

Global Catholic Education Report

2021



Education Pluralism, Learning Poverty, and the Right to Education

Quentin Wodon
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Cover photo: © Matteo Ricci School.

The cover photo shows secondary school students at the new Matteo Ricci (Jesuit) School in Brussels, Belgium. Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) was an Italian Jesuit priest and one of the founders of the Jesuit China missions. The cover photo was selected for three reasons. First, it expresses the dynamism of Catholic education as the Matteo Ricci School is a new school founded in September 2019. Second, it conveys the aim of Catholic education to reach underserved populations from all backgrounds. A majority of the students in the school are Muslim and many are from disadvantaged backgrounds. This relates to the core themes of education pluralism, learning poverty, and the right to education of this report. Third, the photo conveys the scope of Catholic education by emphasizing secondary education, the bridge between primary and higher education. The Global Catholic Education Report 2020 cover photo featured students in a primary school in Burundi as that report focused on Catholic K12 education which is growing especially rapidly in Africa. For this second report and future reports, Catholic higher education will also be included in the analysis. Different cover photos from various regions and settings will be used each year to illustrate the theme of the report that year.

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FOREWORD

Catholic schools serve close to 62 million children in pre-primary, primary, and secondary schools globally. In addition, more than 6 million students are enrolled in Catholic institutes and universities at the post-secondary level. As one of the largest providers of education in the world, the Church contributes to efforts to achieve the fourth Sustainable Development Goals, which is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

The aim of a Catholic education is to educate towards fraternal humanism. Many of the students in our schools and universities are not Catholic themselves. They contribute in a wonderful way to the diversity and richness of our education experience. Yet today, Catholic education is under threat in many parts of the world. As mentioned in the first Global Catholic Education Report for 2020, the COVID-19 crisis has been devastating, leading to countless illnesses and deaths. It has also affected livelihoods all over the world. Especially in contexts where our schools and universities do not benefit from state support, income losses have weakened the ability of parents to afford a Catholic education for their children.

The Global Catholic Education Report 2020 explored some of the impacts of the current crisis on Catholic schools and potential responses. As the crisis still rages, these impacts and potential responses continue to be discussed in this report. In addition, the report expands the analysis in several new directions.

First, this report considers both Catholic schools and universities, while the analysis in the 2020 report was limited to K12 schools.

Second, the report focuses on the issues of education pluralism, learning poverty,

and the right to education. The report suggests two new measures of the fulfillment of the right to education that take into account learning poverty as well as education pluralism. These measures are tentative, but we hope that they will motivate further discussions and analysis of these complex yet fundamental issues.

The Global Catholic Education Report was written as part of a broader program of research under the new volunteer-led Global Catholic Education website. We are thankful to Quentin for creating the website and writing this report. As the report now covers both Catholic schools and universities, it is co-sponsored by the International Office of Catholic Education (OIEC) and the International Federation of Catholic Universities (IFCU). OIEC federates national Catholic education associations and represents Catholic K12 schools in international agencies. IFCU does the same for Catholic universities.

In addition to OIEC and IFCU, the World Organization of Former Students of Catholic Education (OMAEC in French) and the World Union of Catholic Teachers (WUCT or UMEC in French) are also key partners for the new Global Catholic Education website. The hope is that by promoting collaborations and coordination between all four organizations, the website will help the cause of Catholic education globally and thereby contribute to educate new generations towards fraternal humanism.

As recently noted by Pope Francis at the launch of the Global Compact on Education, the task of educating new generations is one of the most crucial tasks we must undertake.

Philippe Richard
Secretary General, OIEC

François Mabile
Secretary General, IFCU

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: KEY FINDINGS

As the largest non-state provider of education in the world, the Catholic Church plays a significant role in efforts to achieve the fourth Sustainable Development Goal¹. Yet this role is rarely acknowledged in global policy discussions, and these discussions rarely reach Catholic networks of schools and universities.

The Global Catholic Education Report is published annually, with two aims. The first is to make the experiences and role of Catholic schools and universities better known by the international community. The second is to bring to Catholic educators global knowledge and expertise from the international community on what works to improve education. There is much to be gained from stronger collaborations between Catholic schools and universities, governments managing national education systems, and international organizations. In a small way, the Global Catholic Education Report aims to promote such collaborations through better mutual understanding.

This report for 2021 is the second in the series. The first report published in June 2020 was dedicated to the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 crisis. As the crisis continues to rage, additional analysis of its impacts and potential responses is provided in this report. But the report also considers other topics. The main themes for this report are education pluralism, learning poverty and the right to education. In addition, while the first report focused only on K12² Catholic schools, this report also includes Catholic universities.

The report is structured into five chapters and a statistical annex. The topics for the five chapters are: (1) Enrollment trends in

Catholic K12 schools; (2) Enrollment trends in Catholic higher education; (3) Education pluralism; (4) Learning poverty and the right to education gap; and (5) COVID-19 crisis, challenges, and opportunities. This executive summary highlights key findings by chapter.

Enrollment Trends in Catholic K12 Schools

Globally, the Catholic Church estimates that 35.0 million children were enrolled in Catholic primary schools in 2018, with 19.3 million children enrolled in Catholic secondary schools and 7.4 million children enrolled at the preschool level. Below are a few highlights:

- Enrollment in K12 education more than doubled between 1975 and 2018 globally, from 29.1 million to 61.7 million students (Figure ES.1). Most of the growth was concentrated in Africa due to high rates of population growth and gains in educational attainment over time.
- The highest growth rates are also observed for Africa, but growth rates are also high in Asia and Oceania. The growth rates in those regions are two to three times larger than those observed globally. In the Americas and Europe, growth rates tend to be much smaller, and in some cases are negative.
- There are substantial differences between regions in the share of students enrolled by level. Globally, primary schools account for 56.7 percent of K12 enrollment, versus 31.3 percent for secondary schools, and 12.0 percent for preschools. In Africa however, primary schools account for 71.3 percent of total enrollment. In Europe, they account for only 36.0 percent of K12 enrollment.

¹ The fourth goal (SDG4) is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

² In the United States, 'K12' refers to schools from kindergarten to 12th grade. We use the acronym in this global report because it is short and handy.

Enrollment in Catholic K12 schools more than doubled from 1975 to 2018. For higher education, enrollment increased almost four-fold. Globally, there are ten times more students in K12 education than in higher education, but geographic patterns of enrollment and growth differ by education level.

Figure ES.1: Total Enrollment in Catholic K12 Schools (Thousands)

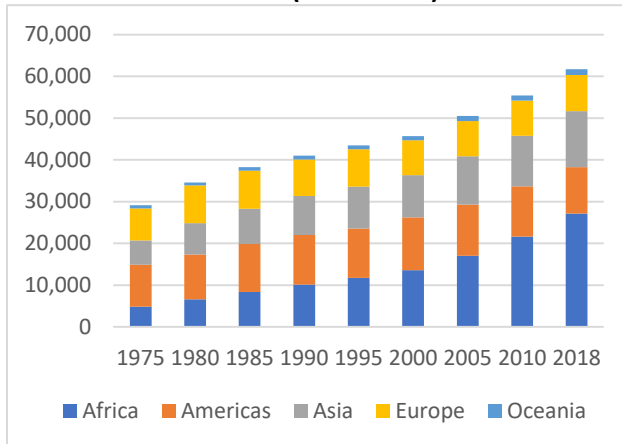
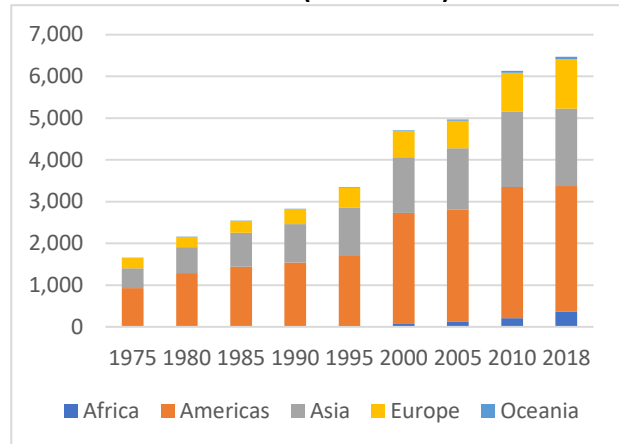


Figure ES.2: Total Enrollment in Catholic Higher Education (Thousands)



Source: Compiled by the author from the statistical yearbooks of the Church.

- India has the largest enrollment in Catholic K12 schools, followed by four sub-Saharan African countries: the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Kenya, and Malawi. Together, the top 15 countries in terms of enrollment size account for about two thirds of global enrollment in Catholic K12 schools.
- The highest growth rate in enrolment over the last four decades is observed for preschools. This is good news given that early childhood is a critical period in the life of children and that investments in early childhood have high returns.

Enrollment Trends in Catholic Higher Education

The Church estimates that it provided post-secondary education to 6.5 million students globally in 2018. This includes 2.3 million students in non-university higher institutes, 0.5 million students enrolled in ecclesiastical studies at the university level, and 3.7 million students enrolled in other types of university studies. Below are a few highlights:

- Enrollment in Catholic higher education

almost quadrupled between 1975 and 2018, from 1.6 million students to 6.5 million. Most of the growth took place in the Americas, Asia, and Europe. However, in proportionate terms from the base, the highest growth rates are in Africa.

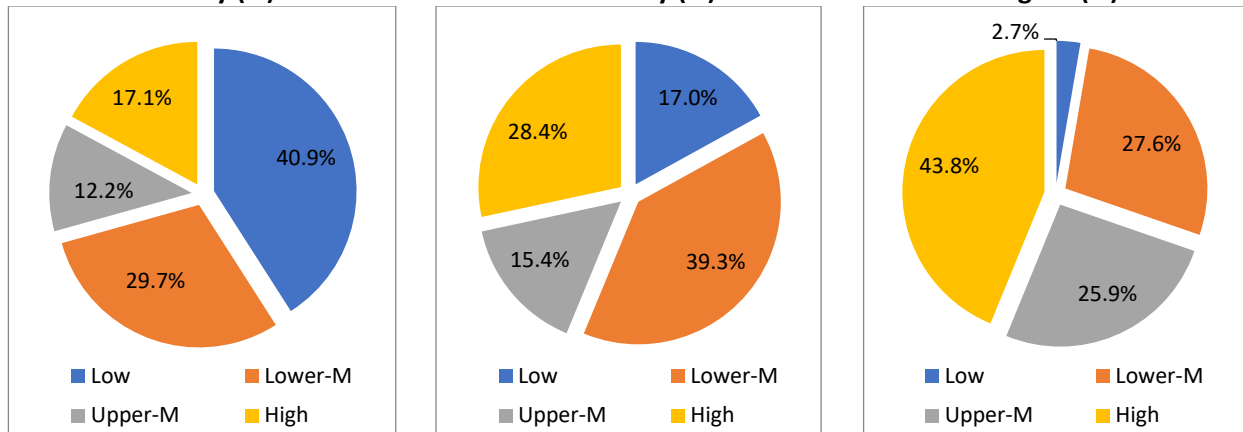
- Globally, students in universities account for most of the enrollment. Yet in India and Asia, there are more students in higher institutes. Globally, the shares of students enrolled in higher institutes and universities did not change a lot over the last four decades despite ups and downs. But among university students, there has been a rise in the share of students enrolled in ecclesiastical studies especially in Africa, the Americas, and Asia. This is good news for the Church.
- Together, the top 15 countries in terms of total enrollment account for four fifths of global enrollment. Enrollment remains highly concentrated in a few countries. The country with the largest enrollment is the United States, followed by three large middle income countries: India, the Philippines, and Brazil. Italy is next,

probably in part due to historical reasons

and the location of the Vatican.

Data on enrollment are also provided by income group. At the primary level, most students in Catholic schools live in low and lower-middle (Lower-M in Figure ES.3) income countries. By contrast, Catholic higher education remains concentrated in upper-middle (Upper-M) and high income countries.

Figure ES.3: Shares of All Students in Catholic Education by Income Groups, 2018



Source: Author's computations from data in the statistical yearbook of the Church 2020.

Education Pluralism

In education systems that support pluralism, students or parents can choose the type of school or university they attend, as called for in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Given heterogeneity in priorities for what students should learn, education pluralism may also boost schooling and learning. The fact that there is heterogeneity is clear (otherwise all students would opt for the same type of education). What is less clear is the extent to which education systems are pluralistic. Rather than looking at inputs for pluralism (such as laws and regulations), we suggest a measure of education pluralism based on outputs, that is actual enrollment in different types of schools and universities. Below are a few highlights:

- There are clear differences in the priorities of parents for what children should learn in school based on the type of schools they rely on for their children. Examples are provided for Burkina Faso, Ghana, and the United States. There are also differences in the motivation for students to enroll in different types of

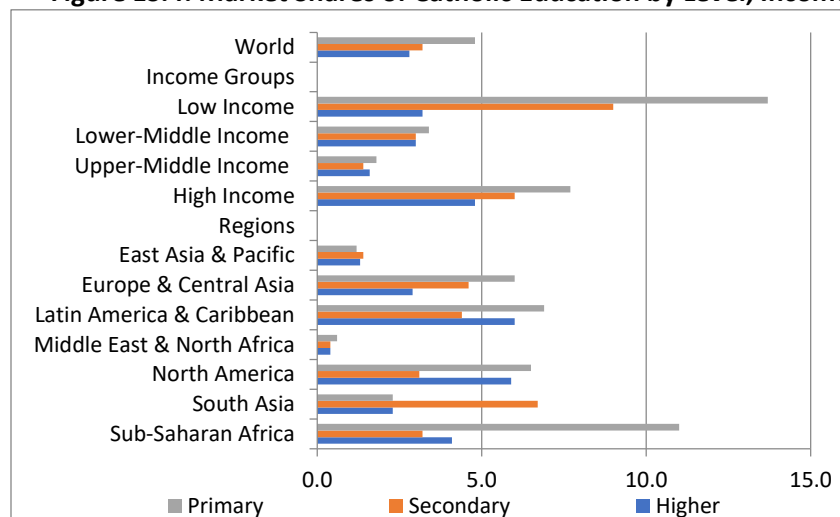
universities. Education pluralism helps in responding to these differences.

- To measure pluralism, the basic idea is that too much concentration in education provision may be detrimental to school choice as well as educational outcomes, much as too much concentration in industry may be detrimental to customers. Conversely, more pluralism in provision is a positive.
- The measure of education pluralism (Box ES.1) requires data on market shares. While analysis is conducted at the country level, for manageability estimates of market shares and education pluralism are provided in the report for various regions and income groups using World Bank classifications.
- The market shares of Catholic education are at 4.8 percent, 3.2 percent, and 2.8 percent at the primary, secondary, and higher levels globally. In low income countries, they are at 13.7 percent, 9.0 percent, and 3.2 percent (Figure ES.4). For primary education, Catholic schools have a large footprint

in sub-Saharan Africa (11.0 percent) and

low income countries (13.7 percent).

Figure ES.4: Market Shares of Catholic Education by Level, Income Groups and Regions (%), 2018



Globally, the market share of Catholic education is estimated at 4.8 percent at the primary level, 3.2 percent at the secondary level, and 2.8 percent at the higher education level. For primary education however, it is much higher in sub-Saharan Africa (11.0 percent) and low income countries (13.7 percent).

Source: Author's computations from data in the statistical yearbook of the Church 2020.

Box ES.1: The Education Pluralism Index

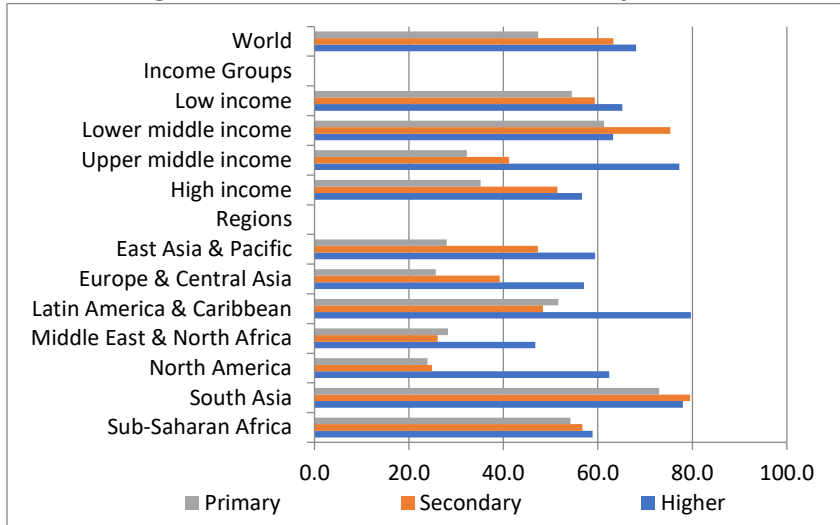
The normalized education pluralism index is $NEPI = (1 - HHI) / (1 - 1/N)$ where HHI is the Herfindahl-Hirschman index, itself equal to the sum of the squared market shares of education providers. NEPI takes a value between zero and one. Higher values denote more pluralism. Computing the index requires estimating market shares. Data were already available on public versus private provision. The advance of the report is to identify Catholic education separately, noting that while in most countries Catholic schools are private schools, in some countries most Catholic schools are public.

- Globally, the normalized education pluralism index is estimated at 0.474 for primary education, 0.633 for secondary education, and 0.681 for higher education. Education pluralism tends to increase with the level of education being considered, especially for higher education where governments tend to have a lower market share.
- Education pluralism is higher in South Asia, in part because of a large market share of private providers in India. It is also comparatively high in sub-Saharan Africa for primary and secondary

education. It is low at those education levels in North America and the Middle East and North Africa (see Figure ES.5 for comparisons by region and income group at all three levels).

- Catholic education contributes to education pluralism. This is shown in Figure ES.6 by comparing estimates of pluralism when considering only two providers (public versus private) and three providers (disaggregating Catholic education). The contribution of Catholic education to pluralism is largest at the primary level, and smallest for higher education, in line with market shares at those levels. Within primary education, again in line with market share, the contribution of Catholic schools to pluralism is largest in sub-Saharan Africa and low income countries where pluralism without Catholic schools would otherwise be comparatively low.
- The normalized education pluralism index has limitations. Alternative measures could be proposed based on the literature on market concentration and sensitivity tests could be performed. But it is hoped that its availability will help promote and inform debates on these issues.

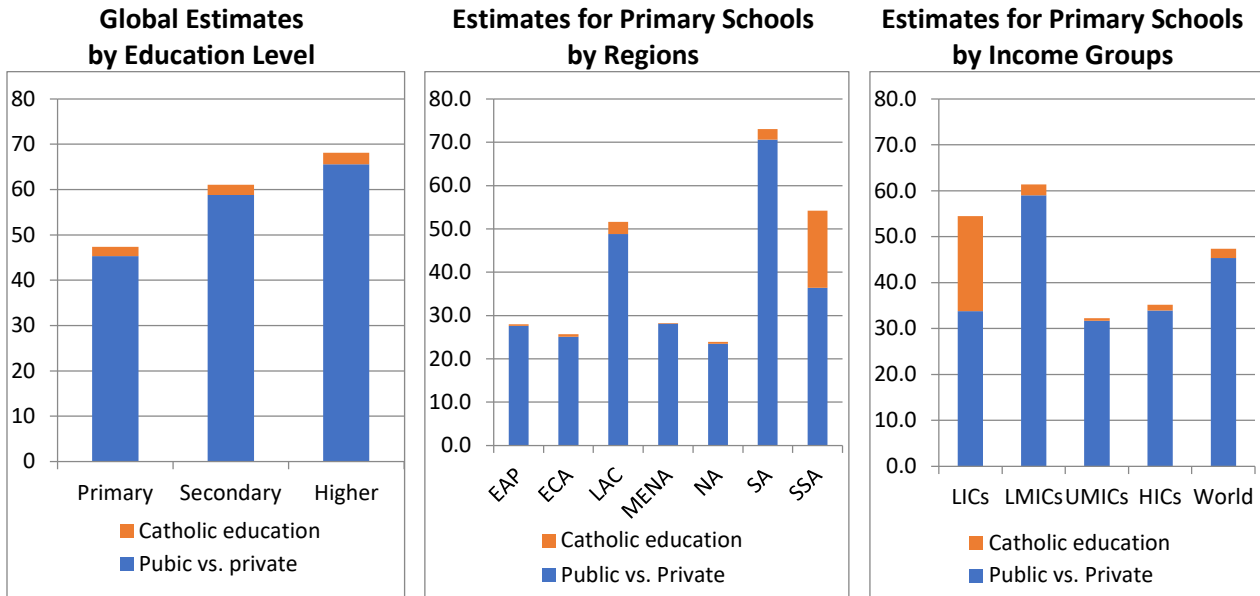
Figure ES.5: Education Pluralism Index by Level, Income Groups and Regions, 2018



Source: Author's estimations.

Globally, education pluralism increases with the level of education, with the highest values observed for tertiary education. For all levels of education, pluralism is high in South Asia. It is also comparatively high in sub-Saharan Africa for primary and secondary education. It is low at those education levels in North America and MENA.

Figure ES.6: Estimates of Education Pluralism with and without Catholic Schools, 2018



Source: Author's estimations.

Catholic Education contributes to education pluralism, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and low income countries where levels of education pluralism without Catholic schools would be comparatively low.

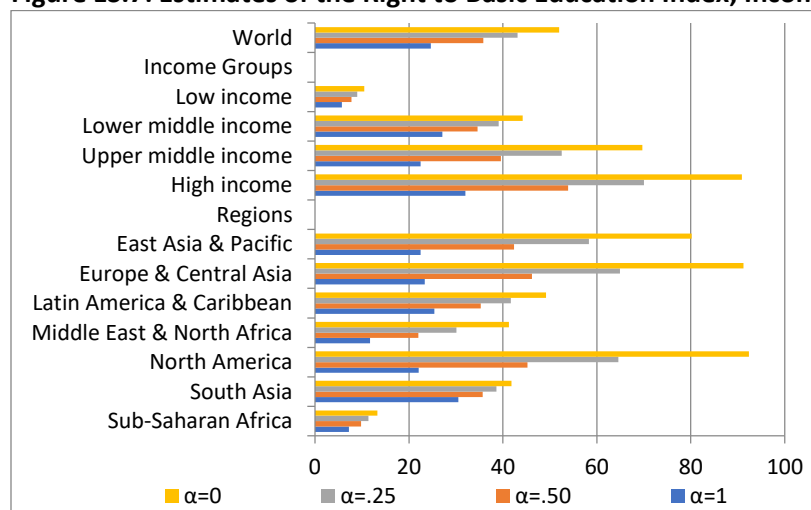
Learning Poverty and the Right to Education

As for education pluralism, various measures can be used to assess the fulfillment of the right to education. In this report, rather than looking at inputs, we focus again on outputs and outcomes. We propose a measure of the fulfillment of the right to basic education that takes into account not only whether children learn, but also education pluralism.

- Two new measures emphasizing learning have recently been proposed by the World Bank. The first is the learning-adjusted years of schooling children are expected to complete. The second is learning poverty defined as the share of 10-year old children not able to read and understand an age-appropriate text.
- Even though it focuses only on basic literacy, learning poverty seems more appropriate for assessing the fulfillment of the right to basic education across countries. Globally, the World Bank estimates that almost half of all 10-year old children are learning poor. In sub-Saharan Africa and low income countries, the proportion is almost nine in ten.

- The right to basic education index (RBEI) is defined as the product of (1) the share of children not in learning poverty and (2) the normalized index of education pluralism, with a weighting parameter for flexibility (Box ES.2). When using the measure, more or less emphasis can be placed on pluralism with that parameter.
- When no weight is placed on pluralism, the right to basic education index is simply one minus the learning poverty rate. As the weight placed on pluralism increases, the index decreases since no country ever achieves perfect pluralism. For multi-country analysis, the same weight should be used across countries, but for country-specific work, weights can be specific to any particular country.
- Given higher learning poverty in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, these regions tend to have lower right to basic education indices, as do low income countries. Still, accounting for pluralism in measuring the right to basic education makes a difference for estimates.

Figure ES.7: Estimates of the Right to Basic Education Index, Income Groups and Regions, 2018



Source: Author's estimations.

When a higher weight is placed on education pluralism, the estimate of the right to basic education index decreases, in some cases substantially. For illustration, estimates are provided in Figure ES.7 for the full range of values of α , but it would make sense to use low values for α in applications given the implicit trade-offs that these values entail.

Box ES.2: The Right to Basic Education Index

Denoting learning poverty by LP, the right to basic education index is $RBEI=(1-LP)\times NEPI^\alpha$ with $0\leq\alpha\leq 1$. The estimate of NEPI for primary education should be used in the formula. The index takes a value between zero and one. A higher value suggests higher fulfillment of the right to education. Changes in the parameter α reflect more or less emphasis on pluralism. When $\alpha=0$, pluralism is not valued and $REI=1-LP$. It makes sense to choose a value for α that is small given the implicit trade-offs that this value denotes between reducing learning poverty and increasing pluralism to fulfill the right. The measure RBEI focuses on the right to basic education and primary education, but similar approach could be used for higher levels.

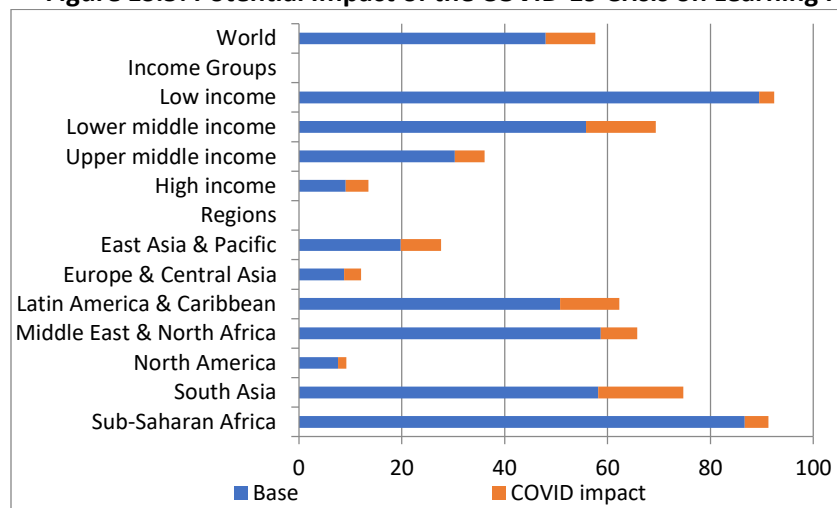
COVID-19 Crisis, Challenges, and Opportunities

The current crisis is having unprecedented negative impacts on students and education systems. Some impacts relate to school closures, others to the economic crisis leading to drop-outs. Catholic schools and universities are especially vulnerable in countries where

they do not benefit from public funding as some parents may not be able to afford tuition anymore. The crisis is leading to higher learning poverty and lower pluralism, thus affecting the right to basic education negatively.

- Under a pessimistic scenario, World Bank estimates suggest that learning poverty could increase from 48.0 percent to 57.6 percent globally. Losses are smaller under alternative scenarios but still large. Students in Catholic schools are affected as most live in regions with low connectivity (thus limiting the efficacy of distance learning) and little remediation.
- Estimates of losses in education pluralism are not provided due to insufficient data at this time. But many national Catholic education networks expect large enrollment losses. In the United States, the drop in Catholic K12 enrollment for the 2020-21 school year is at -6.4 points, which is unprecedented. Universities may have seen smaller losses, but many have been weakened financially, and for some their sustainability may be in doubt.

Figure ES.5: Potential Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis on Learning Poverty, Pessimistic Scenario (%)



Source: Azevedo (2020).

Under a pessimistic scenario, learning poverty may have increase from 48.0 percent to 57.6 percent globally. Increases are smaller under two other scenarios (intermediate and optimistic), but in all scenarios a large number of children may become learning poor.

Box ES.3: Has Catholic Education Peaked?

Enrollment in Catholic schools and universities has grown almost continuously between 1975 and 2018. Yet since 2016, there has been a small decline due to lower enrollment at the K12 level. As the COVID-19 crisis may lead to losses in enrollment, global enrollment in Catholic education may reach a plateau for a few years. Yet in the medium and long term, enrollment should continue to grow. Growth in sub-Saharan Africa due to population growth and gains in attainment should compensate for potential losses in some other parts of the world. For higher education as well, we can probably expect growth in the long run.

The shift towards Africa is changing the geography of Catholic education in a major way. By 2030, projections suggest that close to two thirds of all students in Catholic primary schools and more than 40 percent of all students in secondary schools could live in Africa. For higher education, changes will be slower.

For education systems to recover and fulfill the right to education, policy actions are needed on three fronts: (1) mitigating the impact of the crisis; (2) improving learning; and (3) increasing education pluralism.

- Guidance has been provided by multiple organizations on how to respond to immediate impacts of the crisis. Priorities include developing multi-modal distance learning, providing remedial education, ensuring safety when reopening schools, and protecting education budgets.
- To improve learning, a new World Bank blueprint suggests clear priorities for low and middle income countries. These priorities relate to learners, teachers, learning resources, safety and inclusion, and system management. The blueprint also suggests principles to guide reforms.
- The World Bank blueprint does not discuss the role of private providers, but guidance should become available in the fall of 2021 from UNESCO's upcoming

Global Education Monitoring Report that will focus on the role of non-state actors.

- Estimates for 38 OECD and partner countries suggest that in 2016, Catholic schools provided US\$ 63 billion in savings for national budgets, with an additional US\$43 billion in savings from Catholic universities versus a situation in which students would enroll in public institutions. Preventing a weakening of Catholic education due to the crisis is good for education pluralism, but it also makes economic sense for states.

The damage caused by the current crisis is massive. Students in Catholic schools and universities are also affected. For some Catholic institutions, the crisis may be an existential threat, especially in countries where they do not benefit from state funding. Yet these institutions contribute to lower learning poverty and to education pluralism, both of which are essential for the right to education. More research, dialogue, and policy guidance are needed to fully realize the value that Catholic education can bring to education systems. And conversely, Catholic education must learn from international experience. The aim of the Global Catholic Education project is to contribute in a small way to this endeavor (see Box ES.4).

Box ES.4: Global Catholic Education Website

The volunteer-led [Global Catholic Education](#) website went live symbolically on Thanksgiving Day in November 2020. Its vision is to connect Catholic education to the world, and the world to Catholic education. It brings global knowledge to Catholic schools and universities by sharing evidence-based good practices emerging from international experience. And it brings to the attention of the global education community the work of Catholic schools and universities, including their approach to educate the whole person towards fraternal humanism.

INTRODUCTION

The first Global Catholic Education Report³ was published in June 2020. At the time the report was drafted, we were still in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, in February 2021, the situation is even more difficult than it was then. Vaccines provide hope that the pandemic will soon be managed, but major challenges remain, especially in ensuring that developing countries have access to these vaccines. In the meantime, in low, middle, and high income countries alike, the pandemic continues to have devastating consequences. Apart from its impacts on health, the negative effects of the pandemic on livelihoods have been massive. As for education, many students remain out of school or in hybrid situations where a lack of opportunities for quality distance learning is detrimental to learning.

The core objectives of this second report are in some ways the same as those of the first report. A first objective is to bring global knowledge to Catholic schools about how to improve education outcomes, especially under current circumstances. A second objective is to make the international education community better aware of the valuable contributions made by Catholic schools to education systems. These are also the objectives of the new Global Catholic Education website launched in November 2020 (Box I.1).

In this report, many of the themes that were discussed in the first report are discussed again, since the pandemic remains at the core of the challenges faced today by education systems, including networks of Catholic schools and universities. But in addition, the analysis in this report is expanded to consider new topics.

The focus of this report is on education pluralism, learning poverty, and the right to education. After a discussion of trends in enrolment in Catholic schools and universities,

the report proposes a new measure of the fulfillment of the right to education that takes into account education pluralism. Education pluralism is a broad concept, but it refers in part to the ability of parents to choose among different types of schools for their children, as called for by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This ability can be measured, so that the performance of countries in achieving pluralism can be compared.

Apart from considering education pluralism, the proposed measure of the fulfillment of the right to education accounts for the learning crisis faced by many education systems. Today too many children are not learning in school the skills that they need to acquire. Therefore the proposed measure of the fulfillment of the right to education is based on the new learning poverty measure introduced by the World Bank. The measure suggested in this report for the fulfillment of the right to education is necessarily tentative, as is the proposed measure for education pluralism. But we hope that they will motivate further discussion of these fundamental issues.

A second addition to the scope of the report is no less important. While the Global Catholic Education Report 2020 was devoted solely to Catholic schools at the pre-primary, primary, and secondary level, this report also considers challenges and opportunities for Catholic higher education. Many of the analyses included in this report are therefore conducted twice – first for Catholic schools, and next for Catholic universities and other institutions of higher education. Major differences are observed, including in terms of enrolment trends. While the African continent is quickly becoming home to a majority of students enrolled in Catholic schools globally, its share of total enrolment in Catholic higher education remains very small. Indeed, Catholic higher education continues to be dominated by universities in a relatively small number of

³ Wodon (2020a). See also two papers on which part of the report was based (Wodon 2020b, 2020c).

countries, including especially the United States. Still, while some challenges and opportunities affecting Catholic schools and universities differ, many are common.

As this report covers both Catholic schools and universities, it is co-sponsored by the International Federation of Catholic Universities (IFCU) and the International Office of Catholic Education (OIEC). OIEC federates national Catholic education associations and represents Catholic K12 schools with United Nations and other international agencies. IFCU does the same for Catholic universities.

