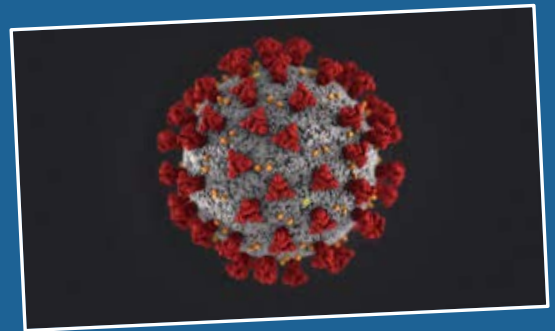


DRAFT RAPID SURVEY ON THE COVID-19 CRISIS AND CATHOLIC SCHOOL RESPONSES GLOBALLY



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KEY MESSAGES:

- In order to assess some of the potential impacts of the crisis on Catholic schools, a rapid online survey was implemented at the end of April 2020 by the International Office of Catholic Education.
- Most Catholic school networks have moved to distance learning during school closures, but with differences in the media used depending on the country. The crisis may lead to large losses in enrollment in some countries. Many (but not all) school networks are planning to adapt the curriculum next year and provide remedial education. The timing for reopening schools varies between countries.

Introduction

The COVID-19 crisis has generated massive challenges for Catholic and other schools and their students globally. School closures have affected more than 90 percent of all students worldwide, leading to losses in learning and other forms of hardship. The economic crisis brought about by the pandemic is unprecedented and likely to increase poverty, possibly leading many children to drop out of school especially in low income countries.

To assess some of the potential impacts of the crisis on Catholic schools, a rapid online survey was implemented at the end of April 2020 by the International Office of Catholic Education (*Office International de l'Enseignement Catholique* in French or OIEC) among its members, which are national Catholic education associations. Key results of the survey are summarized in this note. A more detailed analysis of the impacts of the crisis and potential responses is available in a two-part paper published in the *Journal of Catholic Education*. The paper (Introduction, Part 1, and Part 2) can be downloaded freely at no cost [here](https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/ce_covid/) (or go to https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/ce_covid/).

Box 1: OIEC Knowledge Notes

Why a series of knowledge notes? OIEC promotes research on the contribution of Catholic schools to the field of education and on the schools' adaptation to the needs, realities, and aspirations of the environment in which they are integrated. This series of notes contributes to that goal.

What are the topics discussed? The series explores achievements and challenges for Catholic schools in various countries and globally, including in terms of enrollment, reach to the poor, academic performance, parental priorities, costs and affordability, and religious education. Interesting innovations are also featured.

What questions are asked in this note and how are they answered? The COVID-19 crisis has generated massive challenges for Catholic and other schools as well as students globally. To assess some of the potential impacts of the crisis on Catholic schools, a rapid online survey was implemented by OIEC at the end of April 2020. Key results of the survey are summarized in this note.

Survey Characteristics

The survey was implemented online in three languages – English, French, and Spanish. It was sent at the end of April 2020 to the contact list of OIEC for its national Catholic education association members. In most cases, only one response was received per country, but in some cases more responses were received as the contacts for national Catholic educations shared the survey with some of their own members. When multiple respondents from the same countries answered the survey, there was strong convergence in the responses provided, which is reassuring. A total of 171 responses were received from 31 countries at the time of writing this note. The survey remains open for additional Catholic school networks to provide information on their response to the crisis.

A total of 171 responses were received from 31 countries for the OIEC rapid survey at the time of writing this note. The survey remains open for Catholic school networks to provide information on their response to the crisis.

Among the 31 countries, ten are developed countries: Belgium, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, the Republic of Ireland, the United Kingdom (more specifically England and Wales), and the United States. In the case of Belgium, responses were received for two Catholic school networks covering respectively the Francophone and Flemish parts of the country, hence statistics are computed for a total of 11 Catholic school networks among developed countries. Another 11 countries are from Africa: Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Mauritius, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, and South Africa. Finally, ten countries are other developing countries or emerging economies: Albania, Bolivia, Brazil, India, Lebanon, Mexico, Nicaragua, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Ukraine. While only a minority of all countries with Catholic schools are represented in the survey, many of the countries with a large enrollment are included in the survey responses. As a result, the survey is illustrative of conditions for countries that account for 58.3 percent of all students in Catholic schools globally in 2017 according to data from the latest statistical yearbook of the Church, and 58.0 percent of all Catholic schools globally.

