrees.

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**What is the focus of this interview?** In this interview, Father René Micallef, SJ, Associate Lecturer at the Gregorian University, talks his research and work with refugees. The interview is part of a series on vulnerable groups and integral human development.

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The “Roman College”, as it was known at the time, received grants and privileges from various Popes and other benefactors in the 1500s and 1600s; the main benefactor was pope Gregory XIII who provided a large and prestigious new seat (inaugurated in 1584) and sources of income to support the students and professors. Its model offering free education to the poor, its organization of student life and teaching, and its well-designed curriculum of studies (known as the “Ratio studiorum”) were emulated in hundreds of cities all over the world first by the Jesuits themselves and later (especially after the suppression of the Society of Jesus in 1773) by other religious orders and national governments.



Photo: Conference at the Greg on Evangelii Gaudium.

The Roman College attracted brilliant scholars and students from all over the world. It also used scientific knowledge to finance itself; for instance, it had a famous herbal and pharmaceutical dispensary which imported and sold “Jesuit bark” from South America (a malarial remedy which forms the basis of anti-malarial compounds still widely used today). During the time of the Suppression of the Jesuit Order (due in part to political concerns about the influence of the Jesuit education network), the Roman College was dissolved, though some non-Jesuit students and lecturers organized themselves to complete their courses, and found a new school that eventually became the Pontifical Lateran University. In 1814, the Society of Jesus was restored and the Jesuits started rebuilding their major education centre in Rome; 10 years later the traditional seat of the Roman College was returned by the Pope to the Jesuits, as well as the rights and privileges that the Roman College had before the Suppression. The edifices of the old “Roman College” were lost again due to confiscation by civil authorities in the late 1800s, and in the process, pope Pius IX ordered that the university become known as the “Gregorian University” (in honour of Gregory XIII); this decision, taken in 1873, provided name recognition to the

main Jesuit tertiary education institution in Rome, independently of its historical seat.

Here in Italy, several decades of secularist ideology as regards tertiary education, before and even after the Bologna Process (harmonization of tertiary education standards and institutions in Europe), have made it very hard to offer programmes in non-ecclesiastical disciplines in Pontifical universities. In this context, the “Greg” is mainly focused on Theology and ecclesiastical formation (about half of its students and resources), and has one of the best theological libraries in the world. It however has important faculties of Philosophy, History and Cultural Heritage of the Church, Canon Law, Social Sciences and Mission Studies, as well as well-respected institutes of Psychology and Spirituality and several Centres.

The Pontifical Gregorian University, though relatively small by modern state university standards (with less than 3000 students), is known as the “university of the nations” since both the student body and the faculty are extremely diverse (around 120 nationalities). Many important Catholic theologians and religious leaders have studied at the university. The institution is famous in the Catholic world for its personal accompaniment of students in their learning process, and its unwavering promotion of intellectual honesty, academic rigour and freedom (which, properly understood, go hand-in-hand with a mature respect of Church authority as regards its competence in certain matters of doctrine).

**One of your main areas of work relates to migration and refugees. Why did you choose that field?**

The Jesuits have a long history of wandering around the world and being expelled and deported (the State of New York and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in the past had severe laws prohibiting “infiltration” by Jesuits). St. Ignatius of Loyola was a pilgrim and migrant, and travelled widely before finding himself tied down in Rome as first superior general of the Jesuits and engaged in founding universities and other institutions that require “stability”. Yet, to some extent, the adoption in all Jesuit centres of higher learning of the standardized curriculum of the Roman College in the late 1500s (coupled with the use of Latin) allowed Jesuit lecturers and students to move around the world within the network with relative ease, and retain some element of the charism of “wandering priests” that characterized the style of Ignatius and his first companions.

I myself have been “on the move” for most of my life, having resided and studied in Genoa, Padua, London, Malta, Paris, Madrid, Boston, Rome and Nairobi in the last 23 years. I believe this sense of inhabiting one world not segregated by political national boundaries, and being available to go and serve the Church and the World wherever we are needed, is something which attracts



people to the Society of Jesus and imbues all we do with an international flavour.

This ability to empathise with and accompany people on the move must surely have influenced the decision, taken in November 1980 by Fr. Pedro Arrupe SJ, the then superior general of the Society of Jesus, to respond to the plight of Vietnamese boat people by founding the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), as well as its rapid expansion, as hundreds of Jesuits responded to Arrupe's call. JRS now works in 45 countries and accompanies over 700,000 people (specializing in the provision of education services to refugees and migrants, as can be expected from the Jesuits). Today Jesuits are known for their commitment to the accompaniment of migrants and refugees (as well as spiritual accompaniment according to the method of the "Spiritual Exercises", and higher education).

I got to know JRS in Malta in the 1990s before becoming a Jesuit. I did some volunteering there, and was attracted to this work. After joining the Jesuits, I had other experiences of accompanying refugees and migrants during my formation.

As regards my academic life, my wide-ranging intellectual interests led me in various directions during my formation, until eventually my superiors asked me to do a licentiate and a doctorate in Moral Theology. I was initially inclined towards doing research on the sources of moral knowledge, but eventually, after some months getting to know the faculty at Boston College, I decided to ask Fr David Hollenbach to be my thesis mentor. Given his interest and mine in forced migration, I decided to focus my doctoral research on the ethical underpinnings of immigration policymaking. As I got to know this field of studies better, I became more and more passionate about it.