In addition to OIEC and IFCU, we hope that the report will also be useful to two other partners for the Global Catholic Education website: the World Organization of Former Students of Catholic Education (OMAEC in French) and the World Union of Catholic Teachers (WUCT or UMEC in French).

The report is structured in five chapters. The first two chapters document long-term trends in enrollment in pre-primary, primary, and secondary education (chapter 1) as well as higher education (chapter 2). The analysis in chapter 1 was for the most part already provided in the Global Catholic Education Report 2020, but it has been updated and expanded for this report, and is included again here to facilitate comparisons with chapter 2.

The next two chapters focus on the theme for this report: education pluralism, learning poverty, and the right to education. Chapter 3 makes the case for the importance of school choice as a key component of education pluralism. A measure of education pluralism is suggested based on concentration indices used

in the literature on market power. Chapter 4 discusses the learning crisis, and suggests that combining estimates of learning poverty and education pluralism may provide a way to assess the fulfillment of the right to education. The analysis remains tentative, but is hopefully informative.

The last chapter considers the impacts of the current pandemic as well as other challenges and opportunities for education systems including Catholic education networks. Expanding on the analysis provided in the Global Catholic Education Report 2020, the chapter relies on newly available data to consider the impacts of the crisis on learning poverty and education pluralism. It also discusses approaches to improve both learning and pluralism to fulfill the right to education. A brief conclusion follows.

Box I.1: Global Catholic Education Website

The volunteer-led [Global Catholic Education](#) went live symbolically on Thanksgiving Day at the end of November 2020 to give thanks for many blessings received. Its vision is to connect Catholic education to the world, and the world to Catholic education. It brings global knowledge to Catholic schools and universities by sharing evidence-based good practices emerging from international experience. And it brings to the attention of the global education community the work of Catholic schools and universities, including their approach to educate the whole person towards fraternal humanism.

CHAPTER 1

ENROLLMENT TRENDS IN CATHOLIC K12 SCHOOLS

Introduction⁴

Globally, the Catholic Church estimates that 35.0 million children were enrolled in Catholic primary schools in 2018, with 19.3 million children enrolled in Catholic secondary schools and 7.3 million children enrolled at the preschool level⁵. These estimates for 2018 are likely to be a lower bound for the number of students served by the Catholic Church because they do not fully account for the role played by Catholic institutions in providing other education services, such as technical and vocational education and training, as well as informal education services. Overall, the Catholic Church is therefore one of the largest providers of education services worldwide after the governments of China and India.

This first chapter updates and slightly expands an analysis of enrollment trends in Catholic K12 schools that was already included in the Global Catholic Education Report 2020. This is done to be able to contrast trends in enrollment in K12 schools with those observed in higher education, as discussed in chapter 2. After a brief introduction providing background, trends in enrollment from 1975 to 2018 are documented, and then briefly discussed.

In the context of efforts by the international community to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, faith-based organizations play an important role in the provision of education and health services, and more generally in investments in human capital. Many of these organizations are Christian, and among Christian organizations, in part for historical reasons, Catholic institutions often tend to have the largest networks of schools and healthcare facilities. In the case of

healthcare, one prominent example is that of the Christian Health Associations which provide care in many sub-Saharan African countries, and especially in East and Southern Africa⁶. In the case of education, large networks of schools are managed by Catholic dioceses and religious orders, especially in sub-Saharan Africa⁷.

What should be the aims of Catholic schools according to the Church? The Congregation for Catholic Education defines a school as a place where integral formation occurs through a living encounter with a cultural inheritance. The first mission of Catholic schools should be to contribute to the salvific mission of the Church. This requires *“the development of man’s psychological and moral consciousness ... as a pre-condition for the reception of the befitting divine gifts of truth and grace”*⁸. To that end, given the pluralism that characterizes today’s societies and the fact that many students in Catholic schools are not Catholic, the Congregation for Catholic Education calls for an education that leads to fraternal humanism and a civilization of love⁹.

Ensuring that education is provided ‘in a Catholic key’ is a key objective of Catholic schools¹⁰. But this does not imply that size does not matter. As long as Catholic schools are faithful to their mission, providing education to a larger as opposed to a smaller number of students helps the Church, including in terms of its evangelization mission, which should not be equated to proselytism.

For communities and society at large, a robust network of Catholic schools is also likely to be beneficial in various ways. First, it is often believed that Catholic schools perform better

⁴ This chapter is based on Wodon (2018a). Estimates have been updated with the latest data.

⁵ Secretariat of State of the Vatican (2020).

⁶ Olivier et al. (2015), Dimmock et al. (2012, 2017).

⁷ Wodon (2014, 2015, 2018, 2020a).

⁸ Congregation for Catholic Education (1977).

⁹ Congregation for Catholic Education (2017).

¹⁰ Delfra et al. (2018).

than public schools in terms of learning outcomes for students, even though the empirical evidence to that effect is mixed. Catholic schools and the Church also have a long tradition of serving the poor¹¹, even if doing so in practice is difficult especially when the schools do not receive support from the state. Finally and perhaps most importantly, Catholic and other faith-based schools provide valuable options for parents, thus contributing to healthy pluralism in the educational choices available to them. We will come back to these arguments in chapter 4. But first, to set the stage for the analysis that follows, it is useful to review (pre-COVID) long term trends in enrollment.

Trends in Enrollment

How has the number of students in pre-primary, primary and secondary Catholic schools evolved over the last four decades? In which parts of the world is growth in enrollment taking place, and where do we observe a potential decline? How is enrollment distributed between the pre-primary, primary, and secondary levels? Which are the countries with the largest enrollment in Catholic schools?

To answer these questions, this chapter documents trends in enrollment in Catholic schools from 1975 to 2018 and discusses some of the implications for the future of Catholic schools. The chapter updates with the most recent data available an analysis published in *Educatio Catholica*, the journal of the Congregation for Catholic Education in Rome¹², as well as in the Global Catholic Education Report 2020.

Data on the number of students in Catholic K12 schools are available in the Catholic Church's annual statistical yearbooks, with the most recent data available for 2018¹³.

The yearbooks provide data among others on enrollment in K12 schools by level, considering separately nurseries and preschools, primary schools, and secondary schools for each country and some territories. While the data are self-reported by the chancery offices of ecclesiastical jurisdictions that fill the annual questionnaire, the data seem to be of sufficient quality to document broad trends over time. In a typical year, about five percent of the ecclesiastical jurisdictions do not fill the questionnaire, but this is the case mostly for small jurisdictions, so that the missing data should not affect the overall results substantially for most countries, or at the regional and global levels.

Data on the number of students in Catholic K12 schools are available in the Catholic Church's annual statistical yearbooks, with the most recent data available for 2018.

Table 1.1 provides estimates of enrollment for nurseries and preschools, primary schools, and secondary schools, as well as total enrollment for all three levels combined. For primary and secondary schools, data are provided from 1975 to 2018. For nurseries and preschools, the data are not available in the statistical yearbook for 1975, so the series starts in 1980. Estimates are provided by region – as defined in the yearbooks, and globally. As already mentioned, in 2018, 7.4 million children were enrolled in Catholic nurseries and preschools globally, 35.0 million children attended primary schools, and 19.3 million children attended secondary schools, for a total across the three levels of almost 62 million children.

Figures 1.1 through 1.4 provide a visualization of the trends in enrollment by region for five regions: Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and Oceania. The analysis is kept at that level to keep the tables manageable, but data are available at the country level in the statistical yearbooks. A number of interesting

¹¹ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (2004), Francis (2015), McKinney (2018).

¹² Wodon (2018a).

¹³ Secretariat of State of the Vatican (2020).

findings emerge from the data. Five findings are highlighted here. First, the trends in Figures 1.1 through 1.4 suggest healthy growth in enrollment over time. Total enrollment in K12 education more than doubled between 1975 and 2018 globally, from 29.1 million to 61.7 million students. Most of the growth in enrollment in absolute terms was concentrated in Africa, and within that region, in sub-Saharan Africa (not shown in the Table). This is not

surprising, given that the continent has a high rate of population growth and that thanks to efforts to achieve education for all, enrollment rates have risen substantially, especially at the primary level, even if gaps remain.

Total enrollment in Catholic K12 schools more than doubled between 1975 and 2018 globally, from 29.1 million to 61.7 million students.

Table 1.1: Trends in the Number of Students Enrolled in Catholic K12 Schools (Thousands)

	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2018
Nurseries and Preschools									
Africa	-	162.4	312.5	484.6	646.2	1,147.9	1,149.4	1,277.5	2,327.0
Americas	-	514.0	800.6	968.7	1,042.1	1,331.1	1,541.7	1,409.6	1,235.3
Asia	-	607.0	840.0	1,058.6	1,327.0	1,369.8	1,651.4	1,761.1	1,846.2
Europe	-	1,634.4	1,796.5	1,845.1	1,901.3	1,681.0	1,714.5	1,923.4	1,890.0
Oceania	-	7.6	37.0	33.5	33.9	37.1	109.7	107.0	78.3
World	-	2,925.4	3,786.7	4,390.5	4,950.5	5,566.8	6,166.7	6,478.6	7,376.9
Primary Schools									
Africa	4,221.0	5,610.7	7,052.5	8,393.8	9,356.4	10,158.4	12,435.8	15,821.3	19,365.1
Americas	7,101.5	6,838.6	7,118.2	7,380.6	7,198.3	7,554.7	7,045.0	6,766.0	6,143.7
Asia	3,215.1	3,752.6	3,929.0	4,289.9	4,539.6	4,668.9	4,907.5	5,023.8	5,608.8
Europe	4,552.5	3,979.0	3,810.3	3,569.2	3,607.6	3,099.4	3,003.7	2,846.0	3,126.7
Oceania	493.6	480.3	480.2	510.9	544.1	615.7	692.1	694.0	767.7
World	19,583.7	20,661.2	22,390.3	24,144.5	25,245.9	26,097.1	28,084.1	31,151.2	35,012.0
Secondary Schools									
Africa	599.0	806.5	1,032.4	1,275.2	1,701.7	2,267.1	3,438.1	4,540.9	5,462.8
Americas	2,930.2	3,364.0	3,521.2	3,506.0	3,603.7	3,797.6	3,696.6	3,868.1	3,684.0
Asia	2,607.8	3,150.9	3,720.9	3,982.1	4,134.5	4,017.4	4,985.1	5,292.0	5,993.4
Europe	3,149.2	3,436.0	3,485.0	3,358.3	3,459.2	3,593.8	3,721.2	3,666.4	3,657.7
Oceania	236.0	257.6	306.8	319.3	333.3	350.8	391.1	426.1	509.6
World	9,522.3	11,015.0	12,066.3	12,440.9	13,232.4	14,026.7	16,232.1	17,793.6	19,307.3
Total									
Africa	4,820.0	6,579.6	8,397.4	10,153.6	11,704.3	13,573.4	17,023.4	21,639.8	27,154.8
Americas	10,031.7	10,716.6	11,440.1	11,855.3	11,844.1	12,683.3	12,283.2	12,043.7	11,063.0
Asia	5,822.9	7,510.5	8,489.9	9,330.6	10,001.1	10,056.1	11,544.0	12,076.9	13,448.3
Europe	7,701.7	9,049.3	9,091.8	8,772.6	8,968.1	8,374.3	8,439.4	8,435.8	8,674.5
Oceania	729.7	745.5	824.0	863.7	911.3	1,003.6	1,192.9	1,227.1	1,355.5
World	29,106.0	34,601.5	38,243.3	40,975.9	43,428.9	45,690.6	50,482.8	55,423.4	61,696.2

Source: Compiled by the author from the annual statistical yearbooks of the Church.

Note: Totals for 1975 are not comparable to subsequent years due to lack of data for nurseries and preschools.

Figure 1.1: Enrollment in Catholic Preschools (Thousands)

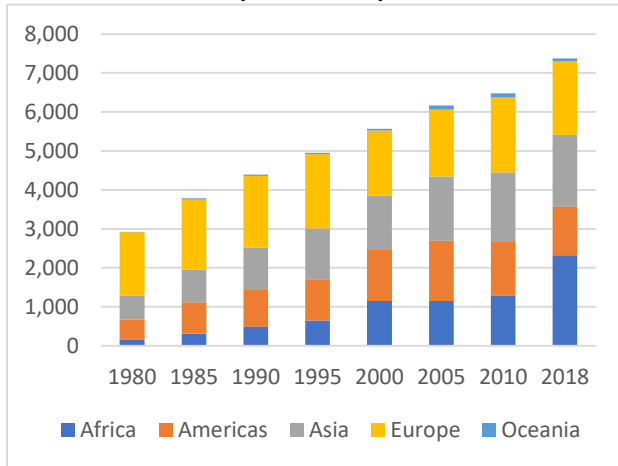


Figure 1.2: Enrollment in Catholic Primary Schools (Thousands)

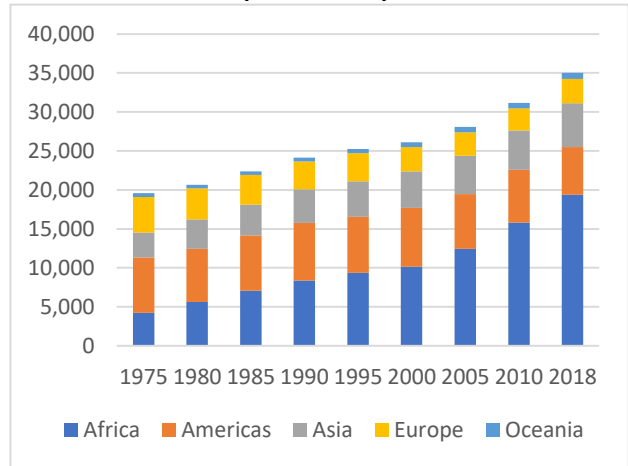


Figure 1.3: Enrollment in Catholic Secondary Schools (Thousands)

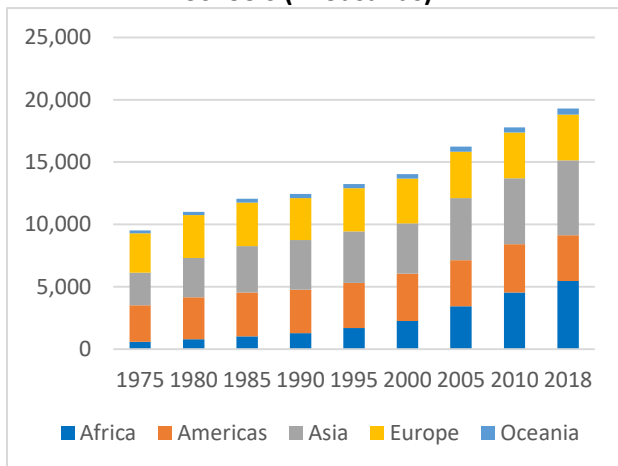
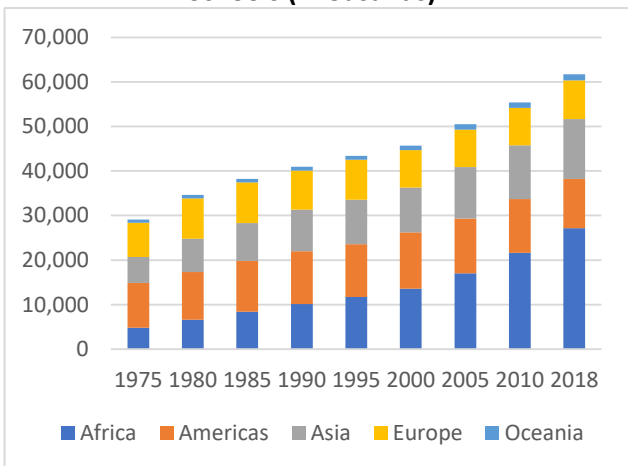


Figure 1.4: Total Enrollment in Catholic K12 Schools (Thousands)



Source: Statistical Yearbooks of the Church.

Note: Preschools not included in 1975.

By 2018, the Africa region had 27.2 million children enrolled in Catholic K12 schools. Of those, 19.4 million were enrolled in Catholic primary schools. This accounted for 55 percent of all children enrolled in Catholic schools at that level globally. The numbers of children in Catholic nursery and preschools and in Catholic secondary schools in Africa were estimated in 2018 at respectively 2.3 million and 5.5 million, accounting in both cases for about three in ten children enrolled at those levels in Catholic schools globally. The other region with a large increase in enrollment in

absolute terms over the last few decades is Asia, mostly due to gains in India, especially at the secondary level. It is worth noting however that over the last few years, global enrollment in K12 education as levelled off, with even a recent (albeit small) decline. In the context of the COVID-19 crisis, there may be a risk that some Catholic schools will have lost students, and some schools may close¹⁴.

¹⁴ Wodon (2020a, 2020b, 2020c).

The largest gains in enrollment in absolute terms are observed in Africa. This was expected given that high rates of population growth as well as gains in educational attainment in the region over the last few decades.

A second key finding is the fact that there are substantial differences between regions in the share of students enrolled by level (see Table 1.2 and Figure 1.5). Globally, primary schools account for 56.7 percent of all enrollments in Catholic schools in 2018, versus 31.3 percent for secondary schools, and 12.1 percent for preschools. In Africa however, primary schools still account for 71.3 percent of total enrollment, mostly because the transition

to secondary schools is still weak in many countries (for example, only four in ten students in Africa complete their lower secondary school according to the World Bank's the World Development Indicators). By contrast, in Europe, primary schools account for only a third (36.0 percent) of total enrollment in Catholic schools. This is due not only to substantial enrollment at the secondary level, but also to high enrollment rates in nurseries and preschools. Globally, there has been a progressive decline in the share of students enrolled at the primary level globally from 67.3 percent in 1975 to 56.7 percent in 2018.

Table 1.2: Proportion of Students Enrolled in Catholic K12 Schools by Level (%)

	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2018
Nurseries and Preschools									
Africa	-	2.5	3.7	4.8	5.5	8.5	6.8	5.9	8.6
Americas	-	4.8	7.0	8.2	8.8	10.5	12.6	11.7	11.2
Asia	-	8.1	9.9	11.3	13.3	13.6	14.3	14.6	13.7
Europe	-	18.1	19.8	21.0	21.2	20.1	20.3	22.8	21.8
Oceania	-	1.0	4.5	3.9	3.7	3.7	9.2	8.7	5.8
World	-	8.5	9.9	10.7	11.4	12.2	12.2	11.7	12.0
Primary Schools									
Africa	87.6	85.3	84.0	82.7	79.9	74.8	73.1	73.1	71.3
Americas	70.8	63.8	62.2	62.3	60.8	59.6	57.4	56.2	55.5
Asia	55.2	50.0	46.3	46.0	45.4	46.4	42.5	41.6	41.7
Europe	59.1	44.0	41.9	40.7	40.2	37.0	35.6	33.7	36.0
Oceania	67.6	64.4	58.3	59.2	59.7	61.4	58.0	56.6	56.6
World	67.3	59.7	58.5	58.9	58.1	57.1	55.6	56.2	56.7
Secondary Schools									
Africa	12.4	12.3	12.3	12.6	14.5	16.7	20.2	21.0	20.1
Americas	29.2	31.4	30.8	29.6	30.4	29.9	30.1	32.1	33.3
Asia	44.8	42.0	43.8	42.7	41.3	40.0	43.2	43.8	44.6
Europe	40.9	38.0	38.3	38.3	38.6	42.9	44.1	43.5	42.2
Oceania	32.4	34.6	37.2	37.0	36.6	35.0	32.8	34.7	37.6
World	32.7	31.8	31.6	30.4	30.5	30.7	32.2	32.1	31.3

Source: Compiled by the author from the annual statistical yearbooks of the Church.

Note: Shares for 1975 are not comparable to subsequent years due to lack of data for nurseries and preschools.

A third finding is that in proportionate terms, as a percentage change from the base, the highest growth rates are also observed for Africa, as was the case for absolute gains in enrollment. But growth rates are also high in

Asia and Oceania. The annual growth rates for the period from 1975 to 2018 for primary, secondary, and total enrollment, and from 1980 to 2018 for enrollment in nurseries and preschools, are computed taking into account

compounding. They are provided in Table 1.3 and visualized in Figure 1.6. In Africa, the annual growth rates are estimated at 7.3 percent for nurseries and preschools, 3.6 percent for primary schools, 5.3 percent for secondary schools, and 4.1 percent for total enrollment in Catholic K12 schools. These growth rates are two to three times larger than those observed for enrollment in Catholic schools globally. In Asia, growth rates in Catholic school enrollment are slightly above those observed for the world, at 3.0 percent for nurseries and preschools, 1.3 percent for primary schools, 2.0 percent for secondary schools, and 2.0 percent for total

enrollment in Catholic K12 schools. By contrast, in the Americas and in Europe at all levels, growth rates tend to be much smaller, and in some cases are negative. The only exception is the growth in the Americas in enrollment at the nursery and preschool levels.

The highest growth rates in enrollment are also observed for Africa, as for absolute gains in enrollment. But growth rates are also high in Asia and Oceania.

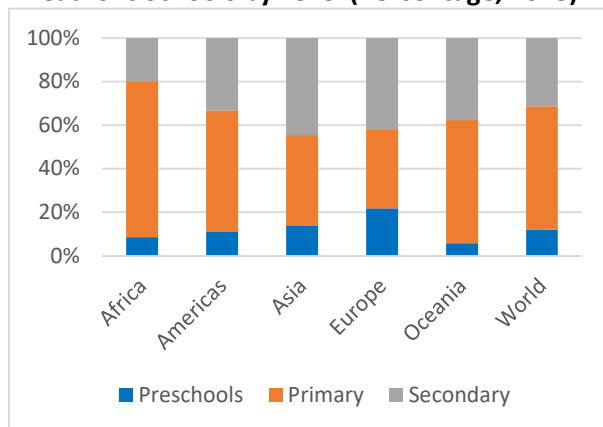
Table 1.3: Annual Growth Rate for Enrollment in Catholic K12 Schools (%)

	1975- 1980	1980- 1985	1985- 1990	1990- 1995	1995- 2000	2000- 2005	2005- 2010	2010- 2018	1975- 2018
Nurseries and Preschools									
Africa		14.0	9.2	5.9	12.2	0.0	2.1	7.8	7.3
Americas		9.3	3.9	1.5	5.0	3.0	-1.8	-1.6	2.3
Asia		6.7	4.7	4.6	0.6	3.8	1.3	0.6	3.0
Europe		1.9	0.5	0.6	-2.4	0.4	2.3	-0.2	0.4
Oceania		37.2	-2.0	0.2	1.8	24.2	-0.5	-3.8	6.3
World		5.3	3.0	2.4	2.4	2.1	1.0	1.6	2.5
Primary Schools									
Africa	5.9	4.7	3.5	2.2	1.7	4.1	4.9	2.6	3.6
Americas	-0.8	0.8	0.7	-0.5	1.0	-1.4	-0.8	-1.2	-0.3
Asia	3.1	0.9	1.8	1.1	0.6	1.0	0.5	1.4	1.3
Europe	-2.7	-0.9	-1.3	0.2	-3.0	-0.6	-1.1	1.2	-0.9
Oceania	-0.5	0.0	1.2	1.3	2.5	2.4	0.1	1.3	1.0
World	1.1	1.6	1.5	0.9	0.7	1.5	2.1	1.5	1.4
Secondary Schools									
Africa	6.1	5.1	4.3	5.9	5.9	8.7	5.7	2.3	5.3
Americas	2.8	0.9	-0.1	0.6	1.1	-0.5	0.9	-0.6	0.5
Asia	3.9	3.4	1.4	0.8	-0.6	4.4	1.2	1.6	2.0
Europe	1.8	0.3	-0.7	0.6	0.8	0.7	-0.3	0.0	0.3
Oceania	1.8	3.6	0.8	0.9	1.0	2.2	1.7	2.3	1.8
World	3.0	1.8	0.6	1.2	1.2	3.0	1.9	1.0	1.7
Total									
Africa	6.4	5.0	3.9	2.9	3.0	4.6	4.9	2.9	4.1
Americas	1.3	1.3	0.7	0.0	1.4	-0.6	-0.4	-1.1	0.2
Asia	5.2	2.5	1.9	1.4	0.1	2.8	0.9	1.4	2.0
Europe	3.3	0.1	-0.7	0.4	-1.4	0.2	0.0	0.3	0.3
Oceania	0.4	2.0	0.9	1.1	1.9	3.5	0.6	1.3	1.5
World	3.5	2.0	1.4	1.2	1.0	2.0	1.9	1.4	1.8

Source: Compiled by the author from the annual statistical yearbooks of the Church.

Note: Growth rates for 1975-80 do not include data for nurseries and preschools.

Figure 1.5: Proportion of K12 Students in Catholic Schools by Level (Percentage, 2018)



Source: Author’s estimations from the Statistical Yearbooks of the Church.

For the Americas, a difference between the United States and the other countries should be noted. While enrollment continues to grow in some countries in Central and Latin America, there has been a steep decline in enrollment in the United States, from more than five million students in primary and secondary schools in the early 1960s to only about 1.8 million today¹⁵. This is due in part to a lack of public funding for schools which generates budget savings for the state, but implies out-of-pocket costs on parents¹⁶. The decline in enrollment has affected private schools more generally¹⁷, with the middle class facing increasing difficulties given stagnant wages to afford private schools due to their cost in the absence of state or federal subsidies (in contrast to private schools, charter schools have expanded over time thanks to public funding – these are formally public schools but they are privately managed).

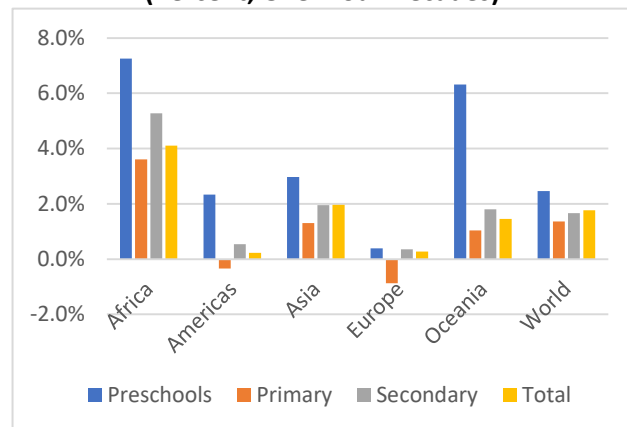
Fourth, the share of students enrolled in Catholic schools globally has remained somewhat stable over time. Estimates of these shares for 2018 are provided in Chapter 3, but analysis suggests that globally the shares have

¹⁵ Wodon (2018c).

¹⁶ On savings for the state in the United States and other countries, see Wodon (2019d, 2019f).

¹⁷ Murnane et al. (2018).

Figure 1.6: Annual Growth Rates in Enrollment (Percent, Over Four Decades)



not changed substantially over time¹⁸. This share decreased slightly at the secondary level, but it increased slightly at the primary level.

There are differences however between regions. In Africa (combining sub-Saharan and North Africa), the share of students in Catholic schools is much higher, with one in ten children enrolled in a Catholic primary school. In Oceania, the shares are even larger, with one in five students in primary schools enrolled in a Catholic school. This is due in part to Australia, where Catholic schools benefit from state funding. In many other countries by contrast, only a relatively small share of students enroll in Catholic schools, and in some cases (such as China), there are no Catholic schools.

The share of students enrolled in Catholic schools globally has remained somewhat stable over time. It decreased slightly at the secondary level and increased slightly at the primary level.

It is worth noting that gains (or losses) in enrollment can come from building new schools (or closing schools in cases of losses), or accommodating more students in existing schools (or less students in the cases of losses). Analysis suggests that gains were achieved for

¹⁸ Wodon (2018a).

the most part from creating new schools¹⁹. This is not surprising since there is a limit to ability of existing schools to accommodate more students. But it may be a source of concern in some countries where the Church or communities may not have the means to build new schools, especially at the secondary level. As governments and low cost for-profit providers expand the coverage of their secondary schools in low and lower-middle income countries, even if enrollment in Catholic secondary schools increased, the share of students enrolled in Catholic schools may not.

Fifth, there is heterogeneity between countries in the size of their Catholic school networks. Table 4 provides the list of the 15 countries with the largest enrollment in Catholic K12 schools in 2018. Estimates of enrollment are provided by level in each country. Together, these 15 countries account for about two thirds of the global enrollment in Catholic K12 schools. As mentioned earlier, enrollment is largest in absolute terms in India due to the sheer size of the country. The next four countries are from sub-Saharan Africa: the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Uganda, Kenya, and Malawi. Three are classified as low-income by the World Bank. Kenya like India is a lower-middle income country, the next level in the income classification of the World Bank. The fact that the footprint of Catholic schools is today especially large in low income countries is a positive development for the mission of the Church to serve low income students. In countries such as the DRC, even households in the second top quintile of income are not “well off” economically by any means.

The fact that the footprint of Catholic schools is large in low income countries is important for the mission of the Church to serve the poor.

In the DRC as well as Uganda, Kenya, and Malawi, most Catholic schools are considered as public schools and are at least

¹⁹ Wodon (2019e).

partially funded by the state²⁰. In the DRC for example, Catholic schools are part of *écoles conventionnées*²¹. Catholic schools in the DRC have a large market share due in part to historical factors and the limited ability of the state to provide education services during periods of conflict. The smallest country included in Table 1.4 is Belgium which has high levels of enrollment because of a system that funds (almost) equally Catholic and public schools. But in the other countries, while the number of student enrolled in Catholic schools may be high due to population sizes, the market share of Catholic schools is often low, in large part due to limited or no state support leading to cost recovery from parents by the schools, and thereby higher costs which may not be affordable for the poor. This is for example the case in the United States as well as India.

Sixth, the fact that the highest growth rate in enrolment is observed for nurseries and preschools is worth acknowledging. This is good news, not so much in terms of how this may affect future enrolment in Catholic primary or secondary schools, but in terms of the value of nurseries and preschools for the children attending them. The literature demonstrates that early childhood is a critical period in the life of children and that investing in children at that time has high returns (and often higher returns than investments later in life). This is the case especially for the first 1,000 days in the life of children when brain development occurs, but also later, including to make sure that children are ready to enter primary school²². Early stimulation and preschools have therefore been identified as key interventions that governments as well as other organizations should promote when investing in human development²³.

²⁰ On benefits but also challenges that this may create, see D’Agotsino et al. (2019) on Kenya.

²¹ Backiny-Yetna and Wodon (2009), Wodon (2017a).

²² Black et al. (2017).

²³ Denboba et al. (2014).

Table 1.4: Top 15 Countries by K12 Enrollment in Catholic Schools, 2018

	Preschool	Primary	Secondary	Total
India	1,184,522	3,907,185	4,038,841	9,130,548
DR Congo	78,239	4,316,789	1,557,110	5,952,138
Uganda	183,519	4,882,705	450,674	5,516,898
Kenya	413,238	2,673,575	889,294	3,976,107
Malawi	462,791	1,835,418	173,315	2,471,524
France	391,615	630,785	1,134,850	2,157,250
USA	152,753	1,278,673	574,887	2,006,313
Rwanda	193,988	1,140,958	352,564	1,687,510
Spain	237,577	569,872	591,029	1,398,478
Argentina	210,143	635,426	520,749	1,366,318
Philippines	98,760	381,053	798,745	1,278,558
Belgium	197,493	465,302	556,803	1,219,598
Mexico	160,653	533,076	414,472	1,108,201
Ghana	188,622	524,020	289,955	1,002,597
Brazil	183,453	598,126	204,650	986,229

Source: Compiled by the author from the annual statistical yearbooks of the Church.

Summing Up

The purpose of this chapter was to update a basic analysis of trends in enrollment in Catholic K12 schools previously published in *Educatio Catholica* and in the Global Catholic Education Report 2020. All Figures and Tables have been updated with data available from the latest statistical yearbook of the Church. Below are a few concluding remarks.

First, much of the growth in enrollment has been observed in Africa. As discussed in Chapter 5, the COVID-19 crisis may lead to a drop in enrollment. Given that there was a small reduction in enrollment in Catholic K12 schools between 2016 and 2018, the added pressure from the current crisis may lead to a plateau in enrollment for a few years. However, in the medium to long term, growth is expected to continue (see Box 1.1). Now, the fact that the global growth in enrollment is mostly due to low income African countries does not mean however that in those countries, Catholic schools succeed in reaching the very poor, even if many of the students they serve are likely to be poor. The risk for the schools to enroll proportionately more children from the well-to-do has long been recognized²⁴. Congregations

which used to be able to provide quasi-free education in their schools a few decades ago may not anymore have the personnel and resources to do so today. In the absence of state support, cost recovery may lead the schools to be unaffordable for some among the poor. These pressures may become more severe over time in countries where Catholic schools do not benefit from state funding. In these countries, engaging in discussions with governments about the possibility of receiving (partial) funding is essential for the future.

Second, while the analysis in this report was conducted separately for the three levels of schooling being considered, it must be acknowledged that there are links between these three levels. While enrollment in Catholic nurseries and preschools may not necessarily lead to higher enrollment in Catholic primary schools, the link between Catholic primary and secondary schools is likely to be stronger, with primary schools serving as feeder schools for secondary schools. Given the rise in enrollment at the primary school, and higher transition rates to secondary schools in many low and lower-middle income countries, growth in enrollment should continue for some time at the secondary level in those countries as large cohorts of students enrolled in primary school complete their primary education. This has

²⁴ Congregation for Catholic Education (1977).

implications for strategy and planning. In much the same way that governments use simple forecasting models to project trends in enrollment at various levels based on population growth and education parameters, this type of analysis could be beneficial for Catholic networks, including to assess budget and cost recovery requirements.

Box 1.1: Has Catholic K12 Education Peaked?

