



# Apporto delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice all'educazione (1872-2022)

PERCORSI, SFIDE E PROSPETTIVE

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## **EDUCATION FOR INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AT A TIME OF CRISIS: REMARKS FOR THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FMA CONGREGATION**

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### **Introduction**

For 150 years, as Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, you have provided education with a particular focus on girls from vulnerable backgrounds. You have changed millions of lives. Over the last two years, I had the opportunity to interview several members of your congregation: Sister Patricia Parraguez Núñez in Chile, Sister Joséphine Chulu in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sister Mickerlyne Cadet in Haïti, Sister Anecie Audate and Sister Martha Séide in Italy, Sister Josephine Garzain and Sister Maria Victoria Sta. Ana in the Philippines, and finally Sister Sarah Garcia in Switzerland.<sup>2</sup> These sisters and all of you are doing extraordinary work, often with limited resources. I am honored to have been invited to participate in your Congress and I hope that the Congress will be a source for inspiration not only for the continuation of your own work, but also for the work of others who share your passion for education.

We live in a challenging time marked by wars, climate change, heightened competition, and a lack of resources for education. For today's session, the organizers asked me to share a few thoughts on some of these challenges and how they may affect schools and universities as well as children and youth. As I work for an international development agency, let me emphasize that my remarks today emerge from my volunteer work on Catholic education. They reflect only my own views, and not necessarily the views of my employer, its Executive Director, or the countries they represent.

I have been given 45 minutes to share thoughts on those themes, after which we will have discussants and a broader exchange of views and experiences. So let me try to share at least some nuggets of information that I hope will be useful to you. I will structure my

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was prepared for a presentation at the 150th Anniversary Congress of the Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice congregation. The views expressed in this paper are those of the author only and may not reflect the views of the author's employer, its Executive Director, or the countries they represent.

<sup>2</sup> The interviews are available at <https://www.globalcatholiceducation.org/interviews>.



presentation around seven topics: (1) the lack of sufficient progress towards ensuring quality education for all; (2) the potential impact of the current overlapping crises that are affecting much of the world; (3) the importance of education, especially for girls; (4) the need for a stronger focus on improving learning; (5) the importance of including a focus on values in education; (6) the contribution of Catholic and other faith-based education providers to education systems and the issue of education pluralism; and finally (7) a few opportunities for Catholic schools and universities related to alumni engagement, service-learning, and their global footprint.<sup>3</sup>

## 1. Lack of Progress Towards SDG4

You are all familiar with the fourth Sustainable Development Goal or SDG4, which is to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” Most countries are unlikely to meet the 10 targets associated with the goal. Just over a week ago, the United Nations organized a major summit in New York on the need to transform education. A number of commitments were made, and analysis was carried before the summit on five action tracks that could help make progress. But before discussing what could be done to improve educational outcomes for children and youths, let me first summarize some of the stylized facts on where we stand.

Globally, according to data from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics available in the World Bank’s World Development Indicators, nine in ten children complete their primary education, and three in four complete their lower secondary education. In low-income countries however, despite some progress over the last two decades, only two-thirds (67%) of children complete their primary education, and less than 40% complete lower secondary school. The latest estimates from UNESCO suggest that 244 million children remain out of school, with the number of out-of-school children increasing in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>4</sup>

As a congregation, you have a particular interest in educating girls and more generally with providing them with better opportunities in life. Girls have caught up with boys for primary education completion rates in most countries, but they continue to lag behind boys at the secondary level in many low-income countries. This is due in part to the high prevalence in those countries of both child marriage (defined as marrying before the age of 18) and early childbearing (defined as having a first child before the age of 18). While some countries are making progress than others, especially in South Asia, progress is much too slow to achieve the targets for SDG4, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. The poor and

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<sup>3</sup> Part of this paper updates an analysis for a report by the Caritas in Veritate Foundation. See Wodon, Q. 2019. Editorial: Education, The Rights of the Child, and Development, in A. de La Rochefoucauld and C. M. Marengi. Editors. *Education as a Driver to Integral Growth and Peace: Ethical Reflections on the Right to Education*. The Caritas in Veritate Foundation Working Papers. Chambésy, Switzerland: Caritas in Veritate Foundation.

<sup>4</sup> See Global Education Monitoring Report Team and UNESCO Institute for Statistics. 2022. *New estimation confirms out-of-school population is growing in sub-Saharan Africa*. Paris: UNESCO.

vulnerable continue to be left behind with major implications for their opportunities later in life.

Apart from low levels of educational attainment in many countries, children suffer from a global learning crisis, with too many students – especially again in the developing world – not acquiring the foundational skills that education systems should provide. Based on data from international and regional student assessments, simulations suggests that in part due to the COVID-19 pandemic, seven in ten children aged 10 in low- and middle-income countries may not be able to read and understand a simple text.<sup>5</sup> As a Congregation, beyond literacy, you emphasize socio-emotional skills in the education that you provide. Performance on socio-emotional skills is harder to measure, but if education systems fail on basic cognitive skills such as literacy or numeracy, it is unlikely that they provide great socio-emotional skills.

Low levels of educational attainment and a lack in learning in schools as well as poor health outcomes contribute to low levels of human capital. In 2018, the World Bank suggested the use of a new Human Capital Index to assess how the performance of countries on a small number of education and health indicators could affect productivity in adulthood.<sup>6</sup> The education component of the index combines data on the average number of years of schooling that children in various countries are expected to complete, with data on what they actually learn while in school. This leads to the concept of learning-adjusted years of schooling. Globally, across all countries for which data are available, the latest available data for the year 2020 suggest that children are expected to complete 11.3 years of schooling on average.<sup>7</sup> But this is only valued at 7.8 years under the learning-adjusted measure. In other words, 3.5 years of schooling or almost one third (31%) of the average expected years of schooling are “lost” due to insufficient learning. In low-income countries, these measures are much lower. Most countries with very low performance are located in sub-Saharan Africa,<sup>8</sup> and these estimates are likely to have further deteriorated due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

While many children are at risk of dropping out and/or not learning enough while in school, children in extreme poverty are especially at risk. Another group at risk that I would like to mention is children with disabilities. While primary and secondary completion rates increased for all children over the last few decades and especially for the poorest, smaller gains were achieved for children with disabilities. This has led to larger gaps between children with and without disabilities over time. Similar trends are observed for literacy rates. Regression analysis suggests large negative effects of exclusion associated with

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<sup>5</sup> See World Bank et al. 2022. *The State of Global Learning Poverty: 2022 Update*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

<sup>6</sup> World Bank. 2018. *The Human Capital Project*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

<sup>7</sup> This is an average across countries, not weighting countries by their respective population. The data are available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/human-capital#Index>.

<sup>8</sup> World Bank, 2019. *Africa Human Capital Plan: Powering Africa's Potential through Its People*, Washington, DC: The World Bank.

disabilities, for both completion and literacy rates.<sup>9</sup> Disabilities are also associated with lower performance on student assessments. In francophone Africa, data for ten Francophone countries<sup>10</sup> suggest that controlling for other factors affecting learning, children with hearing or seeing difficulties tend to do worse on mathematics and reading tests in all but one of ten countries that participated in the assessment for primary schools. Unfortunately, screening in school for visual and hearing impairments is rare, and less than one in ten teachers benefit from in-service training on inclusive education. Among a dozen categories of in-service training, this is the category with the lowest coverage rate for teachers across the ten countries.<sup>11</sup>

## 2. Overlapping Crises and Challenges

The organizers of the Congress asked me to reflect on some of the societal trends that affect how we think about education and some of the factors that are contributing to a lack of progress towards achieving the targets set forth in SDG4. Today, we are facing a set of overlapping crises and challenges that have implications either for education systems as a whole, as well as for Catholic schools and universities in particular. Let me mention six of those current crises or challenges.

