

# Some *implications* of the **COVID-19** pandemic

*In Lasallian institutions*



Brothers of  
the Christian  
Schools

La  Salle



**Brothers of the Christian Schools. 2021**

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**International Lasallian  
COVID Survey**



# Forward for the COVID Study Booklet

H. George Van Grieken, FSC

*June 19, 2021*

## **SURVEY PROCESS**

This report provides the results of an international survey of Lasallian ministries and institutions on the impact of the COVID pandemic in four areas: Institutional Management, Pedagogical Management, School Management and Financial Management. It was requested in early November of 2020 by Br. Nestor Anaya from the Secretariat for Association and Mission and was created on Google Forms by Br. George Van Grieken of the Secretariate for Lasallian Research and Resources. The components and details for the survey were also developed in consultation with Br. Andres Govela and Carlos Coelho from IALU.

The survey included 11 questions for each of the four management areas. These questions were the same in each management area with small adaptations appropriate to the category. (The survey may be found in the appendix of this publication).

The survey was sent to each of the 33 Districts of the Institute on January 3, 2021. The deadline for receiving replies was February 19, 2021. We received 123 responses from 31 Districts. The database of answers was then compiled into a single document that included all responses in their separate native languages (English, Spanish, French). From that document, a single document in each language was created via DeepL.com, providing all of the submitted answers in each language (English, Spanish, French).

With the assistance of IALU, teams of Lasallian scholars at Lasallian institutions of higher education were invited to analyze the data – one team for each management area. They were asked to analyze the data and provide a short report in the format they found to be most appropriate. Each report in this publication has been separately created and written.

We sincerely thank those teams of Lasallian scholars who carefully and professionally analyzed the submitted responses, and who provided clear and helpful reports for the intended audience – the delegates to the 3rd International Assembly for the Lasallian Mission, the delegates to the 46th General Chapter, and the worldwide community of Lasallian educators. The work these teams of Lasallian scholars was critical in understanding the larger implications of the responses received, and they should be appropriately recognized.

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## **SURVEY RESPONSES**

The survey was done during a time period (January – February 2021) when the world was in the middle of the COVID pandemic and prior to the wide availability of the first vaccines. The responses were submitted when those in the Lasallian world had spent almost a year dealing with the unexpected disruption of their normal, long-standing educational processes and practices. It was an appropriate time to consider the impact of the pandemic on these four areas of the Lasallian educational mission. The submitted responses also reflect good familiarity with the realities of local experiences and come from the leadership viewpoint on decision-making areas, challenges, and concerns.

It should be noted that there are also limitations to the survey and its results. Some areas were not addressed in this survey, such as the disproportional and unique impact of the pandemic on women or the specific distinctions in the experience among the five Lasallian Regions, factoring in access to resources, cultural realities, and predominant educational models. Perhaps these and others could, or should, be the focus of further study by IALU and its universities. They would certainly be welcome. The present survey was done with very limited objectives in mind.

It may be helpful for the reader to see a short summary of the four reports that were submitted by the teams of Lasallian scholars. These are highlights that I personally noted in reading the reports. Others who read the full reports – which I very much encourage everyone to do – will almost certainly lead to summaries that are different than mine. But perhaps these highlights will at least give the reader 1) a sense of the importance of the results and 2) the motivation for having conversations with others or within Lasallian leadership groups that inform and shape changes in Lasallian education that are sure to come. The guiding question that I suggest is this one: What clear and present needs for the future of Lasallian education, both locally and beyond, are reflected in these results?

## HIGHLIGHTS

The following highlights have been categorized into six areas: Technology, Education, Leadership, Community, Teachers, and Finances. Almost all of the statements are directly taken from the reports or are edited versions of such statements.

### **TECHNOLOGY** – *Infrastructure, Access & Training*

- The first issue that needs immediate action is unequal access to technology. Teachers need to be taught online learning pedagogy and undergo a paradigm shift to understand and embrace how the classroom dynamics have changed. The pandemic has highlighted educational access disparities.
- There is a distinction between the realities of different countries and within countries. Not all countries have the same level of digital development; sometimes internet connectivity is lacking which does not always favor online meetings. Educators often do not have the personal resources to work online from their homes, and institutions do not have the capacity and resources to support online learning, or the training of staff.
- An upgrade in technology infrastructure requires investments, and teacher training has become a priority. Educators need to rethink their pedagogical approaches.
  - Invest in systems and technologies (a new area) that is critical, strategic, and essential for the future of Lasallian education.

### **EDUCATION** – *Lasallian education needs to be reimaged, revitalized, and reformed.*

- Because learning is intrinsically a social endeavor, students crave a level of connectedness with their peers and their teachers, and

they can become less interested and less invested in their education when this tangible yet valuable aspect of the learning experience is not addressed in an alternate modality.

- Encourage schools to think beyond the current reality.
- Envision flexible and enabling structures responsive to the dynamic and multi-faceted management of schools.
- Create a bank of experiences (pedagogy, administration, finances) for better decision making in the Districts.
- Offer training and support opportunities for all – regarding online courses. Set up an online network for teaching and facilitation between rich and poor schools.
  - Provide a global platform that will support the publication of Lasallians’ written reflections on effective strategies to deal with the multi-faceted effects of the pandemic.
- Academic policies were adjusted in consideration of emerging realities and complications.

### **LEADERSHIP** – *Good leadership is essential: good management and communication.*

- The most frequently cited contribution to success on institutional management during the pandemic was good leadership in the schools. The second most cited item was ongoing consultation and collaboration with other Lasallian institutions. An important learning has been the importance of teamwork and networking with the Sector and District, where Lasallian administrators need to make decisions and assure, inspire, and unite all stakeholders. They must be ready to relax their hold on conventional leadership ideologies and management styles.



- Lasallian leaders are now called to lead in curriculum reform, support technology integration and implementations, champion digital literacy programs, and proactively seek partnerships with corporate and non-profit organizations as well as other Lasallian institutions to address the drastic need for student access to technology as well as to open unique learning opportunities that would not be possible without the aid of technology.

**COMMUNITY** – *Revisit “Lasallian Educational Community.”*

The global Lasallian education community seems unified in the notion that a lot more can be done to improve the animation of the Lasallian spirit. Perhaps the definition, scope, and role of the Lasallian education community will need to be revisited.

- Lasallian institutions, therefore, need to reach out, consider, and involve not only the individual student or teacher, but their families as well in policies, approaches, and communications.
  - Foster a culture of collaboration.
  - Establish a common platform for delivering Lasallian systems of education (benchmarking, networking, etc.)
  - Develop home-school partnerships.
- Holistic Lasallian education: One of the top practical gaps identified is the inadequate capacity of online learning to accommodate a holistic learning curriculum. It is the gap in social interaction, which is a fundamental component for deepening knowledge through interactive ideation and application.

**TEACHERS** – *Need for Strategic Support*

- The general sentiment appears to be that this pandemic has forced institutions and educators outside of their comfort zones and discover new methods of teaching and reaching out to their students and their families.
  - The challenges, advantages and disadvantages of teleworking have been little discussed in the Lasallian context and would deserve more attention in future studies.
- Due to the peculiarities of the pandemic context, emotional and psychological support to the educational community was part of many reports. Creation of strategies to support the academic community, such as the organization of spaces for sharing and socioemotional accompaniment for students and teachers.
- Emotional and psychological support to the educational community was part of many reports: How was the socioemotional-spiritual support to administrators, teachers, and students supported during the confinement.

**FINANCES** – *Finances.*

- The greatest negative impact has been the loss of income from school fees, student desertion, low portfolio recovery, and the need to grant discounts and increase scholarships and other support to students’ families.
- In general, the works have experienced great improvements in financial management; the effective and efficient use of resources, reviewing and reducing expenses, ongoing professionalism, strength of ownership of the mission. This has been due to the strategic support of district management.

- There was an increase of expenditures and a decrease in the collection of revenues. Because of the shift to the online mode, IT infrastructure must be strengthened, and computer units must be acquired to meet the demand of teaching and learning.
- Educators often do not have the personal resources to work online from their homes, and institutions do not have the capacity and resources to support online learning, or the training of staff.
  - Strategies to make educational resources available for vulnerable students.
  - Build more private schools for the needy.
  - Have funds and a budget for emergency situations and disasters.

## **WHERE TO GO FROM HERE**

While it is likely that many Lasallian educational institutions will eventually return to their pre-COVID educational contexts, it is very unlikely that they will do so without a changed perspective about the priorities, practices, paradigms, and processes that deserve attention because of what was learned during the pandemic. It is towards that attentive consideration that these results may be helpful.

Reviewing, adapting, and renewing educational practices has been a hallmark of Lasallian education since the publication of the Conduct of Schools in 1720, itself the result of some 40 years of experimentation and experience. Doing the same thing today, based on what we have learned during the pandemic, will further validate and

exercise our ongoing priority of providing a human and Christian education for those entrusted to our care. With practical focus, common shared efforts, and intentional priorities, we may all be encouraged by this statement that appears at the end of one of the reports:

“Looking at our own strengths, there are sufficient reasons to be afraid and worried about our future. ... [but] From the hopeful responses of the participants of this survey, COVID may be seen from a different light. It is our courageous outlook towards a vision of the Lasallian Mission under the guidance of God’s Divine Providence.”



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# Financial Management



The pandemic caused by COVID-19 has had major financial impacts worldwide. All sectors of society have been affected to a greater or lesser extent by these impacts. At the business level, many organisations have been forced to lay off workers, others have faced temporary closure and have seen their revenues reduced, and a high percentage have not survived the effects of the pandemic and have had to close down permanently. The consequences of these closures and the recession of productive activity in general have had a direct impact on the economy of the families who depend on them.

## 1. The overall view

The current situation has highlighted the fact that most Lasallian ministries are heavily dependent on income derived from their tuition fees. This has led to reflection on how vulnerable this income is to various events impacting the world, such as the health crisis arising from COVID-19, and the danger of not having a successful alternative scheme of other income. The fear and uncertainty of families in the face of reduced salaries, reduced income and, in the most serious cases, loss of employment, health or life, are just some of the issues that have led to the decline of revenue coming from student fees. The temporary closure has also caused a sharp drop in secondary revenue from workshops, cafeterias, facility rentals, residence hall rentals, book sales, among others. As an effect of the above, and in the best of cases, surpluses destined for investment have also been reduced, as well as the return derived from them. In the most adverse cases, this has led to a liquidity shortage and a lack of capacity to assume the main short-term commitments, making it necessary to request external financing.

In addition to these impacts on the past-due portfolio, the reduction in general revenue and the decline of tuition fees, it has been necessary to allocate significant resources to technological investments and to teacher training for the teaching of online classes, as well as materials and equipment for disinfection and sanitisation to safeguard the integrity of those who attend Lasallian ministries in person. Most of these effects had not been foreseen and the ministries were not prepared economically, academically and structurally for these impacts.

On the other hand, the savings generated by not using the facilities, mainly due to the reduction in electricity tariffs and the reduction in the consumption of maintenance materials, stationery and office and computer consumables. In some cases, and especially at the beginning of the pandemic, some families demanded reductions in school fees, considering that the expenses and costs incurred by educational institutions had been reduced. Other outlays that were reduced or eliminated were those related to travel expenses, social activities and meetings. However, this reduction in costs is not sufficient and not even comparable to the reduction in income mentioned above.

The generalised uncertainty in all sectors of society and especially among students, parents and partners has been another impact which has put to the test the dynamism and flexibility of Lasallian ministries. In addition to this, the governmental demands in school matters in the context of the pandemic, the individual and family situation of each collaborator and student, the ongoing fear of contagion and even the experience of illness and loss of partners, students and families, have added difficulties to the capacity of Lasallian ministries to respond efficiently.