Between 1975 and 2018, the annual growth rate in enrollment for Catholic K12 schools was at 1.8 percent globally. For most of the period, year-on-year growth was positive. Yet between 2016 and 2018, there was a small decline as enrollment in K12 schools dropped from 62.4 million to 61.7 million students. This drop is small and could be due to statistical errors in reporting for some countries. But as discussed in Chapter 5, the COVID-19 crisis may have a negative effect on enrollment starting with the 2020-21 school year. Given the time lag in the production of the statistical yearbooks of the Church, it will take a few years before we can assess whether the loss was a substantial. But some level of decline in enrollment is likely.

In the medium and long term however, global enrollment in Catholic education is likely to continue to grow, in part because of sub-Saharan Africa. The market share of Catholic schools in that region is high. As enrollment continues to grow in that region due to population growth and gains in educational attainment, global enrollment in Catholic K12 education should also increase even if enrollment drops in other parts of the world. By 2030, simple ‘business-as-usual’ projections²⁵ suggest that close to two thirds of all students in Catholic primary schools and more than 40 percent of all students in Catholic secondary schools may live in the African continent.

²⁵ Wodon (2019b).

Third, gains in enrollment may require accommodating more students in existing schools or building new schools as there is a limit to the ability of existing schools to welcome more students. This could be a source of concern for the market share of Catholic schools since networks of Catholic schools may not always have the means to build new schools, especially at the secondary level where the cost of new schools is higher than at the primary level. As governments and low cost for-profit providers expand the coverage of their secondary school networks in low and lower-middle income countries, even as enrollment in Catholic secondary schools may increase, the market share of Catholic schools at the secondary level may fall, as it did to some extent globally over the last few decades²⁶.

Given rising competitive pressures, the need to excel not only academically, but also in other dimensions of the education being provided by Catholic schools, may only intensify over time.

Fourth, in some countries Catholic schools may struggle between two priorities. On the one hand, the schools have a Catholic identity that they are aiming to maintain, or even strengthen. Investing in the spiritual capital of teachers and staff is crucial for this mission²⁷. But on the other hand, the schools also need to ensure that students adequately learn while in school. Even if Catholic schools perform better than public schools as measured through national or international assessment data, it does not mean that they are performing well everywhere. The World Development Report on education and its companion studies demonstrate that many education systems are currently failing their students²⁸. For basic literacy and numeracy in primary schools, the

²⁶ Another challenge is to build secondary schools in poor areas. See Wodon (2020j) on Uganda.

²⁷ Grace (2002a, 2002b).

²⁸ World Bank (2018). Among companion studies, see Bashir et al. (2018) for sub-Saharan Africa.

average student in low income countries performs worse than 95 percent of the students in high-income countries. Even top students in middle-income countries rank in the bottom fourth of the achievement distribution in high income countries. These gaps are likely to be observed for students in Catholic schools as well as those in public schools. This in turn has implications for the ability of students to become lifelong learners and acquire the socio-emotional skills that they need in life. As public schools raise their game in this area, so must Catholic schools. The point is not to pitch one mission of Catholic schools against the other, but simply to recognize that both missions are complementary, and that long-term efforts need to be undertaken in both areas.

Finally, even though there has been almost continuous growth in enrollment in Catholic schools over the past four to five decades, the competitive pressures faced by the schools should not be underestimated. They are likely to increase in the future as the market for

K12 education is becoming increasingly competitive. This is the case in a number of developed countries where the market share of Catholic schools has been declining, but it is may also become increasingly the case in developing countries. Public provision is expanding especially in low income and lower-middle income countries, and as mentioned earlier, the emergence of low cost private schools in those countries represents an additional source of competition. While many Catholic schools used to benefit from a comparative advantage in the form of skilled and low-cost teachers from religious orders, this is less the case today. School responses to rising competitive pressures will need to be based on local contexts, but it seems clear that the need to excel not only academically but also in other dimensions of the education being provided by Catholic schools, may only intensify over time (apart from Catholic schools, other Christian schools also serve many students— see Box 1.2).

Box 1.2: Christian Education Institutions May Serve Over 100 Million Students Globally

The focus of this report is on Catholic schools and universities, but other Christian institutions also serve a large number of students globally. Estimating how many is a bit of guesswork given the lack of detailed statistics on enrollment in non-Catholic institutions. But based on simple assumptions, it is likely that Christian education institutions serve at least 100 million students. To see why, denote the number of students in Catholic schools and universities by SCA and the number of Catholics by PCA. An implicit parameter capturing Catholic investments in schools and universities in proportion of the Catholic population is defined as $ICA=SCA/PCA$. To estimate the number of students enrolled in non-Catholic Christian schools, information is needed about the number of non-Catholic Christians (PCR) and their investment parameter (ICR). If estimates of these two variables can be suggested, then we would have $SCR=PCR\times ICR$ and the total number of students in Christian institutions would be $SC=SCA+SCR$. The same approach would work with multiple groups of non-Catholic Christians. When sufficient data are available, disaggregating estimates by denomination could generate more accurate estimates overall.

Based on simple calculations using data from the Pew Research Center, of a total of 2,383 million Christians projected for 2020, there may be 1,194 million Catholics, 284 million Orthodox Christians, 874 million Protestants, and 31 million other Christians²⁹. These values are slightly below estimates commonly cited. For example, it is often suggested that there are more than 900 million Protestants. Applying an annual growth rate to data on baptized populations from the statistical yearbook of the Church yields 1,354 million Catholics in 2020. Yet for both Catholics and Protestants, there is often a drop in faith affiliations between the time of baptism and adulthood. The fact that the estimates are a bit smaller than commonly cited figures may simply reflect that drop.

The investment parameter ICA is estimated at 5.7 percent for Catholics with $SCA=68.2$ million and $PCA=1,194$ million. GPENreformation, the organization that federates (many) Protestant schools, suggests that there may be 25 million students enrolled in Protestant schools globally, of which 10.5 million are affiliated with GPENreformation. This generates an investment in schools and universities parameter for Protestants of 2.9 percent ($2.9=25.0/874$) or half the value for Catholics. For various historical reasons, this seems reasonable. Note however that the value of the parameter may vary substantially between denominations. For example, for the Seventh-day Adventist World Church, a fast growing denomination that is very active in development work, data are available to suggest an investment parameter of 8.8 percent, which is much higher. What might be the investment parameter for other Christian denominations? Apart from Ethiopia, most Orthodox Christians live in European countries that were under communist rule not conducive to faith-based schools and universities. Assume for simplicity that the investment parameter for Orthodox Christians is 0.50 percent. For other Christians, assume a parameter more in line with Protestants at 2.50 percent. This would result in a total of 95.4 million students in Christian schools and universities globally.

That estimates does not include students in non-formal education programs. That number should be at several million students globally. For example, on top of serving 0.8 million students in its primary and secondary schools, the Fe y Alegría network by itself already provides non-formal education and training to 0.5 million additional students. The Catholic Church also operates globally 9,295 orphanages, 10,747 nurseries, and 3,225 other education centers. Other Christian denominations also operate similar institutions. Overall then, including students in non-formal education programs, it seems legitimate to suggest that Christian institutions serve 100 million students globally, and possibly more.

²⁹ See Wodon (2021a) for details.

CHAPTER 2

ENROLLMENT TRENDS IN CATHOLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

Introduction

Globally, the Catholic Church estimates that in 2018, 6.5 million students were enrolled in Catholic institutions of higher education. This includes 2.3 million students in higher institutes, 0.5 million students in ecclesiastical studies at the university level, and 3.7 million students in other types of university studies³⁰.

How has enrollment in Catholic institutions of higher education evolved over time? Does enrollment remain concentrated in few high income countries, or is it increasing in the global south? In which region is enrollment the largest and where is it growing fastest? How is enrollment split between universities and other institutions of higher education, and by types of studies within universities (ecclesiastical and other studies)? To answer these questions, as done in the previous chapter for enrollment trends in K12 schools, this chapter documents trends in enrollment in Catholic institutions of higher education from 1975 to 2018 and discusses some of the implications for the future of these institutions³¹.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, it is often argued that Catholic institutions of higher education provide special benefits to students and broader society. First, there is a perception that the education provided in Catholic institutions of higher education is of good quality, and possibly better on average than in other institutions. Second, while welcoming students from all religious backgrounds, Catholic institutions pride themselves in providing an education that is grounded in the Catholic faith and that

emphasizes moral values. The question of Catholic identity or “What makes us different?” is often the focus of debates in scholarly work on Catholic education. At the same time, Catholic institutions are not immune to broader challenges faced by all institutions of higher learning, whether Catholic or not. There could even be a risk of focusing too much on issues related to Catholic identity at the expense of confronting other challenges.

This chapter is written in a context of rising competitive pressures facing institutions of higher learning in both developed and developing countries, as well as persistent difficulties. These pressures are also observed for K12 schools, but they may be even stronger for higher education. In a relatively recent report, the World Bank’s Independent Evaluation Group³² identified three core challenges faced by institutions of higher learning in developing countries, which also apply for the most part in developed countries.

A recent World Bank report identifies three core challenges faced by institutions of higher learning in developing countries: lack of equity in access, risks of low quality, and lack of employability. In many ways these challenges are also present in high income countries.

First, access to universities and other institutions of higher learning remains highly unequitable, with the poor often excluded. This is especially problematic for Catholic institutions given their aim, in one way or another, to contribute to the preferential option for the poor. Realistically, Catholic institutions of higher learning will continue to face equity challenges in the foreseeable future.

³⁰ Secretariat of State of the Vatican (2020).

³¹The chapter updates with the most recent data available analysis published previously in two papers (Wodon, 2019, 2020a).

³² World Bank (2017).

The second challenge is the low quality in the education being provided by many institutions of higher learning, which contributes to delays in graduation and higher costs for both students and states. The problem of low quality is also prevalent in K12 education in many countries as noted by the World Development Report on the learning crisis³³. Better preparation for students at the secondary level should help, but efforts to improve quality in institutions of higher learning are also key.

The third challenge is that of employability with, again in many countries, high rates of unemployment and underemployment among university graduates. This comes in part from the issue of low quality, but it also relates to insufficient interactions between universities and the private sector. What students learn is not necessarily what is needed in the labor market³⁴.

While a university education should not cater only to the demand from the labor market, it should lead to adequate employment opportunities given the financial sacrifices made by students, parents, and tax payers for acquiring tertiary education. In low income countries where the formal sector is small, this could for example mean putting a stronger emphasis on entrepreneurial skills, as well as a shift towards fields of study where labor demand is stronger.

While these challenges may be more severe in the developing world, they also apply to developed countries. This can be illustrated in the case of the United States. While enrollment at the tertiary level is much more widespread than in developing countries, low income students do face serious and rising challenges to acquire post-secondary education³⁵. Quality is perceived to be an issue,

with substantial heterogeneity between institutions in the value added being provided and associated concerns about the cost of college (after years of cost increases above inflation) in comparison to potential benefits³⁶. This concern relates itself in part to concerns about the availability of well-paying jobs after graduation and the vulnerability inherent to the 'gig economy' and the broader pressures from the changing nature of work³⁷.

As for Catholic K12 schools, data on enrollment in Catholic higher education are available in the Catholic Church's annual statistical yearbooks. This chapter documents global and regional trends in enrollment from 1975 to 2018.

The objective of this chapter is to provide a broad overview of trends in enrollment in Catholic higher education globally and regionally from 1975 to 2018. Growth or even stability in enrollment is probably not a primary objective of Catholic institutions of higher education, but it does matter. A healthy enrollment level is necessary for financial sustainability in an increasingly competitive higher education market³⁸. It also contributes to the evangelization mission of the Church³⁹, as mentioned in chapter 1. Beyond the Church, as is the case for K12 education, Catholic higher education provides benefits to society at large. Catholic institutions of higher learning provide choice for students and thereby contribute to pluralism in democratic societies. There are also indications that Catholic institutions of higher

³³ World Bank (2018).

³⁴ See Filmer and Fox (2014) on sub-Saharan Africa, and World Bank (2019a) on the future of work and its implications for education.

³⁵ Goldrick-Rab (2018).

³⁶ Taylor et al. (2011).

³⁷ See World Bank (2019a). Limited funding from governments whose budgets are often stretched may be of the factors contributing to low quality in education and as a result lack of employability for graduates. Affordability is especially an issue in the developing world, but it matters also in developed countries. In the United States, declining support from states for tuition at public colleges and universities has contributed to higher student debt.

³⁸ Altbach et al. (2009), Salmi (2009).

³⁹ Congregation for Catholic Education (1977, 2017).

education perform relatively well, including in terms of graduation rates. Finally, as for other private colleges and universities, Catholic institutions generate substantial savings for state budgets since most of the cost of education is born by students or their family.

As is the case for other universities, Catholic universities must follow the evaluation processes and quality standards that prevail in their country. In addition, guidance is also provided by the Holy See on specific aspects. The documents providing that guidance differ between (the minority of) ecclesiastical or pontifical universities and other universities⁴⁰.

In most countries including those with a strong Catholic tradition, many students attending Catholic institutions are not Catholic themselves. In the United States for example, just over half of first year students at four-year Catholic colleges and universities self-identify as Catholic⁴¹. While a majority of students in Catholic institutions of higher learning globally are enrolled in colleges and universities, the Church also runs a large number of other institutions at the post-secondary level, especially in the developing world. In India for example, apart from a dozen large medical colleges and universities, the Catholic Church

⁴⁰ Ecclesiastical or pontifical universities and faculties are established or recognized by the Holy See and may grant ecclesiastical degrees in theology, philosophy, and Canon Law. They are governed by Pope Francis' Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis Gaudium* which updated guidance from *Sapientia Christiana*. Most Catholic universities are governed instead by Pope John Paul's Apostolic Constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. Beyond a focus on theology and related disciplines, Catholic universities often provide training in religious sciences more broadly, including for future teachers of Catholic religion. Guidance for a third category of institutions, Higher Institutes of Religious Sciences, is provided by the Congregation for Catholic Education (2008). Across the various types of Catholic universities, most students are actually enrolled in secular as opposed to religious programs, even if they may be required to take one or more courses in religious studies.

⁴¹ Eagan et al. (2017).

operates approximately 25 management institutions, 300 professional colleges and engineering institutes, 450 degree colleges, and 5,500 junior colleges, all of which are post-secondary institutions⁴².

Trends in Enrollment

Data on the number of students in Catholic higher education are available in the Church's annual statistical yearbooks⁴³. As noted in chapter 1, the data are self-reported by chancery offices of ecclesiastical jurisdictions through an annual questionnaire. Less than five percent of the jurisdictions do not fill the questionnaire, and those tend to be small, thus not affecting results substantially.

Based on those data, Table 2.1 provides estimates of enrollment in Catholic institutions of higher education for the three categories of students mentioned earlier and for the total number of students enrolled. As in chapter 1, except for the last time period, the data are provided by five-year intervals from 1975 to 2018 globally and for five regions: Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and Oceania. These regional aggregates are used because they are the ones according to which data are reported in the statistical yearbooks. In 2018, 6.5 million students were enrolled in Catholic Higher Education. Of those, 2.3 million were in higher institutes, 0.5 million were enrolled in ecclesiastical studies in universities, and 3.7 million were studying other topics at Catholic universities. Figures 2.1 through 2.4 visualize the trends in enrollment by region and globally. The analysis is kept at that level to keep the tables manageable, but data are available at the country level in the statistical yearbooks.

A few findings are worth emphasizing. First, the trends in Figures 2.1 through 2.4 suggest substantial growth in enrollment over time. The combined enrollment in Catholic higher education grew almost four-fold globally

⁴² Manidapam (2018).

⁴³ Secretariat of State of the Vatican (2020).

between 1975 and 2018, from 1.6 million students to 6.5 million. Catholic higher education thus grew even faster than K12 education. But while for K12 education most of the growth was in Africa, for tertiary education most of the growth in absolute terms took place in the Americas (gain of 2.1 million students), Asia (gain of 1.4 million students), and Europe (gain of 0.9 million students). In terms of annual growth rates, as will be discussed below, Africa is doing well, but it is starting from a low base, so that absolute gains remain smaller.

In terms of the three categories of students, the largest gains were observed in absolute terms for university students not engaged in ecclesiastical studies and students in higher institutes, but large gains were also observed for students in ecclesiastical studies. While there may be a crisis in vocations in parts of the world, the number of students enrolled in ecclesiastical studies is nevertheless rising almost everywhere.

Table 2.1: Trends in the Number of Students Enrolled in Catholic Higher Education (Thousands)

	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2018
Higher Institutes									
Africa	4.3	6.5	10.8	6.8	13.2	24.8	51.2	88.4	137.2
Americas	373.6	383.0	368.5	427.9	470.5	517.5	581.0	795.1	591.9
Asia	310.9	445.9	493.4	539.6	678.4	795.7	899.4	1,135.7	1,205.6
Europe	107.6	116.3	128.8	157.2	193.6	221.8	272.3	270.5	308.5
Oceania	2.5	3.1	3.9	2.7	5.7	8.8	9.3	14.5	8.6
World	798.9	954.7	1,005.4	1,134.2	1,361.4	1,568.6	1,813.2	2,304.2	2,251.6
Universities – Ecclesiastical Studies									
Africa	0.2	1.0	1.5	1.4	4.1	5.8	9.3	15.6	49.6
Americas	16.5	28.5	26.3	31.9	62.4	53.9	139.1	158.4	233.1
Asia	6.0	7.0	11.4	8.7	38.6	71.5	107.8	184.3	129.3
Europe	25.0	29.0	38.3	52.7	69.9	65.8	100.7	116.0	89.2
Oceania	0.4	1.3	1.6	1.7	2.9	3.8	10.6	12.4	6.7
World	48.1	66.8	79.1	96.5	177.8	200.9	367.5	486.7	507.9
Universities – Other Studies									
Africa	0.9	0.9	2.1	2.1	23.8	41.1	70.7	106.2	177.5
Americas	530.2	870.3	1,033.6	1,070.2	1,144.1	2,088.5	1,962.7	2,183.6	2,187.0
Asia	159.0	169.4	303.6	376.1	422.0	467.3	457.5	490.7	518.2
Europe	111.7	98.2	116.8	149.9	217.6	332.7	288.2	541.7	788.0
Oceania	0.2	0.2	0.1	2.6	1.7	5.1	10.8	16.2	36.9
World	801.8	1,138.9	1,456.2	1,600.9	1,809.2	2,934.7	2,789.8	3,338.5	3,707.6
Total									
Africa	5.3	8.3	14.4	10.3	41.0	71.7	131.2	210.1	364.3
Americas	920.3	1,281.8	1,428.4	1,530.0	1,677.0	2,660.0	2,682.8	3,137.2	3,012.0
Asia	475.9	622.2	808.3	924.4	1,139.0	1,334.6	1,464.7	1,810.8	1,853.0
Europe	244.2	243.5	283.9	359.9	481.1	620.3	661.1	928.2	1,185.6
Oceania	3.1	4.6	5.6	7.0	10.3	17.7	30.7	43.1	52.2
World	1,648.8	2,160.4	2,540.6	2,831.7	3,348.4	4,704.2	4,970.5	6,129.3	6,467.1

Source: Compiled by the author from the annual statistical yearbooks of the Church.

Figure 2.1: Enrollment in Catholic Higher Institutes (Thousands)

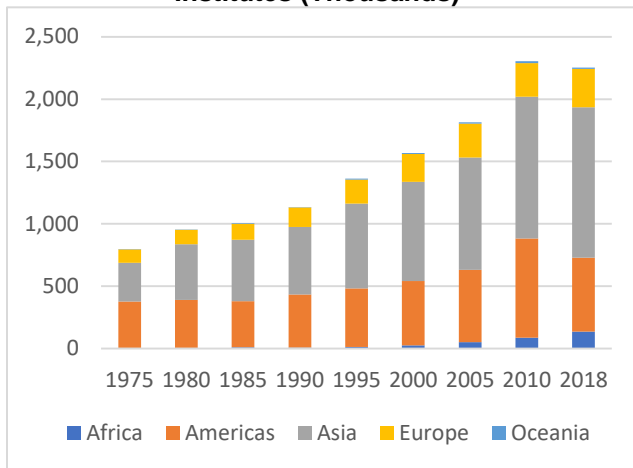


Figure 2.2: Enrollment in Catholic Universities: Ecclesiastical Studies (Thousands)

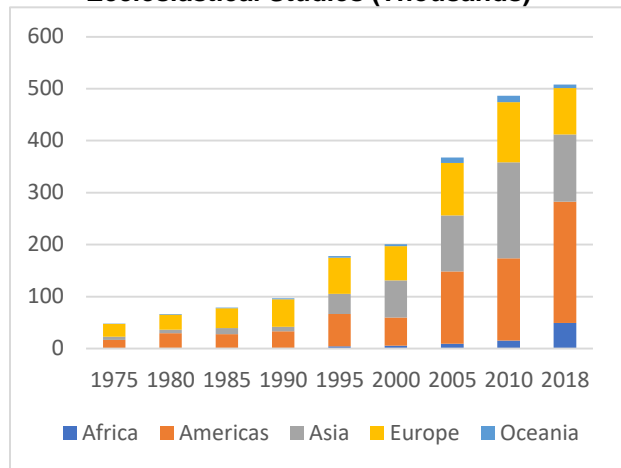


Figure 2.3: Enrollment in Catholic Universities: Other Studies (Thousands)

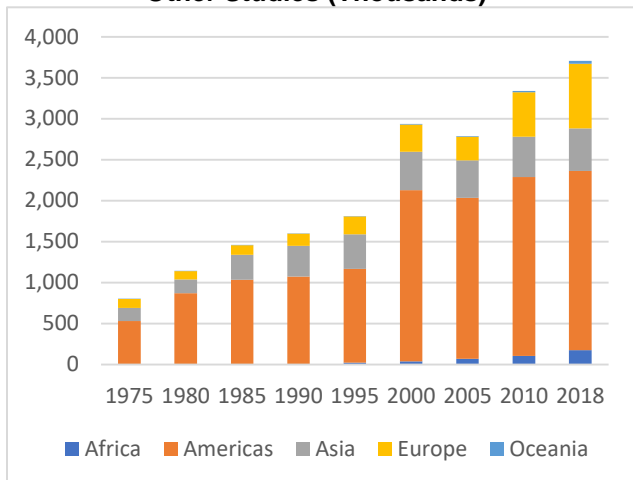
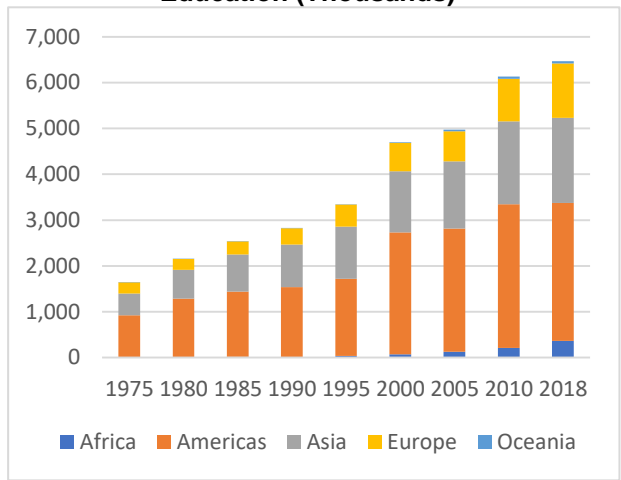


Figure 2.4: Total Enrollment in Catholic Higher Education (Thousands)



Source: Statistical Yearbooks of the Church.

Second, as shown in Table 2.2 and Figure 2.5, there are differences between regions in the share of students enrolled by type of higher education. Globally, students in universities account for 65.2 percent of total enrollment, versus 34.8 percent for students in higher institutes. Asia, where India plays a major role (given virtually no Catholic institutions in China), is the only one of the five regions where most students are enrolled in higher institutes. This is related in part to the explosion of private non-university institutions of higher education in India as a response to a demand from the rising middle class for higher

education. Globally, within university students, there are about seven students in non-ecclesiastical studies for each student in ecclesiastical studies, but again with regional differences.

Globally, students in universities account for 65.2 percent of total enrollment, versus 34.8 percent for students in higher institutes. Yet in Asia, where India plays a major role, a majority of students are in higher institutes.

Globally, the shares of students enrolled in higher institutes and universities did

not fundamentally change over the last four decades, despite ups and downs by five-year intervals. But among universities, there has been a steady rise of the share of students enrolled in ecclesiastical studies. In 1975, these students represented less than three percent of total enrollment in Catholic higher education globally. By 2018, this had risen to 7.9 percent especially thanks to gains in Africa, the Americas, and Asia. By contrast, in Europe and Oceania, there was a substantial decline in the share of students in ecclesiastical studies between 2010 and 2018, albeit from higher baseline levels. Note that at the regional level, there are a few jumps in the shares reported in

Table 2.2 for ecclesiastical studies. This is due in part to the fact that estimates of enrollment for these students are smaller in absolute terms, especially in Oceania, so that even comparatively small changes can lead to jumps in shares.

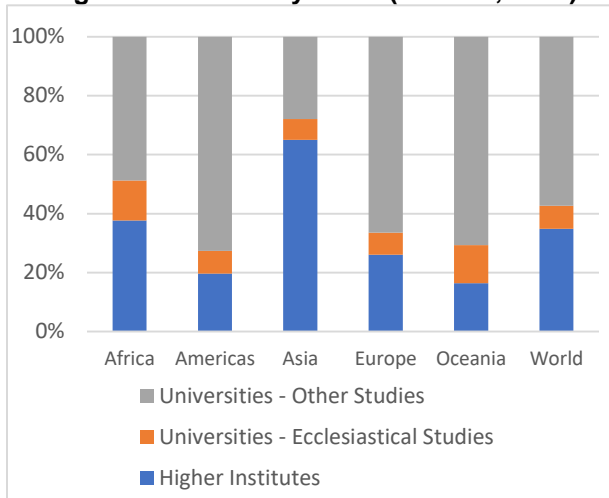
There has been a steady rise of the share of students enrolled in ecclesiastical studies. In 1975, they represented less than three percent of total enrollment in Catholic higher education globally. By 2018, this had risen to 7.9 percent, more than twice the share in 1975.

Table 2.2: Proportion of Students Enrolled in Catholic Institutions of Higher Education by Type (%)

	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2018
Higher Institutes									
Africa	81.1	77.5	74.7	66.3	32.1	34.6	39.0	42.1	37.7
Americas	40.6	29.9	25.8	28.0	28.1	19.5	21.7	25.3	19.7
Asia	65.3	71.7	61.0	58.4	59.6	59.6	61.4	62.7	65.1
Europe	44.0	47.8	45.4	43.7	40.2	35.8	41.2	29.1	26.0
Oceania	82.5	67.4	70.4	38.0	55.7	49.6	30.4	33.7	16.4
World	48.5	44.2	39.6	40.1	40.7	33.3	36.5	37.6	34.8
Universities – Ecclesiastical Studies									
Africa	2.8	11.6	10.6	13.6	10.0	8.1	7.1	7.4	13.6
Americas	1.8	2.2	1.8	2.1	3.7	2.0	5.2	5.0	7.7
Asia	1.3	1.1	1.4	0.9	3.4	5.4	7.4	10.2	7.0
Europe	10.2	11.9	13.5	14.7	14.5	10.6	15.2	12.5	7.5
Oceania	12.4	29.4	27.9	24.6	27.9	21.7	34.5	28.8	12.9
World	2.9	3.1	3.1	3.4	5.3	4.3	7.4	7.9	7.9
Universities – Other Studies									
Africa	16.1	10.8	14.7	20.2	58.0	57.3	53.9	50.5	48.7
Americas	57.6	67.9	72.4	69.9	68.2	78.5	73.2	69.6	72.6
Asia	33.4	27.2	37.6	40.7	37.1	35.0	31.2	27.1	28.0
Europe	45.7	40.3	41.1	41.7	45.2	53.6	43.6	58.4	66.5
Oceania	5.1	3.3	1.8	37.5	16.4	28.7	35.2	37.6	70.7
World	48.6	52.7	57.3	56.5	54.0	62.4	56.1	54.5	57.3

Source: Compiled by the author from the annual statistical yearbooks of the Church.

Figure 2.5: Proportion of Students in Catholic Higher Education by Level (Percent, 2018)

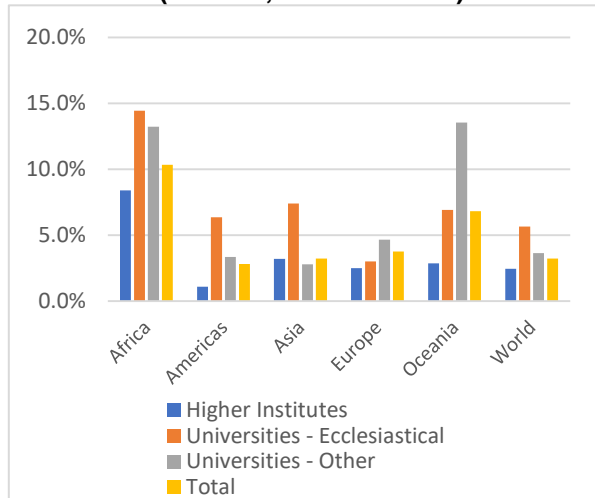


Source: Author's estimations from the Statistical Yearbooks of the Church.

Third, in proportionate terms, as a percentage change from the base, the highest growth rates in overall enrollment are observed in Africa, even though in absolute terms larger gains are reported in other regions. The annual growth rates from 1975 to 2018 (taking into account compounding) are provided in Table 2.3 and visualized in Figure 2.6. In Africa and Oceania, total enrollment grew over the last four decades at a rate of more than 13 percent per year. In the case of Africa, if the growth in enrollment continues to be higher than in the rest of the world, the region will account for a progressively larger share in total enrollment, but this will take some time. For students in ecclesiastical studies, the highest growth rates over the four decades are observed in Africa.

Fourth, as is the case in K12 education, there are substantial differences between countries in the size of their Catholic higher education networks. Table 2.4 provides data on the top 15 countries in terms of total enrollment in 2018. Together, these countries account for about four fifths of global enrollment. By comparison, the top 15 countries account for about two thirds of global enrollment in Catholic K12 schools. As expected given the correlation between enrollment in higher education and economic development, there is a higher concentration of enrollment in

Figure 2.6: Annual Growth Rates in Enrollment (Percent, Four Decades)



a few countries for higher education than for K12 education. The country with the largest enrollment is the United States, with close to 1.3 million students in higher education. Three large developing counties follow: India, the Philippines, and Brazil. Italy is next, possibly in part because of a concentration of students in ecclesiastical and other studies in Rome.

As for K12 education, the smallest country with a large enrollment in Catholic higher education is Belgium. This is in part because under the Constitution, Catholic schools and universities institutions benefit from public funding.

The smallest country in the mix by population size in Table 2.4 is again Belgium, as was the case for K12 education. This is in part because under the Constitution, Catholic higher education institutions benefit from public funding as do public universities. None of the countries in the top 15 are classified as low income by the World Bank (low income countries have a level of Gross National Income per capita of \$1,035 or less in 2019). By contrast, for K12 education, three of the top five countries in terms of total enrollment are low income (the Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, and Uganda).

Table 2.3: Annual Growth Rate for Enrollment in Catholic Institutions of Higher Education (%)

	1975- 1980	1980- 1985	1985- 1990	1990- 1995	1995- 2000	2000- 2005	2005- 2010	2010- 2018	1975- 2018
Higher Institutes									
Africa	8.5	10.8	-8.7	14.0	13.5	15.6	11.5	5.7	8.4
Americas	0.5	-0.8	3.0	1.9	1.9	2.3	6.5	-3.6	1.1
Asia	7.5	2.0	1.8	4.7	3.2	2.5	4.8	0.7	3.2
Europe	1.6	2.1	4.1	4.2	2.8	4.2	-0.1	1.7	2.5
Oceania	3.9	5.0	-7.5	16.4	8.9	1.2	9.3	-6.4	2.9
World	3.6	1.0	2.4	3.7	2.9	2.9	4.9	-0.3	2.4
Universities – Ecclesiastical Studies									
Africa	45.2	9.6	-1.8	23.9	7.4	9.7	10.9	15.6	14.4
Americas	11.5	-1.6	4.0	14.3	-2.9	20.9	2.6	4.9	6.3
Asia	3.1	10.3	-5.1	34.6	13.1	8.6	11.3	-4.3	7.4
Europe	3.0	5.7	6.6	5.8	-1.2	8.9	2.9	-3.2	3.0
Oceania	28.6	3.0	2.1	10.6	6.0	22.4	3.2	-7.3	6.9
World	6.8	3.4	4.1	13.0	2.5	12.8	5.8	0.5	5.6
Universities – Other Studies									
Africa	1.2	18.6	-0.4	62.8	11.6	11.5	8.5	6.6	13.2
Americas	10.4	3.5	0.7	1.3	12.8	-1.2	2.2	0.0	3.4
Asia	1.3	12.4	4.4	2.3	2.1	-0.4	1.4	0.7	2.8
Europe	-2.5	3.5	5.1	7.7	8.9	-2.8	13.5	4.8	4.6
Oceania	-0.9	-7.8	92.5	-8.6	24.6	16.3	8.5	10.9	13.5
World	7.3	5.0	1.9	2.5	10.2	-1.0	3.7	1.3	3.6
Total									
Africa	9.5	11.6	-6.5	31.8	11.8	12.8	9.9	7.1	10.3
Americas	6.9	2.2	1.4	1.9	9.7	0.2	3.2	-0.5	2.8
Asia	5.5	5.4	2.7	4.3	3.2	1.9	4.3	0.3	3.2
Europe	-0.1	3.1	4.9	6.0	5.2	1.3	7.0	3.1	3.7
Oceania	8.2	4.1	4.7	7.8	11.5	11.6	7.0	2.4	6.8
World	5.6	3.3	2.2	3.4	7.0	1.1	4.3	0.7	3.2

Source: Compiled by the author from the annual statistical yearbooks of the Church.