**What are some of the programs that work best to support refugees? And what does not seem to work well?**

My studies in the field of migration focus on ethics of hospitality and human rights; I have no personal experience of administering programmes and have not done social-science research into the effectiveness of different types of programmes in favour of refugees run by NGOs, international relief agencies, Churches and universities. I believe, however, that education is a basic need, and programmes which provide food and shelter for refugees (in camps or urban settings) while offering little in terms of education are short-sighted and do not allow the most vulnerable to flourish and lead independent lives.

To be sure, for many decades, given the difficulty to fundraise for "strangers" in faraway lands, many efforts focused on immediate needs that could evoke generosity when portrayed in a photo or short video: from this

perspective, keeping people from starving and freezing to death seems "urgent" while teaching them to read and write (let alone secondary and tertiary education) seems more of a "luxury". Furthermore, offering decent education to millions of "strangers" in camps in remote areas of third-world countries could create envy and tensions with local populations (especially in places where the state provision of education was or still is rudimentary or practically nonexistent, and most children do not finish primary schooling).

Yet, refugees have little material capital (e.g. fertile agricultural land) and providing them with human capital and skills through education is the only viable way of helping them stand on their two feet and not become dependent on aid for generations. Education also prepares them to return to their country when the persecution or conflict is over with the skills needed to support themselves and to build healthier institutions and a vibrant civil society, capable of unrooting the evils that created the refugee situation in the first place, so to avoid new cycles of violence and oppression that may cause new cycles of flight.

**How involved are the Catholic Church and in particular the Jesuits in supporting refugees? What more could be done? What should not be done?**

I have already mentioned the work of the JRS. There are many other religious orders who work with vulnerable migrants and refugees; I have collaborated in the past with the Scalabrini missionaries, in particular. Various Catholic foundations (such as CARITAS or Catholic Relief Services), charities and universities support this work providing funding for various projects, resources and staff. Other important sources of commitment to "welcome, protect, promote, and integrate" refugees and vulnerable migrants (the "four verbs" Pope Francis likes to underline) include the work of some Church movements (e.g. Sant'Egidio's promotion of "humanitarian corridors") as well as private persons nourished by their personal faith (e.g. lay people and parish priests in Mexico who founded their own immigrant shelter, some of whom I have met).

The recently founded "Migrants and Refugees" section within the Integral Human Development Dicastery at the Vatican has in recent years also organized many conferences, published important "pastoral orientation" documents (e.g. the one on climate-displaced persons, published in March 2021) and coordinated various international initiatives to raise awareness of the mass migration phenomenon among Catholics, challenging populist fear-mongering, fake news, popular myths and misconceptions. There is of course much more to do in the direct accompaniment of refugees and internally displaced persons (in countries of origin, transit and destination) since most never pass through or reach "traditionally Catholic-majority-countries" where the

Catholic Church has a rich network of institutions (3/5 of persons displaced across a national border are hosted in just 10 countries, of which only one is a first-world western country, namely Germany – cfr. UNHCR Mid-Year Trends 2020).

Working with local NGOs, governments and religious authorities in places like Syria, Myanmar, Afghanistan and their neighbouring countries can be challenging. Yet in some cases, helping some Catholics in traditionally Christian countries to overcome fears and misconceptions (e.g. those linking crime, terrorism and unemployment to asylum), and to open their eyes and hearts to the realities of exploitation, social exclusion and human trafficking happening in their own back yard, could be even more challenging. In the light of Catholic Social Thought and the teaching of recent popes, I believe however we should go even further, and help our Christian brethren to start seeing vulnerable migrants and refugees as bearers of rights, persons with agency who have much to contribute to our societies, rather than seeing them mainly as "needy aid recipients", "welfare queens" or "trauma victims".

**Are Catholic universities doing enough in terms of teaching or research in this area? What should be their priorities?**

I think they can do much more. A few years ago, in 2017, with the support of the International Federation of Catholic Universities (IFCU), Being the Blessing Foundation and the Pontifical Gregorian University, we held a conference in Rome challenging universities to respond to the call of Pope Francis to face this challenge using their own resources (namely education and research), collaborating with NGOs working in the field, as part of the "social responsibility of universities". The result was the foundation of a network which is currently called the "Refugee and Migrant Education Network" (RMEN), and which now also includes secular, Muslim and Jewish universities and NGOs. The chairperson is Dr. Anthony Cernera, former IFCU president and former president of Sacred Heart University (Connecticut); I myself have been on the coordination committee since its origins.

Though it is still an incipient organization mostly dependent on the work of volunteers and with few resources, it is a source of hope for me. RMEN networks initiatives focused on the education of refugees and vulnerable migrants (especially by universities and education NGOs), the education of students and staff about the reality of people on the move in the world (both in specialization courses and within general undergraduate programmes and pastoral and social outreach activities) as well as research (especially on the effectiveness of such education). Yet, in spite of the importance and magnitude of the issue, few of our members have consistent, well-funded and well-staffed initiatives to report and share, at this point in time, and

most of our energies are dedicated to present the few examples of best practices and getting members to talk among themselves, hoping that they will find the will and resources to launch new initiatives themselves.



Photo: Session with Pope Francis at the 2017 conference.