Although this situation is generally observed throughout the world, the impacts vary from one country to another and even from one Region to another within the same country or District. Lasallian ministries which receive a great deal of support from the State have suffered a much smaller impact than those which do not. The ministries that have been most affected are those that require the support of others in order to continue to provide their services and carry out their mission, as well as those located in the poorest and most underdeveloped countries.

## **2. The response to the pandemic caused by COVID-19**

Faced with this scenario, the general response of Lasallian ministries has been predominantly humanised and reflects a deep commitment to the community. Although it is true that this quality is a key part of the historical action of Lasallians in the world and over the years, at times of crisis it appears in a more evident and forceful way, constituting a fundamental guideline in decision-making.

This humanistic response is mainly seen in the diligent care of students and partners. Collection management was carried out in a personalised manner, increases in school fees were avoided, payment deadlines were made more flexible, discounts and scholarships were granted and enabled parents to keep their children in the colleges and schools. The dropouts identified in Lasallian ministries has been lower than the average dropout rate in the educational ministries in general. The various Districts sent out guidelines and lines of action in this regard, always seeking the well-being of the student and the families. All these measures have notably improved confidence and the perception of Lasallian ministries in the community in general.

With regard to the partners, the first priority was to ensure their permanence, maintain their salaries, safeguard their integrity by promoting remote work and dynamism in functions and activities in order to avoid job losses. Here too, the District leadership has been instrumental and very positive. It is clear the importance and value of the individual and the constant desire to recognise that employees are human beings with needs, fears, hopes, expectations and dreams. The result of this recognition are the many actions aimed at maintaining and improving the quality of life, such as reflection groups, accompaniment and support, as well as the facilities for working from home.

The diligent accompaniment provided by the Lasallian ministries during this pandemic has not been limited to their students and their partners but

has transcended to the entire community in general and also to other Lasallian ministries or institutions, especially those which have been most affected. In the face of crisis, people and organisations are capable of reflecting and rediscovering their essence, and this is what has happened in the Lasallian ministries, always attentive to the needs of society. This is why actions in favour of the poor, the needy, the vulnerable, and attention rendered to families, far from being reduced by the effects of the pandemic, have been a favoured aspect and have constituted an enormous challenge which obliges us to bring out the best in people and organisations. The same has undoubtedly been true of support for other Lasallian ministries which, by their very nature, are not self-sufficient or have been more affected by the health crisis. The help provided, both by the District and by the financially stronger institutions, has not been long in coming.

Faced with the financial challenge, there was a need to make important changes in administrative and economic management. All of this would not have been possible if the partners had not shown a proactive, committed and grateful attitude. These same attitudes were observed in the students' families, where it was possible to verify the change from a demanding attitude to an attitude of trust and closeness. Among the main modifications to financial management, the following ones stand out: strict budgeting, assuming only priority expenses, the increased use of electronic means for collection management, the notable allocation of resources for technology as well as for the training of teachers and educational staff, the continuous assessment of the financial situation through more timely and clearer reports, transparency in the use of resources, flexibility and ongoing communication with students and parents.

The fraternal accompaniment of the District has been another fundamental factor in facing up to this unprecedented crisis and for adequate and professional financial management. The sharing of experiences, problems, solutions and crises faced by the various ministries and communities of the District and of the Lasallian Family in general, has consolidated the identity and awareness of belonging to a District and world network. Some ministries received direct contributions and loans from the District and other Lasallian institutions with which they were able to respond to their short-term financial needs.

The experience of this health crisis has produced many lessons for Lasallian ministries and has allowed us to look to the future with hope, resilience and the capacity to adapt to change. Despite the different realities, most of the ministries agree on the importance of creating and strengthening reserves, not only for health crises such as this one, but also for the establishment of contingency funds, for the retirement of partners, as well as for political, social and economic contingencies. Without realistic, transparent budgets that are aligned with strategic planning, no effort will bear fruit in the financial area. This is why the commitment of all areas is essential, especially in the awareness of saving and maximising the resources. It is also important to form and consolidate District economic councils that promote shared, transparent and professional management that is aligned with the educational and pastoral mission of the Lasallian ministries. The strong dependence on income from tuition fees makes it urgent to look for new ways of obtaining resources - donations, fund-raising, projects, etc. - and the need to operate surpluses productively and efficiently in order to increase financial income.



Other important recommendations are: the creation and strengthening of solidarity funds for the most vulnerable ministries, the constitution of District models of economic and financial management, professional risk management, the creation of perpetuation funds for works, the management of purchases as a network in view to strengthen negotiations and the general professionalisation of financial management. It is becoming increasingly more necessary to have a global vision of economic management, to understand that Lasallian ministries are not isolated entities, but form part of a large universal family. In the same way, it is essential to assume the serious responsibility that falls on the administrators and directors of the financial and administrative areas to maintain the financial resources necessary for the adequate operation and provision of services, without losing sight of the transcendence of the educational work in society.

### **3. Positive and negative impact**

A key aspect on which the various Lasallian ministries generally agree is the negative and positive impacts derived from this health crisis. The greatest negative impact has been the loss of income from school fees, student dropout, the low recovery of the portfolio and the need to grant discounts and increase scholarships and other support to the families of students. Other negative impacts have been the difficulty in covering the salaries of staff and assistant teachers, which in most ministries represent 70-80 per cent of total costs and expenses; the need to draw on various reserves to meet short-term commitments; the loss of qualified teachers; and the reduction of various profitable activities due to the temporary closure of the ministries. In addition, a number of investment and growth projects that some ministries had planned for this year have been suspended and, in some cases, cancelled.

But not everything has been negative. In addition to the learning described in previous paragraphs, it can be observed that, in general, the ministries have experienced great improvements in financial management, such as: the effective and efficient use of resources, the timely review and

reduction of expenses without sacrificing the essential, the responsiveness and commitment of the staff, a continuous professionalisation of financial management, the strength of the sense of belonging derived from the accompaniment and supervision of the District. Moreover, in some works, this has been enriched by financial support from the State, donations from parents and other local and regional initiatives. Finally, there has been an increase in closeness and solidarity with families and an attitude of reflection, openness to change and hope, a rediscovery of the origins and essence of Lasallian work and trust in divine providence.

All of the above is the result of a solid structure and of the satisfaction of the community in general with the service it receives from Lasallian ministries. It has been possible to meet most of the commitments and to give continuity to the works, in many cases, thanks to the solidarity of the State, the District and other Lasallian ministries.

The general perception of the ministries has been that the success in dealing with the economic impact of the pandemic is mainly due to the strategic support of District administration, the good leadership and atmosphere in the ministries, the consultation and collaboration among network and District institutions, the culture of creating and strengthening reserves and savings, the continuous financial review as part of a new management culture, and the obtaining of financing with advantageous conditions. Undoubtedly, this success is linked to and depends to a large extent on the personalised response to the students and families, not only in the financial aspect, but above all, in the pedagogical aspect and in the fraternal accompaniment.

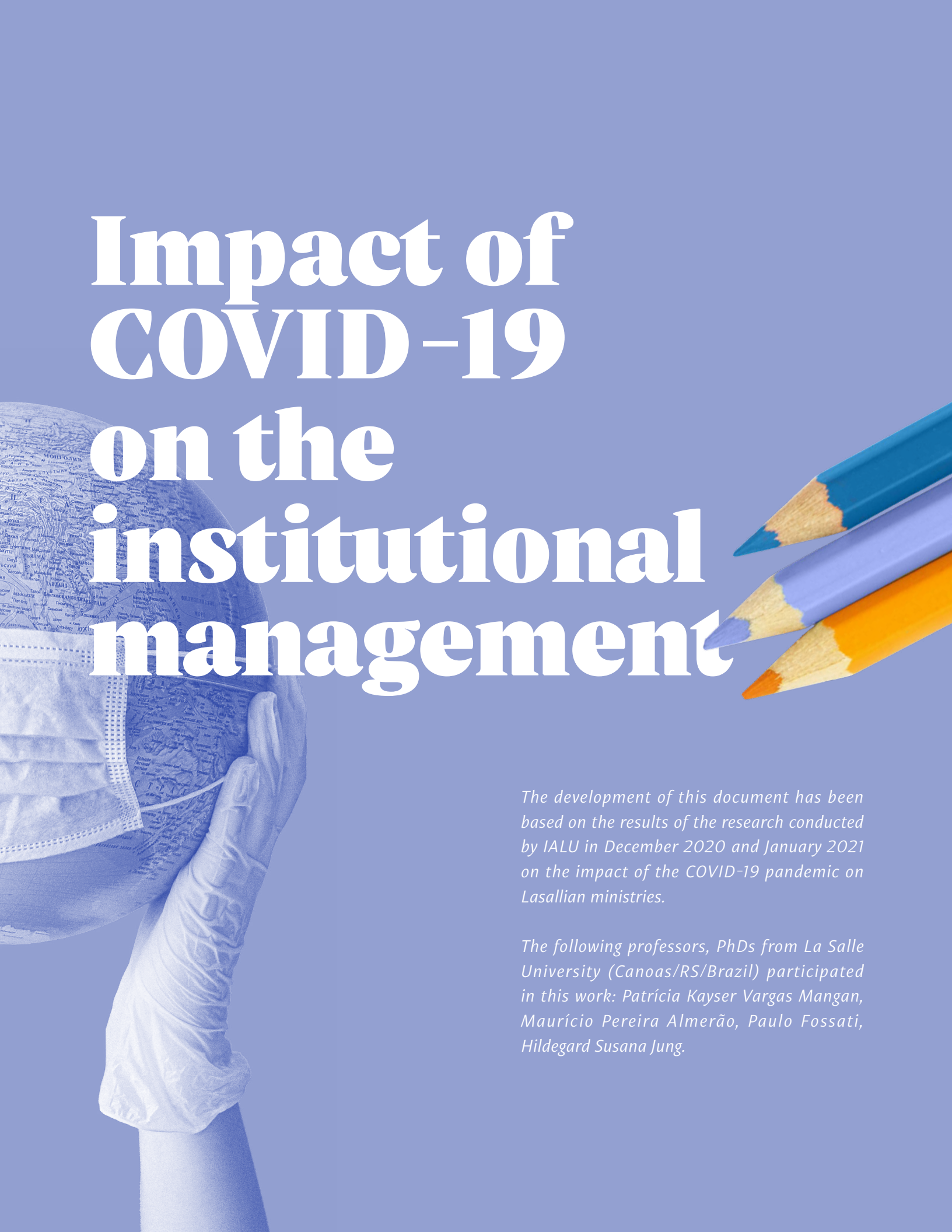
## 4. Conclusion

The overall experience of the impact of COVID-19 on financial management has been one of great learning and preparation for the new challenges ahead. Weaknesses and areas of opportunity became more evident to all and action plans were established to address them. It is very important that these plans are continued and implemented, even though the effects of the pandemic may no longer be that severe. On the other hand, the Lasallian identity, the sense of belonging and the awareness of the relevance of Lasallian work at world level were strengthened. Finally, the financial and administrative management processes were strengthened, communication with the District and with other Lasallian institutions and the outreach to partners, students and their families.

However, it is important that reflection should keep on and that spaces for meeting and communication should continue to be created; this is an unquestionable richness of the great Lasallian Family and a visible sign of fraternity and hope in a society which demands and also lacks more and more signs of fraternity and hope.



# Impact of COVID-19 on the institutional management



*The development of this document has been based on the results of the research conducted by IALU in December 2020 and January 2021 on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Lasallian ministries.*

*The following professors, PhDs from La Salle University (Canoas/RS/Brazil) participated in this work: Patrícia Kayser Vargas Mangan, Maurício Pereira Almerão, Paulo Fossati, Hildegard Susana Jung.*

## 1. Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on school organisation: leadership, administration and generalities

All institutions were affected by the context of the pandemic, which generally had a strong impact on financial, pedagogical and organisational aspects. With the exception of one respondent, all of them pointed out that these impacts imply significant changes in different dimensions of the management of the institutions. Considering that *“the pandemic has been a source of additional stress at all levels of leadership and management”* different accounts indicate the need for more agility and/or flexibility, as well as *“constant organisational adjustments to adapt to the reality”*. In some cases, *“new pedagogical-administrative management teams were formed”*.