(1) *A worsening learning crisis due to the pandemic.* As already mentioned, simulations based on data from student assessments suggest that in low- and middle-income countries, seven in ten children aged 10 are not able to read and understand a simple text.<sup>12</sup> Before the pandemic, the estimate was at just over one in two students. School closures during the pandemic have had a devastating effect on learning, especially in poorer countries where quality distance learning was not a viable option, especially when most families did not have connectivity to the internet (including families with children in Catholic schools<sup>13</sup>). Importantly, the learning crisis is likely to affect children in Catholic as well as public schools.<sup>14</sup> I will come back to some of the programs and policies that could

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<sup>9</sup> Male, C., and Q. Wodon. 2017. *Disability Gaps in Educational Attainment and Literacy*. The Price of Exclusion: Disability and Education Notes Series, Washington, DC: The World Bank.

<sup>10</sup> The data are from the 2014 round of PASEC (Programme d'analyse des systèmes éducatifs de la CONFEMEN).

<sup>11</sup> Wodon, Q., C. Male, C. E. Montenegro, and A. Nayihouba. 2018. *The Challenge of Inclusive Education in Africa*. The Price of Exclusion: Disability and Education Notes Series, Washington, DC: The World Bank. See also Wodon, Q., C. Male, A. Nayihouba, and E. Smith. 2019. *Looking Ahead: Visual Impairment and School Eye Health Programs*. The Price of Exclusion: Disability and Education Notes Series, Washington, DC: The World Bank.

<sup>12</sup> World Bank et al. 2022. *The State of Global Learning Poverty: 2022 Update*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

<sup>13</sup> On the pandemic and Catholic schools, see Wodon, Q. 2020. Covid-19 Crisis, Impacts on Catholic Schools, and Potential Responses, Part II: Developing Countries with Focus on sub-Saharan Africa, *Journal of Catholic Education*, 23(1): 51-86. On digital connectivity, see Wodon, Q. 2021. Digital Connectivity, COVID-19 Crisis and Catholic Schools: Part 1 – Global and Regional Analysis, *International Journal of Education Law and Policy*, 117-132, and Wodon Q., C. Male, and A. Nayihouba. 2021. Digital Connectivity, COVID-19 Crisis and Catholic Schools: Part 2 – Case Study for Benin, *International Journal of Education Law and Policy*, 133-151. On the United States, see finally Wodon, Q. 2020. Covid-19 Crisis, Impacts on Catholic Schools, and Potential Responses, Part II: Developing Countries with Focus on sub-Saharan Africa, *Journal of Catholic Education*, 23(1): 51-86, as well as the other contributions included in the special issue of *Journal of Catholic Education* on this topic.

<sup>14</sup> See Wodon, Q. And C. Tsimpo. 2021. Not All Catholic Schools Are Private Schools: Does It Matter for Student Performance?, *International Studies in Catholic Education*, 13(2): 175-189.

help improve learning later in the context, but let me first briefly mention some of the other overlapping crises we are currently facing.

(2) *Rising inflation, policy responses, and the risks for unemployment and poverty.* Inflation was already substantial before the start of the war in Ukraine, but the war has further disrupted commodity markets, leading to higher prices especially for energy and food. Measures taken to fight inflation in high-income countries may lead the global economy to fall into a recession according to a recent World Bank note.<sup>15</sup> In turn, this could possibly lead to financial crises in emerging market and developing economies. The note suggests that the global economy may face its worst downturn since the 1970s, a period during which policy responses to high inflation led to stagflation (a combination of high inflation, low growth, and high unemployment) as well as severe debt crises in many developing economies. Such a scenario could lead many more households to fall into poverty, which would affect their ability to send their children to school. A global recession may also affect the sustainability of some Catholic schools in countries where the schools do not benefit from state funding and therefore rely on tuition paid by parents to cover their operating costs. This is because when households are affected by shocks that reduce their incomes, they may need to shift their children from private to public schools.<sup>16</sup>

(3) *Rising debts and constrained budgets.* Many countries have accumulated debt at unsustainable levels in recent years. Measures to combat inflation in developed countries, and in particular in the United States, are exacerbating the debt crisis faced by these countries. Interest rates are rapidly increasing, leading for higher debt payments for loans that are not in concessional terms. In addition, the rise in the value of the dollar which results in part from higher interest rates in the United States and the perception of the country as a safe haven for investments in periods of crisis is leading to even higher debt payments because most loans, including those provided in concessional terms, tend to be denominated in dollars. Given higher debt obligations, the possibility of lower tax revenues in case of a recession, and the need to fund safety nets, the availability of resources for the education sector is likely to be limited. The latest Education Finance Watch report published jointly by UNESCO and the World Bank<sup>17</sup> suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic led to larger gaps between actual and required investments in education. Around 40% of low- and lower-middle income countries reduced public spending for education since the onset of the pandemic. The data also suggest that bilateral donors decreased aid earmarked for the education sector as they prioritized support for health and social protection and efforts to mitigate the consequences of the war in Ukraine and other crises.

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<sup>15</sup> Guénette, J. D., M. A. Kose, and N. Sugawara. 2022. *Is a Global Recession Imminent? Equitable Growth, Finance, and Institutions Policy Note No. 4*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

<sup>16</sup> See for example Elmallakh, N., and Q. Wodon. 2021. *How Do Shocks Affect Enrollment in Public, Faith-Based, and Other Private Schools? Evidence from West Africa*, *International Studies in Catholic Education*, 13(2): 245-256.

<sup>17</sup> UNESCO and World Bank. 2022. *Education Finance Watch 2022*. Paris and Washington, DC: UNESCO Global Economic Monitoring Report, UNESCO Institute of Statistics, and the World Bank.

(4) *Conflicts, climate change, and forcibly displaced peoples.* The war in Ukraine has also exacerbated the refugee crisis. For World Refugee Day, UNHCR published its latest report on global trends in forced displacement.<sup>18</sup> At the end of 2021, 89.3 million people had been forcibly displaced.<sup>19</sup> This is more than twice the level a decade ago. For refugees specifically, at the end of 2021, more than two thirds came from just five countries: the Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar. Before the start of the war in Ukraine, the countries hosting the largest number of refugees were: Türkiye, Colombia, Uganda, Pakistan, and Germany. Preliminary estimates from UNHCR suggest that as of early June 2022, in large part due to the war in in Ukraine, the number of forcibly displaced people topped more than 100 million globally. The forced displacement crisis may well worsen in coming decades, in particular due to the impact of climate change. Educating forcibly displaced children will be a massive challenge, but as noted by Father René Micallef, SJ, in a recent interview, “*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.*” There is also a need to educating other children about the plight of refugees in a comprehensive way. As Father René puts it: “*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*”.<sup>20</sup>

(5) *Labor markets and the changing nature of work.* An additional challenge is broader. It relates to the changing nature of work and its implications for education systems if they are to provide the skills that children and youth will need to have decent jobs.<sup>21</sup> Fears of job displacement from technology and artificial intelligence may be overstated as technology could also bring new job opportunities and lead to smarter delivery mechanisms for basic services. Still, the changing nature of work implies that workers need to become team-oriented problem-solvers who can adapt to changing circumstances. While cognitive skills emphasize mastery of subject-specific knowledge, socio-emotional skills relate to how we behave, including how we motivate ourselves and how we interact with others. High-order cognitive and socio-behavioral skills will be increasingly needed in labor markets. Enabling children to acquire these skills requires investment to build human capital starting from an early age, especially for disadvantaged groups. It is sometimes suggested that an emphasis on learning performance, as measured through national or international standardized student assessments, is misplaced, as it may lead to over-emphasizing cognitive skills and success on examinations to the detriment of socio-emotional skills. The argument has some relevance if only to avoid the risk of “teaching to the test” becoming a

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<sup>18</sup> UNHCR. 2022. *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2021*. Geneva, Switzerland: UNHCR.

<sup>19</sup> Of the 89.3 million forcibly displaced people, 53.2 million are internally displaced, 27.1 million are refugees, and 4.6 million are asylum seekers. The total number of forcibly displaced people includes additional categories.

<sup>20</sup> The interview is available at <https://www.globalcatholiceducation.org/interviews>.

<sup>21</sup> World Bank. 2019. *World Development Report 2019: The Changing Nature of Work*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

dominant practice. But the argument may also be overstated. Without foundational skills such as basic literacy and numeracy, it is harder to nurture socio-emotional skills. Students in schools that do well on cognitive skills often do well also on socio-emotional skills. Rather than pitting one set of skills against the other, we need to recognize that both are needed, and may reinforce each other. Success in one area helps students to achieve success in the other. And the need to better prepare students for labor markets is unescapable.