Table 2.4: Top 15 Countries by Enrollment in Catholic Higher Education, 2018

	Higher Institutes	Universities - Eccl.	Universities - Others	Total
United States	349,839	34,567	883,063	1,267,469
India	707,910	19,241	133,039	860,190
Philippines	364,209	47,632	164,997	576,838
Brazil	29,527	93,708	357,116	480,351
Italy	6,795	23,532	298,962	329,289
Colombia	19,613	3,271	267,241	290,125
Great Britain	45,028	118	207,809	252,955
Mexico	37,096	20,814	160,476	218,386
Belgium	122,903	2,582	80,503	205,988
Argentina	57,469	666	101,426	159,561
Indonesia	35,890	7,962	71,902	115,754
Spain	14,900	2,876	95,557	113,333
Chile	7,610	352	101,591	109,553
France	77,774	18,994	9,919	106,687
Ecuador	975	44,119	59,629	104,723

Source: Annual statistical yearbook of the Church.

Fifth, the fact that the highest growth rates in enrollment in Catholic higher education over the last four decades is observed for students in ecclesiastical studies may be good news for the Church. As mentioned earlier, these students account for a small but growing share of all students in universities, and their numbers are rising fastest in Africa and to a lower extent Asia. These are also the two regions where the number of diocesan priests has been increasing the most in recent years, but the trend may also reflect the rising number of permanent deacons in comparison to priests in the Church. While this is beyond the scope of this paper, it would be useful in subsequent work to look in more details at the factors explaining the increase in the number of students in ecclesiastical studies.

Summing Up

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a simple descriptive analysis of trends in enrollment in Catholic higher education globally using the same approach as that in chapter 1 so that comparisons in terms of stylized facts are easier to make. Five main findings emerge from the data.

First, enrollment in Catholic higher education grew almost four-fold between 1975 and 2018 globally, reaching 6.5 million students by 2018. The annual growth rate for all three types of higher education combined was at 3.2 percent for the period from 1975 to 2018, versus 1.8 percent for K12 education. In the long run, one can expect growth to continue given higher demand from higher completion

rates for secondary education as well as population growth especially in the developing world over time.

Second, in most regions, Catholic institutions enroll more students in universities than in higher institutes, but in Asia, the reverse is observed, in large part because of the particularities of India where there has been rapid growth in enrollment in higher education institutions that are not universities (this is also true for non-Catholic private higher education).

Third, in proportionate terms, as a percentage change from the base, the highest growth rates in enrollment are observed in Africa. In absolute terms by contrast, larger gains are reported in other regions, with most of the students in Catholic higher education still residing in high and middle income countries. The only region with a decline in recent years in the total number of students in higher education was the Americas, but this matters because this region concentrates close to half of all students enrolled in Catholic higher education globally.

Fourth, there are substantial differences between countries in the size of their Catholic higher education networks. The United States still has the largest enrollment, but India is progressively catching up.

Finally, within universities, there has been a steady rise of the share of students enrolled in ecclesiastical studies, even if they still represent only about 12 percent of total university enrollment (not including higher institutes).

CHAPTER 3

EDUCATION PLURALISM

Introduction

The fourth sustainable development goal is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The primary responsibility for achieving this goal rests with the state, but this does not mean that the state should be the sole provider of education, or that different types of education should not be available to children and their parents. As will be discussed in chapter 4, Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) includes a provision related to the right of parents to choose the type of education that their children should receive (within reasonable bounds).

Most countries allow different networks of schools and universities to operate as long as they follow some reasonable requirements. And in quite a few countries, the state also funds different education networks, including faith-based schools and universities. Funding or other forms of support from the state for privately managed networks of nonprofit schools and universities may contribute to education pluralism, which in turn can be beneficial not only for learning performance⁴⁴ but also for the vibrancy of democracies more generally.

What is education pluralism? The term itself can be contentious and understood in various ways. But for this report, essentially, the understanding is that in education systems that support pluralism, students or their parents should be able within some ‘reasonable bounds’ to choose the type of school or university that

they will attend. The fact that different types of schools and universities may put a different emphasis on various values matters for parents and students (see Box 3.1 on the values shared by Catholic and Christian schools – these values are present in public schools, but different types of schools may express them differently). Students should be able to enroll in public schools and universities, but they should also have the option to enroll in faith-based or other private institutions. Under some circumstances, public funding is provided for this purpose in a wide range of countries (with accountability).

Various arguments can be made in favor of (or against) education pluralism. Some authors have argued that competition in education markets may be beneficial, in part because good performance in private schools⁴⁵ may put pressure on public schools to improve. The same could apply to universities. This idea remains contested however, and this is not the argument made in this report. At a more basic level, education pluralism is essential to fulfill the right to education because this right should include a form of school choice for parents (and students) so that their priorities for what should be learned in school are taken into account.

⁴⁴ As noted by Brenner (2019), there is no automatic link between education pluralism and the performance of education systems, but research suggests the possibility of a positive relationship. Brenner cites among others Salisbury and Tooley (2005), Wolf (2007), Campbell (2008), West (2012), Pennings (2011), Pennings et al. (2014).

⁴⁵ Studies for the United States suggest that students in Catholic schools may perform comparatively well academically. See Coleman et al. (1982), Greely (1982), Coleman and Hoffa (1987), Bryk et al. (1993), Evans and Schwab (1995), Evans et al. (1995), Sander and Krautman (1995), Sander (1996), Neal (1997), Altonji et al. (2005), Carbonaro (2006), Hallinan and Kubitschek (2013), and Freeman and Berends (2016). A few studies however find no such effects (Jepsen, 2003; Elder and Jepsen, 2014). Catholic schools may also contribute to civic engagement (Dee, 2005) and stronger communities (Brinig and Garnett, 2015). In Latin America, students in Fe y Alegría schools also tend to perform comparatively well (Alcázar and Valdivia, 2014; Parra Osorio and Wodon, 2014; Lavado et al., 2016; Wodon, 2019g).

Box 3.1: Common Values: Catholic and Reformation Schools

In November 2020, the International Office of Catholic Education and the Global Pedagogical Network - Joining in Reformation published a joint contribution for UNESCO's Futures of Education Commission⁴⁶. Below is an excerpt from the section on the aims of Christian schools in that contribution.

Within a pluralistic and globalized world, the schools hold dear the following values:

Quality of education and care for students: The world [... is] faced with a severe learning crisis which is being exacerbated by the current pandemic. Christian schools are often recognized in their countries for the quality of the education they provide, not only in terms of academic performance, but also in terms of socio-emotional skill and the care teachers and staff provide to students.

Equity in education: The conviction that every person is equal before God also means that every person, regardless of his or her origin or financial means, must have access to quality education. Educational justice is therefore a central principle and requirement of Christian education [....].

Social justice and preferential option for the poor: The question of educational justice also means working for social justice - locally, but also globally. [...] The preferential option for the poor is a core value in Christian education, with many schools aiming to serve the least, the last, and the lost. The focus on the 'periphery' is related to a shared understanding of the importance of communion, dialogue, solidarity, and a sense of unity in diversity within the schools.

Human rights education: In the different Christian traditions, peace plays an important role. [...] Committing to human rights, teaching and educating about human rights, and addressing rights violations are a natural part of Christian education.

Education for sustainability: Sustainable development is another fundamental pillar of Christianity [...]. Education for sustainable development and a commitment to the preservation of creation are a matter of course of Christian education, as emphasized by Pope Francis' (2015) encyclical.

Global dimension: [...] Christian-sponsored schools aim to broaden the perspective of the local community towards the ecumenical, worldwide Christianity. This perspective promotes global empathy and a willingness to work together across national borders.

Christian schools aim to contribute to the fulfilment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, by preparing their students for a meaningful life in a pluralistic and globalizing world. They strive to work towards this goal in a number of different ways [...]:

Christian schools educate with regards to human values: Values such as tolerance, mutual care, solidarity, and mindfulness are central concerns in Christian service and charity. The schools aim to live these values and promote them in the community. [...]

Christian schools promote personality and personal responsibility: Christian education aims to strengthen "*the full development of the human personality*" [...]. The aim is to help all children, regardless of their faith, to understand who they are [...] and how to serve this community.

Christian schools strive for high-quality education and upbringing: Every student should be encouraged to achieve his/her full potential. Christian schools strive for an education grounded in science, but also in a hermeneutical understanding of foundational religious texts [...].

Christian schools aim to be a place of refuge for children and young people: Christian schools should be places where parents know that their children and young people will be safe. Attention and respect for the rights of children are important concerns. Violence in school, including the risk of sexual abuse, is simply not acceptable in the schools.

⁴⁶ Barber et al. (2020).

The topic of education pluralism is complex and what ‘reasonable bounds’ should be for the autonomy of faith-based and other private schools is a matter of debate. The issue of state funding for (nonprofit) private schools is also a matter of intense debate. The objective of this chapter is not to enter in those debates, but rather to propose a simple measure of education pluralism that can help inform the extent to which various countries appear to have achieved or lack such pluralism. In what follows, after a discussion of whether pluralism matters for parents, this measure of education pluralism is proposed and its potential implications for assessing the fulfillment of the right to education are discussed.

In education systems that support pluralism, students or their parents should be able within some reasonable bounds to choose the type of school that they will attend. This chapter proposes a simple measure of education pluralism to assess the extent to which various countries have achieved or lack such pluralism.

A Case for Pluralism: Differences in Priorities

Before delving into the technicalities of suggesting a measure of education pluralism, do parents (and students) actually care about education pluralism? One way to answer that question is to look at parental or student priorities for what they would like schools and universities to focus on. To illustrate the fact that parents often do care, we consider briefly results from two different contexts: first the United States and next Ghana and Burkina Faso.

Case Study for the United States

In 2017, with support from the Catholic Education Philanthropy Working Group, FADICA (Foundations and Donors interested in Catholic Activities), and the Philanthropy Roundtable, the National Catholic Education Association

published a report on factors driving the choice of schools by parents in the United States⁴⁷. The report team adopted a mixed research methodology with quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis.

In a survey conducted for the report, adult respondents were asked: “In your opinion, which of following are the THREE most important areas of focus for K-12 schools in your area?” Nine potential responses were provided: (1) Preparing children for college; (2) Preparing children to successfully enter the job market; (3) Teaching children to care about their community; (4) Developing individuals with a sound moral base; (5) Teaching children strong in-person communication skills; (6) Encouraging individual and critical thinking; (7) Measuring and monitoring student progress consistently; (8) Deepening children’s relationship with their religious faith; and (9) Teaching children to accept and embrace diversity.

Table 3.1 and Figure 3.1 provide the share of respondents who chose each of the potential responses among all parents and among the subset of parents with their youngest child in a Catholic school. Since respondents could choose three priorities for what their children should learn in school, the shares in the Table sum to 300 percent. Responses have been ranked according to two broad categories of priorities, those related to the skills that children should acquire, and those related to the values that they should acquire. While the classification of each potential response under skills versus values could be debated, this simple categorization is nevertheless useful. Parental priorities have been listed from the most to the least cited among the sample of all parents.

For the sample of all parents, the top five priorities are all related to skills and success in college and in the job market (even if several of these priorities also have inherent value

⁴⁷ FADICA and NCEA (2018). See Wodon (2019) for the analysis in this section based on those data.

independently of college and work). The other four priorities related to values are ranked lower. By contrast, for parents with their youngest child in a Catholic school, moral values rank much higher. Indeed, developing a sound moral base ranks first followed by communications skills, and deepening one’s faith essentially ties up with critical thinking and being ready for the job market.

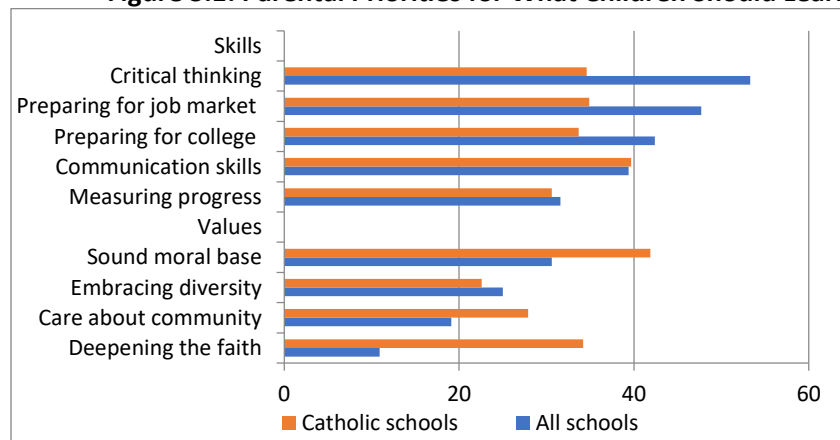
Clearly, different parents may have different priorities for what their children should learn in school. Through a diversity of options for schooling, education pluralism can help education systems respond, again within ‘reasonable bounds’, to this heterogeneity in parental priorities. In some contexts, this may also help boost enrollment in school.

Table 3.1: Parental Priorities for What Children Should Learn in School, United States (%)

	All parents	Youngest child in Catholic school
Skills		
Critical thinking	53.3	34.6
Preparing for job market	47.7	34.9
Preparing for college	42.4	33.7
Communication skills	39.4	39.7
Measuring progress	31.6	30.6
Values		
Sound moral base	30.6	41.9
Embracing diversity	25.0	22.6
Care about community	19.1	27.9
Deepening the faith	10.9	34.2
Total	300.0	300.0

Source: Wodon (2019k, 2019l).

Figure 3.1: Parental Priorities for What Children Should Learn in School, United States (%)



Source: Wodon (2019k, 2019l).

For the sample of all parents, the top five priorities for what children should learn in school are all related to skills and success in college and in the job market. By contrast, for parents with their youngest child in a Catholic school, moral values rank higher.

It should be clear that the statistics provided in table 3.1 should not be interpreted in any way as suggesting that some parents care more about values than others. Parents who do not rely on Catholic schools may rely on other mechanisms than the schools to transmit their values to their children. Even for many parents in Catholic schools, their priorities regarding what their children should learn in school may not be about values, possibly because they believe that those values can be acquired elsewhere, such as at Church. Simply, different

parents place different emphasis on various priorities for what the schools should focus on.

It should also be clear that imparting values is by no means a task reserved to Catholic or faith-based schools. Public schools as well as other private schools also care about imparting strong values to their students. What exactly the aspiration of promoting values and character education in educational systems entails may simply differ depending on the school system considered. But respect for others and for pluralism (which does not imply relativism) is typically a core value in all schools.

Do these types of findings apply to students choosing to enroll in Catholic colleges and universities as well⁴⁸? They may, at least to some extent. A key source of data on the reasons for the choice of a particular college or university by students is the CIRP Freshman Survey implemented every year by the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California. The survey has been implemented for more 50 years. It is administered to first-year students before they start classes at their institution. The survey includes questions among others on established behaviors in high school, academic preparedness, admissions decisions, expectations of college, interactions with peers and faculty, student values and goals, student demographic characteristics, and concerns about financing college.

As shown in Table 3.2 for the latest available survey, typically less than one in ten incoming freshmen consider the religious orientation or affiliation of their college as a very important factor for their choice of attending that college. But among students attending Catholic colleges, the corresponding figure is at about one in five students. The difference is thus substantial. The proportion of students who mention that their college's graduates make a difference in the world is also slightly higher for students enrolled in Catholic institutions than in the whole sample. At the same time, as was the case for Catholic schools, other factors seem to be much more important, including the academic reputation of the college or the intended major at that college, whether graduates get good jobs, and whether students are provided with financial assistance.

If one compares nonsectarian, Catholic, and other religious colleges (data not shown in the Table, but available in the survey), the differences tend to be larger. For example, only 7.0 percent of freshmen in nonsectarian colleges state that they were attracted by the

religious affiliation/orientation of their college. The proportion is 18.1 for those in Catholic colleges as shown in Table 3.2, but it reaches 35.8 percent for other religious colleges, denoting an even stronger importance granted to faith affiliation by students attending those institutions, most of which are evangelical. Still, it is worth noting that overall religious affiliation is not a key driver in college choice, especially among the overall freshman population. This echoes the low ranking placed on 'deepening the faith' in Table 3.1 for K12 schools.

Less than one in ten freshmen consider religious orientation as a very important for their choice of college, versus one in five in Catholic colleges. At the same time, other factors matter more, including the academic reputation of the college or intended major, whether graduates get good jobs, and financial assistance.

In general, in Table 3.2, freshman at Catholic colleges respond in the affirmative on whether various factors were very important for their decision more than the full sample, so one should be careful not to overstate the implications of small difference in affirmative answers between the two groups. Still, some differences appear to be meaningful. In another question, students are asked whether they consider various objectives as essential or very important. For most objectives, the differences in positive answers between freshmen at Catholic universities and all universities are small, but for "integrating spirituality into my life", the difference is (not surprisingly) much larger. This is considered a priority by 43.1 percent of freshman in the full sample versus 62.2 percent of freshmen in Catholic colleges.

⁴⁸ In the United States, some universities, especially smaller ones, are called colleges. In some other countries, colleges refer to high schools.

Table 3.2: Share of College Freshmen Declaring Various Reasons as “Very Important” in Deciding to Go to that Particular College, 2019 CIRP Freshman Survey (%)

	All baccalaureate institutions	Catholic institutions
My parents/relatives wanted me to come here	17.1	19.2
My teacher advised me	8.2	7.9
This college has a very good academic reputation	63.2	71.8
This college has a good reputation for its social and extracurricular activities	47.8	52.4
I was offered financial assistance	48.9	65.5
The cost of attending this college	50.5	48.7
High school counselor advised me	11.2	12.0
Private college counselor advised me	4.9	7.1
I wanted to live near home	25.4	28.0
Not offered aid by first choice	10.8	13.5
Could not afford first choice	14.7	15.5
This college’s graduates gain admission to top graduate/professional schools	30.7	39.0
This college’s graduates get good jobs	54.8	67.3
I was attracted by the religious affiliation/orientation of this college	9.1	18.1
I wanted to go to a school about the size of this college	35.5	49.7
Rankings in national magazines	15.2	17.7
I was admitted through an Early Action or Early Decision program	15.0	22.2
A visit to this campus	46.2	54.7
This college’s graduates make a difference in the world	33.5	39.6
Communication with a professor	21.5	30.3
The academic reputation of my intended major	53.7	59.0

Source: Stolzenberg et al. (2020).

Finally, it is worth noting that in other market research, some of the characteristics associated with Catholic universities are “conservative”, “traditional”, and “expensive”⁴⁹. This is not necessarily a positive perception from a marketing point of view, but it does suggest again that students choosing Catholic universities may have a slightly different set of priorities than those enrolling elsewhere. As is the case for the CIRP survey, this other survey suggested though that the Catholic character of the college was not the main deciding factor for its choice by prospective students. Indeed, less than one in ten students as well as parents identified religious affiliation as a key driver of their choice. Factors such as institutional size,

research opportunities, and internships and job placement were more important, as noted in the CIRP survey. These are all areas where Catholic universities do comparatively well according to data from the Association of Catholic College and Universities. It is therefore not surprising that more than 40 percent of respondents in that survey said they were interested in attending a Catholic university.

The results from these types of surveys matter. In a context of choice as well as competition, the way Catholic universities position themselves is crucial for their survival.

The results from these types of surveys matter for the strategies adopted by colleges and universities. In some countries, prospective students considering enrolling in a Catholic college or university may have a choice between a few universities or none at all. But in the United States, they have a choice between

⁴⁹ Results from a market research survey by EAB Enrollment Services as discussed in Redden (2019). The survey is instructive, but not nationally representative as its sample is based on the firm’s inquiry pools for Catholic colleges.

more than 250 Catholic colleges and universities. Of 6.5 million students enrolled in Catholic post-secondary institutions globally in 2018, 1.3 million were enrolled in the United States. If one considers only university students, the country accounted for 22 percent of all students enrolled in Catholic universities globally (0.9 million of a total of 4.2 million, including students pursuing ecclesiastical studies). In such a context of choice as well as competition, the way Catholic universities position themselves is crucial for their survival.

*Case Study for Ghana and Burkina Faso*⁵⁰

As a second illustration of the fact that parents may have different priorities for what their children should learn in school, consider data for Burkina Faso and Ghana, two countries with populations of different faiths. Using data from a small scale survey implemented in one urban and one rural area in each of the two countries, substantial differences were found in the reasons leading parents to choose various types of schools⁵¹. The education provided by faith-based schools was valued by parents and communities for reasons related to both perceived quality and the promotion of religious and moral values. But there were also differences in perceptions between Franco-Arab or Islamic schools and Christian schools.

As shown in Table 3.3 through the share of respondents emphasizing various reasons for choosing a school, parents choosing Christian schools in Burkina Faso did so for their academic and teacher quality. Parents choosing Islamic schools emphasized the opportunity for their children to receive a religious education, with smaller numbers listing academic or teacher quality too. In public schools, location was a deciding factor for more than two thirds of parents, followed by academic quality and the lack of school fees. Education on moral

values was listed as a reason for school choice by about a third of parents choosing Islamic and Christian schools, but not by parents choosing public schools. Results for Ghana are similar. Religious knowledge was key for the choice of an Islamic school. It also mattered for Christian school, but slightly less so, while academic performance and teacher quality mattered more. For public schools, low cost and proximity were the driving factors.

Several other questions were asked to parents to better understand why they chose a specific school. One question was about the most important area of study for their children. For children in Franco-Arab and Islamic schools, religious education came first, followed by moral education and academics (literacy). For parents at Christian schools, academics came first, as it did for parents at public schools.

Parents were also asked to choose the educational goal of highest importance among social, moral, academic and spiritual goals. Many parents choosing Islamic schools selected spiritual goals and the betterment of society. Parents choosing Christian schools emphasized moral values more. In public schools, the role of religious and moral education was mentioned less. Christian schools were attended by children of all faiths, and religious education was not emphasized in the curriculum. Rather, the schools stressed moral values in addition to secular subjects. Religious education featured more prominently in the curriculum of Franco-Arab and Islamic schools. Those schools were attended almost entirely by Muslim children.

In Ghana and Burkina Faso, parents relying on Islamic schools emphasize spiritual goals. Parents relying on Christian do too, but they emphasize moral values and academic quality more. Religious and moral education matter less for parents relying on public schools.

⁵⁰ This section is adapted from Wodon (2020a). See also Gemignani et al (2014).

⁵¹ Gemignani et al (2014).

Table 3.3: Principal Reasons for School Choice, Primary Level, Burkina Faso and Ghana (%)

	Burkina Faso			Ghana		
	Islamic schools	Christian schools	Public schools	Islamic schools	Christian schools	Public schools
Location	38.7	33.3	70.0	20.8	16.7	37.5
Religious knowledge	83.9	33.3	—	75.0	50.0	6.3
Moral education	35.5	36.7	—	—	29.2	—
To learn Arabic	29.0	—	—	37.5	—	—
To learn French/English	25.8	—	3.3	4.2	—	—
Teacher quality and discipline	12.9	46.7	10.0	4.2	33.3	25.0
Academic performance	25.8	76.7	46.7	4.2	16.7	25.0
Child's future (good education, jobs)	9.7	6.7	16.7	4.2	4.2	—
Familiarity with this school	—	6.7	13.3	16.7	16.7	18.8
No or low school fees	—	—	30.0	4.2	—	31.3

Source: Wodon (2019c), adapted from Gemignani et al. (2014). See also Gemignani and Wodon (2017).

Note: Multiple answers allowed.

What can be concluded from this analysis? Beyond academic subjects, Catholic and other faith-based schools are perceived as emphasizing learning related to values and religion. Do they succeed in doing so? Based on the small sample survey data and qualitative fieldwork carried in Ghana and Burkina Faso, as well as larger nationally representative datasets providing information on parental satisfaction with various types of schools, the answer seems to be a mostly positive one, at least from the view of parents. As will be discussed later, this does not mean that students are learning all that they should, but at least parents recognize the value provided to them by faith-based schools, and are supportive through their enrollment decisions of education pluralism.

Measuring Education Pluralism

It seems clear from the case studies presented above that school choice and education pluralism are valued by at least some parents. How can we assess the level of education pluralism in various countries? There is no unique way to define or measure education pluralism, or more broadly the extent to which the state is supportive of the coexistence of alternative providers of education. One approach consists in looking across countries at the characteristics of

regulatory frameworks for education and how they balance the twin aims of school autonomy and accountability. Case studies based on this approach were pioneered by Glenn and De Groof⁵². The approach is also used in a more systematic way under the Engaging the Private Sector framework of the World Bank's SABER and in a forthcoming study based on that framework for Catholic schools (Box 3.1).

Approaches such as SAER-EPS to assess regulatory frameworks for private schools have clear benefits, in that they can inform policy reforms since the frameworks are directly based on an assessment of existing laws and policies. But they also have limitations. One difficulty with these approaches is that while they are highly informative, they may also be fairly labor intensive, especially if the aim is to document precisely the laws and policies in place on each country. This explains why only about ten completed country assessments have been published on the SABER website.

One approach to measuring education pluralism consists in looking across countries at the characteristics of regulatory frameworks for education and how they balance the twin aims of school autonomy and accountability.

⁵² Glenn and De Groof (2012).

Box 3.1: Assessing Regulatory Frameworks

SABER (Systems Approach for Better Education Results) aims to produce comparable data on education policies across countries. The initiative is organized around a dozen domains ranging from early childhood development to tertiary education and workforce development. One of the domains is Engaging the Private Sector (EPS). SABER-EPS looks in a systematic way at whether laws, regulations, and policies towards the private sector are likely to achieve four policy goals: (1) Encouraging innovation by providers; (2) Holding schools accountable; (3) Empowering parents, students, and communities; and (4) Promoting diversity of supply⁵³. The approach has been adapted to assess policy frameworks for Catholic schools⁵⁴.

Furthermore, these frameworks are not universally accepted. Therefore their application may not lead to consensus on reforms⁵⁵. A third difficulty that these approaches focus on whether regulatory conditions favorable to education pluralism are in place, not on whether pluralism is achieved as revealed by where children go to school. Even when formal regulatory frameworks are conducive to engaging the private sector, other factors may negatively affect school choice, thus reducing education pluralism.

The alternative approach used for this report consists in directly looking at outcomes, i.e. whether children end up being enrolled in different school systems as a measure of the depth of education pluralism in a country. The basic idea is that too much concentration in education systems may be detrimental to school choice as well as broader educational outcomes, much in the same way that too much concentration in an industry may be detrimental to consumers or customers. In

⁵³ Baum et al. (2013).

⁵⁴ Wodon (forthcoming).

⁵⁵ As an example of a critique of the SABER-EPS framework, see Oxfam (2019).

other words, the idea is to apply traditional measures of industry concentration to education systems to measure pluralism.

The basic idea is that too much concentration in education systems may be detrimental to school choice as well as broader educational outcomes, much in the same way that too much concentration in an industry may be detrimental to consumers or customers.

The most widely used measure of industrial concentration is probably the Herfindahl-Hirschman index (HHI) defined as the sum of the squares of the market shares of firms within an industry⁵⁶. A lower value is considered beneficial as no firm or set of firms dominates the market at the risk of competition. When applied to the market share of different providers of education in a country, the index can similarly be interpreted as a simple measure of concentration. The technical definition of the index is provided in Box 3.2.

The HHI is however not itself an intuitive measure of education pluralism because higher values indicate more concentration, and therefore less pluralism. Instead of using the HHI, it seems to make sense to define the education pluralism index instead as $EPI=1-HHI$.

Box 3.2: The Herfindahl-Hirschman Index

Denote the market share of a specific type of education provider i in an education system as s_i . In other words, s_i is the share of students enrolled (at a given level of schooling) in type of school i . The HHI is simply defined as $H = \sum_{i=1}^N s_i^2$ with N being the number of different types of schools operating in the education system. The index ranges from $1/N$ when all types of schools have the same market share to a maximum value of one when all students go only to a single type of school.

⁵⁶ Herfindahl (1959), Hirschman (1964).

Another technical issue is that the HHI actually takes a value between $1/N$ and 1 when the index estimated with data on N providers. This is why in the literature, a normalized HHI is also used with $NHHI=(HHI-1/N)/(1-(1/1N))$. That normalized index should be used cautiously because the information on the number of providers is lost. This can generate problematic results when comparing different markets that have a different number of providers⁵⁷. For our purpose in this report however, given that comparisons of concentration are made across regions or income groups using data on the same number of providers for all regions or income groups, the normalized index is useful to scale the index values between zero and one.

There is a similar issue of normalization with the education pluralism index since it takes a value between zero and $1-1/N$. It is therefore useful to define a normalized education pluralism index as $NEPI=(1-HHI)/(1-1/N)$, so that that index take values between zero and one.

In what follows, the index is applied to education systems. When computing the index across a wide range of countries, a key difficulty is to obtain data on the market shares of different types of education providers. Data from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) are available for most countries on the number of students enrolled in public and private schools at the primary and secondary levels. Private schools are defined as schools not operated by a public authority but instead controlled and managed, whether for profit or not, by a private body. Similarly, data are available on public and private market shares for higher education.

Using these data, the HHI can be computed with two categories of providers – public and private providers. This will lead to a higher value for the index than if the diversity of

private schools and universities were taken into account. Although there may also be some diversity of providers among public schools and universities, this is less likely in terms of the fundamental principles followed by these schools and universities (especially at the K12 level where there is typically more of an attempt at uniformity). But it is clearly important to disaggregate private schools and universities if that can indeed be done. In order to disaggregate private provision into sub-categories, we rely on the data on enrollment in Catholic schools and universities from the annual statistical yearbook of the Catholic Church⁵⁸ already used in chapters 1 and 2.

Enrollment by Region and Income Group

To measure education pluralism with three categories of provider – public, private non-Catholic, and Catholic, we first need estimates of the market share of public, Catholic, and other private schools. While the term ‘market share’ is not necessarily seen with sympathy by many Catholic educators, we use that term since it is used in the literature.

As part of background work for this report, measures of education pluralism were estimated at the country level, but this is not handy for stylized facts given the number of countries. The analysis of trends in enrollment provided in chapters 1 and 2 relied on the geographic categories available in the statistical yearbooks of the Church, such as the Americas, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Oceania. These groupings were used because this is how data are available in the yearbooks, and readers may be familiar with them. But they do not correspond to regional groupings commonly used in empirical work. Therefore, we rely instead in this chapter and the next on regional groupings used by the World Bank. In addition, we provide data according to income groups.

⁵⁷ To illustrate the issue, consider one market with two providers that each has a 50 percent market share, and another market with three providers that each have a third of that market. Both will have a zero value for the normalized HHI, but the second market clearly has less concentration.

⁵⁸ Secretariat of State (2020).

The World Bank classifies countries in six regions: East Asia and Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, North America, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. In terms of income levels, for the World Bank's 2021 fiscal year, low-income countries are those with a Gross National Income (GNI) per capita calculated using the World Bank Atlas method of \$1,035 or less in 2019. Lower-middle-income countries are those with a GNI per capita between \$1,036 and \$4,045. Upper-middle-income countries are those with a GNI per capita between \$4,046 and \$12,535. Finally high-income countries are those with a GNI per capita of \$12,536 or more⁵⁹.

Table 3.4 provides estimates of enrollment in Catholic primary and secondary schools as well as in higher education for 2018 according to these regions and income groups. For primary and secondary education, both the number of students and the number of schools are reported. The analysis is not carried for pre-primary education because global statistics at that level are less available and reliable.

Primary and Secondary Education

As mentioned in chapter 1, most of the growth in enrollment in Catholic schools globally was concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa. As shown in Table 3.4, in 2018 the region accounted for 55.0 percent of all students in Catholic primary schools globally, and 28.0 percent of all students in Catholic secondary schools. After sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and South Asia have the largest enrollment at the primary level, while for enrollment in secondary schools the South

Asia region comes in second place, followed by Europe and Central Asia in third place.

More than 40 percent of all students in Catholic primary schools are located in low-income countries, with another 30 percent in lower-middle income countries. Less than 30 percent live in upper-middle and high income countries.

In terms of income groups, 40.9 percent of all students in Catholic primary schools are located in low-income countries, with another 29.7 percent in lower-middle income countries. Less than 30 percent of students in primary Catholic schools live in upper-middle and high income countries. For secondary school enrollment, the proportion of students who live in low income countries is smaller, because educational attainment in those countries remains low, but together, low income and lower-middle income countries still account for more than half of total enrollment.

Overall it seems fair to state that at the primary and to a lower extent at the secondary level, the Catholic Church serves primarily children in countries with comparatively low levels of economic development. This is good news for the emphasis of the Church placed on the preferential option for the poor⁶⁰, but it also means in the context of the current crisis that children in Catholic schools are likely to have been affected severely by the COVID-19 crisis, as will be discussed in chapter 5.

⁵⁹ The income group in which countries are classified may change over time whether because of economic growth or because of changes in methodology or rebasing of a country's National Accounts. For the World Bank's 2021 fiscal year, ten countries moved to a different category than the year before.