Many changes have been triggered with a view to adaptations to meet legislation and the adoption of sanitary measures in order to ensure safety when in person attendance be possible. Reports point to the hard work of management and administrative teams to meet all the (new) standards imposed by COVID-19.

Most of the institutions report on the adoption of distance or hybrid education and its operational and pedagogical impacts. Each institution, due to its background and contexts, made the change of modality with a greater or lesser degree of difficulty in technical and organisational terms. Added to this are challenges related to *“the continuous training of teachers in the use of technologies”*.

In a pandemic context, it was necessary *“to adapt administrative services to operate remotely from the beginning of the crisis”*. In addition, it is recognised that there was a great financial impact caused by the closure of schools, universities and works, despite *“making payment dates and schemes*

*more flexible, offering facilities and discounts”*.

Finally, it is worth reproducing a significant account: *“Recognising that we face the same challenge (in all countries and in all types of ministries) has been an opportunity to remember that we are more alike than different, and to foster a sense of unity and community”*. In this way, this is a unique opportunity to strengthen ourselves as a network, supporting each other in the search for creative solutions, appropriate to local realities without losing sight of Lasallian ethos.

## 2. Organisational or leadership changes in the face of the administrative challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic

Communication was one of the most discussed items by the majority of respondents. Coping with the challenges of the pandemic required changes in the means of internal and external communication as well as increased effectiveness. One of the main reasons for this concern was summarised in this discourse: *“more regular and transparent communication with parents and staff to ensure trust in the ministries and thus maintain calm and smooth functioning”*. Also in this one: *“internal and external communication has been improved, so that digital means of information are our bond to keep us informed as an educational community”*. In the area of management, virtual meetings and virtual forums were considered to be quite effective. In the discussions on communication, the role of leadership was mentioned at several points, as well as the importance of fostering networking, which can be summarised as follows: *“In leadership, there has been an insistence on greater interdependence, as well as on extending virtual meeting times, with the aim of generating greater communication, integration and joint decision-making”*.

In terms of communication, there were events and seminars held entirely online as well as a concern about *“improving the presence on social media”*. In fact, social distancing *“has led to a reorganisation and a rethinking of the meaning of online events”*. The *“generalisation of teleworking (home office) by administrative staff”* brought countless operational and managerial challenges. The challenges, advantages and disadvantages of teleworking have been little discussed in the Lasallian context and would require further attention in future studies.

Maintaining face-to-face teams or preparing for the return of in-person services involves complying with health protocols for the safe use of institutional spaces. This required minor or major internal adjustments such as some structural changes resulting from governmental requests, changes in task allocation, new posts or internal relationships between workgroups.

Due to the financial impacts during the pandemic, *“leadership is encouraged to develop and study financial strategies”*.

The emotional impact caused by the pandemic is undeniable, from conflicts due to isolation to mourning the loss of friends or family members. To address these needs, strategies such as the *“organisation of sharing spaces and socio-emotional accompaniment for students and teachers”* have been implemented.

### 3. Implications of Decisions in School Life

It is clear that there was a *“change of strategies in the execution of activities”* and *“decisions impact all the activities developed in the educational communities”*. As educational ministries always play an important role in the social communities in which they operate, all educational ministries sought to maintain their presence, despite the fact that some services have been closed. However, the perception of many respondents is of a decline in the provision of their services: *“the pace and the range of activities on offer has decreased. Extracurricular activities have been eliminated in many cases by orders of the educational administration or the health authority. Pastoral activities have been particularly affected”*. It is also important to note that the various educational communities were challenged to find new ways of acting in the virtual context. *“Virtuality has led to the creation of new ways of promoting culture, art, physical activity and above all pastoral accompaniment”*. In particular, the change of the pedagogical model to the hybrid or distance modality generated concerns about the effectiveness of learning, and in the case of the education of children and adolescents, the perception that there were also losses in the dimension of sociability and social bonds, even with *“learning and adaptation to a new reality, greater confidence of parents in the virtual modality”*.

Reports on the impact on students due to the change of modality can be illustrated by the following response: *“The emotional well-being and motivation of students is altered. The fact that students have to isolate themselves from their friends and teachers can affect their behaviour and psychology”*.

However, it is clear that in this context Lasallian care remained present as an important value within the institutions. *“Accompanying people in their difficulties in a close and fraternal way has also been very positive. This includes the spiritual and psychological services offered by the university”*. In fact, the provision of specific psychological care services for the educational community in the period seems to be one of the most effective measures.

Once again, the importance of cooperation and networking was pointed out as very important in the organisational climate. The education community as a whole was challenged to *“a new way of cooperating (more digitally), but also the challenge to stay connected as a team in times of hybrid learning/distance learning”*. The education community as a whole was challenged but teamwork has been the best response.

#### **4. Thinking ahead: organisational structure and school leadership**

A critical learning has been the *“importance of teamwork and networking with the Sector and the District”*. Living the expression *together and by association* has been, is and will be what enables us to continue to meet the educational needs. Respondents point out that even while maintaining independence, we can break down “walls” and increase cooperation, as *“promoting the joint reflection and fostering the interdependence of educational communities are quite critical issues, assuming that the experiences of one can provide important subsidies for the others”*. In addition, *“finding ourselves all facing the same challenge (in all countries and types of ministries) has been an opportunity to see that we are more alike than differ-*

*ent, and to foster a sense of unity and community”*. Also, it was highlighted *“the importance of rapid decision-making and communication between the administrator of the ministries for the joint exploitation of initiatives”*.

It was also pointed out that *“a good leadership is essential, especially in times of crisis”*. In some cases, this concern is due to the *“ageing of current head teachers and the shortage of qualified candidates to replace them makes it imperative to take action”*. There is also *“a need to develop the competencies and attributes of leadership: agility, change orientation, willingness to see opportunity in challenge, etc”*.

Regarding *“the need for decision-making and the link between pedagogical and administrative areas”* there are also indications of two benefits: the *“practice of shared leadership”* and *“the involvement of all administrative and resource staff in decision-making; advocate for regular meetings with staff and partners”*.

Another learning involves management and communication: *“we manage well our own resources and communicate well with others. These are the ways to live our association now and in the future”*. In relation to resource management, the learning was about optimising resources and effective financial management after the first waves of the pandemic. Regarding the improvement of communication, this must be intensified since *“a real team spirit and continuous communication are the key to the success of the educational mission”*. To this end, internal and external communication protocols are being implemented and updated.

Finally, promoting the renewal and adoption of virtual digital technologies can help now and, in the future, to fulfil the Lasallian educational mission.



## 5. Aspects to consider in the 3rd AIMEL related to the school's organisational or administrative structures

Although not all respondents have provided recommendations, below are some important messages that have been selected:

1. There is a distinction between the contexts of the different countries and within the countries: It is clear that we cannot go back to the world of yesteryear. This is why it is particularly important for the world to support developing countries in terms of education. Infrastructures that will require the mobilisation of resources so that marginalised students can pursue their studies without interruption due to lack of resources. *“Not all countries have the same level of digital development, which is not always conducive to online meetings”.*
2. Digital inequity is a reality: how to ensure that in the digital age, no one is excluded from technology? The pandemic has brought a wider gap between rich and poor. Delegates should review how De La Salle can be close to the children of artisans and the poor in this new reality. *“Including in the challenges and proposals the substantial presence of technology to bring the poorest closer to education”* will be important.
3. Professionalisation of management. It is necessary to discuss and modernise the management model, applying practices that are already widely used in market institutions without abandoning our traditional values. Professionalising management, systematically demanding accountability for results as well as extending the coverage of planning. At the same time, understanding the identity journey of the Christian Schools as a process that requires openness, assertive communication, facing crises with certainty (history - sense of the charism) and being flexible enough to understand the vicissitudes and opportunities of the context. Believing in responsible autonomy within a scheme of belonging and co-responsibility.
4. The role of the laity in management. We envisage a strategy with two lines of action: *“to follow the path of structures that allow an increasingly participative organisation between lay people and Brothers for decision-making”.*

*“To continue to train Brothers and lay people to respond to unforeseen situations in order to sustain the mission”.*

5. On the importance of leadership. *“It is necessary to establish a clear leadership structure adapted to local realities and, at the same time, coordination across the entire Region in order to facilitate the flow of information and the distribution of tasks, ensuring the functioning of our educational mission”.*
6. Education in the context of the digital age: What will “school” be like in the future? Distance learning; distance learning but maintaining social unity.

## **6. The negative impact on the institutional management of educational ministries**

It was striking that some respondents explicitly indicated that they had no negative impact and others who minimised potential impacts. Although challenges and local realities vary, it is unlikely that there will be no problems.

Among the negative impacts of the pandemic cited, many reported facing *“a serious challenge in the financial area”*. This situation occurred in many cases *“due to loss of students, especially in lower grades (kindergarten) and increase in portfolio indexes”*. There were indications of *“the suspension of the contracts of personnel”*. One participant warned that *“the economic situation of families prolongs the impact of the Pandemic beyond 2021”*.

There are also several reports of a lack of prior preparation to act online. However, once the days turned into weeks, the obvious lack of preparation became apparent. *“In addition to the difficulties at the pedagogical level, there were also comments at the administrative level about the “lack of expertise*

*of some managers in the use and management of virtual platforms which made it difficult, at the beginning of the pandemic, to fulfil their functions”.*

In fact, the importance of leadership in times of crisis increases, so some of the negative impacts are related to this role. There was also evidence of negative impacts on emotional and commitment issues. Leadership was primarily responsible for mediating these moments. *“The administration had to manage the frustration, fear and anger of all parties. In some cases, this management of the people was unsuccessful, due to “lack of motivation over time”.*

## **7. The positive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the institutional management**

While it seems difficult to identify positive impacts in a pandemic scenario, overall, however, many lessons learned have been identified. One of these is about the increased possibilities of virtual digital technologies. *“We have discovered a lot of opportunities for hybrid learning and digital cooperation”*. For example, *“we have started to provide information on school platforms”* and *“regular connectivity across 4 countries through Zoom”*.

Increased collaboration was another important item. The challenges posed encouraged *“rapid response, cooperation among educators”*, *“we have become a closer District in some areas of collaboration”*.

From a more subjective point of view, a sense of resilience, understanding and belonging was strengthened. *“Once leaders have left the pandemic behind, there is a sense of resilience and courage that they remind each other: if they have successfully met this huge global challenge, they can manage most*

*of what is thrown at them. And if great things were possible in this period, they are due to the “great understanding of the staff”.*

## **8. Organisational and administrative needs**

In the analysis of the experiences, some reports indicated that, despite all the difficulties, it was possible to meet the organisational and administrative needs of the institutions. Even with challenges in the financial dimension. That is, *“with the exception of the economic impact of not having pre-pandemic income, the ministries remain in good working order”*. *“We have seen a lot of drive and energy, but also a lot of innovation in our institutions. The biggest organisational challenge was the constant change in government regulations.”* *“The institutions have developed initiatives to remain accessible. There has been training in the use of digital technology”*.

*“We feel part of a global effort that generates new solutions that benefit our students. As a Lasallian educational network, we have generated synergies and we have shared solutions and resources. We have fostered collaboration among administrators, teachers, families and students. From this culture of sharing, answers emerge and from there we want to add to continue supporting our work”*.