(6) *Secularization*. Finally, from the point of view of Catholic schools and universities, I should mention the challenge of secularization. Consider the case of the United States where enrollment in Catholic schools has declined for more than half a century.<sup>22</sup> As noted in the latest Pew Research Center study on trends in religious affiliations in the country, in 2021 less than two thirds (63 percent) of the adult population identified as Christian, versus 78 percent in 2007.<sup>23</sup> Most of the decline was concentrated among Protestants, but it may still affect future enrollment in Catholic schools negatively. In proportion to base values in 2007, the share of the adult population praying daily decreased even more, and still a larger drop was observed for the share of adults considering religion as very important in their life. Apart from these broad trends towards secularization, the sex abuse scandal that has affected the Catholic Church may also have contributed to lower enrollment in Catholic schools. One question that arises from these trends is how the focus on faith formation in Catholic schools may be perceived in the population. Market research for the National Catholic Educational Association<sup>24</sup> suggests that: (1) While many parents do want their children to develop strong morals and good values, they worry that Catholic school teachings may be too rigid and prevent children from considering other points of view; (2) Not surprisingly, parents are concerned about tuition costs in Catholic schools – this is an affordability issue; and (3) Marketing materials focusing on religious instruction would probably not help to increase enrollment. This of course does not mean that Catholic schools should abandon their evangelical mission, but it suggests that they may need to carefully think about how to implement this mission in today’s environment.

### **3. Benefits from Education, Especially for Girls**

So far, I have focused mostly on the challenges faced by education systems, including Catholic schools and universities, and the particular crises faced by the world today. Let me now shift to the rationale for better investments in education and strategies that could help improve outcomes. Consider first the benefits from education. More needs

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<sup>22</sup> This paragraph follows Wodon, Q. 2022. Decline in Student Enrollment, Parental Willingness to Consider Catholic Schools, and Sources of Comparative Advantage in the United States, *Journal of Global Catholicism*, 6(2): 94-115.

<sup>23</sup> Smith, G. A. 2021. About Three in Ten U.S. Adults Are Now Religiously Unaffiliated. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.

<sup>24</sup> FADICA and NCEA. 2018. *The Catholic School Choice: Understanding the Perspectives of Parents and Opportunities for More Engagement*. Washington, DC: FADICA and NCEA.

to be done to improve educational opportunities for children and youth, especially in low- and middle-income countries. This is not only because of the intrinsic benefits that education provides, but also because education has a substantial impact on other areas of children's lives, including their future opportunities in adulthood. To show how education matters, consider its benefits in a few areas, especially for girls and women, and for their children.

(1) *Labor market earnings and poverty reduction:* Education is key to escaping poverty. According to estimates,<sup>25</sup> men and women with primary education (partial or completed) earn only 20- 30% more on average than those with no education at all. However, these impacts are observed only when workers actually learned while in school, as proxied (given data limitations) by whether or not they are literate. Learning in primary school is also necessary in most countries in order to pursue education at the secondary level or higher, and this is where the labor market returns on education are larger. Indeed, men and women with secondary education may expect to make almost twice as much as those with no education at all, and those with tertiary education may expect to make three times as much as those with no education. In addition, secondary and tertiary education are often (albeit not always) associated with higher labor force participation (especially full-time work for women) and a lower likelihood of unemployment. Since labor earnings are key for households to avoid poverty, improving education – both in terms of educational attainment and learning – has the potential to reduce poverty dramatically.<sup>26</sup>

(2) *Child marriage, fertility, and women's health:* Poor education outcomes have negative impacts for both men and women, but not educating girls is especially costly. When girls drop out of school, they are more likely to marry or have children at an age when they are not yet ready to do so, whether physically or emotionally. This in turn leads to a wide range of negative consequences not only for them, but also for their children and societies as a whole.<sup>27</sup> Keeping girls in secondary school until they graduate is one of the best ways to end child marriage and early childbearing.<sup>28</sup> Each additional year of secondary education is associated with a reduction in the risks of child marriage and early childbearing. Universal secondary education for girls could virtually eliminate child marriage and thereby also reduce the prevalence of early childbearing by three fourths.<sup>29</sup> In addition, women who have children earlier (including when they are still children themselves) tend to have more children over their lifetime. By reducing the risks of child marriage and early childbearing,

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<sup>25</sup> Montenegro, C. E., and Q. Wodon. 2019. Measuring the Returns to Quality in Primary Education Globally Using Literacy as a Proxy, Mimeo, Washington, DC: The World Bank.

<sup>26</sup> UNESCO Institute of Statistics. 2017. *Reducing Global Poverty through Universal Primary and Secondary Education*. Policy paper 32/Fact Sheet 44. Montreal, Canada: UNESCO Institute of Statistics.

<sup>27</sup> Wodon, Q., C. Montenegro, H. Nguyen, and A. Onagoruwa. 2018. *Missed Opportunities: The High Cost of Not Educating Girls*. The Cost of Not Educating Girls Notes Series. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

<sup>28</sup> Botea, I., S. Chakravarty, and S. Haddock, and Q. Wodon. 2017. Interventions Improving Sexual and Reproductive Health Outcomes and Delaying Child Marriage and Childbearing for Adolescent Girls, *Ending Child Marriage Notes Series*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

<sup>29</sup> Wodon, Q., C. Male, and A. Onagoruwa. 2020. A Simple Approach to Measuring the Share of Early Childbirths Likely Due to Child Marriage in Developing Countries, *Forum for Social Economics*, 49(2): 166-79.

as well as providing agency for women, universal secondary education could also indirectly reduce fertility rates by up to a third in many developing countries.<sup>30</sup> This, in turn, would reduce population growth in those countries, accelerate the demographic transition, and potentially generate a large demographic dividend which could help in raising standards of living and reducing poverty. Finally, analysis suggests that universal secondary education for girls would increase women's health knowledge and their ability to seek care, improve their psychological well-being, and reduce the risk of intimate partner violence.<sup>31</sup>

(3) *Child health and nutrition*: Education for children has potentially large intergenerational impacts when the children become parents. It is obvious that educated parents are better equipped to help their children succeed in school. But parental education also matters for health and nutrition. Even after controlling for many other factors affecting under-five mortality and stunting (an indicator of malnutrition), children born of better educated mothers have lower risks of dying by age five or being stunted. In addition, children born of mothers who were younger than 18 at the time of their birth, also face a higher risk of dying by age five or being stunted. Thus, better education reduces these risks both directly and indirectly through its impact on early childbearing. Universal secondary education for mothers and fathers would also, as abovementioned, reduce household poverty, which again would be beneficial for reducing under-five mortality and stunting rates. Finally, children born of educated mothers are more likely to be registered at birth, a key right for children that may influence the life-long exercise of a range of other rights, including political and civil rights throughout life.<sup>32</sup>

(4) *Agency and decision-making*: Better educated men and women tend to have more agency in their lives. Agency can be broadly defined as the capacity to exercise choice. It depends on the enabling environment – including policies, regulations, and social norms at the community or societal level-, as well as whether men and women have access to specific resources. It also depends on a person's past achievements, since past achievements can impact, among other things, a person's level of confidence. Education clearly has an impact on the resources available to individuals, including through its impact on labor market earnings. It affects past achievements, capabilities, and confidence. Dropping out of school, for example, can undermine such confidence. But education also affects the decision-making ability in other ways: for women, lack of educational attainment leads to lower decision-making ability within their households. Research suggests that achieving universal secondary education could increase by one tenth women's reported ability to make decisions, whether by themselves or jointly with their partner, from baseline values. Better educated women and men also report lower satisfaction rates with basic services. This may

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<sup>30</sup> Analysis based on estimates provided in Onagoruwa, A., and Q. Wodon. 2018. Measuring the Impact of Child Marriage on Total Fertility: A Study for Fifteen Countries, *Journal of Biosocial Science*, 50(5): 626-39.