As regards priorities, much depends on the context. Firstly, the education of refugees and vulnerable migrants in wealthy destination countries should focus on scholarships, individual accompaniment and mentoring (many migrants suffering from PTSD and years of destructed life on the move need help to complete their studies successfully); in terms of content, refugees often need help to achieve the recognition of past academic titles (the certification for which has been lost or is controlled by hostile persons in their home-countries), as well as secondary and tertiary education that offer training that provides realistic access to the job market, makes good use of the personal skills learnt during their life on the move, but also offers some intellectual tools to make sense, critically, of their personal experiences (e.g. some elements of a "liberal arts" formation). To some extent, education of migrants in camps and cities in transit countries and poorer destination countries should have the same focus, but be more pragmatic.

Secondly, a holistic education of students in our universities about the current mass migration and asylum phenomena should weave together personal elements (encounters with the "stranger"), imaginative ones (art, movies), ethical and political reflection, as well as critical analysis of data from social science and economics. I am wary about starting with "hard" scientific data, since in our world of social media and "creative" online spin-doctoring of scientific data, presenting statistics and graphs will not convince students with deeply-held ideological beliefs about refugees and migrants.

Finally, as regards research, I think universities should collaborate more with NGOs in the field, which can provide data points and interesting concrete research



questions for our research staff and doctoral students, while universities can share some of their resources and manpower with education NGOs, and push to take a long-term view of the core issues, rather than just prepare themselves to face the next emergency, which is what many NGOs often do best.

**What is your advice for students or others who may be Catholic and are contemplating doing graduate work or specializing in this area?**

I think some personal contact with migrants and refugees is helpful. As noted above, I volunteered in a JRS Office in Malta in the 1990s, working with refugees from the First Gulf War and the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, doing little errands and editing newsletters for the office staff. Later, I helped migrant children with their homework when I lived in Spain, ministered to migrants in a prison in the US during my doctoral studies, travelled the migrant corridor between Guatemala City and Mexico City following the railway tracks and meeting migrants and staff in the shelters along the way. I also spent some time teaching English in Kampala, Uganda, to refugees from South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Burundi. These experiences helped me know certain realities first-hand, while also helping me construct in my mind a series of (idealized) intelligent and experienced interlocutors whom my hypothesis and arguments needed to convince, so as to be truly honest and grounded in the lives of the people I was writing about. The memories of particular migrants and relief workers help me overcome my writing blocks: in those moments when research and teaching become stale and lifeless, especially during a pandemic year as the one we have been living, I remind myself that I am doing it “for them.”

The other bit of advice is to network with people on the ground to figure out the emerging trends and seek their help to ask the deeper questions, to delve into issues that are neglected. NGO staff are wary of researchers dropping in from the global north for a few days or weeks, using up their precious resources (internet connection, guest rooms, driver time and gasoline) and asking lofty and sensitive questions while expecting to be catered to continuously and entertained; they have thousands of more urgent problems and more vulnerable people to tend to. Thus, they will only open up and provide interesting insights for research when graduate students and researchers come along with something concrete and useful to offer in return, and are willing to spend a number of months with them, facing the messy, beautiful, and tragic realities of their work, diving below the surface showcased by “humanitarian tourism.”



Photos: Teaching with refugees in Uganda.



**Finally, could you share a personal anecdote about yourself, what you are passionate about?**

I like cooking, especially concocting "fusion" dishes without using a fixed recipe, mixing flavours and elements from many cuisines. It reminds me of my chemistry studies before becoming a Jesuit (I understand some of the reactions happening when I prepare food) as well as the places I have been and people I have met. I love good Italian and Mediterranean cuisine, but I get that every day while I am here in Rome, so I usually rely on Asian, South-American, North-African and Northern-European flavours when I am cooking. Some years ago I spent eight months in Africa, and was asked to cook some Italian and Maltese food. One particular challenge was to prepare a good lasagna in Kampala using only ingredients sourced from a local supermarket (that is, without going to a shopping mall for expats and buying imported pasta, bechamel, parmesan, canned tomatoes, etc. that often cost more than they do in Italy, given that Uganda is a landlocked country). Taking into account that I have very little experience preparing baked pasta and making bechamel and slow-cooking meat sauces from scratch, I believe I managed to prepare a decent dish, though it was a far cry from the mouth-watering lasagna served here by our community cooks on great feast days.

It was also instructive in many ways: in poorer countries, it is not easy to find certain "simple" ingredients, such as tender ground beef (animals are slaughtered at an older age, meat cuts are different from what we are used to), good cheese (people are not used to the flavour of

seasoned cheeses, and to the consumption of hard cheeses in general), or locally-made durum wheat pasta. It is probably easier to find some of the more "exotic flavours" we associate with Asian and North African cuisines: I particularly enjoyed a visit to a spice plantation in Zanzibar during those months in East Africa, as well as the peculiar spicy and tangy flavours of Ethiopian cuisine during a two-week visit to Addis. Ugandans, on the other hand, make delicious dishes with plantains, cassava and rice, for instance, mixed with ground peanuts and other spices.