## **9. Aspects that make a difference in the success of institutional management in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic**

Among the aspects that contributed to the success of the institutional management during the pandemic, the most frequently cited was *“good leadership in schools”*. The second most cited item was *“ongoing consultation and collaboration among Lasallian institutions”*. The indication of these

elements is consistent with previous responses, which emphasised the importance of leadership and cooperation in facing the challenges imposed by the pandemic.

As well as home office and hybrid or distance classes, the second most cited set of elements refers to technological issues: *“digital competence and teacher training”* as well as *“students’ access to technological and digital devices”*. This dimension was also explicit in the free field with indications of *“sharing virtual training experiences and products”* and *“distance classes through technology and staff training”*.

Finally, two aspects related to the support of the legal entity were also highlighted and indicated in the responses: *“strategic support from District and Regional management”* and *“financial support when needed”*.

## **10. Additional comments**

Some questions were raised in relation to management from a pedagogical point of view. In the context of basic education, these reflections stand out: *“How to redirect resources to pre-primary to grade 2? Children from pre-primary to second grade are most at risk in this environment. During distance learning, parents of younger children need to monitor and guide the learning process more closely. Schools will therefore have to invest more in supporting families with young children. We need to invent more user-friendly technology for our youngest learners”*.

Another concern is with regard to students and Lasallian partners: *“How did they measure their organisation and success, and did the educators engage their students? As Lasallians it was important to continually monitor our staff and students to see if we were meeting their needs. The voices of those*

*we served were important, so the voices of the children were heard.*

While the question of leadership came up in many responses, we append one more. *“How can we collaborate as leaders at critical times like this to ensure that we all stay on mission? We can share knowledge and ideas about how different institutions managed during difficult times”.*

Another dimension inherent to institutional management relates to people management, whereby one respondent questioned the retention of talent, as well as the need to reduce staff for economic and financial sustainability: *“How does the need to make adjustments to the workforce and have to lay off staff impact?”* It is very important to be aware that ministries require viability in order to be sustained. Another question arises in relation to people: *“How was the socio-emotional-spiritual support provided to administrators, teachers and students during the confinement? In the District, virtual meetings of voluntary participation were organised to “have a coffee among teachers and administrators”, coordinated by a counsellor to express emotions. At the ministries, psychologists and counsellors organised activities with students and individual accompaniment was provided when required.*

## 11. Concluding remarks

The entire school community was affected, especially students and their families. *“Lockdowns affect students in multiple ways, reinforcing inequalities and subjecting them to social and psychological stress. Parents and guardians are also affected”*. On the other hand, it is highlighted that in the crisis the social and educational purpose of Lasallian institutions became more evident: *“many of them realise the social purpose of the educational system and its power to structure daily life”*.

In many countries, *“the pandemic situation has further deepened the inequality gap between publicly managed and privately managed education”*. *“The pandemic has shown that there is a need for international advocacy for greater state financial involvement in serious private educational institutions”*.

Eventually, *“the poor will increase worldwide and we must consider how to meet that demand”*.





# **A Report on the Impact of COVID-19 on the Pedagogical Management of Lasallian Institutions in 2020**

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## **SUMMARY**

Using collected responses from the Lasallian COVID Survey prepared and conducted by the Lasallian Research and Resource Services in the first quarter of 2021, this report will attempt to paint a picture, albeit in broad strokes, of how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the Lasallian mission, how the Districts have responded to common and unique pedagogical challenges, and what has been learned moving forward. In documenting and examining the collective strengths, challenges, opportunities, and threats posed by the global situation, recommendations presented for the planning and development of a Lasallian pedagogical framework will hopefully enable a holistic and formative education that transcends learning modalities. Overall, this report aims to support decision-making that will determine a unified Lasallian education response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and other possible future disruptions.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The COVID-19 pandemic has immensely affected the delivery of learning for almost everyone in the world. With the need to restrict mobility and proximity, schools were forced to abruptly close their doors for several months, at best. However, school closures translate to students falling behind and learning gaps further widening (Drenik, 2021), so a shift in education modalities with the aid of digital technologies became necessary and apparent.



To document the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global Lasallian community in 2020, a 44-item survey was distributed to administrators and delegates of Lasallian institutions around the world, with 11 items focused on documenting the pedagogical shifts and challenges encountered by their respective learning institutions. A total of 31 out of 123 responses were gathered on Pedagogical Management from the 5 Lasallian Districts or Regions of Asia and Oceania (PARC), Europe and the Mediterranean (RELEM), Africa (RELAF), Latin America (RELAL), and North America (RELAN). Figure 1 shows the distribution of respondents based on the Lasallian Districts they represent.

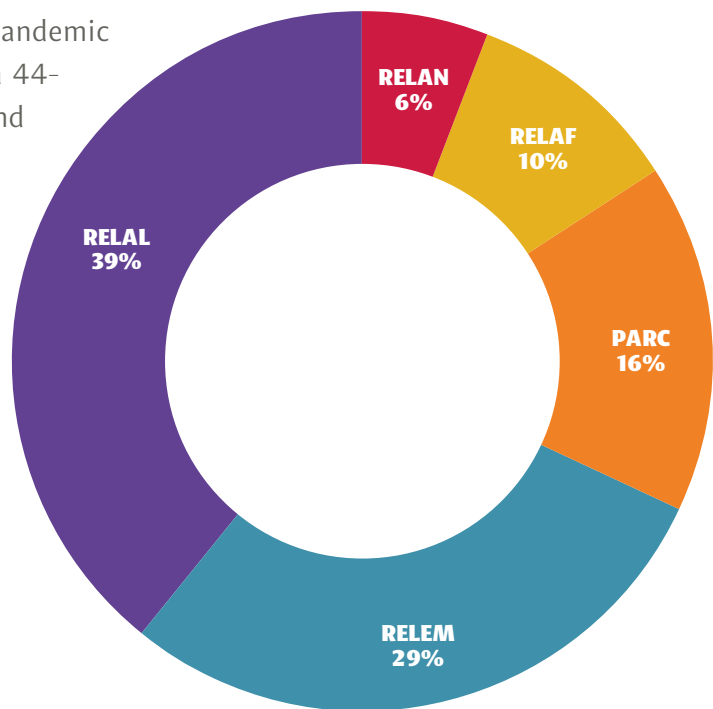


FIGURE 1: Distribution of responses gathered for the COVID-19 Impact Survey on Pedagogical Management based on Lasallian District affiliation

## CHALLENGES TO THE PEDAGOGICAL RESPONSE

### VARIATION IN ACCESS TO DIGITAL RESOURCES

There are many places where connectivity and access to technology are still limited, and remote teaching and learning has and continues to be a struggle. In the Districts of RELAL, RELEM, RELAF, and PARC, some institutions have reported reliance on non-digital means like exercise booklets and learning kits either as a supplement to the limited availability of appropriate online materials or as their main method of instruction while schools remained closed. For some, radio program broad-

casts became a valuable tool to reach students who live in underprivileged areas. Some in RELAL and RELEM have even reported that their educators conducted home visits to check on those students who had zero access to digital technologies in their homes, in order to make sure that the most economically vulnerable families continued to have access not only to education but also to basic needs like food.

This issue of unequal access to technology not only affects students but a great number of teachers as well. Many educators, even in developed countries, sadly do not have the personal

resources to work online from their homes, making it difficult not only to connect with their students but even to receive the necessary professional development and support for becoming effective online teachers. Many educators risk exposure to, and transmission of, the virus by reporting to campus daily to do their work because of their lack of personal devices, and/or conducting physical visits of their students and their families.

Several respondents also reported that their institutions do not have the capacity and resources to support online learning. For instance, there are accounts from RELAF and PARC where teachers relied on social media and free messaging platforms to connect with their students, due to their comfort and familiarity with the available technologies, the dynamic interactions that these mobile applications afford them, and because they are free and readily available to anyone. Unfortunately, while these platforms present valuable opportunities for learning and communication, they also pose a high risk to the privacy and security of the students, teachers, and the learning institutions who use them instead of more secure channels. Similarly, many do not have the resources and capacity to adequately train their teaching staff, and many instructors have been left to their own resourcefulness in educating and retooling themselves for the uphill battle of teaching under lockdown.

Furthermore, despite intentional adjustments and accommodations, there is still a palpable and unaddressed concern across Districts and levels of education: that the uniqueness and hallmarks of a Lasallian education - its concern for the humanity of the learner and the ability to touch the hearts of its students - is diminished by the difficulties involved in establishing shared values and human relationships through a computer screen.

## **DIFFICULTIES IN ESTABLISHING AND SUSTAINING EDUCATIONAL CONNECTIONS**

The pandemic has exposed an extra layer of complexity: how to establish educational relationships without physical proximity. For instance, it had been observed by a respondent from the RELEM District that when positive teacher-student relationships had already been established before school closures, younger students generally had a much smoother experience accepting and adjusting to online learning. Consequently, their teachers also had an easier time managing student behaviors as compared with teachers who were not able to establish a solid rapport with their students before their shift to online.

A congruent issue has been noted in RELAL, where online social interactions were perceived to be constricting and contrived. Virtual chats, recitations, and group discussions - however useful for learning - cannot seem to afford the same spontaneity and social engagement as can be experienced in physical and social proximity. Because learning is intrinsically a social endeavor, students crave a level of connectedness with their peers and their teachers, and they can become less interested and less invested in their education when this intangible yet valuable aspect of the learning experience is not addressed in an alternate modality.

On a positive note, respondents from RELAN and RELAL similarly noted how parents had expressed their appreciation for the effort that Lasallian educators have put into building close relationships with their children as learning continued during lockdown. Some schools even reported an increase in enrollment because of the kind of teacher-student relationships parents were

able to observe, which demonstrates how important the Lasallian approach for holistic formation and education is.

## **BRIDGING THE GAP IN LASALLIAN FORMATION AND ANIMATION**

Since the world of education had been upended, Lasallian community programs like educational trips, art exhibitions, school fairs, and other celebrations had to be either modified, abandoned, or canceled. This was not only for the safety of students but also due to the growing workload of the school staff. It was understandable for formation to take a back seat at the beginning of the global crisis, but once the proverbial dust had settled, it became obvious that institutions needed to find ways to reintroduce social activities and Lasallian spirituality back into the online curriculum.

While students may not immediately be cognizant of its effects, the lack of balance between academic and non-academic engagements resulted in learners and educators alike feeling overburdened and constantly fatigued. When compounded by the loneliness and anxieties brought about by social isolation, these can become overwhelming.

The absence of fun and purely social activities also perhaps contributed to the growing disinterest of certain groups of students to engage or even enroll, like those pointed out by delegates from RELAL and RELAF. More than that, this lack of willingness or interest to engage worries many teachers and administrators across the globe about their student's mental health, and the long-term effects this may have on their emotional and psycho-social development.

To this end, institutions from different Districts enacted a variety of interventions to try and address these problems. In the District of RELEM, programs that promote inward and emotional education were supported, and students were required to meet with their school psychologists or guidance counselors regularly. In LEAD-PARC, teachers have sought and maintained constant and open communications with the parents of their students to keep them well-informed and involved in their children's cognitive and social development. RELAL District schools have employed different strategies: promoting healthy expressions of emotions and self-awareness; adjusting school schedules to give students and teachers pockets of time for self-care; systematically training teachers to improve their online teaching competencies; and welcoming the parents into the wider Lasallian community, highlighting their active participation and contribution.

Still, the global Lasallian education community seems unified in the notion that a lot more can be done to improve the animation of the Lasallian spirit. It has been suggested that the domestic situations of learners, including parent-child relationships in the home, need to also be more closely examined to bolster the emotional development and support of children. Perhaps the definition, scope, and role of the Lasallian education community will need to be revisited in consideration of physically distant learning modalities so that strong educational relationships can continue, and the intrinsic connection between pedagogy and spirituality can be realized.