Apart from identifying information for respondents, in order for the survey to not represent a time burden for respondents at a time of stress, only six questions were asked – four closed form questions and two open ended questions. The survey represents only the opinions of respondents, but it gives some indications of the types of responses that Catholic schools have implemented across the world and the risks they face. The survey was used to inform three conference calls held by OIEC with its members in French, English, and Spanish in early May with participation from representatives of national associations.

Key results from the survey have been included in a broader analysis of the impact of the crisis on Catholic schools and potential policy responses published in a special issue of the Journal of Catholic Education (Box 1).

Box 1: Journal of Catholic Education Special Issue

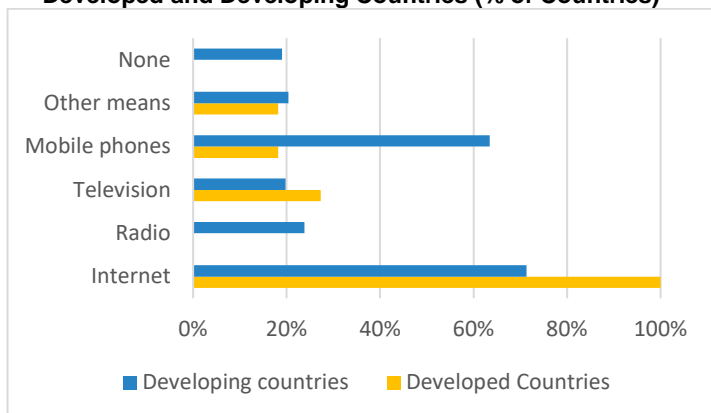
A wide range of policy notes are being written about potential responses to the COVID-19 crisis by national and international organizations, think tanks, and civil society organizations. Few of those analyses consider specifically Catholic schools and their students, but some do, and the others are still relevant. Much of this analytical effort is not reaching Catholic schools leaders. The main aim of the OIEC survey, this note, and a broader two-part paper published in the Journal of Catholic Education (JoCE) is to provide a synthesis of some of those materials, so that they become more accessible to Catholic school teachers and leaders. The paper in JoCE is entitled “Covid-19 Crisis, Impacts on Catholic Schools, and Policy Responses.” Part 1 focuses on developed countries including the US. Part 2 considers developed countries, with a focus on Africa. The paper together with a brief introduction can be found at https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/ce_covid/.

The two-part paper and their brief introduction are the first articles published in a special issue that will provide a forum for sharing information about how Catholic PK-12 schools, colleges, and universities are responding to the pandemic and the pivots in instruction, communication, administration, and ministry it has necessitated. Reports of practices experienced “on the ground,” reflections on challenges and successes, recommendations for next actions, as well as preliminary research reports are also welcomed by the editors of the journal.

Distance Learning Responses by Catholic Schools

The OIEC survey asked leaders of 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). Figure 1 provides the results for developed and developing countries, while Figure 2 disaggregates the results for African and other developing countries. Developed countries have relied principally on the internet, while developing countries, especially those in Africa, have relied also on other media. What is worrying though is that in one in five developing countries, no distance learning solutions had yet been implemented by Catholic schools at the time of the survey. Especially in Africa, additional efforts will be required to reach students during school closures, especially if the closures start anew in the fall in case there is a new surge in the pandemic.

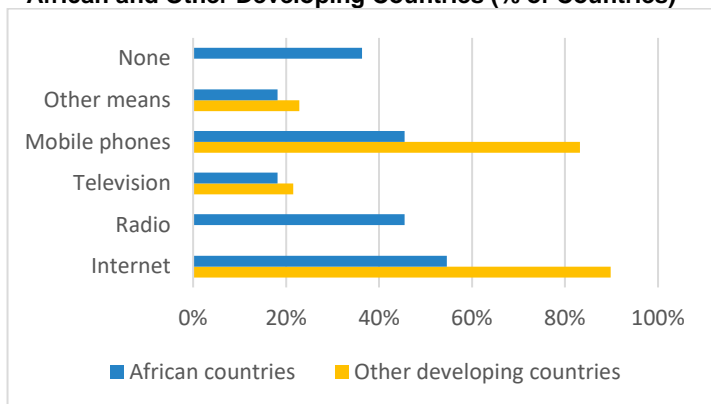
Figure 1: Distance Learning Solutions by Medium, Developed and Developing Countries (% of Countries)



Source: Author, based on OIEC survey.

Developed countries have relied principally on the internet for distance learning during school closures, while developing countries, especially those in Africa, have relied also on other media, but in some countries no initiative had been taken at the time of the survey for distance learning.