<sup>31</sup> Wodon, Q., A. Onagoruwa, C. Malé, C. Montenegro, H. Nguyen, and B. De la Brière. 2019. How Large Is the Gender Dividend? Measuring Selected Impacts and Costs of Gender Inequality. *The Cost of Gender Inequality Notes Series*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

<sup>32</sup> Estimates in this paragraph and the next two are from Wodon, Montenegro, et al., op cit.

sound paradoxical, but may reflect better agency and a more realistic assessment of their quality.

(5) *Social capital and institutions*: A secondary or tertiary education is also associated with a higher reported likelihood of being able to rely on friends when in financial need. Achieving universal secondary education could enable more women and men to engage in altruistic behaviors such as volunteering, donating to charity, and helping strangers. This is of course not because those who are better educated are intrinsically more altruistic than those who are less well educated. Rather, individuals with more education are often in a better position to be able to help others.

#### **4. Improving Learning: An Imperative**

While primary education is necessary, it is not sufficient for children to thrive later in life. For many of the development outcomes just mentioned, having a primary education does not make a large difference versus having no education at all. For boys and girls alike, the gains associated with educational attainment are much larger with secondary education than with primary education. This is likely, in part, a reflection of the failure of many education systems to deliver learning of foundational skills in the early grades. Adequate learning needs to occur early on in order to reap the full benefits of education. But the implication is that it is also essential to enable children to pursue their education at the secondary level.

The issues of schooling and learning are like two facets of the same coin. Schooling is necessary for learning, but learning is also necessary for schooling. Indeed, without learning, it is very difficult for children to remain in school, and for many parents to make the financial sacrifices needed to keep their children in school. While some countries are improving the performance of students in school, average performance on student assessments may be worsening in others. In low-income countries, policies ensuring free basic education have enabled more students from disadvantaged backgrounds to go to school and remain in school longer. However, as they come from more disadvantaged backgrounds, some of these students may be less prepared for school. They may do poorly unless special efforts are made to enable them to thrive. In addition, as more children go to school due to population growth and gains in enrollment rates, education systems may become overstretched, including in their ability to ensure that all teachers are qualified and well-trained and that sufficient schools are available to welcome all children.

What can be done to improve learning specifically? Literature reviews<sup>33</sup> suggest – not surprisingly – that better pedagogy in the classroom is key, especially when teachers adapt their teaching to students' individual learning needs. Some teachers are truly inspirational. This is the case of Brother Peter Tabichi, a Franciscan teaching in a public secondary school

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<sup>33</sup> See for example Evans, D., and A. Popova. 2016. What Really Works to Improve Learning in Developing Countries? An Analysis of Divergent Findings in Systematic Reviews, *World Bank Research Observer*, 31: 242-70.

in a remote part of Kenya's Rift Valley who was the 2019 Winner of the Global Teacher Prize. Asked in an interview how he teaches,<sup>34</sup> Brother Peter responded: "It is all about having confidence in the student. Every child has potential, a gift or a talent. I try to engage students ... It is not a matter of telling them "do this" and then walking away. You need to work with them closely".<sup>35</sup> As a science teacher, Brother Peter also explained that "you also need to improvise. 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 works in practice. This avoids learning to become too abstract or conceptual".<sup>36</sup>

The behaviors exemplified by Brother Peter can be emulated by all teachers. Yet for teachers to be successful, they need to be supported. Based on a review of practices that work, five principles have been suggested to guide teacher policies<sup>37</sup>: (1) Make teaching an attractive profession by improving its status, compensation policies, and career progression structures<sup>38</sup>; (2) Promote a meritocratic selection of teachers, followed by a probationary period, to improve the quality of the teaching force; (3) Ensure that pre-service education includes a strong practicum so that teachers are equipped to transition and perform effectively in the classroom; (4) Provide continuous support and motivation through high-quality in-service training and strong school leadership, to allow teachers to continually improve; and (5) Use technology wisely to enhance the ability of teachers to reach every student, factoring their areas of strength and development. These principles make sense, although they tend to emphasize more extrinsic (based on external rewards) than intrinsic motivation. This is in part because this is where more lessons can be drawn from the existing literature. Yet intrinsic motivation matters too, as noted among others by Professor Gerald Grace from St. Mary's University in the UK for faith-based schools.<sup>39</sup> More generally, many teachers become teachers because they have a passion for education and working with children.

Empowering principals and promoting a positive school culture are also essential for students to thrive, as are broader conditions for school autonomy and accountability.<sup>40</sup> The importance of school management can be illustrated with the case of Fe y Alegría Jesuit

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<sup>34</sup> The interview is available at <https://www.globalcatholiceducation.org/interviews>.

<sup>35</sup> Wodon, Q. 2019. Meet the Winner of the Global Teacher Prize 2019: Interview of Franciscan Brother Peter Tabichi, *Educatio Si Bulletin*, 1:17-19, Summer 2019.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Beteille, T., and D. Evans. 2018. *Successful Teachers, Successful Students: Recruiting and Supporting Society's Most Crucial Profession*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

<sup>38</sup> On teacher satisfaction in sub-Saharan Africa, including in Catholic schools, see Nkengne, P., O. Pieume, C. Tsimpo, G. Ezeugwu, and Q. Wodon. 2021. Teacher Satisfaction and Its Determinants: Analysis Based on Data from Nigeria and Uganda, *International Studies in Catholic Education*, 13(2): 190-208.

<sup>39</sup> Grace emphasized the role of spiritual capital, which can probably be interpreted in the context of this editorial as a form of intrinsic motivation, in the dedication of teachers and principals in Catholic schools. See Grace, G. 2002. *Catholic Schools: Mission, Markets and Morality*. London and New York: Routledge Falmer.

<sup>40</sup> Demas, A. and G. Arcia. 2015. What Matters Most for School Autonomy and Accountability: A Framework Paper. SABER Working Paper Series Number 9. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

schools in Latin America.<sup>41</sup> Evidence in Peru suggest that the schools perform well<sup>42</sup>: According to focus groups and interviews, factors contributing to the good performance of Fe y Alegría schools include a high degree of independence at the school level for generating and managing resources, a favorable institutional climate, an emphasis on the proper selection, tutoring, supervision, and training of teachers, autonomy and authority for school principals, and the capacity to adapt to local realities. Principals convey the mission of the schools in order to engage students, teachers, and the whole community. Fe y Alegría teachers are motivated by the sense of purpose they witness in the schools and experienced teachers enjoy the opportunity to coach and mentor younger teachers. These various elements of the culture of the schools are mutually reinforcing, leading to better teaching and ultimately better student learning.<sup>43</sup>

Beyond the need to empowering teachers and principals, guidance is available from international organizations on how to end the learning crisis. At the World Bank, priorities for programs and policies are identified in a blueprint that emphasizes five pillars<sup>44</sup>: (1) Learners are prepared and motivated to learn—with a stronger emphasis on whole-child development and support to learning continuity beyond the school; (2) Teachers are effective and valued—and ready to take on an increasingly complex role of facilitators of learning at and beyond the school with use of education technology; (3) Learning resources, including curricula, are diverse and of high quality—to support good pedagogical practices and personalized learning; (4) Schools are safe and inclusive spaces—with a whole-and-beyond-the-school approach to prevent and address violence and leave no child behind; and (5) Education systems are well-managed— with school leaders who spur more effective pedagogy and a competent educational bureaucracy adept at using technology, data, and evidence. For each pillar, policies are recommended based on a review of the literature. For example, to keep learners engaged, four actions are suggested: (i) increase the provision of early childhood development services; (ii) remove demand-side barriers; (iii) put conditions in place for learning to occur with joy, rigor and purpose; and (iv) bolster the role of the family and communities. Similar actions are outlined for the other four pillars in the framework. Or to support teachers, education systems should focus on: (i) Establish the teaching profession as a meritocratic, socially valued career; (ii) Expand engagement in pre-

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<sup>41</sup> Wodon, Q. 2019. Catholic Schools in Latin America and the Caribbean: Enrollment Trends, Market Share, and Comparative Advantage, *Estudios sobre Educación*, 37: 91-111.

<sup>42</sup> Lavado, P., S. Cueto, G. Yamada, and M. Wensjoe. 2016. The Effect of Fe y Alegría on School Achievement: Exploiting a School Lottery Selection as a Natural Experiment, IZA DP No. 10431, Bonn: Institute for the Study of Labour. See also the essays included in Parra Osorio, J. C. and Q. Wodon, editors. 2014. *Faith-Based Schools in Latin America: Case Studies on Fe y Alegría*, Washington, DC: The World Bank.