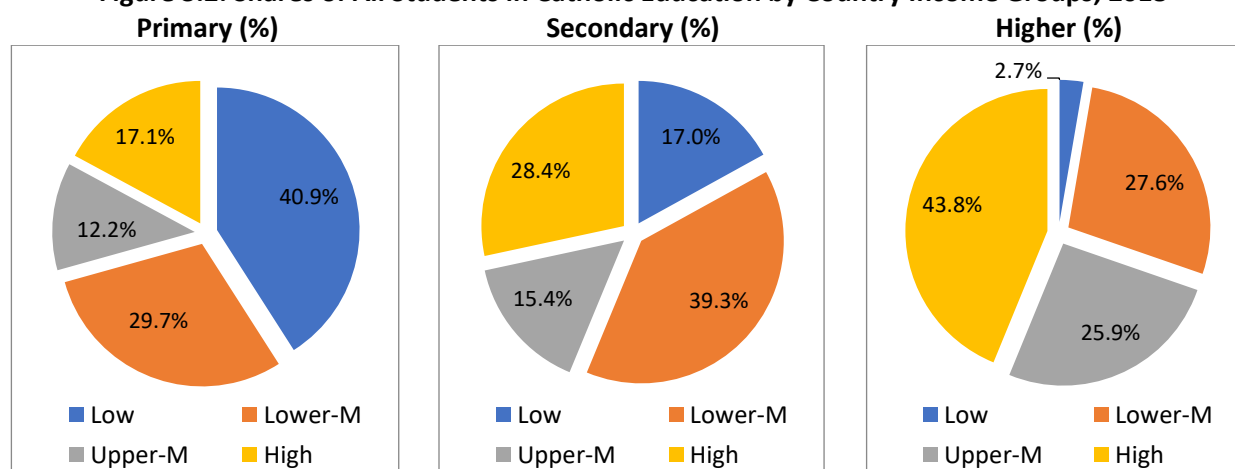
⁶⁰ On whether Catholic schools succeed in serving the poor for schooling and learning in sub-Saharan Africa, see Wodon (2014, 2015, 2019c, 2020g).

Table 3.4: Enrollment in Catholic Schools and Universities by Region and Income Group, 2018

Regions and Income Groups	Primary schools		Secondary schools		Higher Ed.
	Schools	Students	Schools	Students	Students
Estimates of number of schools and students					
Regions					
East Asia & Pacific	8,814	2,185,191	4,184	2,192,622	965,356
Europe & Central Asia	15,715	3,131,268	9,424	3,662,365	1,186,223
Latin America & Caribbean	15,631	4,371,221	10,333	2,816,819	1,701,331
Middle East & North Africa	725	289,241	460	151,733	56,639
North America	6,723	1,770,710	1,796	864,852	1,310,661
South Asia	10,994	3,997,214	7,605	4,207,249	887,851
Sub-Saharan Africa	44,544	19,267,154	15,739	5,411,658	359,020
Income Groups					
Low Income	34,735	14,335,210	9,919	3,274,435	172,858
Lower-Middle Income	28,894	10,412,295	15,936	7,581,178	1,784,779
Upper-Middle Income	13,574	4,261,212	10,629	2,978,055	1,673,934
High Income	25,943	6,003,282	13,057	5,473,630	2,835,510
World	103,146	35,011,999	49,541	19,307,298	6,467,081
Shares in global number of Catholic schools and students					
Regions					
East Asia & Pacific	8.5%	6.2%	8.4%	11.4%	14.9%
Europe & Central Asia	15.2%	8.9%	19.0%	19.0%	18.3%
Latin America & Caribbean	15.2%	12.5%	20.9%	14.6%	26.3%
Middle East & North Africa	0.7%	0.8%	0.9%	0.8%	0.9%
North America	6.5%	5.1%	3.6%	4.5%	20.3%
South Asia	10.7%	11.4%	15.4%	21.8%	13.7%
Sub-Saharan Africa	43.2%	55.0%	31.8%	28.0%	5.6%
Income Groups					
Low Income	33.7%	40.9%	20.0%	17.0%	2.7%
Lower-Middle Income	28.0%	29.7%	32.2%	39.3%	27.6%
Upper-Middle Income	13.2%	12.2%	21.5%	15.4%	25.9%
High Income	25.2%	17.1%	26.4%	28.4%	43.8%
World	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Author's computations from data in the statistical yearbook of the Church 2020.

Figure 3.2: Shares of All Students in Catholic Education by Country Income Groups, 2018



Source: Author's computations from data in the statistical yearbook of the Church 2020.

As could already be seen from the data provided in chapter 1, globally primary schools accounted in 2018 for 64.5 percent of total enrollment in primary and secondary Catholic schools, versus 36.5 percent for secondary schools. In sub-Saharan Africa however, primary schools still account for 78.1 percent of the combined enrollment in primary and secondary schools due to limited transition to secondary schools in many countries. Only four in ten students in Africa complete their lower secondary school according to the World Bank's the World Development Indicators. By contrast, in Europe, primary schools account for less than half (46.1 percent) of total enrollment in Catholic schools. In North America, primary school account for more than two thirds (67.2 percent) of total enrollment in primary and secondary schools, possibly because in the absence of meaningful government funding in the United States, the out-of-pocket cost of enrollment is larger at the secondary level.

Higher Education

As noted in chapter 2, the footprint of Catholic higher education across countries and regions, and therefore also across income groups, is different from that of primary and secondary education. While the growth rate in enrollment in Catholic higher education is high in Africa, the region including sub-Saharan Africa still accounts for only a very small share of total enrollment in Catholic higher education.

In 2018, as shown in Table 3.4, sub-Saharan Africa accounted for only 5.6 percent of all students in Catholic higher education globally. By contrast, despite having a small share of the global population, North America account for one fifth of all students enrolled in Catholic higher education, thanks in particular to a large number of Catholic colleges and universities in the United States. The share of students in Catholic higher education is also relatively high in Latin America at 26.3 percent and in Europe and Central Asia, at 18.3 percent.

Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for only 5.6 percent of all students in Catholic higher education globally. Globally, 43.6 percent of students in Catholic higher education are studying in high income countries.

In terms of income groups, only 2.7 percent of all students in Catholic higher education are located in low-income countries. The proportion is higher at 27.5 percent in lower-middle income countries thanks to India, and 25.9 percent in upper-middle income countries thanks to large countries in Central and Latin America. Still, 43.8 percent of all students in Catholic higher education are studying in high income countries. While a growing share of those students come from low and middle income countries over time, the overwhelming majority of the students were born in these countries. As is the case for higher education in general, Catholic higher education remains highly unequal at the global level.

Market Shares of Catholic Education

What do these estimates mean for the market share of Catholic schools and universities? In order to compute these market shares, enrollment data from the latest statistical yearbook of the Church are compared with data on total enrollment in primary and secondary schools from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics⁶¹. In the case of higher education, the approach involves an additional step and may be less accurate, but is nevertheless instructive.

The resulting market shares for Catholic schools and universities are provided in Table 3.5. At the primary level, the market share of Catholic schools is especially high in sub-Saharan Africa at 11.0 percent. At the secondary level, the highest market share for Catholic schools is in South Asia at 6.7 percent. In low-income countries, Catholic schools account for one in seven students enrolled in all

⁶¹ Estimates of total enrollment are not available for pre-schools, hence this level is not considered.

schools (13.7 percent) and almost one in ten students enrolled at the secondary level (9.0 percent). The market share of Catholic schools is lowest in upper-middle income countries in part because of the absence of Catholic schools in mainland China (by contrast, the schools have a strong footprint in Taiwan).

Estimates of market shares for Catholic higher education are more tentative for two reasons. First, the UNESCO Institute of Statistics does not provide data on the total number of students enrolled in higher education as it does for primary and secondary education. This means that to obtain the denominator for the computation of market shares, we need to multiply the gross enrollment rate at the tertiary level by the population of the appropriate age, which requires a few manipulations. Given the additional variables and calculation involved, this may generate a (probably small) source of error. More importantly, it is not fully clear whether enrollment data available in the statistical yearbooks of the Church for higher education correspond to the definitions of tertiary education used by the UNESCO Institute of Statistics. Still, despite limits in the available data, computing market shares provides a useful order of magnitude of the role played by Catholic higher education globally.

The resulting market shares for Catholic schools and universities are provided in Table 3.5. Globally, Catholic higher education accounts for 2.8 percent of all students enrolled at that level. In terms of regions, the market share is highest in Latin America and North America, at respectively 6.0 percent and 5.9 percent, and lowest in the Middle East and North Africa, at 0.4 percent. In terms of income groups, the market share is highest in high income countries at 4.8 percent, and lowest in upper-middle income countries (probably in large part because of China) at 1.6 percent).

Are these estimates of the right order of magnitude? As a quick test, consider North America, which is dominated in terms of population size and enrollment in higher education by the United States. According to the website of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities and based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics, about 850,000 students were enrolled in Catholic higher education in 2018-19.

The National Center for Education Statistics also reports on its website that total undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions in 2018 was at 16.6 million students, while 3.0 million students were enrolled in post-baccalaureate degree programs. This generates a total number of university students of 19.6 million students. Dividing the number of students in Catholic colleges and universities by the total enrollment at the undergraduate and graduate levels for degree granting institutions generates a market share of for Catholic colleges and universities of 4.3 percent. This is slightly below the estimate of 5.9 percent for North America in Table 3.5.

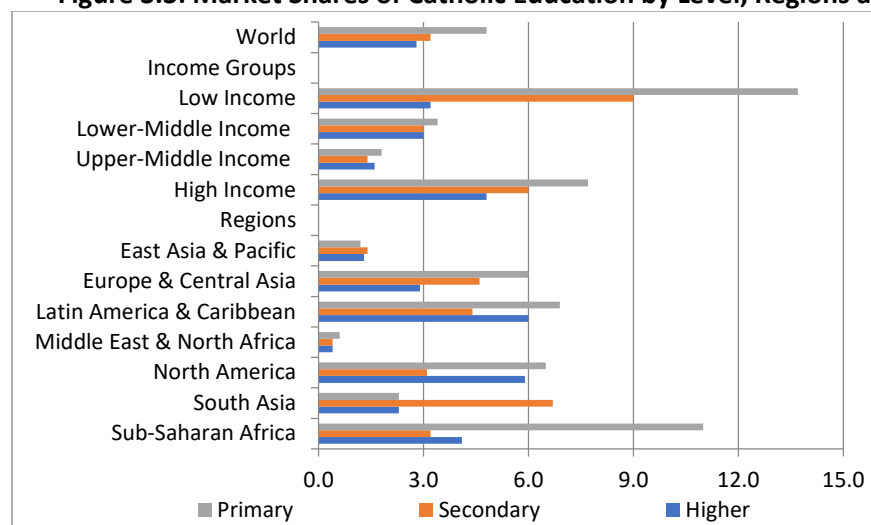
The likely reason for the difference is that the category of students in 'higher institutes' in the statistical yearbook of the Church may include students who are not considered as enrolled in degree-granting institutions by the National Center for Education Statistics. Differences in enrollment in Catholic institutions in other countries in North America, and especially in Canada, may also play a role in the differences in estimates just mentioned. Still, with those caveats in mind, this simple comparison suggests that estimates in Table 3.5 do seem to provide an adequate order of magnitude for the market shares of Catholic higher education, although possibly slightly on the high side.

Table 3.5: Market Shares of Catholic Education by Education Level (%), 2018

Regions and Income Groups	Primary schools	Secondary schools	Higher education
Regions			
East Asia & Pacific	1.2	1.4	1.3
Europe & Central Asia	6.0	4.6	2.9
Latin America & Caribbean	6.9	4.4	6.0
Middle East & North Africa	0.6	0.4	0.4
North America	6.5	3.1	5.9
South Asia	2.3	6.7	2.3
Sub-Saharan Africa	11.0	3.2	4.1
Income Groups			
Low Income	13.7	9.0	3.2
Lower-Middle Income	3.4	3.0	3.0
Upper-Middle Income	1.8	1.4	1.6
High Income	7.7	6.0	4.8
World	4.8	3.2	2.8

Source: Author's computations from data in the statistical yearbook of the Church 2020.

Figure 3.3: Market Shares of Catholic Education by Level, Regions and Income Groups (%), 2018



Globally, the market share of Catholic education is estimated at 4.8 percent at the primary level, 3.2 percent at the secondary level, and 2.8 percent at the higher education level. For primary education, it is much higher in sub-Saharan Africa (11.0 percent) and in low income countries (13.7 percent).

Source: Author's estimations.

Estimates of Education Pluralism

Estimates of the market shares of Catholic schools and universities can be combined with estimates of market shares of public and other private schools and universities to provide measures of education pluralism. If data on enrollment in Catholic schools and universities were not available, the global analysis would need to be based only on the share of students enrolled in public and private institutions since data on the footprint of particular networks of schools for all country

level are not available⁶². Adding data for Catholic institutions enables more disaggregation, and therefore better estimates since three different providers are identified across all countries: public, private non-Catholic and Catholic providers. When a larger number of providers are accounted for through such disaggregation, estimates of the HHI are lower.

⁶² For some networks with relatively few schools, data may be available, but these networks would not make a large differences for measures of education pluralism.

Simply shifting from two to three providers can make a difference in the measures and of course in the reality on the ground as to whether there are opportunities for parents or students to select different types of schools.

Data on the market shares of public and private schools are readily available from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics for primary and secondary education not only at the level of countries, but also by region and income group. In the case of higher education, data are available for many but not all countries, and regional and income group aggregates are not provided⁶³. Therefore we constructed these aggregate market shares based on the available data, acknowledging that estimates are more tentative given some missing country data.

When factoring in market share data for Catholic primary and secondary schools, attention must be paid to the fact that in some countries, including several of the African countries with large enrollment in Catholic schools, most Catholic schools are actually considered as public schools by governments and reported as such to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics. This is for example the case in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda⁶⁴. In other cases as well, such as Ireland, Catholic schools are also considered as public schools in the UIS data. Therefore, in those types of countries, when computing the HHI as well as the NEPI with three providers (public, private non-Catholic, and private Catholic) instead of two providers (public and private), enrollment estimates in Catholic schools must be deducted from enrollment in public schools as opposed to enrollment in private schools for computing the market shares. This issue is less likely to be a problem in the case of Catholic universities because their footprint in the countries considering them as public institutions is small.

The results are provided in Table 3.6. Consider first primary and secondary education.

⁶³ This may be because of missing data for some few countries, especially for any particular year.

⁶⁴ See Wodon

Concentration is lowest in South Asia, mostly because of a high market share of private schools in India. Concentration is also comparatively lower in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. By contrast, concentration is high in North America, in part because lack of state funding for private schools in the United States reduces their market shares since parents must pay tuition. In terms of comparisons by income groups, lower-middle and low income countries have lower levels of concentration than upper-middle and high income countries (India and China play a large role in these results given the countries' size).

For primary and secondary schools, education concentration is lower in South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. By contrast, the highest level of concentration is observed in North America.

In the case of higher education, the situation is a bit different. The HHI is again low in South Asia, but it is even slightly lower in Latin America and the Caribbean. Concentration is at its lowest in upper-middle income countries as a result. While concentration was high in North America for primary and secondary education, the region has a mid-level HHI for higher education in comparison to other regions. This is in part because public higher education in the United States is not free, hence public institutions have less of a pricing advantage versus private universities. In most states, subsidies are provided by the state to students from the state who enroll in the state. But even with those subsidies, students still must pay for part of the cost of their education, and out-of-state students normally must pay the full price (unless they have a scholarship; scholarships are also frequent in private universities). At the global level, there is less concentration in higher education than in secondary education, with the highest concentration found at the primary level.

Table 3.6: Estimates of the Herfindhal-Hirschman Index, 2018

	Two categories			Three categories			
	Private Share (%)	Public Share (%)	HH Index (×100)	Private Share (%)	Catholic Share (%)	Public Share (%)	HH Index (×100)
Primary education							
Regions							
East Asia & Pacific	10.3	89.7	81.6	9.1	1.2	89.7	81.4
Europe & Central Asia	9.2	90.8	83.3	3.2	6.0	90.8	82.9
Latin America & Caribbean	20.5	79.5	67.4	13.6	6.9	79.5	65.6
Middle East & North Africa	10.5	89.5	81.3	9.9	0.6	89.5	81.2
North America	8.6	91.4	84.3	2.1	6.5	91.4	84.1
South Asia	37.8	62.2	53.0	35.6	2.3	62.2	51.3
Sub-Saharan Africa	14.1	85.9	75.7	10.5	11.0	78.5	63.9
Income Groups							
Low Income	12.9	87.1	77.5	8.1	13.7	78.2	63.7
Lower-Middle Income	26.9	73.1	60.7	23.5	3.4	73.1	59.1
Upper-Middle Income	12.0	88.0	78.9	10.2	1.8	88.0	78.5
High Income	13.0	87.0	77.4	5.3	7.7	87.0	76.6
World	18.6	81.4	69.8	13.8	4.8	81.4	68.4
Secondary education							
Regions							
East Asia & Pacific	19.2	80.8	69.0	17.8	1.4	80.8	68.5
Europe & Central Asia	14.8	85.2	74.8	10.2	4.6	85.2	73.8
Latin America & Caribbean	19.1	80.9	69.0	14.8	4.4	80.9	67.7
Middle East & North Africa	9.6	90.4	82.7	9.2	0.4	90.4	82.6
North America	8.9	91.1	83.8	5.8	3.1	91.1	83.4
South Asia	51.0	49.0	50.0	48.5	3.2	48.3	47.0
Sub-Saharan Africa	20.8	79.2	67.0	16.5	6.7	76.8	62.2
Income Groups							
Low Income	16.9	83.1	71.9	15.3	9.0	75.7	60.4
Lower-Middle Income	39.9	60.1	52.0	36.9	3.0	60.1	49.8
Upper-Middle Income	16.1	83.9	73.0	14.8	1.4	83.9	72.6
High Income	20.5	79.5	67.4	14.5	6.0	79.5	65.7
World	26.8	73.2	59.0	23.6	3.2	73.2	57.8
Higher education							
Regions							
East Asia & Pacific	26.5	73.5	61.0	25.3	73.5	1.3	60.4
Europe & Central Asia	24.3	75.7	63.2	21.4	75.7	2.9	62.0
Latin America & Caribbean	42.3	57.7	51.2	36.3	57.7	6.0	46.9
Middle East & North Africa	19.2	80.8	69.0	18.8	80.8	0.4	68.8
North America	26.7	73.3	60.8	20.8	73.3	5.9	58.4
South Asia	54.4	45.6	50.4	52.2	45.6	2.3	48.0
Sub-Saharan Africa	25.0	75.0	62.5	20.9	75.0	4.1	60.8
Income Groups							
Low Income	29.7	70.3	58.2	26.6	70.3	3.2	56.5
Lower-Middle Income	28.3	71.7	59.4	25.4	71.7	3.0	57.9
Upper-Middle Income	49.6	50.4	50.0	48.0	50.4	1.6	48.5
High Income	23.5	76.5	64.0	18.7	76.5	4.8	62.2
World	32.3	67.7	56.3	29.5	67.7	2.8	54.6

Source: Authors' estimations.

Table 3.7: Normalized Education Pluralism Index by Education Level, Three Providers, 2018

	Primary (×100)		Secondary (×100)		Higher (×100)	
	Two providers	Three providers	Two providers	Three providers	Two providers	Three providers
Regions						
East Asia & Pacific	27.6	28.0	46.6	47.3	58.5	59.4
Europe & Central Asia	25.1	25.7	37.8	39.2	55.2	57.1
Latin America & Caribbean	48.8	51.6	46.4	48.4	73.2	79.7
Middle East & North Africa	28.1	28.3	26.0	26.1	46.6	46.8
North America	23.5	23.9	24.3	24.9	58.7	62.4
South Asia	70.6	73.0	75.0	79.5	74.4	78.0
Sub-Saharan Africa	36.4	54.2	49.5	56.7	56.3	58.9
Income Groups						
Low Income	33.8	54.5	42.2	59.4	62.7	65.2
Lower-Middle Income	59.0	61.4	72.0	75.3	60.9	63.2
Upper-Middle Income	31.7	32.3	40.6	41.2	75.0	77.3
High Income	33.9	35.2	48.9	51.5	54.0	56.6
World	45.4	47.4	61.5	63.3	65.6	68.1

Source: Authors' estimations.

Based on the estimates of the HHI, the estimates of the normalized education pluralism index (NEPI) are provided in Table 3.7 and Figure 3.4. Recall that it is better to define a normalized education pluralism. Given that data are available for three providers (considering public, Catholic, and other private schools and universities), we have $NEPI=1.5 \times (1-HHI)^{65}$.

The results mirror the discussion for the concentration index, but in reverse. Globally, the normalized education pluralism index is estimated at 0.474 for primary education, 0.633 for secondary education, and 0.681 for higher education. Pluralism tends to increase with the level of education being considered. It is highest for higher education where governments have a lower market share and less of a mandate to provide free education for all.

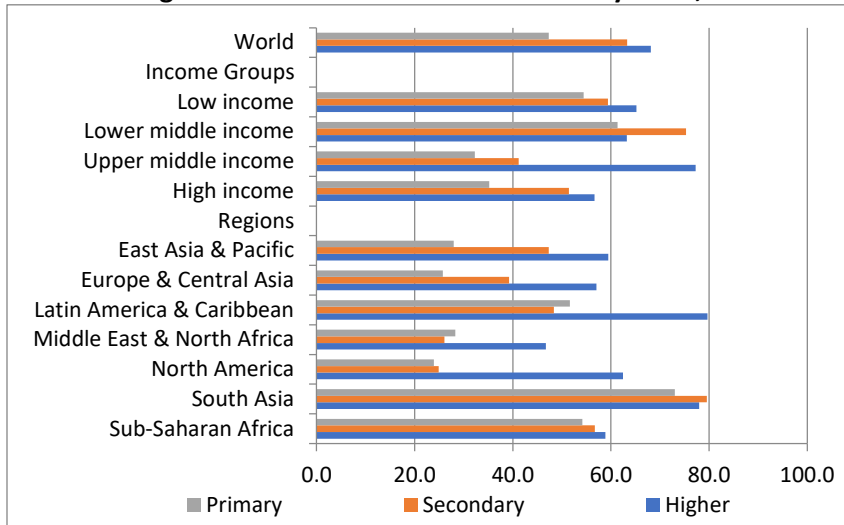
Education pluralism is highest in South Asia, again in part because of a large market share of private providers in India. The only exception is a slightly higher pluralism index for higher education in Latin America and the Caribbean. Pluralism is also comparatively high in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean for primary and secondary

education. It is low at those education levels in North America and the Middle East and North Africa. In terms of income groups, NEPI is higher in lower-middle income countries (in part because of India), and lower in upper-middle-income countries (in part because of China where most schools are public schools).

When shifting from two providers (public and private) to three (public, private non-Catholic and Catholic), education pluralism automatically increases since market shares are disaggregated. The difference in the values of the indices is implicitly as a measure of the contribution of Catholic schools to pluralism. As shown in Figure 3.5, Catholic education contributes to education pluralism. At the global level this contribution is relatively small because the market share of Catholic schools is also small. But in some cases, it is larger. This is especially the case for primary education in sub-Saharan Africa and in low income countries where levels of pluralism without Catholic schools would otherwise be comparatively low.

65

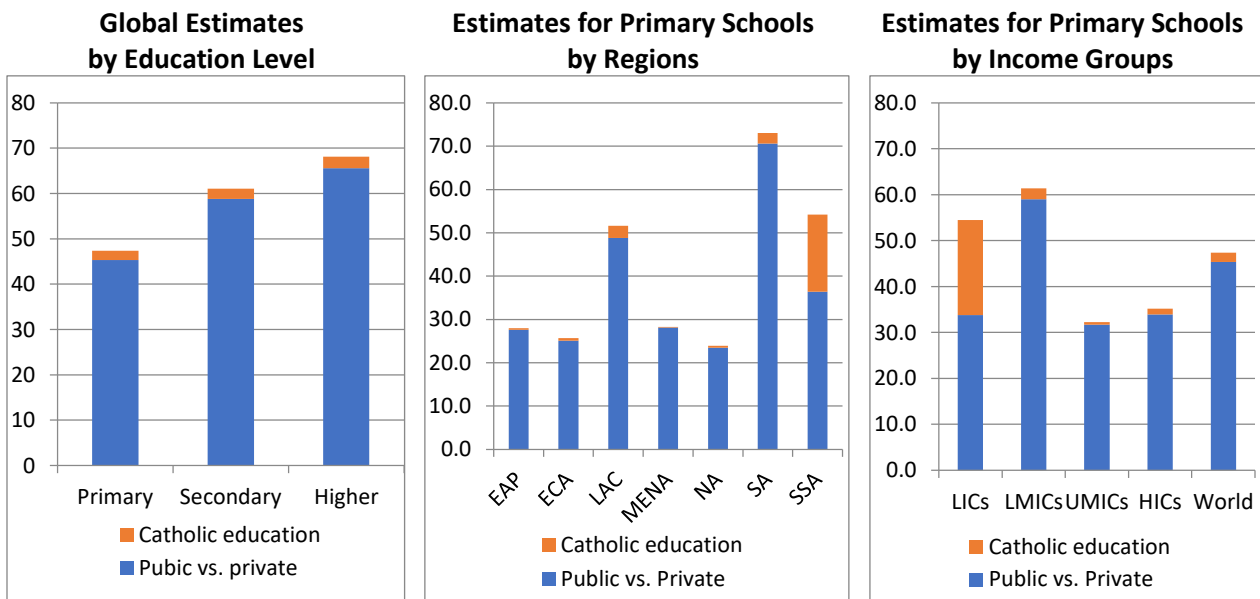
Figure 3.4: Education Pluralism Index by Level, Income Groups and Regions, 2018



Source: Author's estimations.

Globally, education pluralism increase with the level of education, with the highest values observed for tertiary education. For all levels of education, pluralism is high in South Asia. It is also comparatively high in sub-Saharan Africa for primary and secondary education. It is low at those education levels in North America and MENA.

Figure 3.5: Estimates of Pluralism with and without Catholic Schools, 2018



Source: Author's estimations.

Catholic Education contributes to education pluralism, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and low income countries where levels of education pluralism without Catholic schools would be comparatively low.

As is the case for any such measure, the normalized education pluralism index has limitations. Different measures could be proposed based on the literature on market concentration and sensitivity tests could be performed to assess how results change depending on the measure used. But it is hoped that its availability will help promote and inform debates on these issues.

All the values of the index of education pluralism in Table 3.7 are normalized to take a value between zero and one. These are the values that will be used in the next chapter when discussing how to measure the fulfillment of the right to education taking into account not only education outcomes, but also pluralism.

Summing Up

Priorities regarding what children should learn in school may differ substantially between parents. The extent to which this is the case may depend on the country or community being considered, but it is likely that many parents do care about education pluralism because education systems not only provide cognitive and non-cognitive skills to children or students, they also impart values. Different types of schools or universities may put a different emphasis on various aspects of the education they provide. Similarly, parents may have different priorities for what their children should learn in school, and students going to college may have different priorities as well for the experience they would like to have.

These differences in priorities or preferences affect the type of school that parents may want to choose for their children, or that university students may select. Without some level of education pluralism, there may simply be no choice for parents (or students) as to where to send their children to school (where to go to college). In extreme cases, the schools or colleges/universities that are available may even promote values that conflict with those of the children's parents or those of students considering enrollment.

To make the case that priorities may indeed differ in the demand for education, two case studies were provided. In the United States, among a nationally representative sample of parents, the top five priorities for what their children should learn in school tend to relate to skills and success in college and in the job market. By contrast, for parents with a child in a Catholic school, moral values rank much higher. Similarly, in Ghana and Burkina Faso, many parents in Islamic schools selected spiritual goals and the betterment of society as the most important goals for the education of their children. Fewer parents at Christian did so, but they emphasized moral values. In public schools, religious and moral education came less often in answers provided by parents. Even at the university level, there are differences in the priorities of youth who select different colleges. As expected, the emphasis on faith is stronger for students in Catholic universities as well as other religious institutions.

These differences in preferences make the case for the importance of a diversified offering in education systems, and for the idea of education pluralism. The objective of this chapter was to propose a simple measure of education pluralism to assess the extent to which various countries have managed to achieved or lack such pluralism. One approach to measuring education pluralism would consist in looking across countries at the characteristics of regulatory frameworks for education and how they balance the twin aims of school autonomy and accountability. The basic idea in this chapter is different: it is to suggest that too much concentration in education systems may be detrimental to school choice and broader educational outcomes, much in the same way that too much concentration in an industry may be detrimental to consumers or customers.

This idea leads to a measure of education pluralism based on a simple transformation of the Herfindhal-Hirschman Index used in the literature on industrial concentration. The measure is estimated by calculating the market share of different

providers of education in the same way across countries. Globally, the market share of Catholic education is estimated at 4.8 percent at the primary level, 3.2 percent at the secondary level, and 2.8 percent at the higher education level. While the market share of other private providers of education is higher, the education market is clearly dominated by public provision, but there are substantial differences between regions and country income groups.

The analysis reveals that for primary and secondary schools, education pluralism is highest in sub-Saharan Africa, followed by South Asia. It is at its lowest level in North America. In terms of income groups, education pluralism is higher in lower-middle income countries (in part because of India), and lower in upper-middle-income countries (in part because of China). For tertiary education, the situation is a bit different. Education pluralism is at its highest level in Latin America and the Caribbean and in South Asia, and at its lowest level in the Middle East and North Africa. The differences in the values of the index with two and three providers can be seen as an implicit measure of the contribution of Catholic schools to pluralism. Globally, with the measure used, that contribution is limited because the market share of Catholic schools is relatively small. But in sub-Saharan Africa and in low income countries, the contribution is much larger.

The main advantage of the measure of education pluralism being proposed is that it is straightforward, and it can be estimated globally. At the country level, more detailed work could be done with more detailed data on more providers, but globally, considering separately public, private non-Catholic, and Catholic providers is a small advance versus simply considering public and private providers. Given that the Church is the largest non-state provider of education globally, and that some of the characteristics of Catholic schools and universities are different from those of other private and public schools and universities, integrating data on Catholic schools in the analysis leads to measures of education

pluralism that are a bit more precise. These measures should however not be considered as highly precise given lack of comparable data across countries on the footprint of other types of education providers, including for example Protestant and Islamic schools and universities.

Clearly, a simple measure of education pluralism does not exhaust discussions on the topic, nor even the measurement of pluralism. The more traditional approaches to assessing pluralism not on the basis of outcomes, but on the basis based of assessments of the law remain essential since they deal directly with regulatory frameworks. Also, advocating for education pluralism does not mean that all schools or universities can do whatever they want. Private schools and universities should benefit from some autonomy, but they should also be held accountable, as should be the case for public schools and universities.

Advocating for education pluralism does not mean that all schools or universities can do whatever they want. Private schools and universities should benefit from some autonomy, but they should also be held accountable, as should be the case for public schools and universities.

Faith-based schools in particular should teach core secular topics that all students should learn, for example to achieve basic literacy and numeracy in the early grades. But they should also have the freedom within reasonable bounds to develop their own specific pedagogical practices and they may cover additional topics in the instruction they provide, including religious instruction. In so doing, they should themselves respect pluralism within the school (or university), especially when they benefit from state support.

Indeed, although this was not the topic of this chapter, education pluralism does not only refer to the fact that different types of schools and universities should be able to operate with some level of autonomy, but also

to the fact that the schools and universities themselves should respect pluralism in their own midst given that their student body may well be diverse. In Catholic schools and

universities in particular, a large share of students are non-Catholic. Their own particular faith, or lack of faith, must be fully respected.

CHAPTER 4

LEARNING POVERTY AND THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Introduction

There is today widespread consensus on the importance of ensuring that all children and youth benefit from a good education. Multiple targets have been set under the fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG4) to try to capture some of the main improvements that are needed to achieve the goal, i.e. to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Beyond the value that a good education has in and by itself, achieving the education targets set under SDG4 is also essential for the other SDGs. In the Global Catholic Education Report 2020, the fact that education is truly essential for development was illustrated through a Box outlining some of the lifelong benefits of education. For readers who may not have seen that report, the Box is reproduced in this report (see Box 4.1).

Yet despite broad consensus in the international community on the importance of education, we are still very far away from achieving the SDG4 targets. A few simple statistics suffice to illustrate this point. Even before the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, 258 million children remained out of school⁶⁶ and more than half of all children age 10 were considered learning poor, which means that they were not able to read and understand a simple text by age 10. In sub-Saharan Africa, the proportion of children who are learning poor was well above eight in 10 before the pandemic⁶⁷.

⁶⁶ UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2019). The estimate is for 2018. It includes 59 million children of primary school age, 62 million of lower secondary school age and 138 million of upper secondary age. See more generally UNESCO (2020) on the issue of inclusion.

⁶⁷ World Bank (2019).

As will be discussed in the next chapter, the situation is likely to have worsened considerably over the last year with many children dropping out of school and many more not learning due to school closures. Learning poverty may have increased by ten percentage points in low and middle income countries.

The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for educational attainment and learning will be discussed in some details in the next chapter, with special attention to the implications for Catholic schools and universities as well as their students. In this chapter, building on the analysis of education pluralism in chapter 3, the objective is to consider the extent to which even before the pandemic, the fulfillment of the right the education was being fulfilled.

In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the third provision of Article 26 relates to the right of parents to choose the type of education that their children should receive.

How should we assess whether the right to education is being fulfilled? As was the case with the measurement of education pluralism in the chapter 3, there is no unique way to answering this question. But our aim in this chapter is to suggest a way to take seriously the provisions of Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). This article includes not one, but three provisions: *“(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages [...]. (2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms [...]. (3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.”*

Box 4.1: The Imperative of Investing in Education

Ensuring the right to education is simply essential for the enjoyment of human rights in their indivisibility. The benefits from education for human development are especially wide-ranging.