Figure 2: Distance Learning Solutions by Medium, African and Other Developing Countries (% of Countries)



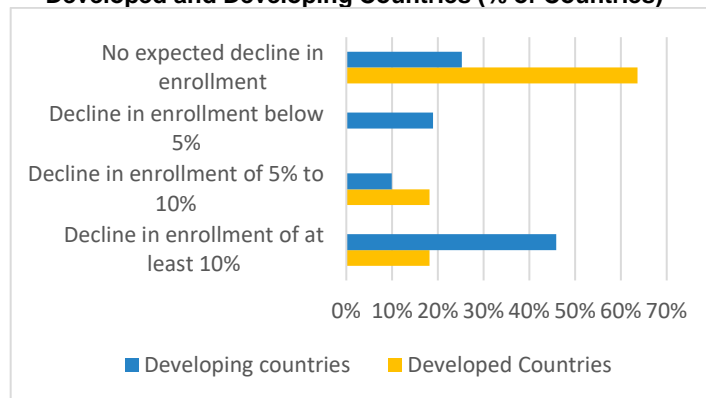
Source: Author, based on OIEC survey.

Expected Decline in Enrollment

The OIEC survey also asked leaders of national Catholic school networks if they were anticipating losses in enrollment in the next school year due to the crisis. Figure 3 provides the results for developed and developing countries, while Figure 4 disaggregates the results for African and other developing countries. While in some countries Catholic school networks do not expect losses in enrollment (these are countries where the state typically pays for the cost of enrollment so that out-of-pocket costs for parents are very low), in many countries, losses in enrollment larger than 10 percent are expected. This may threaten the financial sustainability of some of the schools.

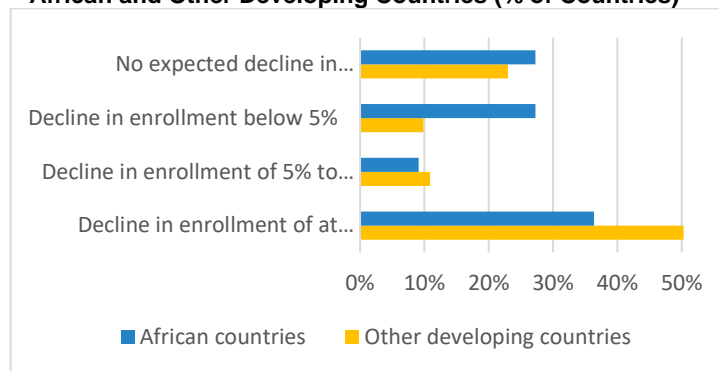
In many countries, Catholic school leaders expect losses in enrollment larger than 10 percent. This may threaten the financial sustainability of some of the schools.

Figure 3: Expected Decline in Enrollment Developed and Developing Countries (% of Countries)



Source: Author, based on OIEC survey.

Figure 4: Expected Decline in Enrollment, African and Other Developing Countries (% of Countries)

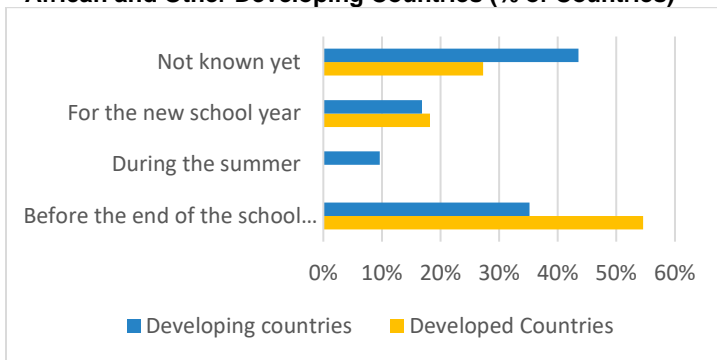


Source: Author, based on OIEC survey.

Timing for Reopening Schools

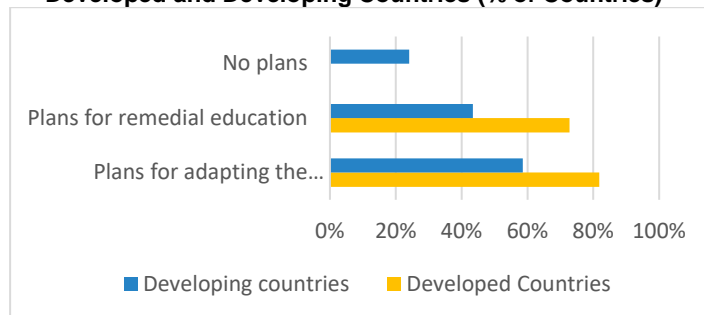
Another question asked in the survey was when leaders of national Catholic school networks were expecting to reopen schools. As shown in Figures 5 and 6, more than half of the Catholic school networks in developed countries expect to reopen before the end of the school year, versus about a third for developing and emerging economies. Correspondingly, the values for the other categories are lower among developed countries than among developing countries, but in both cases a substantial share of Catholic school networks do not yet know when they will be able to reopen. There are again differences between African and other developing countries. While schools in African countries are likely to reopen earlier, there is a risk involved given that not all schools have the water, sanitation and hygiene facilities needed to prevent the spread of the virus.