<sup>43</sup> Alcázar, L. and N. Valdivia. 2014. Fe y Alegría Schools in Peru: Analysis of the Institutional Management and Pedagogy Model and Lessons for Public Education. In J. C. Parra Osorio and Q. Wodon, editors, *Faith-Based Schools in Latin America: Case Studies on Fe y Alegría*, Washington, DC: The World Bank.

<sup>44</sup> World Bank. 2020. *Realizing the Future of Learning: From Learning Poverty to Learning for Everyone, Everywhere*. Washington, DC: The World Bank. The two paragraphs that follow are reproduced from Grace, G., and Q. Wodon, 2021. Catholic and Faith-Based Schools in sub-Saharan Africa: Introduction to the Special Issue, *International Studies in Catholic Education*, 13(2): 154-162.

service training; (iii) Invest in at-scale in-service professional development; and (iv) Give teachers tools and techniques for effective teaching.

Another useful report suggests cost-effective approaches to improve learning.<sup>45</sup> This matters for Catholic schools since they often have limited resources. To provide guidance on what to do, and what not to do, interventions that have been tried to improve learning in low and middle income countries were categorized into four groups with examples of interventions for each group: (1) Great investments: the most cost-effective interventions, like providing families with information on education returns and quality; (2) Good investments: other highly cost-effective interventions, such as: structured pedagogy combined with teacher training and learning materials; programs to teach children at the right skill level; and pre-primary education; (3) Promising low-evidence interventions: programs that appear to improve learning cost-effectively, but where more rigorous evidence is needed, like providing early stimulation to young children and involving communities in school management; and (4) Bad investments: interventions that (as typically implemented) have been shown to be either not effective or not cost-effective; these include investing in computer hardware or other inputs without making complementary changes (like teacher training or better school management) to use those inputs effectively.

Most recently, under UNESCO's leadership, a series of discussion papers with policy advice were prepared for the five action tracks of the Transforming Education Summit: (1) Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools<sup>46</sup>; (2) Learning and skills for life, work and sustainable development<sup>47</sup>; (3) Teachers, teaching, and the teaching profession<sup>48</sup>; (4) Digital learning and transformation<sup>49</sup>; and (5) Financing education.<sup>50</sup> It would take too long to review their recommendations here, but these papers provide a wealth of information relevant for Catholic schools and universities as well as broader education systems.

## 5. Education and Values

Let me now shift to an issue that you probably deeply care about – the role of education systems in promoting values. What is the purpose of education? What should education systems strive to achieve? The title I chose for my remarks makes it clear that

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<sup>45</sup> World Bank. 2020. *Cost-effective Approaches to Improve Global Learning: What does recent evidence tell us are "Smart Buys" for improving learning in low- and middle-income countries?* Washington, DC: The World Bank.

<sup>46</sup> United Nations Transforming Education Summit. 2022. Action Track 1 on Inclusive, Equitable, Safe and Healthy Schools. Discussion Paper. New York: United Nations Transforming Education Summit.

<sup>47</sup> United Nations Transforming Education Summit. 2022. Thematic Action Track 2 on Learning and Skills for Life, Work, and Sustainable Development. Discussion Paper. New York: United Nations Transforming Education Summit.

<sup>48</sup> United Nations Transforming Education Summit. 2022. Thematic Action Track 3 on Teachers, Teaching and the Teaching Profession. Discussion Paper. New York: United Nations Transforming Education Summit.

<sup>49</sup> United Nations Transforming Education Summit. 2022. Thematic Action Track 4 on Digital Learning and Transformation. Discussion Paper. New York: United Nations Transforming Education Summit.

<sup>50</sup> United Nations Transforming Education Summit. 2022. Thematic Action Track 5 on Financing of Education. Discussion Paper. New York: United Nations Transforming Education Summit.

education has a broader purpose beyond its benefits in terms of, say, ensuring literacy and numeracy, or increasing productivity and labor earnings in adulthood. The concept of integral human development refers to the growth of the whole person, including in terms of the values that the person acquires. So let me briefly explore these issues.

Education systems should help children to become engaged citizens respectful of others and of the earth. This is recognized in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is also recognized by most school networks, whether public, private, secular or faith-based. In the case of Catholic schools, the Congregation for Catholic Education calls for an education that leads to fraternal humanism and a civilization of love.<sup>51</sup> This was also the focus of the latest World Congress of the International Office of Catholic Education (OIEC in French).<sup>52</sup> What exactly the call for promoting values and character education in educational systems entails may differ depending on the particular school system considered, but respect for others and for pluralism (which does not imply relativism) should be at the core.<sup>53</sup>

The issue of values is related in part to that of education pluralism. Because parents may have different priorities for what children should learn in school, they may also be differences in parental preferences for various types of schools. In the United States, parents were asked in a recent survey what their children should learn in school.<sup>54</sup> They could select three priorities among a set of nine options. Five options were related to skills, including preparation for college and work. The other four options were related to values and faith. Parents with children in Catholic schools placed a higher emphasis on values and faith in comparison to parents relying on other types of schools, as well as parents willing to consider Catholic schools but with their youngest child not enrolled in one. In the particular context of the United States, where enrollment in Catholic schools has been declining, this may lead to trade-offs for Catholic schools in terms of the aspects of their identity that they choose to emphasize.<sup>55</sup> But the broader point is that one size may not fit

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<sup>51</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education. 2017. *Educating to Fraternal Humanism: Building a "Civilization of Love" 50 Years after Populorum Progressio*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

<sup>52</sup> Richard, P., and Q. Wodon, Editors. 2019. Highlights and Reflections on OIEC's World Congress, *Educatio Si Bulletin*, International Office for Catholic Education, Issue 1 (Summer).

<sup>53</sup> On education pluralism, see Wodon, Q. 2021. *Global Catholic Education Report 2021 – Education Pluralism, Learning Poverty, and the Right to Education*, Washington, DC: Global Catholic Education. On education in a "Catholic key", see Delfra, L. A., W. C. Mattison, S. D. McGraw, and T. S. Scully. 2018. Education in a Catholic Key, in W. H. James, editor, *The Handbook of Christian Education*, New Jersey: Wiley Blackwell.

<sup>54</sup> National Catholic Education Association. 2018. *The Catholic School Choice: Understanding the Perspectives of Parents and Opportunities for More Engagement*, Washington, DC: National Catholic Education Association. See also for further analysis Wodon, Q. Heterogeneity in Parental Priorities for What Children Should Learn in Schools and Potential Implications for the Future of Catholic Schools, *Journal of Catholic Education*, 25(1): 178-205.

<sup>55</sup> For a discussion, see Wodon, Q. 2022. Beyond Academic Excellence and Faith Formation: A Focus Section on Values and the Future of Catholic Schools in the United States, *Journal of Catholic Education*, 25(1): 152-158. See also Wodon, Q. 2022. Decline in Student Enrollment, Parental Willingness to Consider Catholic Schools, and Sources of Comparative Advantage in the United States, *Journal of Global Catholicism*, 6(2): 94-115. On the decision by students to pursue a higher education and the comparative advantages of Catholic universities, see Wodon, Q. 2022. Catholic Education in the United States: Exploring the Decision to Enroll from a Student's (or Student Advisor's) Point of View, *Religions*, 2022, 13: 732. For a related analysis at the global level, see Wodon, Q. 2022. Catholic Higher Education Globally: Enrollment Trends, Current Pressures, Student Choice, and the Promise

all: a diversity of schooling options may help to respond to parental preferences and respect the pluralism of views (hopefully with an overlapping consensus<sup>56</sup>) that is an essential feature of democratic societies about the role that schools may play in the transmission of values to children.