## **SUMMARY OF IDENTIFIED CONSTRAINTS IN PEDAGOGICAL MANAGEMENT**

### **INTERNET CONNECTIVITY AND ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY**

The variation in internet connectivity and access to digital technologies among teachers and students have been a consistent gap in the shift of Lasallian institutions to online learning during this pandemic. This results in the fragmentation of teaching and learning experiences, which consequently disrupts the continuity and quality of knowledge transfer. Furthermore, students and teachers can become demotivated to engage in the online learning process, not only due to difficulties in addressing required resources but also in meeting the fundamental competencies to navigate online learning platforms to achieve learning outcomes.

### **DIGITAL COMPETENCIES AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES**

With the abrupt shift of face-to-face classroom instruction to online classes, students and teachers alike were confronted with the challenge of demonstrating basic digital skills. For students, inadequate digital skills result in non-participation or superficial learning. For teachers, the inability to integrate educational technology tools into learning activities affects the level of student engagement and consequently the depth of learning. The gaps in digital competencies highlighted the need for Lasallian Institutions to provide training opportunities in facilitating effective pedagogical practices using digital learning platforms. Despite efforts to bridge competency gaps through training opportunities, the lack of digital resources is still a major limiting factor in undertaking competency training to improve digital skills.

## **DATA PRIVACY AND INFORMATION SECURITY RISKS**

Aside from gaps in technical competencies, the shift to online learning has also surfaced risks in data privacy and information security. Online learning platforms have been a channel for information exchange among students and teachers, and for the storage of various forms of data. The inadvertent access to confidential information of teachers and students has grave implications in terms of maintaining a safe and secure online learning environment.

## **HOLISTIC LASALLIAN EDUCATION**

Beyond the practical gaps identified is the inadequate capacity of online learning to accommodate a holistic learning curriculum. Lasallian educational institutions have yet to find the means to accommodate extra-curricular, physical, socio-emotional, and socio-civic activities that replicate the holistic curriculum of face-to-face classroom instruction. This also reflects the gap in social interaction, which is a fundamental component for deepening knowledge through interactive ideation and application.

## WEIGHING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

When asked about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the pedagogical management experiences of their respective institutions, the respondents of the Lasallian COVID Survey rated its negative impact at an average of 4.32 out of 10, while the positive impact came to a global average of 7.7 out of 10. When asked about the overall impact that the pandemic has had on Lasallian ministries in their area, the average rating also came to 7.7 out of 10.

### 3.6) NEGATIVE impact on the pedagogical management, 3.7) POSITIVE impact on the pedagogical management and 3.8) General experience of the Lasallian ministries in your District during this pandemic.

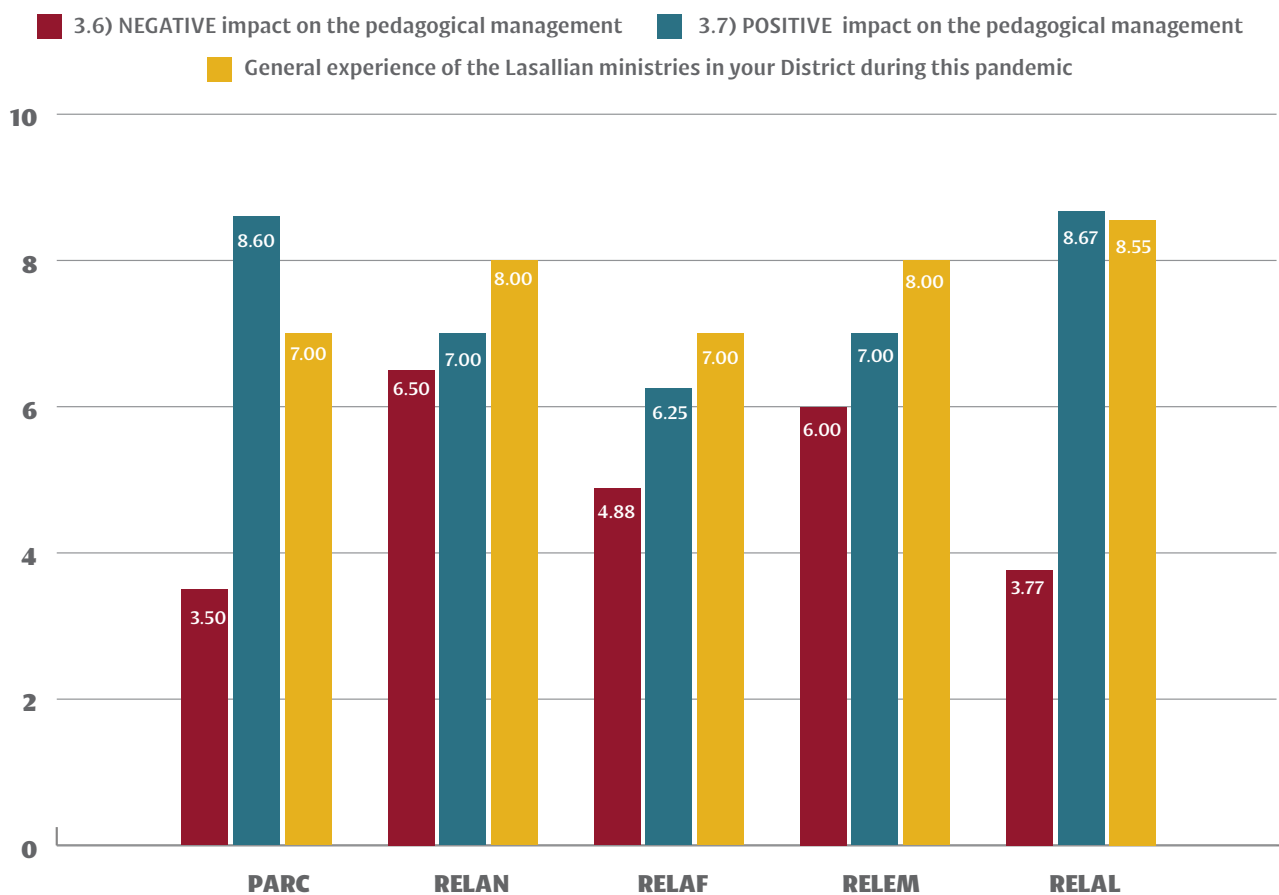


FIGURE 2: Averaged rating for the negative, positive, and overall impact of the COVID-19 response to the Pedagogical Management of Lasallian educational institutions according to District affiliation

Figure 2 shows the distribution and ratings according to District. It must be noted that the number of respondents is not equal per District, as was shown in Figure 1. For instance, there are only 2 respondents representing RELAN while there were 12 for RELAL. Also, not all 31 respondents consistently answered all the survey questions. While this is an obvious limitation, it is more important to note in this instance how the responses are similar in trend and themes across Regions.

The general sentiment appears to be that this pandemic has forced institutions and educators outside of their comfort zones and discover new methods of teaching and reaching out to their students and their families. These new methods did not come easily, and many in the education community - including students and teachers - resented the shift to virtual platforms. Apart from the basic fact that schools were indeed not prepared, the readiness of staff to adapt to technology was tenuous for a good number of instructors. Productivity - whether lack or excess of it - had also become a big problem because work bleeds into personal time and vice versa, resulting in the rate of burnout increasing drastically not only for students but more so for educators who have to deal with the anxieties and added burden of working from home while caring for their families amidst the threats of the pandemic. As one respondent had put it succinctly, *“success depended on how up-to-date and informed the institutions were with technology, pedagogy, and how well-suited the socio-economic characteristics of the environments were before the pandemic.”*

However, new opportunities emerged that seem to outweigh the difficulties. As there is now an undeniable need to question established education practices, many have experimented on new instructional methods. Some of these have worked

and others have failed. This underlines the reality that there is no one-size-fits-all model for learning. What is constant, however, is the realization that online learning spaces are a potentially powerful resource to connect with students, teachers, and professionals from other countries and continents. Moreover, having access to Lasallians who share the same mission in different parts of the world can open opportunities for more meaningful formation and advocacy, such as having cross-cultural dialogues on identity, spirituality, and the like. Reaching beyond borders is also valuable in continuing research endeavors, especially in the area of pedagogical management, and in extending academic and professional development opportunities beyond specific Regions at a much lower cost.

On another positive note, prolonged social distancing has highlighted the value of social relationships in the learning experience, leading many to realize how relationships among and between all education stakeholders are intertwined and influence successful learning experiences for a child. There were reports in RELAN and RELEM where schools noted an increase in enrollment due to the values and nurturing approach that a Lasallian education provides, especially during these difficult times. Lasallian institutions, therefore, need to reach out, consider, and involve not only the individual student or teacher, but also their families when considering policies, approaches, and communications, since the family unit is the *umbilicus* that has long been overlooked in traditional education practices.

## **LEVERAGING ON EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGIES**

Across the five (5) Regions of RELAN, RELAL, RELEM, RELAF, and PARC, many educational institutions went through a similar pattern of response at the onset of the pandemic. Schools first evaluated their existing institutional capacities and made significant decisions and investments towards the upgrade of technological infrastructures, subscriptions to learning platforms and applications, and the possible purchase and distribution of devices. A concurrent evaluation of the teaching staff's competencies and readiness for online learning facilitation was done, and teacher training has become both a priority and a challenge across Regions and levels of education.

## **SHIFTING PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES**

Apart from overcoming technical difficulties, educators needed to rethink their pedagogical approaches due to the synchronous and asynchronous nature of online learning, and to the limitations that this duality poses on pedagogical content. Subjects that targeted cognitive development are more easily adapted for online teaching and therefore were prioritized over subjects that require special equipment or spaces like a laboratory or physical education. Curricula were revisited to ensure that the minimum acceptable standards of learning would be met, even as novel strategies for instruction were being adapted. Class sizes were reduced, and synchronous class times via video conferencing applications like Zoom or Google Meet were regulated.

For institutions that had access to learning management systems such as Moodle or Google

Classroom, formal evaluations were conducted, mostly using these platforms, with some reportedly even employing online examination monitoring software to ensure academic integrity during tests. School projects and activities were redesigned to foster cooperative learning wherever possible, and teachers worked together as much as possible to design cross-disciplinary assessment tasks to somehow ease the burden of their learners.



## FACTORS FOR SUCCESS

When asked to select and identify from a list of possible factors that have made or would have made a significant impact on the success of their respective institutions' pedagogical implementation during the pandemic, the top three factors that emerged were (1) good leadership, (2) digital literacy and training of teachers, and (3) student access to technological and digital devices. Figure 3 shows the further breakdown of responses collectively and by Region, and it clearly shows how important these three factors were perceived to contribute to the success of schooling regardless of location during this pandemic.