Labor market earnings and poverty reduction. Education is key to escaping poverty. Men and women with primary education (partial or completed) earn only 20- 30 percent more on average than those with no education at all. But 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 education⁶⁸. In addition, secondary and tertiary education are often associated with higher labor force participation (especially full-time work for women) and a lower likelihood of unemployment. Since labor earnings are key to avoid poverty, improving education outcomes – both in terms of educational attainment and learning – can reduce poverty dramatically.⁶⁹

Child marriage, fertility, and women's health. 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, physically or emotionally. This leads to a wide range of negative consequences not only for them, but also their children and societies as a whole.⁷⁰ Keeping girls in school is one of the best ways to end child marriage and early childbearing.⁷¹ Universal secondary education for girls could virtually eliminate child marriage and reduce early childbearing by three fourths.⁷² By reducing child marriage and early childbearing, and providing agency for women, universal secondary education could indirectly reduce fertility rates in many developing countries.⁷³ This, in turn, would reduce population growth, accelerate the demographic transition, and generate a large demographic dividend. 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.⁷⁴

Child health and nutrition. After controlling for other factors affecting under-five mortality and stunting, children born of educated mothers have lower risks of dying by age five or being stunted. By contrast, children born of very young mothers 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. By reducing household poverty, universal secondary education for mothers (and fathers) would again help reducing under-five mortality and stunting rates. Finally, children born of educated mothers are more likely to be registered at birth⁷⁵, a key right for children that affects other rights.

Agency, decision-making, and social capital. Better educated men and women tend to have more agency in their lives. Achieving universal secondary education would increase by one tenth women's reported ability to make decisions in their household. Better educated women and men report lower satisfaction rates with basic services, which may reflect better agency through a more realistic assessment of their quality. Educational attainment is also associated with being able to rely on friends when in need, and a stronger ability to engage in altruistic behaviors. This is not because those who are better educated are more altruistic, but because they are in a better position to be able to help others.

⁶⁸ Montenegro and Wodon (2020).

⁶⁹ UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2017).

⁷⁰ Wodon et al. (2018).

⁷¹ Botea et al. (2017).

⁷² Wodon, Male et al. (2020).

⁷³ Onagoruwa and Wodon (2018).

⁷⁴ Wodon et al. (2018).

⁷⁵ Onagoruwa and Wodon (2020).

The third provision relates to the right of parents to choose the type of education that their children should receive (within reasonable bounds). This right has been recognized in other international human rights instruments as well, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights⁷⁶ As for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 29 states the importance of respect for the child's parents, as well as his or her own cultural identity, language and values⁷⁷.

In order to assess the fulfillment of the right to education, one approach consists again in looking across countries at laws and policies related to education and assessing the extent to which they guarantee the right to education. Various organizations have used this approach for diagnostic work, typically with the aim to be

⁷⁶ Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights states that *“The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to choose for their children schools, other than those established by the public authorities, which conform to such minimum educational standards as may be laid down or approved by the State and to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.”*

⁷⁷ Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that: *“States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to: (a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential; (b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations; (c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own; (d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin; (e) The development of respect for the natural environment.”*

able to suggest policies or reforms that would enhance the fulfillment of the right.

UNESCO maintains a database or observatory on the right to education⁷⁸. The observatory consists of country profiles with detailed information the ratification of normative instruments and monitoring status of the right to education, including national reports, constitutional and legal frameworks, and education policies of the selected country. The observatory also includes a library with about 1,000 documents such as Member States' constitutions, laws, decrees as well as educational programs and plans with several tools to facilitate searches. The database is however not used (to our knowledge) to produce an indicator of the fulfillment of the right to education across countries.

UNESCO also recently published guidelines to strengthen the right to education in national frameworks⁷⁹. The guidelines can be used to assess how compatible national education legal and policy frameworks are with international standards and SDG 4 commitments. The guidelines briefly state that private actors have a role to play, particularly for the moral and religious education of children, but that private actors must also conform to minimum standards, recognizing the primary responsibility of the State to provide public education. They also mention risks when private actors do not respect such standards. They include a range of useful checklists and forms, but do not suggest any particular way to measure the fulfillment of the right for education that would account for pluralism.

The Right to Education Initiative (RTE)⁸⁰ was established in 2000 by the first UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education, and re-launched in 2008 as the Right to Education Project, a collaborative initiative supported by several NGOs. It is now a charity registered in England and Wales. RTE conducts research and

⁷⁸ See <http://www.unesco.org/education/edurights/>.

⁷⁹ UNESCO (2021).

⁸⁰ See <https://www.right-to-education.org/>.

legal analysis to help enforce the right to education. RTE's website provides a range of useful resources to monitor the right to education, but no single suggested measure across countries of its fulfillment.

Several tools and approaches have been proposed in the literature to assess the right to education, each seems to have limitations as a broadly applicable measure, whether due to the approach used or the fact that data are available only for a small number of countries.

Another initiative is that of the Right to Education Index⁸¹ (RTEI) managed by Results, a nonprofit in the United States. The index is based on a survey with 79 questions and 365 data points, including sections on governance, availability, accessibility, acceptability, and adaptability. The survey helps in collecting data on a wide range of aspects related to the right to education, but this may lead to two potential issues. The first is that the index has a complex formula because it is based on many variables⁸². The more variables are included in an index, the more the issue of weights comes to the fore, and the less easily interpretable the index becomes for policy makers. The second issue may be related to the first. Perhaps because of data intensity, the latest round of data for 2018 covers only 10 countries. The index can therefore not be used for global cross-country comparisons to be updated regularly.

Still another initiative is that of OIDEL⁸³ a nonprofit Catholic-inspired organization which produced in 2016 a report with an index measuring freedom of education based on four indicators: (1) whether there is a legal possibility to create and manage non-governmental schools (I_1); (2) whether public funding for nongovernmental schools exists, and if so, what costs are subsidized by the State (I_2); (3) the net enrollment rate in primary

education (I_2); and (4) the enrolment rate in non-governmental schools as a percentage of total enrollment in primary education (I_2). The Freedom of Education Index (FEI) is computed as $FEI = [I_1 + I_2[1 + (I_4)] + I_3] / 3.94$. The number of countries covered is large and the formula is easy to understand. However the analytical rationale for the formula is not fully clear.

The index combines data on legal frameworks with data on education outcomes (as does the RTEI measure mentioned above). It is therefore neither a measure of outcomes, nor a measure of policies that could be conducive to specific outcomes. This may make its interpretation less intuitive. The educational outcome included is the primary enrollment rate, which does not account for completion (which is more important than enrollment), nor learning (when the index was proposed, measures of learning outcomes were not yet available from the World Bank). In addition, the weighting of the four components is not flexible, and some components enter additively while others do so multiplicatively without a clear intuition as to why provided. Finally, there is a rationale for the normalization by 3.94, but it problematic within an education pluralism approach⁸⁴. This rapid critique is meant with sympathy for OIDEL's effort to suggest a simple measure of freedom of education based on data for many countries. The effort is to be commended, but it is not clear that the index is adequate to assess freedom of education or the fulfillment of the right to education.

The fact that there is no commonly agreed measure on the fulfillment of the right to education points to the difficulty of proposing such a measure. Any measure,

⁸⁴ The normalization is based on data from Ireland considered an 'ideal state' because it has the highest value for the index due in part to very high enrolment in non-governmental schools as a share of total enrollment in primary education. This is because virtually all schools are Catholic schools. Yet this is not a mark of education pluralism as discussed in the previous chapter. When any particular type of school dominates, education pluralism is reduced.

⁸¹ See <https://www.rtei.org/en/>.

⁸² RESULTS Educational Fund (2016).

⁸³ OIDEL (2016).

including the measure proposed in the chapter, is likely to have both weaknesses and strengths. With the aim to promote discussions on this topic, and acknowledging the limits of the exercise, this chapter suggests a new measure of the fulfillment of the right to education that combines (1) data on learning outcomes recently made available by the World Bank; and (2) the measure of education pluralism suggested in Chapter 3. To propose this new measure, we discuss first two new measures of learning outcomes from the World Bank, and next how to integrate education pluralism.

The fact that there is no commonly agreed measure on the fulfillment of the right to education points to the difficulty of proposing such a measure. Any measure is likely to have some weaknesses as well as strengths.

Learning Outcomes

If the performance of countries in fulfilling the right to education were to be measured solely on the basis of educational attainment and learning, then two measures recently suggested by the World Bank could be great candidates for assessing the extent to which countries are succeeding in fulfilling that right. The first measure is that of learning poverty. The second is the learning-adjusted number of years of schooling that a child may be expected to complete. Both measures are available for a large number of countries and explained briefly in this section.

Learning Poverty

A child is considered to be affected by learning poverty if s/he cannot read and understand an age-appropriate text by age 10⁸⁵. Given this definition, it is clear that ending learning poverty would not enable countries to achieve the targets set under the fourth sustainable development goal. Yet even ending

learning poverty would be a very difficult target to achieve by 2030. As noted below, the target is simply to cut learning poverty by half by 2030, and even that is unlikely to be achieved.

Development targets are most useful when they not only are ambitious, but also SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-based)⁸⁶. In terms of achievability, the learning poverty target fits the bill more than the targets set forth in the SDGs, which are more aspirational. The targets under SDG4 still remain a reference, but to motivate government action on specific bottlenecks that prevent children from learning and thereby staying in school, there is also value in a new measure such as that of learning poverty.

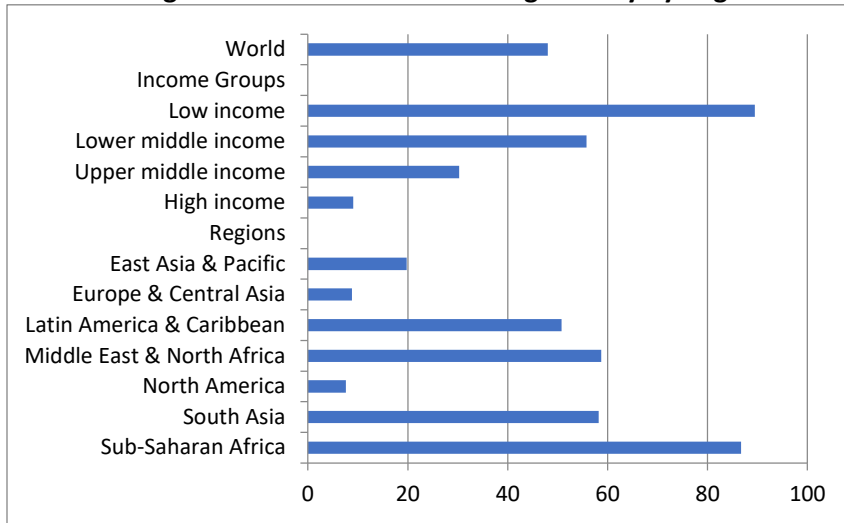
A child is learning poor if s/he cannot read and understand an age-appropriate text by age 10.

The measurement of learning poverty is based on two main data sources. The first is a large set of international student assessments that have been normalized to be comparable and provide information on the share of children aged 10 who are in school are able to read and understand a simple text. The second is the share of students of that age who are out of school, and therefore assumed to be learning poor. By combining both sources of data, estimates of learning poverty can be provided at the national level. As shown in Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1, globally, almost half of all children were learning poor before the COVID-19 crisis. In sub-Saharan Africa and low income countries, learning poverty was much higher, with close to nine in ten children not able to read and understand a simple text by age 10.

⁸⁵ World Bank (2019b).

⁸⁶ Christiaensen et al. (2002).

Figure 4.1: Estimates of Learning Poverty by Region and Income Group, 2018 (%)



Source: Azevedo (2020).

Globally, almost half of all 10 year old children were learning poor before the COVID-19 crisis. In low income countries and in sub-Saharan Africa, almost nine in ten children were learning poor before the crisis.

Table 4.1: Estimates of Learning Poverty by Region and Income Group, 2018 (%)

Share of 10 Years Not Able to Read and Understand A Simple Text (Estimates before the COVID-19 Crisis)

	Learning poverty
Regions	
East Asia & Pacific	19.8
Europe & Central Asia	8.8
Latin America & Caribbean	50.8
Middle East & North Africa	58.7
North America	7.6
South Asia	58.2
Sub-Saharan Africa	86.7
Income levels	
Low Income Countries	89.5
Lower-Middle Income Countries	55.8
Upper-Middle Income Countries	30.3
High Income Countries	9.1
World	48.0
Low & Middle Income Countries	52.7

Source: Azevedo (2020).

Note: Estimates for all countries (in communications, the World Bank tends to refer to estimates only for low and middle income countries - those estimates are therefore also included for reference).

As already mentioned, to motivate global action to improve educational outcomes, the World Bank adopted in partnership with UN agencies adopted a target of reducing learning poverty in

half by 2030⁸⁷. Even under pre-COVID conditions, gains in learning over time would have had to be doubled versus business-as-usual scenarios to reach the target. Today, as discussed in chapter 5, the situation is worse as school closures related to the pandemic may have increased the baseline learning poverty rate by up to 10 percentage points in low and middle income countries under a pessimistic scenario, leading 72 million children to become learning-poor⁸⁸. By 2030, the effect of the current crisis should be lower⁸⁹ but this is no consolation for the children affected today, with clear risks of lifelong negative impacts.

Learning-adjusted Years of Schooling

A second interesting measure recently introduced by the World Bank is that of the learning-adjusted years of schooling. Even before the pandemic, many education systems were confronted with a major learning crisis⁹⁰

⁸⁷ World Bank (2019b).

⁸⁸ Azevedo (2020).

⁸⁹ Learning poverty is estimated among 10 year-old children. Children who will be 10 years old in 2030 were born in 2020 and may not have been affected substantially by the crisis.

⁹⁰ World Bank (2018, 2020a).

apart from the fact that 258 million children of primary and secondary school age were out of school⁹¹. One way to reflect this crisis is to rely on estimates of learning poverty. Another way is to compute the expected years of schooling that a child is expected to complete, but factoring in losses due to insufficient of learning while in school.

On average across countries, more than a third of the years of schooling that children complete are essentially 'lost' due to lack of sufficient learning in school. As a result, across countries, children complete on average only seven years of learning-adjusted years of schooling.

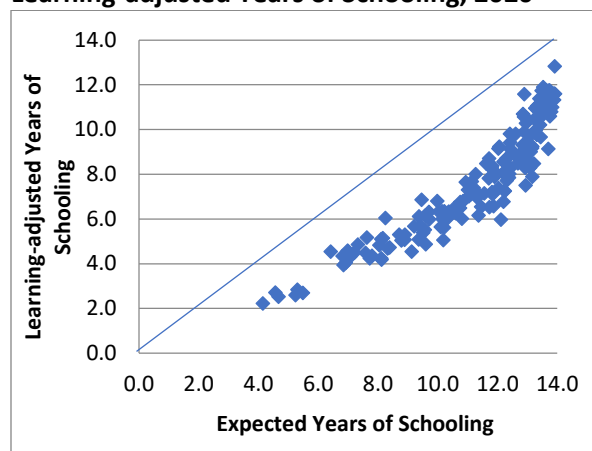
Figure 4.1 provides a scatter plot for 173 countries with on the horizontal axis the average number of years of schooling that children in the various countries are expected to complete, and on the vertical axis the learning-adjusted years of schooling once the typical learning performance of students as measured by international learning assessments is accounted for. The data are from the 2020 release of the Human Capital Index database. To measure the expected learning-adjusted years of schooling across countries, the analysis is again based on the performance of students in a range of international student assessments which generates an indicator referred to as the harmonized learning outcomes.

In Figure 4.1, the gap between learning-adjusted years of schooling and expected years of schooling is shown by the distance between the observations on the scatter plot and the diagonal. In all countries, the learning-adjusted measure is below the expected years of schooling measure due to the fact that some children are not learning in school at the level required for proficiency given the grade in which they are enrolled (as measured through international student assessments).

Globally, weighting equally all countries for which data are available, according to the

2020 release of the data, children globally are expected to complete 11.3 years of schooling on average, but because learning performance is often low, this is only valued at 7.1 years of schooling under the harmonized learning outcome measure. In other words, on average across countries, more than a third (37.2 percent) of the years of schooling that children complete are essentially 'lost' due to lack of sufficient learning in school (since $7.1/11.3=0.628$).

Figure 4.1: International Comparison of Learning-adjusted Years of Schooling, 2020



Source: Author based on World Bank Human Capital Index data for 2020.

Choosing an Anchor for the Right to Education

Both measures are very useful in that they combine information on enrollment or attainment, and learning. If achieving the right to education simply meant being literate by age 10, then the learning poverty measure would be the better anchor for assessing the fulfillment of that right (noting that if children are not literate by age 10, many are not highly likely to become literate later unless they have the opportunity to participate in second chance or remedial programs). However, expectations of the fulfillment of the right tend to go beyond well beyond literacy. For that reason, the measure of the learning-adjusted years of schooling could seem to be more appropriate to anchor the concept of the right to education in

⁹¹ UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2019).

terms of empirical measurement, since it acknowledges the need to go beyond primary education and literacy. Indeed, even higher education is factored into the measure.

The issue though with the learning-adjusted years of schooling measure is that it is an average, as opposed to a share, which is problematic to define whether a right is being fulfilled or not for all. If many children do very well in terms of educational attainment and learning, this leads to a higher measure of learning-adjusted years of schooling, but this may mask the fact that some children may be left behind. For those children, the right to education may not be fulfilled. Therefore, the learning poverty measure may be more appropriate to anchor the measurement of the fulfillment of the right to education. Even though the bar for that fulfillment is set at a relatively low level (literacy by age 10), that level is by no means achieved in the developing world, nor is it fully achieved in high income countries either, as shown in Table 4.1.

Both measures are useful, but the learning poverty measure seems more appropriate to measure the fulfillment of the right to education.

Measuring the Right to Basic Education

Assuming that there is agreement that education pluralism can be a positive⁹², how could the concept be integrated into a measure of the fulfillment of the right to education? The idea in this section is to account for pluralism while still anchoring a measure of the fulfillment of the right to education in data on whether education systems succeed in their first mission which is to promote learning, as can be measured for example by literacy. There

⁹² There does not seem to be such an agreement is today in the international community. In particular, the Abidjan Principles are not favorable to private education provision and especially not to state support for such provision.

is again no unique approach to doing this, but it is useful to make a proposal as a first step.

When combining different measures into an aggregate index, it is common practice to rely on weights. Multiplicative structures with exponential weights tend to be attractive because of their versatility. For example, the Human Development Index (HDI) published by the United Nations Development Programme is the geometric mean of three normalized indices pertaining to life expectancy (LEI), education (EI), and income (II), so that $HDI = LEI^\alpha \times EI^\alpha \times II^\alpha$, with $\alpha = 1/3$, so that all three components of the index are granted the same weight⁹³. If different weights were to be assigned to the different components of the index, we would have a formula of the type $HDI = LEI^\alpha \times EI^\beta \times II^\gamma$ typically with $\alpha + \beta + \gamma = 1$.

Similarly, as a measure of the fulfillment of the right to education, to take into account estimates of learning poverty (LP) as well as the normalized education pluralism measure NEPI introduced in chapter 3, we could define a 'production function' for the right to basic education index based on $(1-LP)^\alpha \times NEPI^\beta$ with $\alpha + \beta = 1$ ⁹⁴. Both learning and pluralism would be needed as inputs for the production of the right to basic education. With such a specification, we would conjecture that $\alpha > \beta$ to place more emphasis on ensuring that all children are able to read than on pluralism. We use the term right to 'basic education' here to clearly convey that the index would apply only to a basic minimum requirement that education systems should guarantee at the primary level, which is to ensure literacy for 10 year old children.

The issue with this specification is that it can lead to counter-intuitive results. In education systems with high levels of learning poverty, the estimate of the right to basic

⁹³ This is the formula used since 2010. A different formula was used before. UNDP also publishes other measures including an inequality-adjusted HDI.

⁹⁴ In the economics literature, this particular specification is known as a Cobb-Douglas function. When $\alpha + \beta = 1$, the production function exhibits constant returns to scale, but this can be relaxed.

education can increase when the weight placed on education pluralism increases. To convey that ending learning poverty is an absolute requirement, we propose instead to use $RBEI=(1-LP)\times NEPI^\alpha$ with $0\leq\alpha\leq 1$. The weight placed on the need to end learning poverty (i.e., the exponent for $1-LP$) is thus equal to one. This simply must be done. In addition, we also place a variable weight on education pluralism that can take a value between zero and one. When $\alpha=0$, education pluralism is not valued, so that we only care about ending learning poverty. When $\alpha=1$, we care as much about pluralism as we do about ending learning poverty. In between, education pluralism is valued, but less so than ending learning poverty because this simply must be done. There is no way around it.

The proposed measure of the fulfillment of the right to basic education requires learning poverty to be eliminated, but the weight placed on education pluralism is flexible.

Which value of NEPI in terms of education levels (primary, secondary, or higher) should be used in the implementation of the formula? Given that the learning poverty measure relates to primary education, it makes sense to rely on the values of NEPI for that level of education, although possibly an aggregate (possibly weighted) value of the education pluralism indices for primary, secondary, and higher education could also be used.

To what extent would accounting for education pluralism affect the measures of the fulfillment of the right to basic education based solely on learning poverty? Illustrative estimates are provided in Table 4.2 with a few values of α . Again, the estimates with $\alpha=1$ are simply equal to one minus the learning poverty rates since no weight is placed on pluralism.

As the normalized education pluralism measures are typically smaller than one minus the learning poverty rates, when the weight

allocated to education pluralism increases, the overall estimate of the fulfillment of the right to education tends to decrease, in some cases substantially. This represents the loss in achieving the right to education due to a lack of education pluralism.

But there however are also a few cases where the fulfillment of the right to education increases when accounting for education pluralism with a larger weight. This is for example the case in sub-Saharan Africa and low income countries because in those countries, learning poverty is very high while measures of education pluralism tend to be higher in part because of a larger role played of Catholic and other private schools. In those countries, a higher level of education pluralism compensates to some extent for very high levels of learning poverty, but only to a limited extent as most of the weight remains placed on (avoiding) learning poverty.

When the weight allocated to education pluralism increases, the fulfillment of the right to education decreases. This measures the loss in achieving the right to basic education due to a lack of education pluralism.

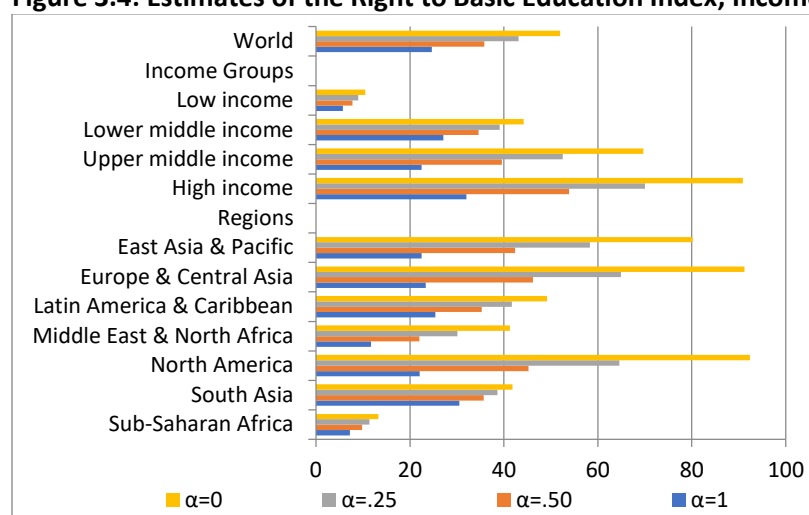
Again, what weight should be used for each of the two components of the fulfillment of the right to education index is a matter of debate, but these simple simulations suggest that taking education pluralism into account could make a substantial difference when measuring the fulfillment of the right to education. This is for example the case for North America mostly due to the low level of education pluralism in the United States. While the analysis has been carried here focusing on primary education given the importance of ensuring basic literacy, it could be replicated with appropriate adjustments for secondary and even higher education.

Table 4.2: Estimates of the Right to Basic Education Index Income Groups and Regions, 2018

	NEPI prim.	LP	RBEI ($\times 100$)			
	($\times 100$)	($\times 100$)	$\alpha=0$	$\alpha=.25$	$\alpha=.50$	$\alpha=1$
Regions						
East Asia & Pacific	28.0	19.8	80.2	58.3	42.4	22.5
Europe & Central Asia	25.7	8.8	91.2	64.9	46.2	23.4
Latin America & Caribbean	51.6	50.8	49.2	41.7	35.3	25.4
Middle East & North Africa	28.3	58.7	41.3	30.1	22.0	11.7
North America	23.9	7.6	92.4	64.6	45.2	22.1
South Asia	73.0	58.2	41.8	38.6	35.7	30.5
Sub-Saharan Africa	54.2	86.7	13.3	11.4	9.8	7.2
Income levels						
Low Income Countries	54.5	89.5	10.5	9.0	7.8	5.7
Lower-Middle Income Countries	61.4	55.8	44.2	39.1	34.6	27.1
Upper-Middle Income Countries	32.3	30.3	69.7	52.5	39.6	22.5
High Income Countries	35.2	9.1	90.9	70.0	53.9	32.0
World	47.4	48.0	52.0	43.1	35.8	24.6

Source: Author's estimation.

Figure 3.4: Estimates of the Right to Basic Education Index, Income Groups and Regions, 2018



Source: Author's estimations.

When a higher weight is placed on education pluralism, the estimate of the fulfillment of the right to basic education decreases, in some cases substantially. For illustration estimates are provided in the Figure for the full range of values of α , but it would make sense to use relatively low values for α in applications.

Summing Up

In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26 spells out the right to education. The first provision of the article states that everyone should have a right at least to free basic education. The second provision relates to the aims of education towards the full development of the human personality. The third provision of relates to the right of parents to choose the type of education that their children should receive. This provision is what

education pluralism is about, as discussed in chapter 3. In order to assess the fulfillment of the right to education, it makes sense therefore to consider education pluralism apart from whether children are able to go to school and are learning while in school.

One approach to measuring whether the right to education is being fulfilled consists in looking across countries at laws and policies related to education and assessing the extent to which they guarantee the right to education. Various organizations have used this approach

for diagnostic work, typically with the aim to be able to suggest policies or reforms that would enhance the fulfillment of the right. Yet this types of approach has limitations, especially for measuring across a large number of countries whether progress is made over time in fulfilling the right to education.

The fact that there is no commonly agreed measure on the fulfillment of the right to education points to the difficulty of proposing such a measure. Any measure is likely to have some weaknesses as well as strengths. But it does seem that any appropriate measure should combine features related to measuring progress in schooling and learning, as well as in ensuring education pluralism.

To measure progress in schooling and learning, this chapter considered two new measures suggested by the World Bank. The first measure is the learning-adjusted years of schooling. On average across countries, more than a third of the years of schooling that children complete are essentially 'lost' due to lack of sufficient learning in school. As a result, across countries, children complete on average only seven years of learning-adjusted years of schooling. The second measure is that of learning poverty defined on the basis of whether a child is able to read and understand an age-appropriate text by age 10.

Both measures are useful in that they combine information on enrollment or attainment, and learning. Yet the learning poverty measure seems more appropriate for measuring the fulfillment of the right to education because it clearly sets a bar to be achieved that is intuitive. Therefore combining estimates of learning poverty with data on education pluralism may be a promising approach to measure progress in implementing the right to education. The learning poverty measure may appear to set a low bar since only basic literacy is required. Yet in low and middle income countries, more than half of all children were learning poor before the COVID-19 crisis, and this proportion is likely to have increased.

Box 4.2: Principal Targets under SDG4

By 2030:

4.1: Ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

4.2: Ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education

4.3: Ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.

4.4: Substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

4.5: Eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

4.6: Ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy

4.7: Ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

A specific formula was suggested to assess the fulfillment of the right to education using a production function approach. The formula provides flexibility in terms of the weights attached to the measure's two components – learning poverty and education pluralism. Estimates suggest that in all regions and income groups, further progress is needed to fulfill the right to education. Furthermore, when the weight allocated to education pluralism increases, the estimates of the fulfillment of the right to education tend to decrease, in some cases substantially. This represents the loss in achieving the right to education due to a lack of education pluralism.

The measure proposed in this chapter could be criticized – such critiques are indeed welcome to improve it. The index is being proposed simply as one way to integrate data on learning outcomes that have now become available with measures of education pluralism. The measure does not exhaust the broader aims that should be pursued in improving education for all, as stated in the Sustainable Development Goals (see Box 4.2)⁹⁵. But it provides a simple way to acknowledge the importance of pluralism in fulfilling those aims.

⁹⁵ Apart from the targets listed in Box 4.1, the SDGs also include goals directed towards international co-operation and development assistance (these are identified for each Goal with letters rather than numerals and are not listed in Box 4.1).

CHAPTER 5

COVID-19 CRISIS, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

Introduction

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

Initial analysis based on experiences in previous health crises such as the Ebola outbreak in West Africa suggested that the consequences of the crisis for children could be severe⁹⁶. This has since been confirmed (see Box 5.1 for recent estimates from UNICEF).

The crisis is having major negative impacts on students and education systems, including those in Catholic schools and universities. Some impacts relate to the fact that many schools and universities had to close temporarily or move to online learning. Others relate to the implications for education of the economic crisis unleashed by the pandemic. ‘

Initial predictions of economic impacts were dire⁹⁷ for both developed⁹⁸ and developing countries⁹⁹. Over time many projections were further revised downward.

⁹⁶ See United Nations (2020) which mentions the Ebola epidemic in West Africa and research by Bandiera et al. (2019), Ribacke et al. (2016), Wesseh et al. (2017), Kamara et al. (2017), Risso-Grill and Finnegan (2015), and Bardon-O’Fallon et al. (2015).

⁹⁷ International Monetary Fund (2020).

⁹⁸ For Europe, see European Commission (2020).

⁹⁹ For sub-Saharan Africa, see World Bank (2020a).

Box 5.1: Impacts of the Crisis on Children

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

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

Source: UNICEF (2020).

The first estimates of impacts on poverty by the World Bank suggested that more than 100 million people might fall into poverty due to the crisis¹⁰⁰. In the latest estimates¹⁰¹, the figure is at 150 million more poor people by 2021. Of those, about half are children. Apart from losses in labor income, many households are suffering from a drop in international remittances¹⁰². According to the World Food Programme, the number of people suffering from acute hunger may have doubled¹⁰³.

Student learning suffers during recessions¹⁰⁴. For schooling, based on past experiences with crises, girls are especially likely to be affected¹⁰⁵, leading to higher risks of child marriage¹⁰⁶ with major implications for the rest of their life¹⁰⁷. Temporary school closures were near universal at the peak of the crisis, affecting 1.6 billion students. Today, hundreds of millions of children are still affected by school closures.

According to research in the US¹⁰⁸, losses in learning can be substantial during the summer when schools are closed, especially for disadvantaged students. The length of the school closures due to the pandemic was much longer than a summer in most countries. Early estimates for the US suggested that the pandemic could lead to large losses in learning¹⁰⁹. Such losses have been confirmed by more recent research especially for the poor.

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

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

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

How many children may have dropped out of school or not enrolled due to the crisis? It will take some time to know the answer, but simulations by UNICEF suggest that the number of out-of-school children may have increased by 24 million due to the crisis. In addition to children dropping out of school, many more may have been affected adversely in terms of mental health (data from school health surveys suggest that even before the crisis, many students suffered from poor mental health)¹¹⁰.

Finally, many children may have been affected by the loss of school lunches and other programs that matter for nutrition¹¹¹. In the US, results from the COVID-19 Impact Survey suggest that the pandemic has increased already high levels of food insecurity, making the loss of school lunches especially worrying¹¹².

¹⁰⁰ Vos et al. (2020).

¹⁰¹ World Bank (2020b).

¹⁰² World Bank (2020j).

¹⁰³ Food Security Information Network (2020). School lunch programs were also affected. These programs serve many children (World Food Programme, 2013).

¹⁰⁴ Shores and Steinberg (2019).

¹⁰⁵ See UNDP (2015), Onyango et al. (2019), and Bandiera et al. (2019). See also World Bank (2020g) for a review, as well as Asfaw (2018) on Ethiopia, Dureya et al. (2007) and Cerutti et al. (2019) on Brazil, and Lim (2000) on the Philippines.

¹⁰⁶ Wodon et al. (2016, 2017); Kassa et al (2019).

¹⁰⁷ Wodon et al. (2018).

¹⁰⁸ Cooper et al. (1996); Alexander et al. (2007); Gerhenson (2013); Quinn and Polikoff (2017).