Differences in parental priorities for the education of children are also observed in developing countries. Qualitative fieldwork in Ghana and Burkina Faso suggests that parents relying on public schools tend to choose those schools for their location and the low cost of enrollment, and in some cases for their academic quality.<sup>57</sup> For parents sending their children to Christian schools (quite a few of whom are not Christian themselves), the emphasis is first on academic quality, and next on values or character education. Religious education also plays a role, but a smaller one. Finally, parents sending their children to Islamic schools tend to specifically emphasize the opportunity for their children to receive an Islamic religious education which is then also perceived as contributing to building strong communal values for the children. All three types of schools emphasize values or character education to some extent. But faith-based schools are perceived by parents as providing a more natural environment for transmitting (their) values to (their) children. Does the fact that different parents may have different priorities for the education of their children imply that education pluralism should be valued, for example, through public funding for (non-profit) private schools, including faith-based schools? Not necessarily, but there is something to be said for taking parental priorities into account when providing education to children.

The debate on the role that schools play in transmitting values and the related issue of education pluralism is complex. In part because of historical circumstances, different countries have adopted different approaches, including in terms of funding.<sup>58</sup> In my country of origin, Belgium, the Constitution requires communities to fund faith-based schools, as students have the right to moral or religious education at the community's expense. By contrast, in the country where I live, the United States, separation between Church and State, under the Constitution, leads faith-based schools not to be funded at the federal level, although limited state-level funding can take place through school choice legislation.

While not taking a strong position here on the issue of education pluralism in general, and school choice in particular, it should be noted that especially in developing countries, a pluralism of options for schooling may be beneficial for educational attainment and learning. The qualitative work just mentioned for Ghana and Burkina Faso suggests that in some Muslim communities, parents do not want to send their adolescent girls to public

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of Service Learning, *Religions*, 13: 735.

<sup>56</sup> Rawls, J. 2005. *Political Liberalism*. New York: Columbia University Press.

<sup>57</sup> Gemignani, R., M. Sojo, and Q. Wodon. 2014. What Drives the Choice of Faith-inspired Schools by Households? Qualitative Evidence from Two African Countries, *Review of Faith & International Affairs*, 2014, 12(2): 66-76.

<sup>58</sup> On relationships between Christian schools and the state in sub-Saharan Africa, see Scheunpflug, A., M. Wenz, M. Brown Rubindamayugi, J. K. Lutswamba, F. Njobati, C. Nyiramana, S. Mutabazi, C. E. Njoya, O. Raharijaona, and Q. Wodon. 2021. Relationships between Christian Schools and the State: A Comparative Analysis for Five sub-Saharan African Countries, *International Studies in Catholic Education*, 13(2): 163-174.

secondary schools because of a perception, warranted or not, that the schools may not be fully safe. The concern is that girls may be sexually harassed, or may become sexually active, whether with a teacher or another student. In such cases, expanding the network of Arab-Islamic schools where religious education, as well as secular topics, would be taught could lead communities to have more confidence that the behavior of teachers and boy students would not affect girls negatively.

## 6. Contributions of Faith-based Schools

In considering the importance of values and education pluralism, the discussion naturally mentioned the case of faith-based schools. These schools, as well as private schools more generally, play an important role in efforts to achieve quality education for all.<sup>59</sup> The market share of private schools has been rising for decades. Globally, data from the World Bank's World Development Indicators suggest that they now serve at least one in eight primary school students, and more than one in five secondary school students. Faith-based schools form an important percentage of private schools. They typically operate as nonprofits and often aim to serve the poorest. While data on the global reach of other faith affiliations are not available, data for the Catholic Church suggest that 34.6 million children were enrolled in Catholic primary schools in 2020, with an additional 19.3 million enrolled in Catholic secondary schools. When adding nurseries and preschools (7.5 million children enrolled), the Church provides education services to 61.4 million children.<sup>60</sup> This estimate does not account for the role played by Catholic institutions in technical and vocational education and training or courses for adult literacy. As for higher education, a total of 6.6 million students were enrolled in Catholic universities and higher learning institutes. The Catholic Church is one of the largest providers of education after the governments of China and India.

Six basic facts emerge from an analysis of trends over time for enrollment in Catholic education.<sup>61</sup> First, combined enrollment in pre-primary to secondary schools has more than doubled since 1975. For higher education, enrollment has increased fourfold over that period. Second, primary schools, while still accounting for a majority of total enrollment at the pre-primary to secondary level, account for a smaller share of the total over time, as enrollment is rising faster in preschools and secondary schools. At the university level, in most regions enrollment is concentrated in universities, but in Asia enrollment is largest in other types of post-secondary education. Third, for pre-primary to secondary education,

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<sup>59</sup> For a discussion of the role of non-state actors, see UNESCO. 2021. *Non-State Actors in Education: Who Choses? Who Loses?* Paris: UNESCO.

<sup>60</sup> Secretariat of State of the Vatican. 2022. *Annuario statisticum ecclesiae 2020 / Statistical yearbook of the Church 2020 / Annuaire statistique de l'Eglise 2020*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

<sup>61</sup> Wodon, Q. 2021. *Global Catholic Education Report 2021 – Education Pluralism, Learning Poverty, and the Right to Education*, Washington, DC: Global Catholic Education. For previous work, see Wodon, Q. 2018. Enrollment in K12 Catholic Schools: Global and Regional Trends, *Educatio Catholica*, IV(3): 189-210, and Wodon, Q., 2019. Enrollment in Catholic Higher Education: Global and Regional Trends, *Journal of Catholic Higher Education*, 39(1): 87-104.

the highest growth rates are observed in Africa, both in absolute terms and in percentage terms from the base, with substantial growth also in Asia. Most students in Catholic schools live in low-income and lower-middle income countries. By contrast, for Catholic higher education, enrollment remains concentrated in upper-middle and high-income countries. Fourth, there is substantial heterogeneity between countries in the size of the Catholic school networks and in the growth of these networks. Fifth, despite growth in enrollment, the market share of Catholic schools does not seem to have changed fundamentally over the last few decades. Finally, while over the last four and a half decades enrollment has grown dramatically, there have been few gains over the last five years, and enrollment seems to have reached a plateau. In the future, enrollment is likely to grow again especially thanks to Africa, but there is no certainty of this.

What about the footprint of other types of faith-based schools in K-12 education? While data similar to those for Catholic schools are not available globally, insights can be gained from specific countries or regions. Globally, Christian educational institutions may serve more than 100 million students.<sup>62</sup> In countries with majority Muslim populations, Arab-Islamic schools also often play an important role. In West and Central Africa for example, *madrasas* or *medersas* and Franco-Arab schools teach secular as well as religious topics. By contrast, Koranic schools such as *daaras* in Senegal emphasize memorization of the *Qur'an* in Arabic and religious education often without secular topics. Yet efforts are underway by governments to strengthen the education provided in Koranic schools and facilitate transitions to public schools.<sup>63</sup> The sizes of Arab-Islamic school networks differ between countries.<sup>64</sup> But there are indications that these networks continue to play an important role in many countries, including as just one example in Niger<sup>65</sup> even as formal public education provision is expanding. Globally, as the share of Muslim populations is expected to increase rapidly in the next few decades, especially in Africa,<sup>66</sup> one should not underestimate the role Arab-Islamic schools may continue to play in the future.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> See the Global Catholic Education Report 2021, op. cit. For analysis of the most recent data and country profiles, see Wodon, Q. 2022. *Enrollment in Catholic Pre-primary to Secondary Schools: Global Trends and Country Profiles, 1975-2020*, Washington, DC: Global Catholic Education. For a comparison of service provision by the Catholic Church in education, healthcare, and social protection, see Wodon, Q. 2022. *Global Report on Integral Human Development 2022: Measuring the Contributions of Catholic and Other Faith-Based Organizations to Education, Health, and Social Protection*, Washington, DC: Global Catholic Education.

<sup>63</sup> Roy, E., and P. Humeau. 2018. *État des lieux sur l'offre et les mécanismes institutionnels relatifs à l'éducation coranique et à l'enseignement islamique dans les pays d'Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre*. Paris: UNICEF and Quale.

<sup>64</sup> Literally, a *madrasa* in Arabic means a school, a place where learning and teaching takes place. On Arab-Islamic schools in West Africa, see Dia, H., C. Hugon and R. d'Aiglepierre. 2016. États réformateurs et éducation arabo-islamique en Afrique, *Afrique Contemporaine*, 257: 11-23.