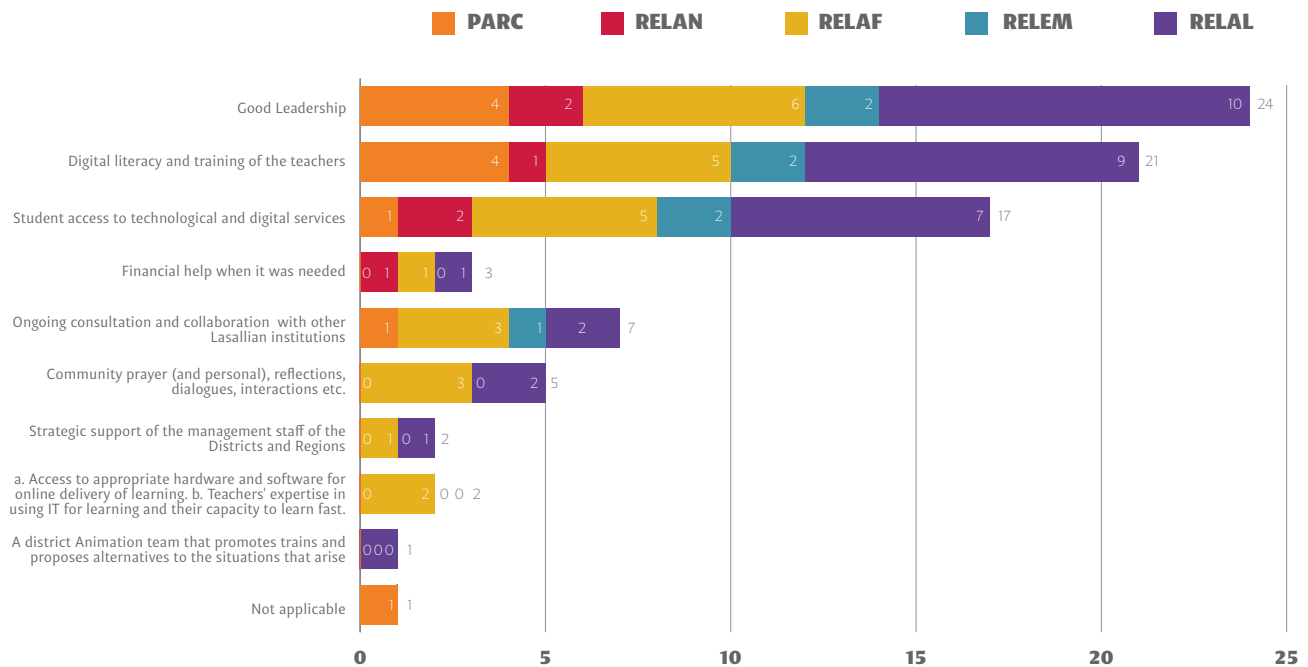


FIGURE 3: Factors that made a difference in being successful in the area of pedagogical management during the pandemic

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), an intergovernmental economic organization with 37 member countries, asserts that students will suffer severe learning losses if there is no intentional strategy in place to protect learning during times of disruption. According to their 2020 report, apart from (1) parental support, (2) the school's capacity to support remote learning, and (3) the student's personal determination to continue learning, a learning institution can develop and implement a strategic and effective response for times of exigencies that makes a great difference (Reimers and Schleicher, 2020).

## **ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY**

The first issue that needs immediate action is unequal access to technology. Lasallian institutions can partner with both private and public companies to raise funds or establish long-term sponsorships for student assistance programs like study-now-pay-later schemes or create sweat-equity-towards-gadget-ownership types of programs. They may also negotiate institutional discounts and gadget loans for faculty and staff. Larger Lasallian institutions may also partner with smaller schools to take advantage of their established brand and reputation in seeking sustainable endowments and long-term corporate partnerships. Furthermore, on an institutional level, schools need to invest in technological infrastructures and learning management systems that not only secure important student data but also provide a uniform learning experience for all students, one that is aligned with the school's vision and independent of the technological know-how and preferences of individual instructors.

## **DIGITAL LITERACY AND TEACHER TRAINING**

Material access is certainly one part of the digital divide, but the lack of knowledge and skills in knowing how to use these technologies to the advantage of its user has a large share of the gap that needs to be filled (van Dijk, 2012; Allen, 2016). For instance, a teacher who learns how to operate Zoom but uses it to lecture for 3 hours every time will not be effective, and students will continue to fall behind (OECD, 2020). What can be done instead is to apply the flipped classroom method (Nouri, 2016), which was reportedly already in practice in some institutions in RELEM, which had experience with online learning before the pandemic. In a flipped classroom, students are given access to learning materials and activities online that they can engage and complete at their own pace within specific time frames so that synchronous class hours can be more devoted to providing live feedback, doing one-on-one or group consultations, and engaging in meaningful exchanges instead of simply lecturing.

Being the educators on the front lines, classroom teachers need to be taught online learning pedagogy so that their students will simultaneously be challenged yet engaged in more fun and personal ways. This shift to virtual learning will take time, because old habits will need to be unlearned so new strategies can be developed to suit new teaching environments. Moreover, teachers will need to undergo a paradigm shift in order to understand and embrace how the classroom dynamics have changed, how the design of instruction has evolved, and how technology can be used in more creative ways than simple substitution. It is now more than ever that institutions should invest in their faculty's continued professional development for the continuity of the Lasallian mission

into the future.

The pandemic has highlighted educational access disparities that had been left unresolved for decades prior. In faithfulness to the Lasallian identity of service to the poor and communion in mission, Lasallian administrators across the globe are even more challenged today to address educational access gaps, which touch the core of Lasallian education. Hence, Lasallian leaders are invited to collaborative discussions, especially in managing the shift of pedagogical practices to on-line delivery and to proactively ensure accessibility of Lasallian education to all.

## **EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP**

The hallmarks of good leadership may perhaps be placed in the context of effective crisis management, where Lasallian administrators are not only called to make quick on-the-ground decisions but also to keep an open, honest, and constant presence in the implementation of novel pedagogical approaches. They need to assure, inspire, and unite all stakeholders in coping and adapting to the challenges together. In doing so, Lasallian leaders need to communicate risks to their subordinates without sugar-coating reality to get a permissive consensus that would ease resistance to new policies and implementations (Robson, 2020). Memos and emails are not enough. Instead, Lasallian leaders should strive to hold regular Town Hall meetings and pay careful attention to their messaging to establish the more social and humane connection that their stakeholders need.

Furthermore, Lasallian leaders must be ready to relax their hold on conventional leadership ideologies and management styles. They must be the first to embrace change as the situation calls

for it. Perhaps Saint John Baptist de La Salle's leadership journey can offer Lasallian leaders a unique perspective on leadership that does not conform to convention (LeBlanc, 2013). He was in many ways an innovator and a visionary who recognized the personal sacrifices that had to be made, and he acted according to his vision and conscience as one who lived in service of others. In this time of great crisis, Lasallian leaders will need a similar drive and vision to channel disruptions into opportunities.

Indeed, Lasallian schools were able to manage varying degrees of success in the implementation of digital or non-digital means to support and accomplish their principal pedagogical targets during the pandemic. But in moving forward, Lasallian education needs to be reimagined, revitalized, and reformed. Lasallian leaders are now called to lead in curriculum reform, support educational technology integrations and implementations, champion digital literacy programs, and pro-actively seek partnerships with corporate and non-profit organizations, as well as other Lasallian institutions, to address the drastic need for student access to technology as well as to open unique learning opportunities that would not be possible without the aid of technology.

## LIMITATIONS OF FINDINGS

The findings and recommendations of this report should be interpreted in consideration of the research limitations. Specifically, the research data are dependent on the (a) extent of on-ground knowledge and awareness of the respondents regarding the pedagogical management shifts of their respective institutions, and on the (b) accuracy of English language translations which may affect analysis and interpretation.

One of the significant limitations of the study is the depth of knowledge and awareness of the participants regarding the pedagogical shift of their respective institutions. Most if not all are administrators of their respective regions and educational institutions. The extent of respondent engagement with the teaching and learning practice determines the specificity of the data that reflects the pedagogical response of their institution in this pandemic.

Another data limitation is the translation of some responses to the English language. About 26% (8 out of 31) of the responses are in French while about 42% (13 out of 31) are in Spanish. Given this distribution, it is inevitable that some contextual meaning inherently captured in the French and Spanish languages is missed in the process of translation. This may have implications in terms of the authenticity of analyzed information, which may affect the general applicability of formulated recommendations.

These research limitations have been addressed to a certain extent through a review of related documents and the use of a validation interview to help ground overall analyses, observations, and recommendations.

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# International Lasallian COVID Survey



REPORT ON SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

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**“Take care that your school runs well”**

*(Letter 42 - to Brother Robert in Darnetal,  
26 February 1709)*

“How are you doing? How are you coping?” These are some of the questions we ask our friends and loved ones every time we learn that something unlikely happened to them. These are questions of concern and affection hoping that we will learn that they are doing well, that they are coping well, or at least hoping that we can do something to be of help, bringing them back to their own two feet.

This International Lasallian COVID Survey must have been motivated by that spirit of fraternity and solidarity, knowing that we are all in this context of the pandemic together. How are we now doing as a Region or District after the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic? How can we ascertain that the schools under our care will run well during and after the pandemic?

There are many ways through which we can answer questions of this sort. The COVID Survey provided us with four areas of focus: Financial Management, Institutional Management, Pedagogical Management, and School Management. Our report shall focus on the last area, School Management.

School Management, as described in the survey, covers all broader schoolwide aspects

of our Lasallian schools and ministries: student clubs and activities, athletics, cafeteria, counseling and guidance, learning support structures, student retreats, religious activities, building community, caring for teachers and staff, and similar topics related to the management of the supplemental areas of the school’s academic life. As such, it covers everything in school that supports the two-fold *raison d’être* of the Lasallian mission, human and education.

Our team applied a certain degree of rigor that ensures a scientific treatment and analysis while staying faithful to the results of the International Lasallian COVID Survey that was conducted between January 3 and February 19, 2021. We went through a process of (1) examining the depth and breadth of the questions: grasping the essence of the questions and their relations to one another; (2) analyzing the responses one at a time to capture the mental dynamics of each respondent, and (3) applying the method of thematic analysis by coding and establishing recurring themes, thus making sense of the respondents’ input across the three language groups: English, Spanish, and French.

We likewise used metaphors from the Sacred Scriptures and Lasallian writings in presenting our analysis. This is intended to invoke discernment from the readers and highlight the presence of God in every step of the way; from the event to the impact, and up to the direction where God is leading all of us.



## **THE MISSION AND THE JUBILATION:** *(Covering Questions 1, 6, And 7)*

The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai:  
“Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it,  
because its wickedness has come up before me.”  
(Jonah 1:1,2)

God called Jonah for a mission; to go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it. The calling was not received with joy and excitement but with fear and anxiety. He tried to evade it but found that unsuccessful. His misfortunes led him to a deep solitude and sincere prayer inside the belly of the big fish, praising God and realizing that Salvation, after all, is for everybody. He was spewed out onto dry land, and thus his mission began.

The Founder, John Baptist de La Salle, was likewise called for a mission. He had his share of fears and anxieties about the early Brothers, and for the Institute, especially when the Church and the government authorities seemed to be hostile to him and to the mission. He almost gave it up. Had it not because of the invitation of Fr. de Saleon to stay for a few days in the solitude of Parmenie, the letter of the Brothers of Paris in 1714, and the encouragement of an illiterate and pious Sister Louise, there would be no jubilation for the 340-year-old Lasallian educational mission today.

If Jonah had the “belly of the big fish” as his locus of prayer and solitude, one that led to his resolve for the mission, the Founder had Parmenie as a place of prayer and solitude, where his commitment to the mission was given a renewed light and a deeper resolve.

It was during this ongoing mission, one that had reached the milestone of a Jubilation, that something unexpected happened and forced the whole world to a halt. It was a year after the Vatican declared a year of Jubilation for the 300th death anniversary of our Founder that the COVID pandemic arrived at the gate of every Lasallian institution.

How did it impact our management of schools? Which areas of school management received the hardest blow of the pandemic? What negative and positive impacts did this pandemic bring to our school management? These are the inquiries raised in questions 1, 6, and 7.

**Question 1: Please describe, in general, how the COVID pandemic has impacted your schools' overall operations. Which areas have experienced the greatest change?**

The first question inquired about two items; (1) a general description of the school at the time the COVID pandemic made its impact, and (2) the areas in school management that have experienced the greatest change.

32 individuals responded to this question across three language groups; English, Spanish, and French - 11 English-speaking respondents (34.37%); 13 Spanish-speaking respondents (40.63%), and 8 French-speaking respondents (25%).

For the first item on a general description of the school at the time the COVID pandemic made its impact, 32 respondents provided 87 general descriptions or codes. Five recurring themes surfaced. The following table shows the themes in a descending order of frequency, and how these themes were distributed according to language groups.