This story also reminds me also of the times I collaborated or volunteered with JRS in Malta. There was a Jesuit (who is now in Iraq working with Chaldean Christians, Muslims and Yasidis) who visited Ethiopia regularly with Maltese medical students to minister to sisters who accompany AIDS and drug-resistant TB patients there. After each visit, he used to bring back large bags of Horn-of-Africa spice mixes (berberé, mitmitá) for the Eritrean refugees in Malta. For many of the women refugees, it was an extremely precious gift: being able to prepare dishes from one's home country and give them the cherished traditional flavours is a great source of pride and self-esteem. It is very humiliating and depressing for a woman refugee, especially in cultures where family roles are very clearly gendered, not to be able to cook a delicious meal according to the traditional standards of taste and texture, especially when she is facing the effects of PTSD. This is why flavours and spices are such a very serious thing.



Photo: Orientation week for licentiate students in moral theology.



## INTERVIEW WITH IDESBALD NICAISE, PROFESSOR AT KU LEUVEN



*Interview conducted by Quentin Wodon*

*May 2021*

### EXCERPTS:

- “Especially in the human sciences, research is always value-driven. The most ‘dangerous’ theoretical frameworks are those that claim to be neutral, disguised in mathematical models, without making their assumptions explicit.”
- “For many years, I have felt like an outsider at university, frustrated by the terrible competition as well as the arrogance of some scientists. I kept doubting whether an academic career was my destiny. My friends convinced me that this was the way for me to follow my ideals. Today, I’m happy that I stayed.”

**You recently retired as Professor of Economics in the School of Education at KU Leuven. Could you tell us a bit about the University?**

KU Leuven was founded in 1425 and is a comprehensive university. It is one of the largest and most dynamic universities in Europe, with over 60 000 students (1 in 5 are international students). It scores very high in international rankings. As the name suggests, it is a catholic university, although the links with the church have weakened in the past decades.

This Catholic denomination implies that a balance is sought between a value-driven, engaged and inclusive policy on the one hand, and the very competitive business that characterizes universities worldwide. It is a difficult exercise: the pressure on faculty staff has grown out of hand, with a worrying impact on their work-life balance, on gender equity and mental health. Students and young researchers also experience that pressure, along with the wonderful opportunities that we offer them. All in all, teaching at university is a fascinating job, and I’m happy to continue working as emeritus.

#### Box 1: Interview Series

**What is the mission of the Global Catholic Education website?** The site informs and connects Catholic educators globally. It provides them with data, analysis, opportunities to learn, and other resources to help them fulfill their mission with a focus on the preferential option for the poor.

**Why a series of interviews?** Interviews are a great way to share experiences in an accessible and personal way. This series will feature interviews with practitioners as well as researchers working in Catholic education, whether in a classroom, at a university, or with other organizations aiming to strengthen Catholic schools and universities.

**What is the focus of this interview?** In this interview, Ides Nicaise, recently retired as Professor of Economics in the School of Education at KU Leuven, talks about his teaching and research. This interview is part of a series on Catholic economists in partnership with the Catholic Research Economists Discussion Organization (CREDO).

Visit us at [www.GlobalCatholicEducation.org](http://www.GlobalCatholicEducation.org).

**What has been your main area of research and what did you teach? Why did you choose these fields within economics?**

My research focuses on social inclusion, linked with social protection, labor market policies and – mainly - education. My PhD research in the economics of education dealt with the role of education as a leverage to grow out of poverty. When I started doing research in this field, economists had very stereotyped views about the intergenerational transmission of poverty and educational inequalities: research had revealed very attractive rates of return on education; hence, if poor children tend to drop out early from school, it was assumed that the returns were lower for them due to lack of ability, or that the poor don't behave rationally.

Together with other researchers in this field, I concentrated on alternative explanations such as inequalities in material, human, social and cultural resources at home, as well as social and ethnic discrimination and systemic barriers in education. The logical next step was the study of the effectiveness of policy reforms to foster equity and inclusion in education. I have been teaching subjects such as 'education and society', 'equal opportunities in education and lifelong learning' and 'educational economics', which allowed me to share my research insights with students.

**Were you able to share your values in your teaching? What seemed to work and what does not?**

Belgium is one of the most secularized countries in the world. I have never openly shown my religious affiliation with students, but given that education is always value-driven, my courses focused very explicitly on equity, social inclusion and anti-discrimination policy. In lectures on intercultural education, I referred to religion as a key dimension of intercultural tensions. One of my most interesting research projects related to interfaith relationships in primary schools: we found that children discuss issues such as creationism versus the big bang theory on the playground, while paradoxically, most teachers tend to avoid them in class. It was an opportunity for me to emphasize that school education needs to be holistic (including the children's religious and philosophical development), and to advocate active intercultural dialogue rather than so-called neutrality.

**Do your values affect your research? In what way? And what are some challenges you faced or still face today?**

Especially in the human sciences, research is ALWAYS value-driven. The most 'dangerous' theoretical frameworks are those that claim to be neutral, disguised in mathematical models, without making their assumptions explicit. Economic research often lacks that

critical reflection, resulting in caricatures of human behavior and indeed harmful prejudices. In the economics of poverty, for example, one of the popular topics is the alleged dilemma between the adequacy of social protection and work incentives: decent benefits are considered at odds with poor people's motivation to take up work. Implicitly, the behavior of unemployed people is reduced to a choice between leisure time and earnings from work. To begin with, this approach ignores the whole demand side of the labor market; but also the intrinsic desire of job seekers to work, their need for personal fulfilment, their quest for citizenship, etc. A more holistic labor market policy should rather invest in the skills, health, connectedness and well-being of job seekers and their families.