<sup>65</sup> Estimates suggest that for 38 OECD and partner countries, the annual savings for state budget thanks to Catholic schools could be valued at up to US\$ 63 billion in purchasing power parity terms in 2016. See Wodon, Q., C. Male, and A. Nayihouba. 2019. *Measuring the Contribution of Koranic Schools in Niger: How Much Can Be Learned from Existing Quantitative Data Sources?*, Mimeo, Washington, DC: The World Bank.

<sup>66</sup> Pew Research Center. 2017. *The Changing Global Religious Landscape*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.

<sup>67</sup> On Koranic schools, see for example the analysis by Wodon, Q., C. Male and A. Nayihouba. 2021. *Measuring the Contribution of Koranic Schools in Niger: How Much Can We Learn from Existing Data?*, *International Studies in Catholic Education*, 13(2): 228-244.

From the point of view of efforts by the International Community to help countries achieving SDG4, an overlooked contribution of faith-based schools is the budget savings they generate for governments. In many countries, at least part of the cost of attending the schools is paid for by parents. This leads to budget savings for governments since enrollment in public schools is then lower.<sup>68</sup> These savings are much larger than official development assistance for education globally, and therefore could be said to help fund this assistance indirectly.<sup>69</sup> Another economic contribution of faith-based schools is through human capital wealth, defined as the value today of the future earnings of the labor force. Human capital wealth accounts for two thirds of global wealth, a much larger proportion than natural capital (such as land, oil, or minerals) and produced capital (such as machineries and infrastructure).<sup>70</sup> Based on an assessment of the share of human capital wealth attributed to educational attainment, estimates suggest that the contribution of faith-based schools to global wealth is also large.<sup>71</sup> But the main contribution of faith-based schools is not economic, it is rather about the transmission of values such as those of solidarity, respect, justice, and peace, as well as the transmission of the faith.

While faith-based schools play an important role in efforts to achieve SDG4, this role is rarely recognized in policy discussions.<sup>72</sup> A full discussion of policy options towards faith-based, and more generally, private schools is beyond the scope of what we can explore today. Still, a few pointers on balancing freedom, autonomy, and accountability<sup>73</sup> may be useful. At the World Bank, guidance on engaging the private sector (EPS) is available under the EPS domain of SABER (Systems Approach for Better Education Results). SABER is an effort to help governments systematically examine and strengthen the performance of their education systems. The initiative relies on diagnostic tools and policy data to evaluate country policies through the lens of global evidence-based standards in order to help countries determine which policies could be implemented to improve learning. Recognizing the role that private schools already play in many countries, SABER-EPS suggests a particular approach to assess whether laws, regulations, and policies towards the private sector are likely to achieve four policy goals: (1) Encouraging innovation by education

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<sup>68</sup> Budget savings from K12 Catholic schools in OECD and partner countries could reach up to \$63 billion per year in purchasing power parity terms. See Wodon, Q. 2019. Pluralism, the Public Purse, and Education: An International Estimate of Savings to State Budgets from K-12 Catholic Schools, *Review of Faith & International Affairs*, 17(2): 76-86. For estimates for tertiary education, see Wodon, Q. 2018. Enrollment in Catholic Higher Education across Countries, *Educatio Catholica*, IV(4): 173-95.

<sup>69</sup> Total net official development assistance was estimated at US\$145 billion in current US dollars in 2016, of which US\$ 13.4 billion was allocated to education. See UNESCO, 2018. *Aid to Education: A Return to Growth?*, Global Monitoring Report Policy Paper No. 36. Paris: UNESCO.

<sup>70</sup> Lange, G. M., Q. Wodon, and K. Carey. 2018. *The Changing Wealth of Nations 2018: Sustainability into the 21st Century*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

<sup>71</sup> Catholic schools may contribute US\$ 12 trillion to the changing wealth of nations. See Wodon, Q. 2019. Measuring the Contribution of Faith-based Schools to Human Capital Wealth: Estimates for the Catholic Church, *Review of Faith & International Affairs*, 17(4): 94-102.

<sup>72</sup> One notable exception is the recent the Global Education Monitoring Report of UNESCO on the role of non-state actors in education that was mentioned earlier.

<sup>73</sup> Glenn, C. L., and J. De Groof. 2012. *Balancing Freedom, Autonomy and Accountability in Education*. Oisterwijk, Belgium: Wolf Legal Publishers.

providers; (2) Holding schools accountable; (3) Empowering all parents, students, and communities; and (4) Promoting diversity of supply.<sup>74</sup>

The idea behind these goals comes in part from the World Development Report on making services work for poor people.<sup>75</sup> The report suggested that for service providers to be responsive to the needs of citizens, and especially the poor, accountability was required. One approach to accountability is the long route, whereby citizens hold the state accountable for the delivery of basic services through the political process, with the state in turn holding various service providers – public or private – accountable. This route is long because several steps and conditions are needed for it to work. In the alternative short route service providers are held accountable by their clientele. This requires information on the quality of the services provided and mechanisms to make services both accessible and affordable.

It must be acknowledged that the policy goals under SABER-EPS and their rationale are not without debate. What constitutes good policies towards private schools, including faith-based schools, remains contested.<sup>76</sup> Without solving those debates here, it should be acknowledged that private provision is no panacea in solving the issues confronted by educational systems – especially in the developing world. But at the same time, one should also acknowledge the positive contributions made by many private schools, including faith-based schools. While not perfect, the SABER-EPS framework is useful in assessing country policies towards the private sector in order to balance autonomy and accountability.

## 7. Three Examples of Opportunities

In closing, beyond the many challenges that I have discussed at some length, I would like to end on a positive note and mention three opportunities that I see for Catholic schools and universities globally. These three opportunities are related to alumni engagement, your global footprint, and service-learning.<sup>77</sup>

(1) *Engaging Catholic Education Alumni.*<sup>78</sup> Catholic schools and universities have a large number of alumni. Engaging just a fraction of these alumni could make a large difference in the education that they provide. In the United States, philanthropic giving

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<sup>74</sup> Baum, D., L. Lewis, O. Lusk-Stover, and H. A. Patrinos. 2013. What Matters Most for Engaging the Private Sector in Education: A Framework Paper. SABER Working Paper 8. Education Global Practice, World Bank, Washington, DC.

<sup>75</sup> World Bank. 2003. *World Development Report 2004: Making Services Work for Poor People*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

<sup>76</sup> Oxfam. 2019. *False Promises: How Delivering Education through Public-private Partnerships Risks Fueling Inequality Instead of Achieving Quality Education for All*. Oxford, UK: Oxfam.

<sup>77</sup> This section builds on Wodon, 2022, op. cit. in Journal of Global Catholicism and Argarate, T., R. Brosse, A. Budani, R. Bustamante, L. Elesgaray, M. Luft, D. Pisano, M. R. Tapia, N. Tapia, T. Ulla, and Q. Wodon. 2023, Service-learning in Catholic Universities: Results from a Global Mapping Survey, *Review of Faith & International Affairs*, forthcoming.

<sup>78</sup> This section is shortened and adapted from Quentin Wodon, “Catholic K12 Education Alumni: A Unique, Yet Mostly Untapped Resource,” *Momentum* (Late Fall 2021): 30-32.

accounts for less than one percent of the cost of operating (public) schools.<sup>79</sup> In Catholic schools, philanthropy contributes more when subsidies and grants from parishes are included in the estimation. This is in part because each year, collections for Catholic schools are implemented in parishes and many parishioners contribute during Catholic Schools Week. Still, the share of funding raised by Catholic schools from philanthropy is very low and could be increased. Alumni could also contribute in many other ways. Some may be willing to serve in tutoring programs that often have positive effects on student performance.<sup>80</sup> While tutoring is especially effective in the early grades, other modes of alumni engagement can be beneficial for high school students. This includes career fairs where alumni share their experience and their passion. College fairs may also be useful for recent alumni to share insights about their college experience and how to get into specific colleges. Preparing students for college and the labor market are high priorities among parents willing to consider Catholic schools and universities. Alumni could help and engaging them is not rocket science. Tools can be used for reaching out and finding how they would like to be engaged.<sup>81</sup> Because of their faith, alumni of Catholic educational institutions may be more willing to contribute than the average alumni.<sup>82</sup>

(2) *Establishing global connections.* Catholic schools operate in most countries of the world. Because schools in different countries share a common ethos, there are a wide range of opportunities for students in one country to learn from students in other countries – including through digital connectivity. This can also be done by public schools, but perhaps less naturally. As an example of initiative tapping into this potential for global connections, consider the Planet Fraternity project launched by the International Office of Catholic Education to facilitate connections across schools. Students in one school work with students in a partner school from another country on themes related to Pope Francis' encyclicals and the United Nations' SDGs. English is used as a common language. The project relies on online resources created by professionals to build commitments towards fraternal humanism and safeguarding the common home.<sup>83</sup> A different topic is explored each month to structure exchanges of views between the students. The themes being explored relate to the SDGs. This type of initiative could easily be scaled up and help students in Catholic schools create bonds of fraternity with students in other countries.