Table 1: Distribution of Themes to Language Groups

|   | THEMES   | N  | THEMES  | n  | PERCENTAGE |
|---|--|----|---------|----|------------|
| 1 | SCHOOL OPERATIONS WERE ADJUSTED                              | 32 | English | 7  | 21,88      |
|   |  |    | Spanish | 13 | 40,63      |
|   |  |    | French  | 12 | 37,50      |
| 2 | TEACHING AND LEARNING IMMEDIATELY SHIFTED TO ONLINE MODALITY | 21 | English | 5  | 23,81      |
|   |  |    | Spanish | 13 | 61,90      |
|   |  |    | French  | 3  | 14,29      |
| 3 | PEOPLE AND COMMUNITY WERE CHALLENGED                         | 18 | English | 9  | 50,00      |
|   |  |    | Spanish | 5  | 27,78      |
|   |  |    | French  | 4  | 22,22      |
| 4 | FINANCIAL CONDITION WAS CHALLENGED                           | 12 | English | 2  | 16,67      |
|   |  |    | Spanish | 6  | 50,00      |
|   |  |    | French  | 4  | 33,33      |
| 5 | PARENTS-TEACHERS PARTNERSHIPS NEED TO STRENGTHEN             | 3  | English | 1  | 33,33      |
|   |  |    | Spanish | 2  | 66,67      |
|   |  |    | French  | 0  | 0,00       |
| 6 | NO CATEGORIES  | 1  | English | 0  | 0,00       |
|   |  |    | Spanish | 1  | 100,00     |
|   |  |    | French  | 0  | 0,00       |

The themes were formulated in broader terms to capture the respondents' general descriptions. The percentage column indicates the distribution of the theme in a particular language group. The **n** is the number codes collected per language group based on the manifest and latent meaning articulated by the respondents and interpreted by the researcher. The **N** is the total number of codes produced across the three language groups.

### **1. SCHOOL OPERATIONS WERE ADJUSTED:**

This theme covers three general descriptions; (1) the stoppage of the regular school operations, (2) the operations needed more staff, (3) the operations needed more facilities such as IT infrastructure and classrooms, (4) the school operations required more training.

### **2. TEACHING AND LEARNING IMMEDIATELY SHIFTED TO ONLINE MODALITY:**

This theme describes how teaching and learning shifted from the traditional modality of face-to-face to a full online modality. This was the immediate response to the threat posed by the COVID pandemic.

The promptness of the shift varied according to the readiness of the online infrastructure of each school. Some were already using online teaching, but in a hybrid mode; that is, while some classes were online, others were in the traditional mode. Consequently, the shift in the modality of teaching and learning necessitated innovative adaptation and new strategies. The curriculum, which is the roadmap for every teacher, had to be re-engineered in order to be responsive to the needs of both teachers and learners.

### **3. PEOPLE AND COMMUNITY WERE CHALLENGED:**

Three aspects were identified under this theme; (1) the challenging health and mental conditions of the people; (2) the economic challenges that they faced, and (3) the greater need for accompaniment of people.

By necessity, school management had to look at the health and mental conditions of their staff. The anonymity of the virus became its strength, making all the stakeholders of the school highly susceptible to it. This challenge brought out fears and anxiety among people.

The people and the community had to face economic challenges. The difficulty of students to promptly pay their fees had repercussions on the management of school in terms of the increase of required capital and operational expenditures.

In all of these cases, school management had to accompany their own people to ensure that the entire community was working together in responding to the impact brought about by the pandemic.

#### 4. FINANCIAL CONDITIONS WERE CHALLENGED:

Financial conditions of schools were also impacted by the pandemic. There were three identified reasons in this theme. They are, (1) due to unsettled accounts, (2) increased expenditures, and (3) the decreased number of enrollees.

#### 5. PARENTS - TEACHERS PARTNERSHIP:

Attention was given to the **partnership of parents and schools** in terms of; (1) the readiness of parents in assisting their children in doing all schoolwork at home, and (2) the need of the school to maintain constant communication with parents.

The second item in the areas that have experienced the greatest change looks at 32 respondents with 85 codes that produced 5 key themes. The five recurring themes correspond to the five areas. These are as follows: 1) Academic Supports, (2) Management of School Operations, (3) Student Affairs, (4) Finance, and (5) Campus Ministry.

|   | THEMES                          | N  | THEMES  | n  | PERCENTAGE |
|---|---------------------------------|----|---------|----|------------|
| 1 | Academic Support                | 27 | English | 8  | 29,63      |
|   |                                 |    | Spanish | 14 | 51,85      |
|   |                                 |    | French  | 5  | 18,52      |
| 2 | Management of School Operations | 27 | English | 7  | 25,93      |
|   |                                 |    | Spanish | 12 | 44,44      |
|   |                                 |    | French  | 8  | 29,63      |
| 3 | Student Affairs                 | 12 | English | 3  | 25,00      |
|   |                                 |    | Spanish | 4  | 33,33      |
|   |                                 |    | French  | 5  | 41,67      |
| 4 | Finance                         | 10 | English | 2  | 20,00      |
|   |                                 |    | Spanish | 5  | 50,00      |
|   |                                 |    | French  | 3  | 30,00      |
| 5 | Campus Ministry                 | 9  | English | 4  | 44,44      |
|   |                                 |    | Spanish | 3  | 33,33      |
|   |                                 |    | French  | 2  | 22,22      |

Table 4.1b: Distribution of Categories according to Language Groups (11 English Respondents; 13 Spanish Respondents; and 8 French Respondents)

### **1. ACADEMIC SUPPORT:**

Academic support covers teaching and learning support resources. Learning support focuses on finding ways to improve the quality of education, while teaching support refers to the training needed by teachers to better deliver instruction to the students.

The English language group considered **academic learning support** as the area of school management that experienced the greatest change. This area represents 33.33% of the total entries of the English language group.

The Spanish language group considered **academic teaching support** as the area of school management that experienced the greatest change. This area represents 36.84% of the total entries of the Spanish language group.

### **2. MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL OPERATIONS:**

The Management of School Operations includes (1) human resources, (2) creative adaptation to a new normal, and (3) Services.

The management of human resources ensures that the operation of the school will not be hampered by the growing number of sick leaves and the shortage of teaching staff.

At the onset of the pandemic, the Management of School Operation required creative adaptation to the new normal.

Due to the impact of the pandemic on people, the Management of School Operations extended services to help struggling individuals.

### **3. STUDENT AFFAIRS:**

The area of Student Affairs, complimentary to academics, experienced the impact of the pandemic through the cancellation of all student-led activities.

All language groups considered Student Affairs as the area of school management that experienced the greatest change. This was due to the suspension of student activities. This area represents 14.12% of the total codes.

### **4. FINANCE:**

The area of Finance in the School Management experienced the impact of the pandemic by way of (1) poor cash flows (2) inability of the students to pay their fees on time, and (3) increased expenditures and decrease in the enrollment of students.

## **5. CAMPUS MINISTRY:**

Campus Ministries were affected by the pandemic by way of the suspension of Formation (adult and students) and Liturgical activities. Campus Ministries directly impact the Formation of students and adults as well as the liturgical activities for the entire school community.

### **Question 6: As you look at the general experience of the Lasallian ministries in your District during this pandemic, what has been the NEGATIVE impact on the School Management of your schools and ministries?**

This question looked at the NEGATIVE impact of the COVID pandemic on School Management. Reiterating our operational definition of School Management, it covers all broader schoolwide aspects of our Lasallian schools and ministries. There were two parts to this question. The first part was an assessment using a Likert scale, and the second part solicited optional comments from the respondents.

A Likert scale was provided to measure the NEGATIVE impact on school management. The Likert has a range of 10 points, 0 being very low and 10 being very high. After giving their ratings, respondents were invited to write something about the NEGATIVE impact. The second part was optional.

There were 36 codes generated from the optional comments of the respondents. 30 respondents answered the instrument in Likert scale. 6 recurring themes were extracted from the data. These are (1) Communal Life Suffered, (2) Finances were Challenged, (3) Teaching and Learning Suffered, (4) Work Overload, and (5) Mental Health issues.

#### **1. COMMUNAL LIFE SUFFERED:**

Community life suffered because of the restrictions imposed on schools. This included the online modality that pervaded the teaching aspects and the overall operations of the schools. Interactions among students were limited.

#### **2. FINANCIAL CHALLENGE:**

There was an increase in expenditures and a decrease in the collection of revenues. Because of the shift to the online mode, the school's IT infrastructure had to be strengthened and computer units had to be acquired to meet the demand of teaching and learning.

### **3. LEARNING SUFFERED:**

The educational service that schools provided needed an immediate adjustment to meet the demands of teaching and learning. While an online modality may have been identified as the ideal mode of teaching, a challenge in internet connectivity made learning doubly difficult. The logical and creative thinking processes of learners were compromised.

### **4. MORE WORKLOAD:**

The workload was heavy. Teachers needed to do an immediate revision of their materials to an online mode.

This shift to an online mode required training and the re-orientation of school processes. The health protocols that needed to be put into place added to the workload of the schools.

### **5. LACK OF FACILITIES:**

Additional technology and electronic devices had to be acquired, and new IT infrastructure had to be installed. The need for online teaching and learning demanded an upgrade of the current facilities of the schools.

### **6. MENTAL HEALTH:**

Mental health issues were on the rise among both students and staff.

## **Question 7: As you look at the general experience of the Lasallian ministries in your District during this pandemic, what has been the POSITIVE impact on the School Management of your schools and ministries?**

This question inquired about the POSITIVE impact of the pandemic on School Management. Four recurring themes were extrapolated from the responses of the respondents. These themes are (1) People's initiative for service, (2) Applied innovative approach to teaching and learning, (3) Optimized resources, and (4) Creative adaptation of school management.

### **1. PEOPLE'S INITIATIVE FOR SERVICE:**

At the time of the pandemic, good-hearted people stepped up and offered services to others. Some took initiative in assuming leadership roles to better serve other members of the community.

## **2. APPLIED INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO TEACHING AND LEARNING:**

With the sudden shift to an online mode of teaching, innovative approaches and pedagogies were discovered to better serve the students. Learning management systems were established to facilitate teaching and learning.

## **3. OPTIMIZED RESOURCES:**

At this time of great uncertainty, securing limited resources was necessary. The situation elicited collaboration among different units of school management that mitigated the negative impact of the pandemic on the stakeholders of the schools.

## **4. CREATIVE ADAPTATION OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT:**

School management became creative in continuing operations while being adaptive to the new contexts of the time. Systems and procedures were simplified - some were enhanced, and some were temporarily suspended in order to give way to the ones that fit the pandemic context.

## **THE GREAT FLOOD AND THE ARK: *(Covering Questions 2, 3, 8, And 9)***

For forty days the flood kept coming on the earth, and as the waters increased, they lifted the ark high above the earth. The waters rose and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. (Genesis 7:17-18)

The story of the Great Flood narrated in the Book of Genesis presents an image of a global disaster. It was so great a flood that it wiped out all forms of earthly life. After 150 days, the water subsided, and the ark rested on Mount Ararat. The great flood killed, but the ark gave life!

In the life of the Founder, the great flood was part of the society of his time; the great flood of evil and unrighteousness, the abandonment of children, moral perversions, and the scandal of extreme poverty. It was a deluge of events that gradually led him “in the



most imperceptible way” to where God wanted him to be. There was no grand plan for the mission’s beginning. There was only a strong sensitivity and great resolve to discern and follow the inner promptings of the Spirit of God in his life.

If Noah’s ark was a product of his faith and his obedience to God, the “ark” of the Founder was the mission, borne out of his great faith and his full submission to the Providence of God. Their respective arks led them to the mission that God had brought them to.

This section describes how this mission was lived out globally during the COVID-19 pandemic, based on the responses to survey questions 2, 3, 8, and 9.