Figure 5: Timing for Reopening Schools, African and Other Developing Countries (% of Countries)



Source: Author, based on OIEC survey.

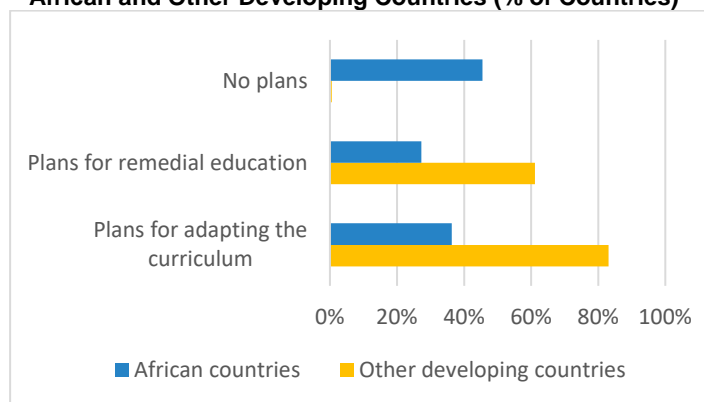
Figure 7: Curriculum Adaptation and Remedial Education Developed and Developing Countries (% of Countries)



Source: Author, based on OIEC survey.

Especially in African countries, Catholic school networks may have a limited ability to adapt the curriculum and provide remedial education when the schools reopen.

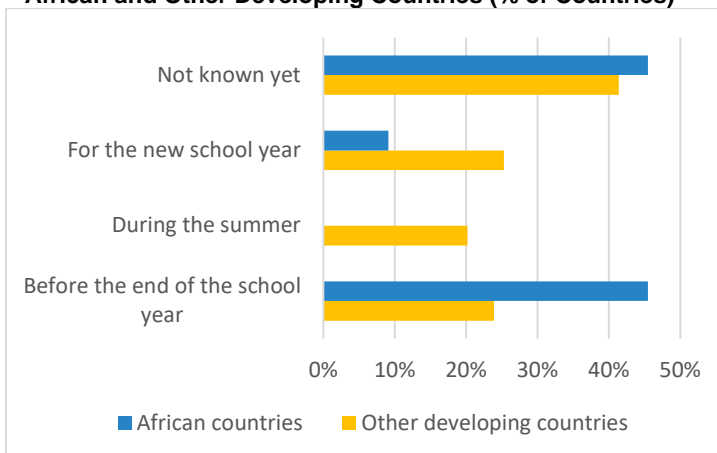
Figure 8: Curriculum Adaptation and Remedial Education, African and Other Developing Countries (% of Countries)



Source: Author, based on OIEC survey.

In some countries, schools will not reopen before next years, while in others it is expected that they will reopen still during this school year. In many cases however, it is not yet known when the schools will reopen.

Figure 6: Timing for Reopening Schools, African and Other Developing Countries (% of Countries)



Source: Author, based on OIEC survey.

Curriculum Adaptation and Remedial Education

The last closed form question asked 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. Results are provided in Figures 7 and 8. The ability for developing countries to adapt the curriculum and provide remedial education is likely to be weaker than in developed countries, especially again in Africa where no such plans are currently in the works for a sizeable share of the countries.

Conclusion

Catholic schools and their students face major challenges from the COVID-19 crisis. Based on a rapid survey implemented by OIEC, some of these challenges have been documented in this note. In subsequent notes, potential responses will be explored in more depth. The survey on which this note is based will remain open a bit longer for leaders of Catholic school networks that have not yet responded to the survey to be able to do so.

Acknowledgment and disclaimer: The author is a Lead Economist at the World Bank, and in a volunteer capacity a Project Manager with OIEC and a Distinguished Research Affiliate with the Kellogg Institute at the University of Notre Dame. Comments and suggestions from Philippe Richard are gratefully acknowledged. This note was drafted by the author in a purely personal capacity and not in his capacity as a World Bank employee. The opinions expressed in this note are those of the author only and need not represent the views of OIEC nor the views of the World Bank, its Executive Directors, or the countries they represent.