In the economics of education, I already alluded to the simplistic view that attributes early school dropout to irrational behavior or lack of ability or motivation, as if home resources and unequal treatment in education did not matter. More fundamentally, there are different concepts of 'equity' that reflect different worldviews and conceptions of mankind. The meritocratic view of equity, which attributes a major role to innate abilities in the explanation of educational achievement, tends to accept more 'natural' inequalities in education than the egalitarian view; the latter tends to grant more credit to children's potential to develop their cognitive skills (the so-called 'growth mindset'). Although the opposition between both theories offers interesting avenues for empirical research, I think that the egalitarian view is more consistent with the 'Christian worldview' than the meritocratic one.

**Is being a Catholic economist easy or hard, and why is that?**

I don't think that there is any tension between being a Christian and an economist. Being a follower of Christ is demanding, just because the key message of the gospel (the Sermon on the Mount) rows against the stream. It puts our worldly values (wealth, success, competition and power) upside down, and it calls upon us to identify with humble and suffering people.

I carried out a lot of policy-oriented research on social inclusion, social protection and equity in education, trying to foster social and educational reforms in my own country. Yet I saw some of our governments do the opposite: tighten access to social protection, reduce social benefits, push people into poverty and turn back equal opportunity measures in education. It can be frustrating – but this is not commensurate with the suffering of people at the bottom of the social ladder. We have no right to be discouraged, as long as this injustice persists.





Photos: A school visit in Phnomh Penh in the context of a programme impact evaluation for a Belgian NGO; a visit to some alumni in Hanoi; and a 'debate' between classes in The Swallow, a primary school in The Gambia.

**What is your advice for graduates who may be Catholic or have an affinity with Catholic values and are contemplating doing a PhD?**

I would encourage them to be critical: to check all assumptions of the models they use against their own values and examine the implications for the models they test. Of course, this does not mean that empirical evidence needs to be 'molded' into ideological straightjackets: we rather need to test alternative hypotheses against each other. This is genuine scientific research.

I would also encourage them not to hide their religious affiliation. I have a lot of respect for our Muslim co-citizens who publicly affirm their faith. Religion is, after all, the 'cement' of society. A secular society is OK, but this does not mean that religion should be banned from the public sphere. I have always felt that our students and young researchers are searching for more than just knowledge and methods: young people are searching how to build a meaningful future, and many of them have great ideals. Should we then hide our own values from them?

**Could you share how you ended up in your current position, what was your personal journey?**

For many years, I have felt like an outsider at university, frustrated by the terrible competition as well as the

arrogance of some scientists. I kept doubting whether an academic career was my destiny. My friends convinced me that this was the way for me to follow my ideals. Today, I'm happy that I stayed; I discovered that many academics share the same ideals and I feel much more comfortable.

Looking back, I'm also surprised how flexible scientific careers can be. Ending up teaching in education sciences as an economist is rather uncommon. But the university provides the freedom to follow your own creative path and to achieve what you deem valuable.

**Finally, could you share a personal anecdote about yourself, what you are passionate about?**

University is also an incredible cultural crossroads. In our international masters' programme in education studies, we have students from all continents: from the Philippines to Peru, from Canada to Ghana and China and Japan, from Russia to Bolivia. It is a real privilege to teach such an audience. I learned so much from those students: many of them already have some professional experience. Each class is an unbelievable experience of comparative co-construction. I asked some of them to write down their own journey for a "friends' album" at the occasion of my retirement. I secretly hope to visit some of them in the coming years.



## ENTRETIEN AVEC MYRIAM GESCHÉ, DÉLÉGUÉE ÉPISCOPALE POUR L'ENSEIGNEMENT, SEGEC



Entretien réalisé par Quentin Wodon

Février 2021

### EXTRAITS:

- « En Belgique francophone, à l'instar d'autres pays, une Éducation à la Philosophie et à la Citoyenneté a été introduite dans l'ensemble cursus scolaire... Les responsables de deux disciplines [cours de religion et de géographie] ont décidé de créer ensemble un outil numérique qui permet de faire la jonction entre leurs cours ... en se centrant sur la problématique de la vulnérabilité énergétique. »
- « Il me semble que l'outil est novateur de quatre manières : en raison de sa forme numérique, de son contenu, de l'activité proposée aux élèves, et de l'accessibilité et des interactions que l'outil permet. »

Cet entretien est adapté d'un article par Myriam Gesché pour le numéro d'été 2020 du Bulletin *Educatio Si* de l'Office International de l'Enseignement Catholique.

**Lorsque vous étiez avec le Secrétariat général de l'enseignement catholique (SeGEC) en Communautés française et germanophone de Belgique, vous avez créé un outil numérique sur les questions de religion et géographie. Pourquoi cette initiative ?**

En Belgique francophone, à l'instar d'autres pays, une Education à la Philosophie et à la Citoyenneté (EPC) a été introduite dans l'ensemble du cursus scolaire depuis 2016, plus précisément depuis 2017 dans le secondaire. Un référentiel inter-réseaux a été rédigé pour préciser le contenu de cette EPC. Ce référentiel est mis en œuvre de façon différenciée selon les réseaux d'enseignement. Il fait l'objet d'un cours distinct dans l'Enseignement officiel. L'Enseignement catholique, en raison de son projet éducatif, s'est saisi de cette matière d'une manière propre. Son choix a été de l'incarner de manière transversale, dans des disciplines de la grille horaire ou dans des activités éducatives citoyennes solidaires et culturelles développées au sein ou à l'extérieur de l'établissement scolaire.