**Question 2: If possible, please describe the major and significant school changes that you put in place in order to address the challenges that came about because of the pandemic.**

There are 78 themes identified in the responses that revolve around eight categories of major and significant school changes put into place: (1) Online and Distance Education, (2) School Management, (3) Health Protocols, (4) Engagement and Collaboration, (5) School Activities, (6) Formation, (7) Resources, and (8) Lasallian Ethos.

**1. ONLINE AND DISTANCE EDUCATION**

Lasallian schools across the globe transitioned to distance and online modalities, including in its instructional delivery, meetings, and supervision of Lasallian and pedagogical practices. The pandemic provided an opportunity to develop online curricula and implement more innovative teaching strategies. Schools acquired new digital resources, invested in new technological infrastructure, and deployed technology to aid instructional delivery. The school community members were also trained in the use of digital tools for learning.

**2. SCHOOL MANAGEMENT**

To ensure that students’ learning would continue despite the pandemic, Lasallian schools implemented work-from-home arrangements. There were adjustments in class sizes, scheduled face-to-face classes, the management of sports and arts classes, and the reopening of schools. School leaders adjusted their management approach, implemented subsidiarity through delegation of authority, introduced new monitoring systems for learning, and made processes leaner. They started planning school operations for different scenarios (virtual, blended, face-to-face). Some schools similarly organized their digital marketing and communications.

### **3. HEALTH PROTOCOLS**

Lasallian schools complied with their respective governments' suspension of face-to-face classes for certain periods of time, as well as the implementation of health measures and protocols.

### **4. ENGAGEMENT AND COLLABORATION**

Engagement and meetings among the members of the school communities continued through social media and other online means of communication. Collaborative work methods intensified, as well as support for teachers. Parents were more involved in accompanying their children in school activities. Teachers participated in global learning opportunities.

### **5. SCHOOL ACTIVITIES**

In view of the pandemic, school events and activities were either reduced, cancelled, or transitioned onto online platforms.

### **6. FORMATION**

Lasallian school leaders facilitated reflective and spiritual activities, along with formation programs and liturgies, through an online modality. Self-care was emphasized to ensure the well-being of the Lasallian community.

### **7. RESOURCES**

Lasallian administrators cut school expenses to the minimum. Some schools provided accommodations to school community members, as needed.

### **8. LASALLIAN ETHOS**

Despite the pandemic, some Lasallian schools gave preferential attention to students or families in vulnerable situations.

**Question 3: What implications, if any, did your decisions or changes have on other aspects of the school operations, atmosphere, or general school life?**

The decisions or changes implemented by the Lasallian institutions to address the COVID-19 pandemic brought about both positive and negative consequences or implications, as indicated by the respondents. The positive consequences include different spaces for accompaniment, implementation of continuous teacher training, manifestation of teachers' ardent zeal, sense of community, new atmosphere for teaching and learning, exploration and provision of resources, collaboration, family support, development of resilience, adaptation, and protection of children, among others. However, there were negative consequences such as delays in the school calendar and activities, very low teacher morale, reports on students experiencing depression and anxiety, isolation and gaps in the community, parents' distrust about distance education, and lost ministries, among others. Part of the highlights of those implications that can be linked with the negative consequences are the increased need for mental health and counseling services, the need for pastoral support, and the need for decisions that are not only based on science but are also based on a sensitive eye toward others.

**Question 8: As you look at the general experience of the Lasallian ministries in your District during this pandemic, how well have your institutions been able to address the general schooling needs of the students.**

On a ten-point scale where 1 means "Very Poorly" and 10 means "Very Well", the Spanish language group gave themselves an overall average rating of 8.54, followed by the English language group with 7.18, and then by the French language group with an overall average rating of 7.0. Some respondents opted to justify their ratings by mentioning the same things that they had already mentioned in question no. 2.

**Question 9: What kinds of things have made a major difference in being successful in the area of school management during the pandemic?**

For this survey question, a seven-item checklist was used in which the respondents may tick all that applied to them. The list included the following items, all of which could make a major difference in the successful response in the area of school management during the pandemic:

- A. Good leadership in the schools
- B. Ongoing consultation and collaboration with other Lasallian institutions
- C. Strategic support from District and Regional leadership

- D. Financial help when it was needed
- E. Digital literacy and training of the teachers
- F. Student access to technological and digital devices
- G. Communal (and personal) prayer, reflections, conversations, interactions, etc.

Across the three language groups, the item that received the highest number of votes is “good leadership in the schools.” Good school leadership has something to do with adapting to crisis situations and identifying affirmative actions required to ensure that no one is left behind. On the other hand, the item that received the lowest number of votes is “financial help when it was needed.” Only one respondent elaborated that their Regional Council had provided financial assistance to the Lasallian ministries.

## **THE RAINBOW AND THE HOPE FOR THE MISSION:** *(Covering questions 4, 5, and 10)*

I have set my rainbow in the clouds,  
and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth.  
Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds,  
I will remember my covenant between me and you and all li-  
ving creatures of every kind. (Genesis 9:13-15)

The global disaster may be over, and so is was with the story of Noah. A rainbow was set in the clouds to immortalize an everlasting covenant that God made with the rest of the creatures on the earth; and the rainbow is still with us today - to stay.

“Here I am! What do you want me to do?” These were the words of the Founder upon his return to the Brothers of Paris from Parménie. After all that had happened, the mission has continued up to this very day, after more than 340 years. The humility and dedication of the Founder immortalize to today’s generation the profound, living tradition of the Lasallian mission of education. Crises in the mission do come, and they may stay for a while. But the mission remains.

The rainbow in the story of Noah reminds us of a powerful and yet loving God. The Founder’s rainbow consists of the lives of men and women, changed and renewed by the kind of education that is called “Lasallian.” The COVID pandemic is just one crisis, although of great magnitude. But greater than this is the hope that we have in God, who remains with us and will always be with us every step of the way.

For us 21st-century Lasallians, our rainbow will come from the 2021 AIMEL Assembly and the 2022 General Chapter where the delegates will collectively envision and chart the course of the Lasallian Mission during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. To help frame the upcoming reflections and conversations, the research team extracted the recurring themes based on the responses to survey questions 4, 5, and 10. These themes were integrated into a set of recommendations that revolve around ten general categories: (1) Collaboration, (2) Lasallian Ethos, (3) Resource Sharing, (4) Effective School Management, (5) Formation, (6) Online Education, (7) Quality Assurance, (8) Varied School Activities, (9) Student Involvement, and (10) School Professional Development.

**Question 4: As you look to the future, what have you learned about your school’s management that will help you and others in the years ahead?**

**Question 5: Is there anything specific that you would like to communicate or recommend to the delegates of AIMEL and the General Chapter related to the management of schools?**

**Question 10: What question did we not ask? Please state the question and your response to that question.**

**1. ON COLLABORATION:**

- 1.1 Foster a culture of collaboration among Lasallian stakeholders in solving evolving problems. International Lasallian gatherings such as AIMEL and the General Chapter should be a venue to create a shared strategic plan.
- 1.2 A common platform should be created for delivering a Lasallian system of education, facilitating benchmarking, and networking among schools, as well as enabling global interaction, collaborative projects, and the exchange of learning among teachers and students, preferably by discipline areas.
- 1.3 Develop home-school partnerships that will support online education. Establish inter-congregational dialogue to build new alliances.

## **2. ON LASALLIAN ETHOS:**

- 2.1 Propose strategies to strengthen Lasallian identity and spirituality in a complex, challenging, and changing world.
- 2.2 Emphasize the centrality of the human person in the Lasallian educational model, the educators' special role in bringing about educational fraternity, and the creation of a just and humane society.
- 2.3 Recommend practical ways to incorporate the ideals in the 2020 Declaration on the Lasallian Educational Mission into day-to-day school management, particularly in the academe's participation in the evangelization, formation, and social solidarity projects within the local Church.

## **3. ON RESOURCE SHARING:**

- 3.1 Propose strategies to make educational resources available for students or families in vulnerable situations, and share unused resources with schools in developing countries.
- 3.2 Provide help in building more private schools in order to ensure educational opportunities for the most needy.
- 3.3 Set aside funds or a special budget for possible emergency situations or disasters.

## **4. ON EFFECTIVE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT:**

- 4.1 Encourage schools to think beyond the current reality and ensure that Lasallian education will emerge stronger than before the pandemic. Schools should ideally maximize the potential of digital marketing.
- 4.2 Envision flexible and enabling structures that will be responsive to the dynamic and multi-faceted management of schools. Ensure that there is regular consultation, planning and feedback mechanism that engage all stakeholders in the school community.
- 4.3 Create a bank of pedagogical, administrative, and economic experiences that will aid better decision making and enrich the activities of the Districts.

## **5. ON FORMATION:**

- 5.1 Propose strategies that ensure the integral formation of teachers and school leaders, capacitate them for 21st century education, and empower them to be attentive to the needs of their students.

- 5.2 There should be a systematic way to keep track of the professional and Lasallian formation of teachers, administrators, etc.
- 5.3 Create a roadmap as a guide for the formation of Lasallian educators and school leaders.

#### **6. ON ONLINE EDUCATION:**

- 6.1 Appropriately invest in information systems and technologies as a new area that is critical, strategic, and essential to the future of Lasallian education.
- 6.2 Offer training opportunities in Computer Science for Brothers or laypersons who will lead the development of online courses in the Districts. Set up an online network for teaching to facilitate communication between richer and poorer Lasallian schools.
- 6.3 Introduce the use of TV channels or TV network programs as an alternative learning resource.

#### **7. ON QUALITY ASSURANCE:**

- 7.1 Mandate regular academic and financial audits in schools.
- 7.2 Ensure appropriate monitoring, research, evaluation of learning, and new educational models. The results of these should be used to improve ineffective systems.
- 7.3 Design an evaluation study on the effectiveness of online education in Lasallian schools, with a focus on the readiness and training of teachers, the level of their mental threshold in relation to the use of digital devices, and IT personnel's motivation and training.

#### **8. VARIED SCHOOL ACTIVITIES:**

- 8.1 Visualize sports, culture, and extracurricular activities as vital components of students' integral formation and opportunity areas for the recruitment of students with different skills and qualities.
- 8.2 Enhance non-academic programs (e.g., sports, cultural, and other service-related activities) that have social development impact.
- 8.3 Ensure the sustainability of non-academic programs for students.

## 9. ON STUDENT INVOLVEMENT::

- 9.1 Provide a global platform that will support the publication of written reflections by Lasallians on effective strategies for dealing with the multi-faceted effects of the pandemic.
- 9.2 Invite Lasallian student alumni to publish via the global platform.

## 10. ON SCHOOL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

- 10.1 All school professional development programs and activities should be at the forefront and be more proactive in the institutional response to the COVID-19 pandemic

## CONCLUSION

How are you doing? How are you coping?

The responses to the COVID Survey are concrete answers by people serving the Lasallian mission today. They provide us with a clear picture of the situation of school management in their Districts and schools as the COVID pandemic hit them.

The present COVID pandemic is a global disaster that affects the Lasallian mission of education worldwide. Looking at the results, there are sufficient reasons to be concerned about our future.

But in moments like this, we remind ourselves of the “belly of the big fish,” inviting us to prayer and solitude, to the ark that renews life, and to the rainbow that gives hope to us.

From the hopeful responses of the participants of this survey, COVID may be seen from a different light. This is the light of our **COURAGEOUS OUTLOOK** towards a **VISION** of the Lasallian Mission under the guidance of God’s **DIVINE** Providence.

Live Jesus in our Hearts... Forever!

Viva Jesús en nuestros corazones... ¡Por siempre!

Vive Jesus dans nos cœurs, ...a jamais

Manahan nawa si Hesus sa aming mga puso...Magpakailanman!











**Brothers of  
the Christian  
Schools**

**La  Salle**