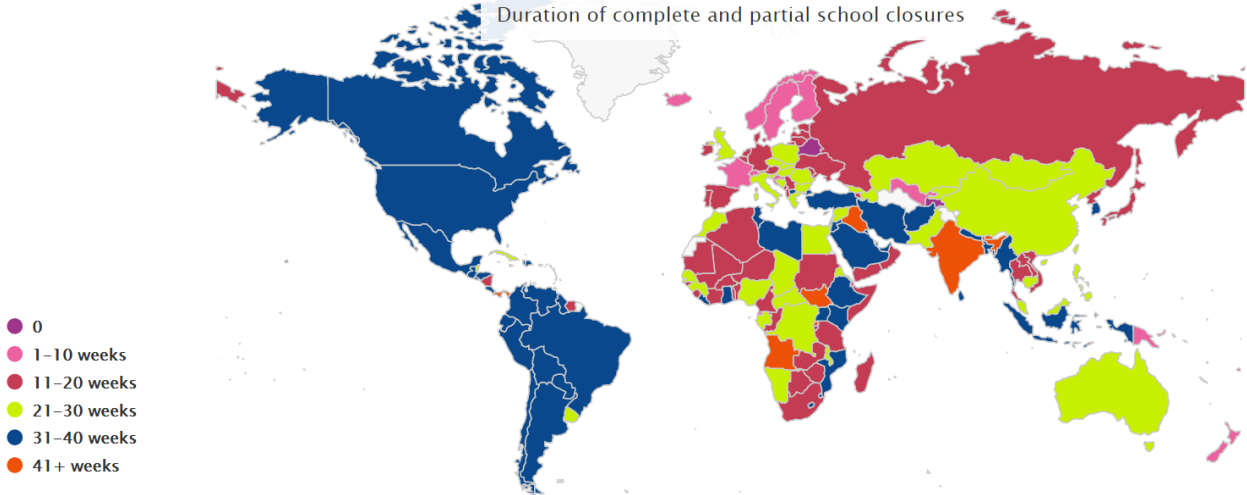
¹⁰⁹ Kuhfeld and Tarasawa (2020).

¹¹⁰ Wodon, Fèvre et al. (2021).

¹¹¹ On the importance of school programs, see Alderman and Bundy (2012).

¹¹² See <https://www.covid-impact.org/results>.

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



Source: UNESCO interactive monitoring map (data as of January 2021).

Given the above context, in this chapter, the focus is on discussing the impact of the crisis on learning poverty and education pluralism as the two key components that affect the fulfillment of the right to education as defined in chapter 4. The crisis is having negative effects on many other aspects of education systems, including for Catholic schools and universities, but these are referred to only briefly to focus on the themes of this report. The next two sections discuss impacts on learning poverty and education pluralism. This is followed by a discussion of some of the policies that would be required to fulfill the right to education to 'build back better'.

In this chapter, the focus is on the impacts of the crisis on learning poverty and education pluralism as the two key components that affect the fulfillment of the right to education, as well as policies to 'build back better'.

Impact of the Crisis on Learning Poverty

The COVID-19 crisis is having a major negative effect on both basic (pre-primary to secondary) and higher education. Because of the focus in this report on learning poverty, the

impact of the crisis on basic education is discussed in more details, but a few insights on impacts on higher education are also provided.

Basic Education

As mentioned in chapter 4, a child is considered to be learning poor if s/he cannot read and understand an age-appropriate text by age 10¹¹³. Estimates of learning poverty are based on two main data sources: (1) the performance of students who are in school on international student assessments; and (2) the share of students who are out of schools and therefore assumed to be learning-poor. The pandemic is likely to have affected both components of the measure.

The target set by the World Bank in partnership with UN agencies was to reduce learning poverty in half by 2030. Because of the pandemic, that target is unlikely to be achieved¹¹⁴. The magnitude of the impact of the crisis on learning poverty will not be known for some time, but simulations suggest it may be large. Three such simulations were

¹¹³ World Bank (2019b).

¹¹⁴ World Bank (2020b).

implemented¹¹⁵. In all three scenarios, schools are closed for 70 percent of the school year. The differences between the three scenarios related to the ability of education systems to implement mitigation measures to reduce learning losses.

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

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

In the optimistic scenario, 60 percent of learning losses during school closures are remediated. As for mitigation, it enables 40 percent of the learning loss to be avoided in high-income countries, while the share is 30 percent for developing countries. In the intermediate scenario, only 30 percent of the learning loss is remediated, and mitigation measures enable countries to avoid only 20 percent of learning losses in high-income and 15 percent in other countries. Finally, in the pessimistic scenario, there is no remediation, and mitigation only reduces learning losses due to school closures by 10 percent in high income countries and 7 percent in the developing world. While these assumptions could be debated, they provide an order of magnitude of the learning losses that may occur.

The estimates are provided in Table 5.1. Globally, under the pessimistic scenario, learning poverty may increase from 48.0

percent to 57.6 percent, an increase of 9.6 percentage points. Under the intermediate scenario, the increase is at 6.4 points, and under the optimistic scenario, the increase is at 3.2 points.

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

It could be that after a few years, children manage to catch up on the materials that they were not able to learn during school closures. In that case, these estimates of learning losses would be reduced over time. In addition, the learning losses are measured for children who are ten years old today. As the crisis subsumes, new cohorts of children reaching 10 years of age in a few years would not have been affected by the crisis, therefore the measures of learning poverty should go back to their steady-state trend fairly quickly.

Still, the children who are now in primary school are affected, and not all of them will be able to catch up over time. Older children too are being affected, even if this does not show up in the measures of learning poverty provided in the Table¹¹⁶.

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

¹¹⁵ Azevedo (2020).

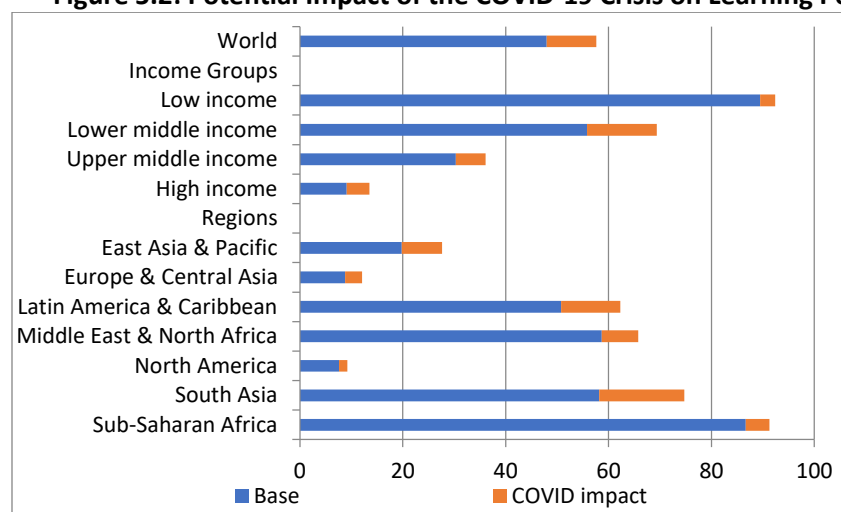
¹¹⁶ For estimates of potential effects of the crisis on the number of years of schooling that children are expected to reach and their learning performance using the learning-adjusted years of schooling approach, see Azevedo et al. (2020).

Table 5.1: Potential Effect of the Crisis on Learning Poverty

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

Source: Azevedo (2020).

Figure 5.2: Potential Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis on Learning Poverty, Pessimistic Scenario (%)



Source: Azevedo (2020).

Under a pessimistic scenario, learning poverty may increase from by almost 10 points globally. Increases are smaller under other scenarios, but in all scenarios many children may become learning poor. Children in low and lower-middle income countries are especially at risk in part due to lack of connectivity that reduces access to distance learning.

Children in low and lower-middle income countries are especially at risk. Students in Catholic schools are also affected. Table 5.2 provides two measures of digital connectivity from the World Bank’s World Development Indicators: the number of mobile cellular subscriptions per 100 people and the share of individuals using the Internet¹¹⁷. Even in low

income countries, many individuals have a mobile phone. Yet many of these phones are not “smart” phones, and the share of adults using the internet is low in low income countries at only 16.3 percent. In all likelihood, children have even less access to the internet.

¹¹⁷ Data for both indicators are collected by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and available in the ITU World Telecommunication/ICT

Indicators Database. In Table 5.2, for most regions and income groups, the latest available data point is for 2018, but in a few cases the data pertain to 2017.

Table 5.2: Digital Connectivity, 2018

	Mobile cellular subsc. per 100 people	Share of adults using the internet (%)
Regions		
East Asia & Pacific	122.2	54.9
Europe & Central Asia	123.8	78.9
Latin America & Caribbean	104.5	65.9
Middle East & North Africa	106.0	65.1
North America	125.0	88.5
South Asia	87.4	20.1
Sub-Saharan Africa	82.4	18.7
Income levels		
Low Income Countries	60.8	16.3
Lower-Middle Income Countries	94.3	31.9
Upper-Middle Income Countries	117.3	56.4
High Income Countries	127.6	86.8
World	106.5	49.0

Source: Data from the statistical yearbook of the Church and the International Telecommunication Union.

As the profile of most students in Catholic schools in the countries with high enrollment especially in sub-Saharan Africa is not very different from the profile of students in public schools (given the high market share of Catholic schools in those countries), the lack of digital connectivity and the learning losses expected for children in those countries also apply to children in Catholic schools. Even if there are some differences in profiles, they are not likely to be large enough to would fundamentally change this conclusion.

To emphasize this point, consider data in Table 5.3 for the top 20 countries in terms of combined enrollment in Catholic primary and secondary schools. In many of these countries, and especially in the top 10, the share of adults using the internet is very low. Access rates for children are likely to be even lower. It is thus unlikely that students would have been able to access distance learning materials online, even among comparatively better off households.

Table 5.3: Digital Connectivity in Countries with High Enrollment in Catholic Schools, 2018

	Combined enrollment in primary and secondary Catholic schools	Share of adults using the internet (%)
India	7,946,026	20.1%
DR Congo	5,873,899	8.6%
Uganda	5,333,379	23.7%
Kenya	3,562,869	22.6%
Malawi	2,008,733	13.8%
United States	1,853,560	88.5%
France	1,765,635	83.3%
Rwanda	1,493,522	21.8%
Philippines	1,179,798	43.0%
Spain	1,160,901	90.7%
Argentina	1,156,175	74.3%
Belgium	1,022,105	90.4%
Mexico	947,548	70.1%
Ireland	938,841	84.5%
Indonesia	828,230	40.7%
Ghana	813,975	37.9%
Brazil	802,776	70.4%
Nigeria	793,114	7.5%
Australia	750,908	86.5%
Canada	746,797	92.7%

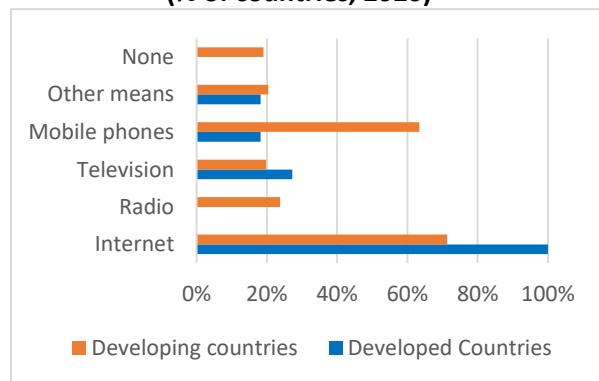
Source: Data from the statistical yearbook of the Church and the International Telecommunication Union.

While other modes of distance learning through radio and television may have helped, even those may not have had universal reach and their effectiveness to mitigate learning losses is likely to have been much smaller. This conclusion is confirmed by findings on the potential impacts of the crisis on Catholic schools that were mentioned in the Global Catholic Education Report 2020, but are worth reiterating here briefly. The findings are from a survey implemented with OIEC in April 2020 among national Catholic Education Associations¹¹⁸. The survey asked leaders of

¹¹⁸ Responses were received from 31 countries that account for 58.3 percent of students in Catholic schools globally: 10 high income countries (Belgium with two responses for the two systems, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, the

national Catholic school networks if their network had been able to implement distance learning solutions for students, and if so, using which media (options included the internet, radio, television, mobile phones, other means, or none). As shown in Figure 5.2., developed countries have relied principally on the internet, while developing countries, especially those in Africa, have relied also on other media¹¹⁹. Yet in one in five developing countries, no distance learning solutions had yet been implemented by Catholic schools at the time of the survey.

Figure 5.2: Distance Learning Responses (% of countries, 2020)



Source: Wodon (2020a).

Another question in the survey was about plans to adapt the curriculum or provide remedial education in the next school year to enable students to catch up, given that many will have suffered from losses in learning during school closures. As shown in Figure 5.3, the ability for Catholic school networks in developing countries to adapt the curriculum

Republic of Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the US); 11 African countries (Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Mauritius, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, and South Africa); and 10 other countries (Albania, Bolivia, Brazil, India, Lebanon, Mexico, Nicaragua, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Ukraine).

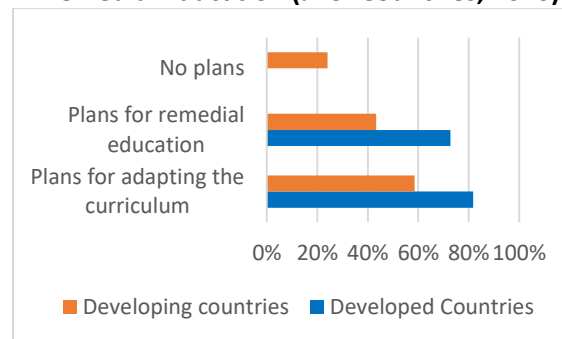
¹¹⁹ In the Global Catholic Education Report 2020, estimates from the OIEC survey for developing countries are further disaggregated to provide results for Africa and other countries separately.

and provide remedial education was weaker than in developed countries, especially again in Africa where no such plans were at the time in the works for most countries.

The ability for Catholic school networks in developing countries to provide distance learning options, adapt the curriculum and provide remedial education is weaker than in developed countries, especially in Africa.

Clearly, Catholic schools and their students face major challenges from the COVID-19 crisis due not only to a lack of access to distance learning options, but also to limited options for remediation and adaptation of the curriculum. The results from the survey implemented in April 2020 were confirmed in a follow up survey sent in October 2020.

Figure 5.3: Curriculum Adaptation and Remedial Education (% of Countries, 2020)



Source: Wodon (2020a).

Beyond Catholic schools and their students, data from rapid surveys confirm that most students in the developing world have not been able to learn much during the school closures. As just one example, a phone survey in Senegal¹²⁰ suggests that as early as in April, a third of children were not engaged in any learning activity. The ability of parents to support learning at home varied greatly, as did access to distance learning online or through television. Other surveys since have provided

¹²⁰ Le Nestour et al. (2020).

similar results pointing to lack of learning opportunities for children as well as difficulties for governments in developing countries to provide access to distance learning (Box 5.2).

Box 5.2: Policies to Respond to the Crisis

As part of the coordinated global education response to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank are monitoring national education responses to school closures. In a joint report, they analyze the results of the first two rounds of data.

Data were collected on three main areas: (1) Monitoring and mitigating learning losses from school closures (data on the length of school closures, learning assessments, and reopening support to remediate learning loss); (2) Deploying effective distance learning strategies (data on remote learning modes and effectiveness, policies to boost access to online learning, policies to support teachers, and policies to support parents and caregivers); and (3) Reopening school safely for all (data on School reopening plans, health protocols during school reopening, and financing).

In many countries, the surveys suggested that the ability of governments to mitigate the impacts of the crisis is limited.

Source: UNESCO, UNICEF & World Bank (2020).

Higher Education

There is a fundamental difference in how the COVID-19 crisis may be affecting Catholic schools versus Catholic universities. In basic education, the interaction with the teacher on a daily basis is fundamental. The pandemic has disrupted that interaction, and the losses in learning have been barely patched through distance learning not only because this mode of learning does not work well at a young age, but also because of the increasing concentration of students in Catholic schools in countries where access to the internet remains

very limited. As a result, large learning losses are likely to have occurred, as discussed earlier.

The situation in Catholic universities is different. While many students prefer in-person instruction, online learning can be implemented with some success, and universities have been improving their online offerings for more than a decade. In addition, the bulk of students in Catholic higher education live in countries with widespread access to the internet. Many of these students are also from the upper quintiles of the distribution of household income, and thereby tend to have access to online learning. Therefore, losses in learnings may have been more limited, at least in comparisons to losses for students enrolled in basic education.

For universities, the crisis' most lasting impact may be to accelerate trends leading to an even more competitive environment for which all Catholic universities many not be well prepared.

However, the COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated trends that were already observed and that were threatening for many colleges and universities, including Catholic institutions. Based on analysis by the Foresight Unit of the International Federation of Catholic Universities, five such trends are highlighted in Box 5.3. The trends refer to: (1) the rise of hybrid teaching and learning; (2) the risk of losses in revenues from foreign students due to a reduction in the speed of internationalization; (3) the rising premium for practical skills as opposed to general knowledge; (4) the resulting perceived loss of value of a college degree at least in the United States; and finally (5) the further acceleration of faculty casualization and its implications among others for research.

At special risk from the rapidly changing higher education market are small liberal arts Catholic colleges that may not have be well equipped to cope with, and respond to, some of these trends.

Box 5.3: Trends Affecting Higher Education Exacerbated by the COVID-19 Crisis

Many recent trends affecting higher education globally have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis. Four times a year, the Foresight Unit of the International Federation of Catholic Universities suggests trends to watch in the sector. Below is a slightly edited version of the trends highlighted in early 2021.

Trend 1: Hybrid Teaching. To respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, multiple universities across the world had to transfer the bulk, and in many cases the entirety, of their course programs on line. Many or most were inadequately equipped for this move. As the pandemic wore on, many institutions either planned to continue with courses carried out fully on line, or devised a mixed formula that relied on online teaching while at the same time making provisions for limited on-campus teaching. While online courses were already a constantly increasing share of the global offering in tertiary education before the pandemic, it is likely that the mixed formula – or hybrid teaching – will remain a permanent feature of programs made available to students in many parts of the world even after the restrictions associated with the pandemic have long been lifted. Yet few studies reveal a preference for online teaching on the part of learners. Many surveys actually show that students miss the direct interaction of classroom learning and the socialization with peers. Yet the share of online teaching will be even greater in the future because of the economies of scale that institutions will soon realize can be achieved. The fact that countless institutions of higher learning worldwide will remain on shaky financial grounds for quite some time as a result of the pandemic will only serve to reinforce this trend.

Trend 2: Internationalization under Threat. The dramatic drop in international students' enrollment at universities mainly in the West but also in Asia has predictably been one of the major sources of revenue loss for multiple top- and middle-tier universities. This trend combines with lower domestic enrollments in 2020-2021 and losses already incurred by demands for tuition refunds from students and families. Even in Europe where most universities are state-funded and tuition fees are low or nominal, programs such as Erasmus, the European Union student exchange program that has offered a learning experience at European level for countless students within the EU for decades, have been severely affected by the restrictions on travel and mobility. This has served to underscore the vulnerability of the business model adopted by many universities because of the latter's substantial dependence on revenue from international enrollments, in particular in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom. The internationalization of higher education has been a major feature for decades – a feature perceived as beneficial. While student mobility will become possible again once vaccination against COVID goes mainstream, the future of internationalization may yet suffer from two distinct causes: in the medium term, the possibility of lingering hesitation among students potentially interested in learning abroad, and in the longer term, the devaluing impact that a growing online offering may have, in particular if it includes entire degree programs, or even multiple “unbundled” modules, made available to students worldwide by prestigious colleges and universities at a fraction of the brick-and-mortar cost.

Trend 3: Skills over Knowledge. For the past two decades and in particular since the 2008 financial and economic crisis, institutions of higher learning have been under growing pressure to focus on curricula that emphasize the acquisition of skills and competencies in demand on the labor market. For many institutions, this shift became, over time, the only option available to remain relevant in an increasingly competitive landscape. This trend is likely to be significantly reinforced in the aftermath of the pandemic. With millions of jobs wiped away by the restrictions and lockdowns and the foreseeable progress of automation and AI across many professions that the COVID crisis will have caused, the premium on transferrable skills and competences, in particular technological, acquired through a college

education will only expand. Given the growing realignment toward STEM fields at the expense of humanities and liberal arts that colleges and universities have already been carrying out over the past few decades based on the same calculus, it is likely that the time-old role of institutions of higher learning in fostering the pursuit of general knowledge and intellectual inquiry for their own sake, the mission in which the institution itself was originally grounded at its inception, will wither even further. Another source of pressure in the same direction will come from the expansion of alternative modes of post-secondary learning (see Trend 4 below). The only unknown is to what extent this accelerated shift will generate a wide debate within and without the higher-education sector. If the past few years can serve as a reference, it can be feared that such a debate will remain widely muted.

Trend 4: The Devalued College Degree. The 2008 financial and economic crisis clearly had a negative impact on the public's perception of the value of a university degree, especially in the United States, where higher education most often burdens graduating students with long-lasting, sometimes barely sustainable, debt. Later studies demonstrated that students who graduated during the recession went on to earn less on average than their predecessors. With the devastating consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on household revenue due to losses of employment and given the uncertainty of the future, it is likely that at least in educational systems where a college degree comes with a sizeable price tag, the prospect of investing in a four-year post-secondary learning path will elicit even greater suspiciousness. The value of a college education will be further threatened by a shift in broad societal perceptions of vocational training, which will increasingly be viewed as a beneficial alternative to higher education because of its lower costs and greater ability to quickly lead to jobs in demand on the labor market. To this must be added the growing appeal – and expanding availability – of in-company training, in which the 'big tech' sector in particular is increasingly investing. These combined factors will accelerate the development of 'unbundled' higher education, in which learners take single courses or modules (most often exclusively on line) in piecemeal fashion to get a credit or certification. The unbundling strategy may even be the only survival path for multiple institutions of higher learning in years to come.

Trend 5: More Faculty Casualization. Tenure and tenure-track positions were already becoming increasingly rare in the pre-pandemic world. The pressure that universities had been under for decades to look for ways to increase revenue and cut costs had led countless institutions to expand their reliance on adjunct faculty, hired on fixed and often very short-term contracts. In the first months of the pandemic, multiple universities, in particular in the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom, laid off tens of thousands of non-tenured faculty. It is more than likely that many will not be rehired once the crisis subsides, and that tenure-track positions will become even scarcer in the future. Instead, as the expansion of online learning continues apace, a growing share of the teaching activity may be outsourced to external instructors who will maintain very little or no deep connection to the hiring institution other than a fixed contract. One severely adverse effect of this trend, if it indeed comes to develop, may be its impact on the ability of universities to keep conducting research at a competitive level if the teaching and researching activities are not somehow decoupled. In addition to the possible negative impact on the quality of teaching that this reinforcement of the casualization trend already under way may have, the potential separation between the teaching and researching activities that may arise will push universities to invest further efforts in the redesigning – and even reconceptualizing – of their current operating model. It remains to be seen whether scholars and scientists who no longer have to impart their knowledge to younger generations of learners and thus become disconnected from one of the university's essential missions will be able to produce research on a par with those who still do.

Source: International Federation of Catholic Universities Foresight Unit (2021).

Impact of the Crisis on Education Pluralism

While the COVID-19 crisis may affect enrollment in school as well as learning, it can also affect the market shares of different types of schools and universities especially when the state does not provide funding for private schools, including nonprofit faith-based schools. As households lost income, their ability to afford the cost of sending their children to Catholic and other private schools and universities may be reduced. This can lead to shifts in enrollment from those schools and universities towards public institutions, apart from an across the board reduction in enrollment due to children dropping out or not enrolling. As the pandemic is likely to reduce the market share of Catholic and other private institutions in many countries, it may lead to a reduction in education pluralism.

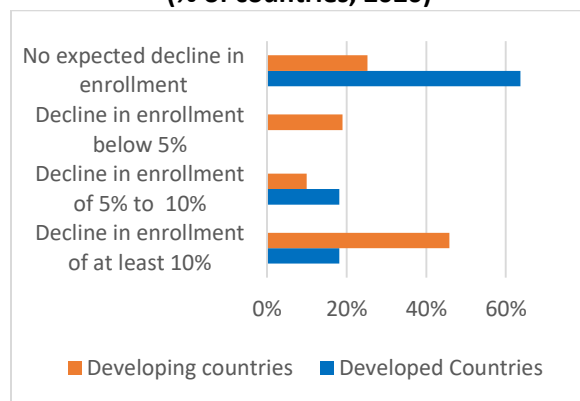
The pandemic may also lead to a risk of closure for some private schools and universities, including Catholic institutions. As some students drop out and others transfer to public institutions, private institutions are likely to face a reduction in tuition revenues. For public schools as well, there are threats as well, As national budgets are stretched thin, allocations to education sector by governments may be reduced, especially in developing countries where the ability to borrow is limited¹²¹. However, the risk of school closures is lower than it is for private institutions.

There are currently no data available across countries to assess the impact of the pandemic on education pluralism. But the fact that there may be a negative impact is clear. In

¹²¹ Even before the crisis, many developing countries were highly indebted. To protect their population, as governments prioritize funding for measures in health and social protection at a time when their tax base is weakened, indebtedness becomes more of an issue. This is why at G20 and other meetings, efforts have been undertaken to implement a moratorium on debt service payments for poor countries. Yet even with such a moratorium, pressures to cut education budgets may remain.

the survey of national Catholic school networks mentioned earlier, respondents were asked if they were anticipating losses in enrollment in the next school year due to the crisis. As shown in Figure 5.4, while in some countries Catholic school networks did not expect losses in (these are mostly countries where the state pays for much of the cost of enrollment), in many others losses larger than 10 percent were expected, which again could threaten the financial sustainability of some of the schools.

Figure 5.4: Expected Decline in Enrollment (% of countries, 2020)



Source: Wodon (2020a).

In many countries, Catholic school networks are expecting losses in enrollment larger than 10 percent, which in turn could threaten the financial sustainability of some of the schools.

Case Study for the United States

In the United States, detailed data are available on the impact of the crisis on enrollment. This is a country where enrollment in Catholic schools has decreased for some time. In the mid-1960s, 5.2 million students were enrolled in Catholic elementary, middle, and high schools. For the 2020-21 school year, the estimate is at 1.6 million¹²². Part of the drop

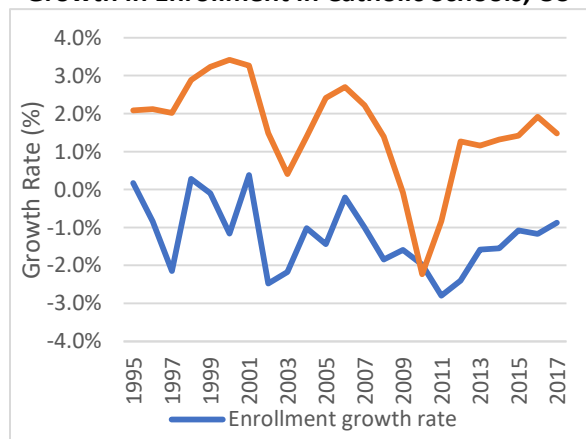
¹²² Several factors may have contributed to the long-term decline in enrollment in Catholic schools in the United States, but lack of affordability is clearly one of them See Murnane and Reardon (2018) and

in recent years has been due to a decline in the number of births, but the main reason for the drop is a loss in market share. Each year some Catholic schools are forced to close, but the number of schools that closed this year is much higher than it was in the past. This confirmed expectations as respondents in surveys of teachers and principals about the potential impact of the pandemic were not optimistic about their school's prospects¹²³.

The Global Catholic Education Report 2020 included a 'back of the envelope' analysis of the potential impact of the crisis on enrollment in Catholic schools in the United States¹²⁴. The analysis was based on recent data, including data from the great recession that resulted from the collapse of financial institutions a decade ago. During that recession, enrollment in private schools dropped and never fully recovered. Figure 5.5 is reproduced from the report. It displays estimates of enrollment growth in the combined enrollment in Catholic primary and secondary schools 1995 using a two-year moving average to smooth the data a little bit. Also shown is the growth rate in GDP per capita two years earlier, again using a two-year moving average. The reason for using lagged GDP growth is that when an economic crisis hits, the effect on school enrollment may not be immediate for various reasons¹²⁵.

The average growth in enrollment over the period is negative, reflecting the long-term decline that started in the 1960s. Growth in GDP per capita is typically positive, but dips in 2003 when growth was weak and is negative during the great recession. There is a clear relationship in the Figure between economic growth and growth in enrollment in Catholic schools. In hard times, enrollment drops more. When the economy does better, enrollment may drop, but at a smaller rate. When growth is strong, enrollment may even increase.

Figure 5.5: Lagged Per Capita GDP Growth and Growth in Enrollment in Catholic Schools, US



Source: Wodon (2020a).

In the United States, there is a clear relationship in the Figure between economic growth and growth in enrollment in Catholic schools. In hard times, enrollment drops more.

Figure 5.6 was not included in the Global Catholic Education Report 2020, but it is based on the data in Figure 5.3. It provides through a scatter plot a visualization of the relationship between (lagged) per capita GDP growth and the growth in enrollment in Catholic schools. A simple linear trend line through the scatter plot suggests that on average, the growth rate in enrollment in Catholic schools is equal to -1.95 percent plus 0.45 times the growth rate in GDP per capita. This is not in any way a serious econometric analysis, but it is

Wodon (2018c, 2020a), as well as Wodon (2020d) for a comparison with the United Kingdom and Ireland. On private schools in the United States, including Catholic schools, see also Glander (2017), Broughman et al. (2019), and McFarlan et al. (2019).

¹²³ A survey by Hanover Research (2020) suggests concerns for students' families struggling financially and for losing enrollment, especially among respondents working in Catholic schools.

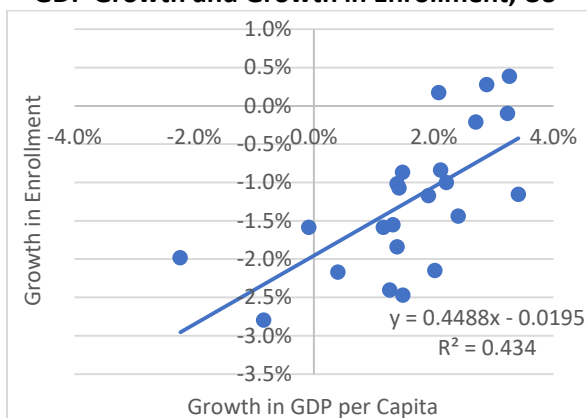
¹²⁴ Wodon (2020a, 2020b).

¹²⁵ Parents need to wait at least for the end of the school year to shift a child to another school if the Catholic school is not affordable for them anymore. In addition, parents may try to delay such a shift to enable a child to complete a cycle (elementary, middle, or high school) at his/her current school.

shared to provide some basic intuition on the potential magnitude of the effects at work.

Preliminary estimates suggest that the US economy shrank by 3.5 percent in 2020. Applying this estimate to the trend line suggested in Figure 5.6 would lead to an expected reduction in enrollment in Catholic schools of -3.5 percentage points. However, the reduction in GDP per capita in the spring at the time parents had to make decisions regarding enrollment of their children for the next school year was much larger. In addition, losses in employment and thereby in disposable income for a large share of the population were much larger than losses in GDP. This would suggest a larger negative impact on enrollment.

Figure 5.6: Relationship between Per Capita GDP Growth and Growth in Enrollment, US



Source: Author.

Data just released by the National Catholic Education Association confirms this was the case (see Box 5.4). In a typical year, total enrolment in elementary and secondary schools decreases by 30,000 to 50,000 students. In 2020-21, the loss was 111,006 students or 6.4 percent. Data are also available on enrolment by grade. Not surprisingly, when comparing 2020-21 with 2019-20, enrolment fell the most at the pre-primary level (-26.6 percent for pre-kindergarten and -6.7 percent for kindergarten).

Survey data from the National Catholic Education Associations show that some students transferred into Catholic schools in part because some of the schools were closed

for a shorter period of time than public schools. Parents who transferred children in Catholic schools were looking for schools that had in-person classes but in a safe environment, fostered character development, and had challenging academics. These transfers were however mostly from families where parents were Catholic, had fairly high levels of income, and were mostly white. These families were typically less affected by the economic crisis. Unfortunately, many more students left, whether they transferred to public schools, other private schools, or were home schooled.

The available data also suggest a substantial drop in enrolment in higher education due to the crisis in the United States. Estimates from the National Student Clearinghouse Centre suggest that post-secondary enrollment declined by 2.5 percent in the fall of 2020. This is nearly twice the rate reported a year earlier. The drop was mostly due to a decrease in undergraduate enrollment with a loss of 3.6 percent or over 560,200 students. The data are disaggregated in Figure 5.7 according to various types of universities.

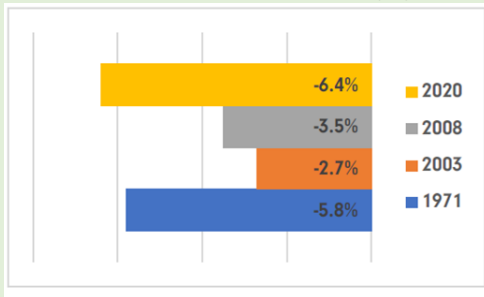
In higher education, Catholic colleges and universities may not have suffered the most in the short term, but many have been weakened by the crisis and education pluralism is likely to be affected at least in the medium term.

Enrollment in 4-year public colleges dropped more than in private 4-year colleges. Therefore Catholic colleges and universities may not have suffered the most (they are included in the 4-year private non-profit category). But many have been weakened by the crisis. As a result, education pluralism is likely to be affected. In the medium term, public colleges and universities are likely to survive, but some of the private colleges that have been affected the most may not. There have been stories in the media about Catholic colleges and universities closing because of the additional financial stress brought about by the pandemic.