### Encadré 1: Série d'entretiens

**Quelle est la mission du site Web Global Catholic Education?** Le site informe et connecte les éducateurs catholiques du monde entier. Il leur fournit des données, des analyses, des opportunités d'apprentissage et d'autres ressources pour les aider à remplir leur mission, y compris l'option préférentielle pour les pauvres.

**Pourquoi une série d'entretiens?** Les entretiens permettent de partager des expériences d'une manière accessible et personnelle. Cette série comprendra des entretiens tant avec des praticiens que des chercheurs travaillant sur l'éducation catholique, que ce soit dans les salles de classe, les universités ou d'autres organisations de support aux écoles et universités catholiques.

**Sur quoi porte cet entretien?** Cet entretien est avec Myriam Gesché, Déléguée épiscopale pour l'enseignement du diocèse de Tournai en Belgique. L'entretien fait partie d'une série sur le thème de l'éducation et la digitalisation.

Visitez-nous à [www.GlobalCatholicEducation.org](http://www.GlobalCatholicEducation.org).

Ce choix offre l'avantage de confier à une équipe d'enseignants un objet d'enseignement commun transversal, favorisant ainsi l'émergence de pratiques collaboratives et les regards croisés d'enseignants de disciplines différentes sur le cheminement citoyen des élèves.

Dans une visée humaniste, l'enseignement catholique a saisi l'opportunité de cette réforme pour conjuguer, au travers de cette orientation pédagogique intégrative, les valeurs de l'Évangile auxquelles son projet se réfère et les compétences liées à la philosophie et à la citoyenneté, dans la mesure où elles se renforcent mutuellement.

## Votre outil porte sur la religion et la géographie, en référence à l'encyclique du Pape François *Laudato Si'*. Pourquoi ce choix ?

Une thématique de ce référentiel d'EPC au 3<sup>ème</sup> degré du secondaire *Liberté et responsabilité* a été attribuée conjointement au cours de religion et au cours de géographie. Les responsables de ces deux disciplines ont décidé de créer ensemble un outil numérique qui permet de faire la jonction entre leurs cours autour de cette thématique, en se centrant sur la problématique de la vulnérabilité énergétique. C'est cet outil qui a fait l'objet d'une présentation dans un Lab du congrès de l'OIEC en juin 2019 à New York.

**Religion - Géographie**  
Mise oeuvre transversale de l'éducation à la philosophie et la citoyenneté (EPC)

**CADRE GÉNÉRAL**

Depuis les décrets « Missions » (1997) et, plus encore, « Citoyenneté » (2007), le législateur a manifesté la volonté de placer l'éducation à la citoyenneté au cœur des objectifs éducatifs de l'enseignement obligatoire en Communauté française.

Le décret du 22 octobre 2015 prévoit, quant à lui, que les établissements scolaires de tous les réseaux d'enseignement participent à l'acquisition d'une série de compétences liées à la philosophie et à la citoyenneté.

Dans son article 60bis §3, le décret précise un double objectif :

- le développement de compétences et de savoirs relatifs notamment à l'éducation philosophique et éthique et à l'éducation au fonctionnement démocratique, y compris l'éducation au bien-être ;
- le développement de modes de pensées, de capacités d'argumentation et de raisonnement critiques et autonomes ainsi que le développement d'attitudes responsables, citoyennes et solidaires.

Le choix de l'enseignement catholique a été d'incarner cette éducation à la philosophie et à la citoyenneté dans des disciplines de la grille horaire ou dans « des activités éducatives citoyennes solidaires et culturelles développées au sein ou à l'extérieur de l'établissement scolaire ».

La mise en œuvre de ce nouveau référentiel de compétences ne signifie évidemment pas que ces apprentissages « philosophiques et citoyens » étaient absents du travail quotidien mené par les équipes d'enseignants et qu'il s'agira donc de lancer de tout nouveaux chantiers. Il s'agit ici de formaliser des pratiques pédagogiques porteuses et déjà bien implantées dans nos programmes et dans la vie de nos écoles.

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Exemples de supports pour une production hypermédiatique collaborative

## Quels sont les objectifs visés par l'outil ? (voir <http://epc.scienceshumaines.be/wordpress/>)

La compétence générale qui y est ciblée est *Problématiser les concepts de responsabilité et de liberté comme conditions de possibilité de l'engagement individuel et collectif*. Cet outil constitue un ensemble de supports documentaires mis à disposition des élèves. L'objectif qui leur est donné est la réalisation d'une production hyper-médiatique.<sup>1</sup> pour sensibiliser des pairs face à cette problématique de la vulnérabilité énergétique.

Chacune des disciplines apporte des éclairages, d'une part pour permettre aux élèves de comprendre les composantes et les enjeux liés à cette problématique, d'autre part pour les guider dans la réalisation de leur production : une exposition virtuelle en vue de faire prendre conscience à leurs pairs de la manière dont se jouent la liberté et la responsabilité, à une échelle locale et globale, au regard de la problématique de la vulnérabilité énergétique. L'idée est de les inviter à un engagement individuel ou collectif au service du bien commun, en vue de réduire la dépendance énergétique.