(3) *Promoting service-learning.* Many public, Catholic, and other private schools and universities have been experimenting with service learning for some time. In the United

<sup>79</sup> Frederick M. Hess, *The State of Education Philanthropy* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute, 2019). <https://www.aei.org/articles/the-state-of-education-philanthropy/>.

<sup>80</sup> Even if the effects of tutoring programs are stronger on average for tutoring by teachers and paraprofessionals than volunteers, alumni could help, especially in the early grades when tutoring is most effective.

<sup>81</sup> As just one recent example, public schools in San Diego carried a formative study of efforts to increase alumni engagement that is a useful read. See Yonezawa, S., M. Murià, D. Ruiz, D. Beckstrand, and R. Jimenez. 2019. *The Educational Value of Alumni for Public High Schools*. San Diego: Yankelovich Center for Social Science Research, University of California San Diego.

<sup>82</sup> This can be seen in giving rates to Catholic universities that tend to be higher than average giving rates. See Wodon. Q. 2021. Engaging Catholic Higher Education Alumni: Should We Organize Ourselves Better?, *Update: The Newsletter of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities*, Fall 2021 issue.

<sup>83</sup> Lecomte, H. 2021. Point sur le projet planète fraternité de l'OIEC, *Educatio Si Bulletin*, No. 11 (Fall 2021): 17-18.

States, a report<sup>84</sup> published soon after 9-11 defines service learning as “a teaching and learning approach that integrates community service with academic study to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.” Service learning has been identified by the American Association of Colleges and Universities as one of 11 high impact practices that benefit students.<sup>85</sup> It was recently emphasized by Pope Francis and the Congregation for Catholic Education.<sup>86</sup> Indeed, many of the themes that are often constitutive of service learning initiatives are echoed in the seven commitments called for by Pope Francis under the global compact on education.<sup>87</sup> Catholic schools and universities may again have a comparative advantage in this area. In the United States, a higher percentage of high school seniors enrolled in Catholic schools engage in community service activities than is the case for public and other private schools.<sup>88</sup> At the university level, surveys suggest that a larger share of students enrolling in Catholic institutions expect to participate in volunteer or community service work than is the case for students at other institutions.<sup>89</sup> Catholic universities tend to have a strong reputation for service learning.<sup>90</sup> Finally, data collected among Catholic universities globally for the Uniservitate collaborative suggest that while Catholic universities have some way to go to fully institutionalize service-learning, many start from a strong base.<sup>91</sup> There are debates about the effectiveness of service-learning for various goals,<sup>92</sup> but guidance is available.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>84</sup> National Commission on Service Learning. 2002. *Learning In Deed: The Power of Service-Learning for American Schools*. Newton, Massachusetts: National Commission on Service Learning.

<sup>85</sup> See <https://www.aacu.org/trending-topics/high-impact>.

<sup>86</sup> Service is a pillar of the culture of encounter by Pope Francis. See Francis. 2019. Message of his Holiness Pope Francis for the Launch of the Global Compact on Education. Rome: The Vatican. Service is also a key theme in his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*. See Francis. 2020. *Encyclical Letter Fratelli Tutti of the Holy Father Francis on Fraternity and Social Friendship*. Rome: The Vatican. Finally, service-learning is explicitly mentioned in the *Vademecum* for the Global Compact on Education. See Congregation for Catholic Education. 2021. *Global Compact on Education Vademecum*. Rome: Congregation for Catholic Education.

<sup>87</sup> These seven commitments are: (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.

<sup>88</sup> See data for 1992 and 2004 in [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19\\_227.20.asp?current=yes](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_227.20.asp?current=yes).

<sup>89</sup> Stolzenberg, E. B., M. C. Aragon, E. Romo, V. Couch, D. McLennan, M. K. Eagan, and N. Kang, N. 2020. *The American Freshman: National Norms Fall 2019*. Los Angeles, CA: Higher Education Research Institute.

<sup>90</sup> Of 25 universities in the United States ranked by US News & World Report as recognized by their peers in this area, seven were Catholic institutions and three others were Christian institutions. See <https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/rankings/service-learning-programs>.

<sup>91</sup> ZIGLA. 2019. *Mapping, Identification and Characterization of Service-learning in Higher Education: Final Report*. Buenos Aires, Argentina: ZIGLA.

<sup>92</sup> The practice is not without its detractors. Two recent literature reviews illustrate this debate. Based on a large number of studies, most of which are not experimental, a recent review for business schools suggests that service learning provides benefits for students. See Marco-Gardoqui, M., A. Eizaguirre, and M. García-Feijoo. 2020. The Impact of Service-learning Methodology on Business Schools' Students Worldwide: A Systematic Literature Review. *PLoS ONE*, 15(12): e0244389. By contrast, based on a small number of randomized evaluations, another recent study for K12 education suggests that the evidence does not conclusively establish that service learning improves student outcomes. See Filges, T., J. Dietrichson, B. C. A. Viinholt, and N. T. Dalgaard. 2022. Service Learning for Improving Academic Success in Students in Grade K to 12: A Systematic Review. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 18: e1210. For a discussion of the potential pros and cons of the practice, see Toppo, G. 2020. Service Learning in America: From “McService” to “Life Changing”. *Education Next*, 20(3), 22-28.

<sup>93</sup> See for example Ribeiro, A., P. Aramburuzabala, and B. Paz-Lourido. 2021. *Guidelines for the Institutionalization of Service-Learning in European Higher Education*. Madrid: European Association of Service-Learning in Higher Education. See also the first three volumes in the Uniservitate collection: (1) Caballero, Mónica S. Editor. 2020. I Global Symposium Uniservitate. Buenos Aires: CLAYSS; (2) Peregalli, Andrés, and M. Beatriz Isola. Editors. 2021.

## 8. Conclusion

It is time to conclude, as you have been listening to me for too long! To my defense I did try to spare you a little bit as there is an even longer version of my remarks which is available from the organizers. I will not try to summarize the various points that I raised. Let me simply mention on a more personal basis that when I launched the Global Catholic Education project as part of my volunteer work in November 2020, I had two main goals<sup>94</sup>. The first goal was to connect Catholic education to the world. My aim was to bring global knowledge on education and integral human development to Catholic schools, universities, and other organizations working at the frontline by sharing evidence-based good practices emerging from the international experience. The second goal was to connect the world to Catholic education. I was hoping to bring to the attention of the international community the work of Catholic schools, universities, and other organizations promoting integral human development, including their approach to educate the whole person towards fraternal humanism. I accepted this invitation to share a few thoughts at your international Congress as a step towards the first of these two goals. My aim today was to share with you some of the discussions taking place on education in the international community. As to the second goal, I hope to continue to benefit from your wider-ranging experience as Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and make this experience better known in the international community.

I congratulate you again for your 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and for all that you have achieved so far. I have no doubt that you will continue to make a unique contribution to education for integral human development in the next 150 years. Thank you again for inviting me to be with you today.

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*Service-Learning Pedagogy and the Teachings of the Catholic Church*. Buenos Aires: CLAYSS; and (3) Isola, B., and L. Gherlone. Editors. 2022. *Spirituality and Higher Education: Perspectives from Service-Learning*. Buenos Aires: CLAYSS.

<sup>94</sup> For a review of the activities of the project, see Wodon, Q. 2021. *Global Catholic Education Year in Review 2021: Sharing Knowledge about Education and Integral Human Development*, Washington, DC: Global Catholic Education.