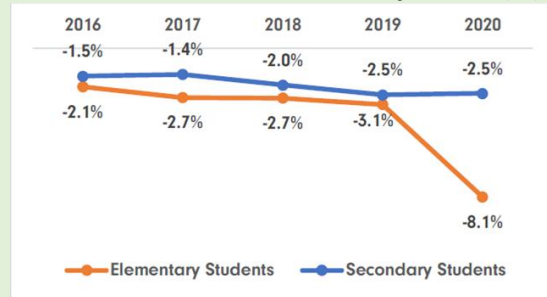
Box 5.4: Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis on Catholic K12 Education in the United States

The loss in enrollment was the largest single year decline in nearly 50 years, well above losses during the clergy sex abuse crisis (2003: -2.7%) and the great recession (2008: -3.5%). Enrollment dropped by 8.1 percent in elementary schools, which may affect future enrollment in secondary schools. Pre-Kindergarten enrollment declined by 26.6 percent. Only 10 of the 174 Catholic school dioceses saw an increase of one percent or more in enrollment. Nationally, over 200 schools closed or consolidated. Availability of state-funded parental choice (voucher) programs did not seem to make a major difference. While Arizona and to a lesser extent Ohio did better, Indiana and Florida did not.

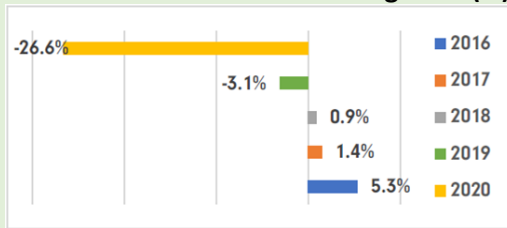
Overall Enrollment loss (%)



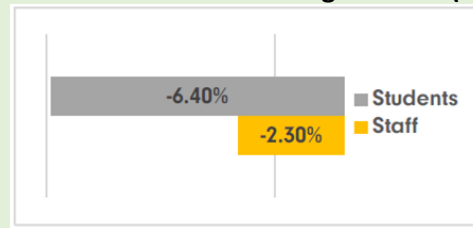
Enrollment Loss for Elementary School (%)



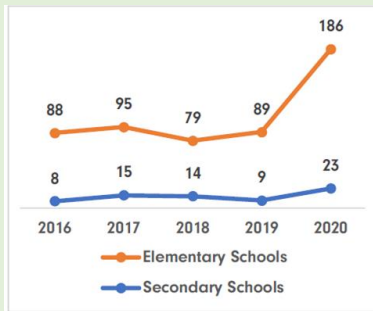
Enrollment Loss for Pre-Kindergarten (%)



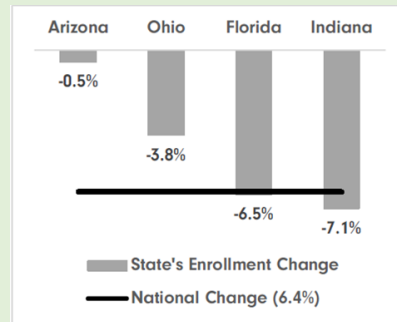
Enrollment Loss and Change in Staff (%)



Number of School Closures



Enrollment Loss in States with Vouchers

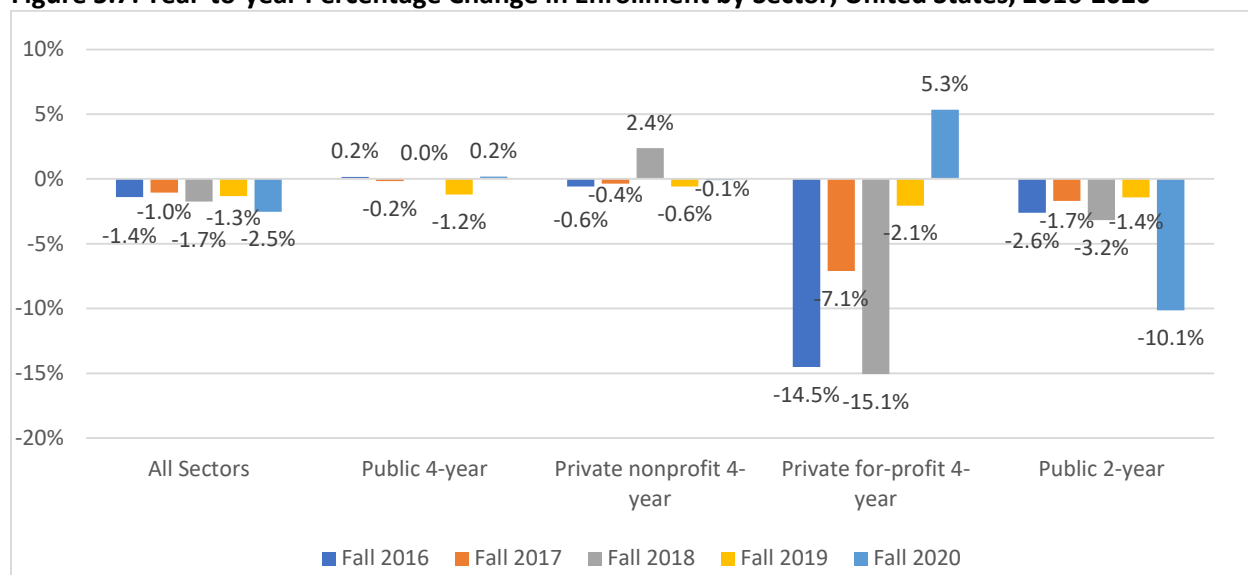


Source: NCEA (2021).

The largest drop in enrolment was observed in the 2-year public sector (associate degrees) which tends to be relied on more by disadvantaged groups. Importantly, the estimates in Figure 5.7 do not represent the full magnitude of potential losses. When looking at freshmen enrolment, losses were much higher than revealed for total enrolment in the Figure

(loss of -13.1 percent or over 327,500 students). While those who had started their higher education before may have felt that the cost of dropping out was too large, many freshmen postponed enrolment. If these decisions become permanent, they will have an impact on enrolment years down the road.

Figure 5.7: Year-to-year Percentage Change in Enrollment by Sector, United States, 2016-2020



Source: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2020).

Again, while the estimates in Figure 5.7 suggest that private nonprofit 4-year colleges were perhaps less affected by the crisis than other colleges, the broader competitive pressures faced by Catholic universities remain as outlined earlier (see Box 5.3). The five trends identified by the International Federation of Catholic universities (hybrid teaching, drop in revenues from internationalization, premium for skills versus knowledge, loss in the value of college, and faculty casualization) all tend to put additional stress on a weakened sector.

Fulfilling the Right to Education

The above discussion makes it clear that the crisis has led to an increase in learning poverty and is likely to reduce education pluralism. In order to fulfill the right to education, the first challenge today is to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. As the crisis is multi-dimensional, responses are needed not only in the education sector¹²⁶, but also in health¹²⁷, social protection and labor

markets¹²⁸, and other sectors¹²⁹. This section discusses selected policies needed in education.

In addition, beyond the immediate response to the crisis, education systems, including networks of Catholic schools will need to ‘build back better.’ Framing what building back better may mean within the themes of this report, suggestions are made on how to reduce learning poverty and increase education pluralism. In so doing, one of the objectives of this section is to make Catholic educators aware of some of the analytical work recently conducted on these issues by international organizations, and in particular the World Bank.

Responding to the COVID-19 Crisis

Guidance has been provided by multiple organizations on how education systems can respond to the COVID-19 crisis. This guidance was reviewed in some details in the Global Catholic Education Report 2020 and some of the background papers for that report¹³⁰. For readers who may not have seen

¹²⁶ A useful review of options for education systems is World Bank (2020g).

¹²⁷ World Health Organization (2020).

¹²⁸ Gentilini et al. (2020).

¹²⁹ World Bank (2020i).

¹³⁰ See Wodon (2020a, 2020b, 2020c).

that report, this guidance is briefly summarized here. A few additional resources that recently became available are also mentioned. Finally, an example for Benin is given to suggest how multiple actions needed to deal with the crisis may be integrated into an overall strategy.

A first step to mitigate the impact of the current crisis and potential future crises is to provide distance learning options during school closures. For developing country contexts, the World Bank¹³¹ suggested a dozen practical action steps for planning and implementing multi-faceted remote learning. The steps are: (1) Develop remote learning plans with stakeholders; (2) Create an inventory of content to be deployed; (3) Organize available content to align with curricula; (4) Create a virtual helpdesk for parents, teachers, and students; (5) Promote offline learning, e.g. through distribution of printed material for home; (6) Use radio and television for lessons and edutainment; (7) Increase access to digital resources; (8) Provide a one-stop-shop to access online materials; (9) Make content available through a variety of devices; (10) Support low bandwidth solutions; (11) Provide assistance to use/access remote learning content; and (12) Use multimedia to share information across platforms. In implementing these steps, television¹³² and radio¹³³ offer alternatives to online materials.

While the guidance from the World Bank targets low and middle income countries, resources have also been curated that apply to high income countries. As one example, HundrED¹³⁴ identified ten websites with resources curated in a useful way and provided other useful tools and resources. Catholic organizations have also put together resources for school principals and teachers¹³⁵.

¹³¹ World Bank (2020d). See also World Bank (2020l).

¹³² On Telesecundaria in Mexico, see Navarro-Sola (2019) and Fabregas (2019).

¹³³ Education Development Center (2020).

¹³⁴ HundrED (2020)

¹³⁵ For dioceses, see San Diego and Imperial Valley Catholic Schools (2020). For Catholic school in

Importantly, as research¹³⁶ suggests that before the pandemic many teachers were not ready for distance learning, including in high income countries, training must be provided, whether in developing or developed countries.

Reopening schools is a priority both to stem learning losses and to enable parents to work with fewer disruptions or return to work if they had to leave their job to take care of their children. Reducing the risk that opening schools may spread infections is essential¹³⁷. Guidance has been provided by UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, and the World Food Programme¹³⁸.

As schools reopen, re-enrollment campaigns may be needed for some students to come back to school¹³⁹. This is more likely to be needed in low income contexts. Such campaigns should be participatory, involving when feasible local and faith leaders¹⁴⁰. Incentives (waiving fees and/or providing cash transfers, school lunches or free school uniforms) may help, especially when targeting the most vulnerable. Community-based early warning systems to prevent drop-outs may also help¹⁴¹. Care must be applied on how to manage examinations, especially if they are high stake¹⁴².

Financial relief for schools. During recessions, public funding for schools often declines with negative impacts especially for

Europe, See <http://www.ceec.be/>. On independent schools, see also Scafidi and Wearne (2020).

¹³⁶ OECD (2018a, 2018b), Moreno and Gortazar (2020).

¹³⁷ Various studies simulate the risk (Di Domenico et al., 2020). Early research suggested that children were less likely to be infected by the coronavirus, but had more contacts once schools reopen, leading to risks of spreading the virus. See Zhang et al. (2020) on China and Jones (2020) on Germany.

¹³⁸ UNESCO et al. (2020). See also Center for Disease Control (2020), and Bailey and Hess (2020).

¹³⁹ See UNICEF (2013) for examples.

¹⁴⁰ For Ebola in West A, faith leaders played an important role (Christian Aid et al., 2015; Greyling et al., 2016).

¹⁴¹ Adelman et al. (2017).

¹⁴² Liberman et al. (2020).

disadvantaged students¹⁴³. Providing relief to schools and universities, including those from the private sector, can help ensure that they remain afloat. One good example is the Education Stabilization Fund under the CARES Act in the United States. In addition, Catholic and other private schools/universities were able to apply for the Paycheck Protection Program from the Small Business Administration.

Data and monitoring. Schools should closely monitor how students are doing in order to be able to help as needed. Simple surveys can also help in assessing whether schools are doing well, or not. One example from Belgium was a survey by the French-speaking Catholic school network to assess school and teacher readiness to implement distance learning¹⁴⁴. The survey identified actions taken by schools and constraints faced by households to access resources, and the frequency of interactions between schools, teachers, and students.

The above list of potential interventions is by no means exhaustive. As mentioned earlier, multiple responses from education systems are needed to respond to the crisis. The question then emerges as to how to integrate these various responses into a coherent strategy. As an example of how to integrate multiple responses into an overall plan, Box 5.4 provides an example of project funded by the Global Partnership for Education and implemented by the World Bank with Ministries of Education in Benin¹⁴⁵. The objectives of the project are to: (1) ensure continuity of teaching during and after the COVID -19 pandemic, particularly in deprived communes; and (2) increase preparedness to mitigate the effects of future crises.

To achieve those objectives, the project has three components. The first component aims to ensure safe reopening of schools and return of students, particularly in deprived communes. It includes three sub-components:

(i) Media campaign and community sensitization for returning to school and disease control and prevention; (ii) Ensuring schools are safe for re-opening mostly through WASH interventions to be implemented by UNICEF; and (iii) Ensuring continuity of teaching and tracking of student progress, including through remedial education for students, compensation of part of incidental costs paid for school canteens in deprived communes, and the provision of school kits for deprived communes and children with disabilities. The second component aims to improving preparedness to mitigate the effects of future crises. A first sub-component is to expanding sustainable remote learning opportunities by setting up an enabling environment for distance learning, providing teacher training for distance learning, and developing distance learning program contents. A second sub-component aims to build system capacity at the Ministries of Education to anticipate and cope with future shocks in education. Finally the last component is about monitoring, management, and coordination.

Six main indicators are used to monitor progress: (i) Children previously enrolled in schools who return to school once the schools re-open; (ii) Students benefiting from direct interventions to enhance learning in targeted communes; (iii) Girls benefiting from these direct interventions; (iv) Schools equipped with minimum hygiene standards for prevention of COVID-19; (v) Schools offering remediation programs in deprived communes; and (vi) whether a National strategy for continuity of learning for all children has been developed and disseminated. While the project is a government response to the crisis, many of its ideas could apply to Catholic school networks.

¹⁴³ Jackson et al. (2018).

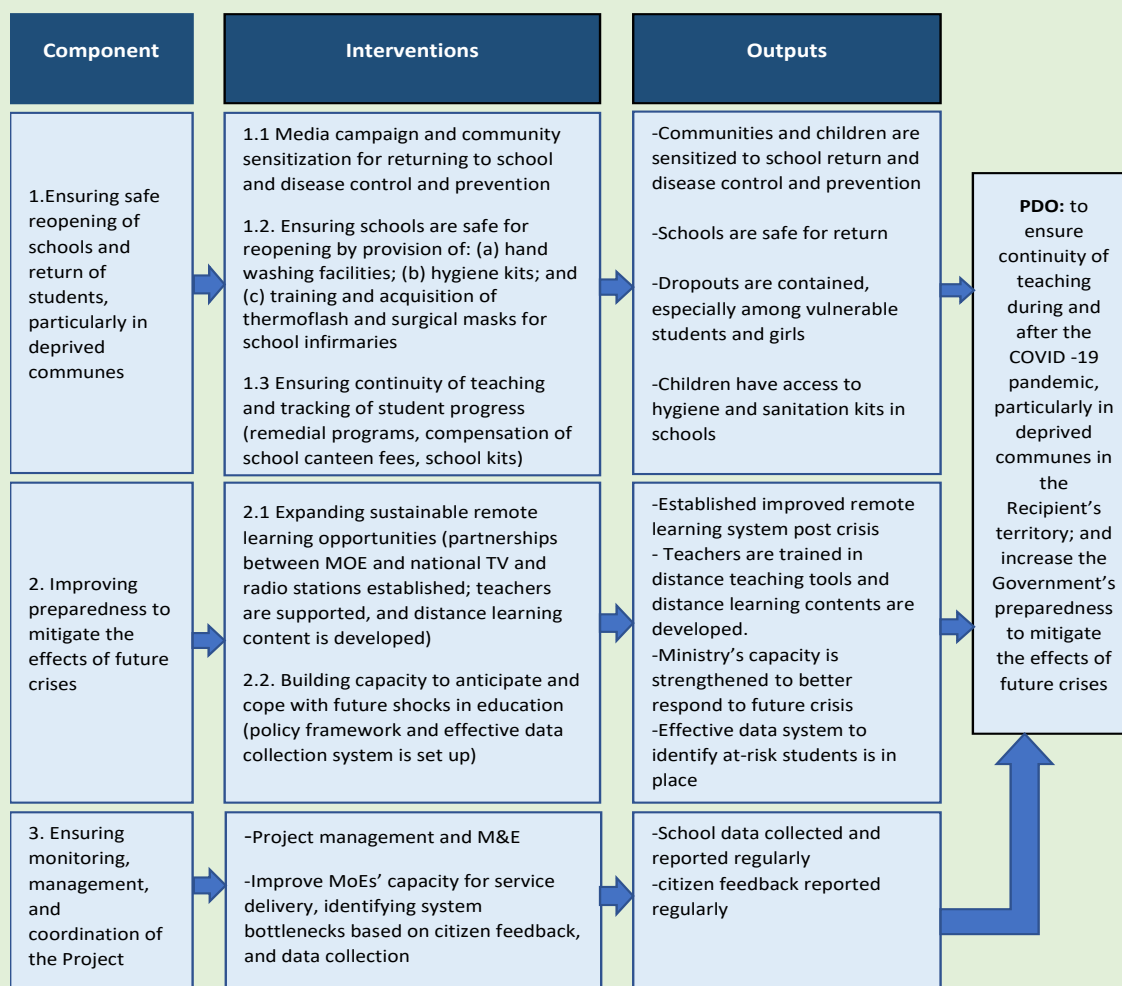
¹⁴⁴ Devel (2020).

¹⁴⁵ World Bank (2020m).

Box 5.4: Responding to the COVID-19 Crisis – An Example from Benin

Following school closures in the spring, the Government of Benin created a task force to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic and prepare the country to be able to respond in the future. To support these efforts, the World Bank is implementing with Education Ministries a project funded by the Global Partnership for Education. The project has three components. The first aims to ensure safe reopening of schools and return of students, particularly in deprived communes. The second component aims to improving preparedness to mitigate the effects of future crises. The third component aims to ensure monitoring, management, and coordination of the project. Details on the project’s components and sub-components and their overall logic are provided in Figure 5.8.

Figure 5.8: Results Chain for the COVID-19 Education Project in Benin



Source: World Bank (2020m). Note: PDO = Project Development Objective.

Reducing Learning Poverty

Beyond the immediate response to the crisis, there is also a need to build back better. The learning crisis has worsened. A range of programs and policies will be needed to achieve the original target that had been adopted before the pandemic of reducing learning poverty by half by 2030. In December 2020, the World Bank published a report or blueprint to outline how this could be done¹⁴⁶. The vision is 'learning with joy, purpose, and rigor for everyone, everywhere. Priorities are identified for five inter-related pillars (Figure 5.9):

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 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.
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, specific policy actions are recommended based on an in-depth review of the literature. For example, to keep learners engaged, four key 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.

¹⁴⁶ World Bank (2020k).

Similar actions are outlined for the other four pillars in the framework. Or to support teachers, education systems should focus on the following four actions: (i) Establish the teaching profession as a meritocratic, socially valued career; (ii) Expand engagement in pre-service training; (iii) Invest in at-scale in-service professional development; and (iv) Give teachers tools and techniques for effective teaching¹⁴⁷. Similarly, policy actions are suggested for the other three pillars.

In addition to policy actions in each of the five pillars, five core principles to guide reform efforts are also suggested: (1) Pursue Systemic Reform Supported by Political Commitment to Learning for All Children; (2) Focus on Equity and Inclusion Through a Progressive Path Toward Universalism; (3) Focus on Results and Use Evidence to Keep Improving; (4) Ensure Financial Commitment Commensurate with What Is Needed to Provide Basic Services to All; and (5) Invest wisely in technology.

Many of the policy actions proposed in the World Bank report on the future of learning could apply to Catholic school networks as well.

Many of the policy actions proposed in the report could apply to Catholic school networks as well. While the framework targets low and middle income countries, the core principles as well as many of the policy actions are also valid for high income countries, especially for school networks serving disadvantaged groups (in some countries, there is only one national integrated network of schools; but in other countries education policy is decentralized – in the United States, there are a total of 13,000 school districts, each with substantial autonomy). The framework is less applicable to Catholic universities, but it can help guide the work that many of these universities perform in service to K12 schools.

¹⁴⁷ On how to improve teaching, see also Evans and Popova (2016) and Beteille and Evans (2018).

Figure 5.9: World Bank Framework for Realizing the Future of Learning

(a) Five inter-related pillars



(b) Five Core Principles to Guide Reform Efforts



Source: World Bank (2020k).

Another useful and shorter report recently published by the World Bank provides recommendations for cost-effective approaches to improve learning. These recommendations were made by the Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel convened by the World Bank and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and hosted by the Building Evidence in Education Global Group. The mandate of the panel is to provide succinct, usable, and policy-focused recommendations to support decision-making on education investments in low- and middle-income countries. In its first report, in order to provide guidance on what to do, and what not to do, the panel classified interventions that have been tried to improve learning in low and middle income countries into four classes¹⁴⁸. These classes with examples of interventions that fall into each of them are as follows:

- Great buys: the most cost-effective interventions, like providing families with information on education returns and quality;
- Good buys: 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;
- 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;
- Bad buys: 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.

¹⁴⁸ World Bank (2020I).

Increasing Education Pluralism

The World Bank framework for realizing the future of learning is comprehensive, but it does not discuss the role of the private sector and how governments could collaborate with private providers¹⁴⁹. Similarly, the pros and cons of private provision in education were not discussed in details in the World Development Report on the learning crisis¹⁵⁰. Analysis and guidance should however become available in UNESCO's upcoming 2021 Global Education Monitoring Report on non-state actors.

The World Bank framework for the future of learning is very comprehensive, but with one notable exception: the role of private schools is mostly ignored and no guidance is provided.

In the meantime, some guidance for governments on how to 'engage the private sector' is available from the SABER-EPS framework¹⁵¹. As mentioned in Chapter 3, SABER-EPS is part of a series of diagnostic tools used for benchmarking education policies against good practice. Recognizing the role that private schools already play in many countries, SABER-EPS assesses whether laws, regulations, and policies towards the private sector are likely to achieve four policy goals. These four goals are listed below together with their rationale as defined in the SABER-EPS paper:

¹⁴⁹ The private education sector is briefly mentioned four times, once each with reference to (i) private sector employers; (ii) private and nonprofit educational publishers and providers of literacy materials; (iii) innovative public-private partnerships that can help increase the use of EdTech; and (iv) education systems in which the private sector plays a critical role. That reference reads: "In systems in which the private sector plays a critical role in providing services, the regulatory role of the state is complex (and unavoidable)." No additional analysis or recommendations are provided.

¹⁵⁰ See World Bank (2018). That report had one box on the pros and cons of private provision.

¹⁵¹ Baum et al. (2014).

1. *Encouraging innovation by education providers:* Local decision making and fiscal decentralization can have positive effects on school and student outcomes. Most high-achieving countries allow schools autonomy in managing resources including personnel and educational content. Local school autonomy can improve the ability of disadvantaged populations to determine how local schools operate.
2. *Holding schools accountable:* If schools are given autonomy over decision making, they must be held accountable for learning outcomes. Increases in autonomy should be accompanied by standards and interventions that increase access and improve quality. The state must hold all providers accountable to the same high standard.
3. *Empowering all parents, students, and communities:* When parents and students have access to information on relative school quality, they can have the power to hold schools accountable and the voice to lobby governments for better-quality services. For empowerment to work equitably, options for parents and students should not depend on wealth or student ability.
4. *Promoting diversity of supply:* By facilitating market entry for a diverse set of providers, governments can increase responsibility for results, as providers become directly accountable to citizens as well as to the state.

SABER-EPS identifies four policy goals: encouraging innovation by education providers; holding schools accountable; empowering all parents, students and communities; and promoting diversity of supply.

For each policy goal, policy levers are identified to assess the quality of existing policies. These levers are analysed through a

detailed questionnaire assessing the regulatory frameworks for four types of schools: (i) Independent private schools (owned and operated by non-government providers and financed privately, typically through fees); (ii) Government-funded private schools (owned and operated by non-government providers, but receiving government funding); (iii) Privately managed schools (owned and financed by the government, but operated by non-government providers); and (iv) Voucher schools (attended by students who choose to do so with government-provided funding¹⁵²).

A rubric generates ratings for policies on a four-level scale. The lowest rating is latent. Progressively better sets of policies are rated as emerging, established, or advanced. An established rating indicates sustained good performance, while an advanced rating suggests that a country is at the frontier of what the literature suggests are good policies.

The SABER-EPS framework recognizes that private provision may be beneficial for education system, but it is not without critics¹⁵³. It was inspired in part by the World Development Report on Making Services Work for Poor People¹⁵⁴. That report suggested that for service providers to be responsive to the needs of citizens, and especially the poor, accountability is 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 practice. The alternative is the ‘short route’ whereby service providers are held accountable by their clientele. This requires among others information to be available on the quality of the

¹⁵² Voucher schools can be operated by the government or non-government providers or both, depending on the education system.

¹⁵³ Oxfam (2019).

¹⁵⁴ World Bank (2003).

services being provided, and mechanisms to make the services accessible and affordable.

The cost for governments of a weakening of the private education sector due to the crisis could be larger than the cost of supporting it.

Relying on the SABER-EPS framework, a study is being prepared with data collected with the International Office of Catholic Education to assess perceptions of national regulatory frameworks among national Catholic education networks. The data predates the COVID-19 crisis, but it is clear that the crisis has weakened private provision including by Catholic schools and universities in countries where they do not benefit from (much) state support.

During crises, as national budgets are stretched thin, there is little appetite to support private education provision. Yet ensuring that the private sector can continue to play its role towards fulfilling the right to education may require some form of support by national governments. The cost for governments of a weakening of sector could be larger than that of supporting it (see Box 5.5).

Box 5.5: Economic Contributions of Catholic Schools and Universities: Budgets and Wealth

Two of the economic contributions of Catholic schools and universities relate to the savings they provide for state budgets when they receive no or only partial state funding, and the wealth that their alumni create thanks to the education that they have acquired.

Estimates for 38 OECD and partner countries suggest that budget savings from Catholic schools in these countries could be valued at US\$ 63 billion per year in purchasing power parity terms¹⁵⁵. Catholic schools account for 35.4 percent of total budget savings from private schools at the primary level, and 19.2 percent at the secondary level. The country that accounts for the largest budget savings is the United States. Similar analysis for Catholic colleges and universities suggests that they may generate another \$43 billion in savings for state budgets versus a situation in which the students were to enroll in public institutions instead¹⁵⁶.

Another contribution of Catholic (and other) schools is through the human capital wealth they create. Estimates suggest that human capital wealth accounts for two thirds of global wealth, a much larger proportion than natural capital and produced capital¹⁵⁷. Education is a key contributor to human capital wealth. Estimates suggest that Catholic schools and universities may contribute globally US\$ 12 trillion to the changing wealth of nations¹⁵⁸.

The main objectives of Catholic schools and universities are not economic, but their contributions to development are large. It could be argued that the cost for governments of a collapse of the private education sector could be larger than the cost of supporting it.

¹⁵⁵ The estimates are based on budget data for 2014 and enrollment data for 2016. See Wodon (2019f).

¹⁵⁶ Wodon (2018b).

¹⁵⁷ Lange et al. (2018).

¹⁵⁸ Wodon (2019d).

Summing Up

The Global Catholic Education Report 2020 provided a detailed early assessment of the potential impact of the COVID-19 crisis on education systems, and in particular Catholic schools and their students. Today, in many ways the situation is worse, even though the discovery of effective vaccines provides hopes that the crisis will be managed. In this chapter, the focus has been on documenting the potential impact of the crisis on learning poverty and education pluralism, and thereby on the fulfillment of the right to education, and suggesting ways to ‘build back better’.

Some of the impacts of the crisis relate to the fact that many schools and universities had to close temporarily or move to online learning. Others relate to the economic crisis unleashed by the pandemic. Estimates suggest that the crisis could increase learning poverty globally by 9.6 percentage points in a pessimistic scenario. Under an intermediate scenario, the increase is at 6.4 points, and under an optimistic scenario, it is at 3.2 points. Children in low and lower-middle income countries are especially at risk, in part due to lack of connectivity for distance learning.

Students in Catholic schools are not immune from these effects as many live in countries where access to distance learning is limited. In addition, the ability of Catholic schools in those countries to adapt their curriculum and provide remedial education is also weaker than in developed countries. This is especially the case in Africa.

While the focus of much of the discussion has been on basic education given its relevance for learning poverty measures, Catholic universities have also been affected in a major way by the crisis. Recent trends affecting higher education globally have been exacerbated by the crisis. Small liberal arts Catholic colleges may be especially at risk as their ability to adapt to the rapidly changing higher education market is often limited.

The COVID-19 crisis is also affecting education pluralism as the market shares of private providers is likely to fall. In many countries, Catholic school networks are expecting large losses in enrollment which could threaten the financial sustainability of some schools and universities. In the United States, enrollment in K12 schools for the 2020-21 school year fell by an unprecedented drop of -6.4 percent. In higher education, Catholic colleges and universities may not have suffered as much in the short term. But many colleges have been weakened by the crisis and education pluralism is again likely to be affected at least in the medium term.

The last section of the chapter suggested ways to deal with the crisis and build back better. In terms of responding to the current crisis, a summary of some of the suggestions provided in the Global Catholic Education Report 2020 was provided, as these suggestions remain valid today. Thereafter, priorities suggested in a new World Bank report on realizing the future of learning were outlined. The report recommends policy actions in five inter-related pillars related to learners, teachers, learning resources, safety and inclusion, and the management of education systems. It also suggests five core principles to guide reform efforts.

The new World Bank report on realizing the future of learning is comprehensive, but it does not provide guidance on how governments could engage with private education providers. Analysis should become available in UNESCO’s upcoming 2021 Global Education Monitoring Report on non-state actors. In the meantime, some guidance is available from the SABER initiative.

To conclude, ending learning poverty is essential, but promoting education pluralism also matters to fulfill the right to education. In some countries, Catholic education has been weakened by the crisis and may need support. For governments not to provide support when needed may actually be the costly strategy.

CONCLUSION

Students and education systems around the world have been profoundly affected by the COVID-19 crisis that started about a year ago. Many schools and universities had to close for substantial periods of time. Some children dropped out of school. For many others, their ability to learn was dramatically curtailed.

Learning poverty is the proportion of 10-year old children who cannot read and understand an age-appropriate text. It is likely to have increased substantially due to the crisis, especially in low and middle income countries. The ability of many governments to help has been limited. The crisis today remains severe. Vaccines provide hope that the pandemic will soon be managed, but major challenges remain including to make sure that low and middle countries also have access to the vaccines.

Catholic schools and universities have not been immune to the effects of the crisis. In countries where they do not benefit from state support, the survival of some of these schools and universities has been threatened as the economic impact of the crisis made them less affordable for parents and students. This is bad news for efforts to reduce learning poverty. It is also bad news for education pluralism.

The right to education calls for all children to be able to learn and grow. It also calls for parents to be able to choose (within reasonable bounds) the education that their children receive. There is clear evidence that not all parents have the same priorities about what their children should learn while in school. All schools should provide a core secular education of quality. But different types of schools should also be able to tackle questions of faith and values differently as long as they are respectful of all students, including those who may not share in any particular faith. Democracies are more vibrant when different priorities and views are honored and respected.

Education pluralism, and in particular the issue of school choice, are contested issues today. In order to contribute to the debates on those issues, this report has proposed a simple measure of education pluralism inspired by the literature on industrial concentration. That measure was combined with the new learning poverty index of the World Bank to suggest a new approach to assess the fulfillment of the right to education. As any new approach, this particular approach remains tentative. But it is hoped that it will promote useful debate.

Apart from documenting trends in Catholic education globally and sharing results of new analytical work on Catholic education, a key aim of the Global Catholic Education Report and associated website is to share with Catholic educators lessons from the international education community about what works to improve educational outcome. The last section of this report suggested ways to deal with the COVID-19 crisis and 'build back better'. Priorities suggested in a new World Bank report on how to realize the future of learning were outlined. That report is comprehensive and based on an extensive review of the literature. It provides very useful guidance on how to reduce learning poverty. But it does not discuss how governments could fruitfully engage with private schools and universities. Guidance in that area remains very much needed, as it is crucial for education pluralism and the fulfillment of the right to education.

One of our immediate priorities in the months ahead as part of the volunteer-led Global Catholic Education project will be to look at those issues. We hope to inform in a small way discussions on this topic, including in the context of UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report planned for the fall of 2021 on the role of non-state actors.

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STATISTICAL ANNEX

Every year, the Central Statistics Office of the Catholic Church publishes the Statistical Yearbook of the Church. At the time of writing, the latest edition was published in 2020. It provides data for 2018. Data on a wide range of Church activities are collected. For K12 education, the yearbook provides for each country and some territories the number of the schools managed by the Church at three levels: preschools, primary schools, and secondary schools, and the number of students enrolled in those schools. In addition, the yearbook provides statistics on tertiary education with the number of students enrolled according to three categories: students in higher institutes and students in universities, with a distinction between those engaged in ecclesiastical studies and those engaged in other types of studies.

The data for the yearbook are collected through a questionnaire sent to the chancery offices of ecclesiastical jurisdictions worldwide. The data are self-reported and may not always be fully accurate, especially in contexts where local conditions are not favorable to data collection.

In addition, not all ecclesiastical jurisdictions are able to fill the questionnaire every year. Each year a small number of the more than 3,000 jurisdictions that should fill the questionnaire are not able to do it. Typically, these jurisdictions tend to be small, so that the missing data should not affect the validity of the data substantially.

This statistical annex provides country level data for enrollment in both K12 schools and higher education for 2018. Country profiles with trends over time are available separately on the Global Catholic Education website for all countries with at least 10,000 students by level (K12 schools or higher education).

The possibility of errors in reporting enrollment by ecclesiastical jurisdictions cannot be excluded. But overall, while estimates in the yearbooks may not always be fully accurate, especially for large and complex countries that also have weaker administrative systems, the data appear to be of sufficient quality to suggest broad stylized facts.