<sup>1</sup> Pratique artistique intégrant un principe associatif entre des images, du texte et du son dans une interface de type écran. Elle se caractérise par des hyperliens, une non-linéarité, la

présence d'une interactivité soutenue, l'interconnexion, et une grande hétérogénéité.



Parmi les éclairages fournis aux élèves, l'encyclique *Laudato si'* du Pape François représente un élément clé. Le cours de géographie quant à lui apporte des données spatiales qui permettent de se représenter concrètement différentes données du problème: déplacements, cartes illustrant l'état de l'habitat sous l'angle énergétique... Des consignes précises sont données aux élèves pour la réalisation de la tâche. Un schéma de parcours ainsi que des ressources supplémentaires sont proposés aux professeurs pour leur permettre d'approfondir certains objets liés à la problématique traitée.

Le blog peut être utilisé selon des modalités variables : soit pour mettre les élèves au travail en vue de réaliser la production numérique proposée, soit comme un manuel électronique à disposition des enseignants leur permettant de choisir des ressources à exploiter par leurs élèves selon les consignes qu'ils définiront. Si l'outil est prévu au départ pour des élèves du troisième degré qualifiant, une série de ressources et de tâches peuvent être adaptées pour des élèves plus jeunes. A mon sens, chacun pourra en tirer des idées, quel que soit son contexte, quel que soit son pays.

### **Selon vous, en quoi l'outil est-il novateur ?**

Il me semble que l'outil est novateur de quatre manières : en raison de sa forme numérique, de son contenu, de l'activité proposée aux élèves, et de l'accessibilité et des interactions que l'outil permet.

*En raison de sa forme numérique.* Il permet d'intégrer des documents variés (images, textes, son et vidéos), de faire des liens vers d'autres documents, des revues et des sites. D'un simple clic, les ressources sélectionnées sont mises à disposition. Cette forme lui permet aussi de rester évolutif. En fonction de l'actualité, de nouvelles ressources peuvent être rapidement intégrées dans l'outil : un blog Wordpress. La crise du coronavirus qui sévit au moment où j'écris cet article ajoute une plus-value toute particulière à cette forme numérique à l'heure où les enseignants doivent organiser leur enseignement à distance .

*En raison de son contenu.* La problématique de la vulnérabilité énergétique est une question d'actualité importante pour chacun et pour l'ensemble des citoyens. Traitée dans l'optique d'une recherche du bien commun inspirée par l'encyclique *Laudato si'*, elle représente un angle d'approche qui permet de percevoir combien les dimensions écologiques, économiques et sociales sont liées. Le sujet se prête donc très bien à une approche décloisonnée, interdisciplinaire. Si le cours de religion, le cours de géographie et l'éducation à la philosophie et à la citoyenneté sont directement concernés par cet outil, les cours de sciences, de sciences économiques, d'art, d'informatique ainsi que d'autres disciplines et même des

cours pratiques peuvent aussi apporter leur contribution à ce parcours pédagogique.

*En raison de l'activité proposée aux élèves.* La réalisation d'une production hyper-médiatique sous la forme d'une exposition numérique est une forme de production nouvelle qui permet aux élèves d'être créatifs et de se familiariser avec des outils numériques qui seront de plus en plus présents dans leur environnement. La présélection de ressources et les consignes qui leurs sont données les guident dans la recherche d'informations sur Internet et dans l'usage critique et pertinent qu'ils peuvent en faire. En outre, l'activité suppose des démarches individuelles et collectives que les élèves doivent articuler dans leur production, ce qui représente aussi un apprentissage intéressant.

*En raison de l'accessibilité et des interactions que l'outil permet.* Cet outil est accessible gratuitement en ligne. Il permet des interactions avec les internautes par des commentaires sur le blog. Il favorise le partage d'idées et les réflexions critiques. Il peut participer au développement d'une culture pédagogique collective et donner l'idée à d'autres enseignants de réaliser de tels outils sur d'autres thématiques à partager sur la toile.

### **Pourriez-vous nous donner un aperçu de quelques ressources dans l'outil pour les professeurs ?**

La référence aux programmes et aux référentiels des différentes disciplines concernées et le cadrage proposé aux professeurs de religion et de géographie leur donnent les éléments utiles pour situer leur séquence d'apprentissage dans l'ensemble de la matière à voir.

Parmi les [documents](#) proposés aux élèves, en voici quelques-uns sans ordre logique ou chronologique établi, qui vous donneront, je l'espère, l'envie de découvrir le blog et surtout de l'utiliser. Un article intitulé [Des penseurs s'expriment](#) propose aux élèves quatre courtes vidéos par lesquelles quatre personnalités expriment leur manière d'envisager le rapport au monde en partant d'un sujet relatif à l'usage de l'énergie : Dominique Bourg, Elon Musk, Bertrand Picard et Pierre Rabhi. Les élèves ayant par ailleurs exploré avec leur professeur la notion de « bien commun », doivent discerner ce qui selon eux, dans le propos de chacune des personnalités, va dans le sens du bien commun ou bien s'en éloigne. On les invite à chercher et analyser le discours d'autres personnalités avec la même clé d'analyse.

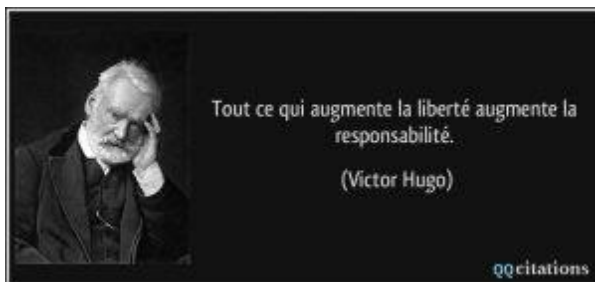
[Les récits bibliques de la création](#) sont donnés à lire, avec le support de deux dessins animés très suggestifs de bonne qualité. Ces textes seront abordés de façon méthodique avec l'appui de l'enseignant. Il s'agira ensuite pour les élèves d'y discerner à quel mode de rapport à la nature et aux autres humains ces récits invitent.

Une prise en compte de [La diversité des représentations culturelles du rapport entre l'homme et la nature](#) est nécessaire pour gérer la transition écologique. Entre rapport de maîtrise ou d'exploitation d'une part et symbiose d'autre part, entre anthropocentrisme (mettre l'homme au centre de l'univers) et bio-centrisme (mettre la vie comme fin en soi au centre de tout, l'homme n'étant qu'un vivant parmi d'autres), quelle transition graduelle pouvons-nous entrevoir ? Des œuvres artistiques qui illustrent des points de vue différents du rapport à la nature sont proposées aux élèves. Ceux-ci doivent les analyser et en choisir d'autres pour enrichir leur exposition numérique.

Un travail un peu analogue est proposé à partir de [chansons](#). Il s'agira pour les élèves de discerner celles qui sont des appels à l'engagement ou qui au contraire sont démobilisatrices.



[L'encyclique Laudato si' du Pape François pour une écologie intégrale](#) est évidemment largement présentée dans le blog. Une série de passages directement liés à la problématique de la vulnérabilité énergétique ou liés à des de concepts abordés dans le parcours sont sélectionnés. Il est demandé notamment aux élèves de traduire quelques idées clés de cette encyclique et de les illustrer dans leur exposition numérique.



Un article intitulé ["Harceler le politique" face à l'urgence écologique](#) propose une vidéo de l'astrophysicien Aurélien Barreau. Dans son message, les élèves sont amenés à discerner ce qui relève de la responsabilité individuelle et/ou collective et ce qu'il dit de la liberté des individus. Les élèves sont invités à s'inspirer des propos de ce conférencier pour illustrer les mondes

possibles vers lesquels nous pouvons encore choisir de nous orienter.

### Qu'en est-il des ressources disponibles dans l'outil pour les élèves?

Voici quelques exemples de *documents élèves*. Vous en trouverez bien d'autres, accompagnés de consignes pour les exploiter. S'y trouvent également une série d'informations sur l'énergie, la notion de précarité ou de vulnérabilité énergétique, des données sur la mobilité en Belgique, une carte des navetteurs, une carte de la vulnérabilité énergétique...

Comme les élèves ciblés par cet outil sont dans l'enseignement qualifiant, ils seront amenés à réfléchir à ce que pourraient être [des choix énergétiques responsables dans leur secteur professionnel](#). Sous l'onglet [Ressources professeurs](#), les enseignants trouveront un lien vers [les Cahiers du développement durable](#), une publication à destination des écoles techniques et professionnelles en Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles. Un chapitre y est consacré à l'énergie.

Un article [« Trajectoire vers le bien commun », boussole éthique](#) renvoie à une étude de la Commission Justice et Paix. Cette étude contient un outil pratique sous forme de tableau qui constitue "une boussole éthique" à l'usage de toute personne sur le point de prendre une décision sociale. Il est conçu selon trois volets: Bien commun et justice sociale ; Bien commun et environnement ; Bien commun et démocratie. Il est proposé aux enseignants d'adapter les questions qui constituent cette boussole à la problématique de la vulnérabilité énergétique, en interaction avec les élèves.

Une fiche technique synthétique pour faire entrer les élèves dans [la démarche philosophique](#), des compléments philosophiques, le lien vers l'ouvrage en ligne de Michel Sauquet et Martin Vielajus sur [L'intelligence interculturelle](#) et d'autres références utiles viennent compléter les *ressources professeurs*.

### Quelques mots de conclusion sur votre expérience ?

Je voudrais vous proposer de découvrir vous-même l'[outil](#), de le partager avec d'autres, de vous en servir comme il vous semblera le plus pertinent pour vos élèves et de créer de nouveaux outils à partager sur la toile. Vous verrez que les dernières ressources de l'outil datent de 2019, en partie parce que j'ai quitté le Secrétariat général de l'enseignement catholique pour prendre de nouvelles fonctions au diocèse de Tournai. Mais il reste bien d'actualité, continue d'être une référence pour les enseignants et est utilisé de diverses manières. C'est un outil précurseur pour la mise en œuvre de l'éducation philosophique et citoyenne à travers plusieurs disciplines. Il pourra, je l'espère, continuer à en inspirer d'autres.



# Responding to the Call from Pope Francis: Seven Commitments for a Global Compact on Education

