

19.3 REPORT 2: DEPUTIES CHRISTIAN EDUCATION – INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS AND HOME SCHOOLING (Art 138)

- A. Dr DJ de Kock tables the Report.
- B. The Report will be concluded during the Synod session.

C. REPORT

1. Mandate

- 1.1 The to-be-appointed Deputies receive the assignment to liaise with Aros and similar institutions to exploit and introduce existing resources (Acta 2012:223, 3.1).
- 1.2 The to-be-appointed Deputies nominate a person / persons to liaise with various institutions involved with public and independent Christian education / home schooling, e.g. VCHO, ARSO/Aros, ARTO, BCVO, ERCO, Fedzas and SAOU with a view to assisting where possible (Acta 2012:223, 3.2).
 - (*ERCO no longer exists*)
- 1.3 The to-be-appointed Deputies provide Church Councils with information so that they can introduce ARSO's textbooks to schools in their area (Acta 2012:223, 3.3).
- 1.4 Church Councils are urged to earnestly support / cooperate with service organizations (such as ARSO/Aros/BVCO etc.) who promote Christian education (Acta 2012:223, 3.4).
- 1.5 Church Councils are requested to give the responsibility to a church member to sign up on Aros' facebook page. This member is asked to convey relevant information to the Church Council in order to keep abreast of among others the development of education law and policy (Acta 2012:224, 3.5).
- 1.6 Church Councils are called to pray that God will bless the intentions of the Aros service bureau for the expansion and development of schools to build up of His kingdom (Acta 2012:224, 3.6).
- 1.7 Church Councils are requested to, in light of the expansion and innovative education initiatives by the Aros service bureau, allocate one mandatory collection per year for the development of lesson material by AROS until the next Synod (2015).
[See 13.3 in Acts – Acts Deputies], (Acta 2012:224, 3.7).
- 1.8 Church Councils are requested to introduce the books of ARSO/Aros at schools in their area and recommend that they purchase these (Acta 2012:224, 3.8).
- 1.9 Church Councils are encouraged to, in terms of CO, art 21, and with reference to the baptism promises, show covenantal parents on their responsibility concerning the content of their children's textbooks and to equip them (Acta 2012:224, 3.9).
- 1.10 Local Church Councils should note that Aros can assist in the assessment of specific textbooks and that parents may contact Aros in this regard (Acta 2012:224, 3.10).

Decision: Points 1.1 to 1.10 noted.

2. Matters that the Synod take note of

2.1 Concerning ARSO

- 2.1.1 Nationally there are a dozen schools or small schools with about a thousand learners combined, mostly nursery and primary school children, who are members of ARSO ("Aksie Gereformeerde Skoolonderwys"), but there is a huge potential to establish more such schools. Many church buildings have the right facilities for this.
- 2.1.2 Last year a community school, *ARSO Derdepoort*, was established in the Reformed Church Derdepoort. The school is a missionary model, and the intention is to clone this model. However, this requires the cooperation of church councils, religious workers and financiers.
- 2.1.3 On 11 June 2014 ARSO entered a new phase when they were formally unbundled from AROS. ARSO will now operate as one of the four legs of the "Instituut van Christelike onderwys". The "Instituut van Christelike onderwys" deals with:

- 2.1.3.1 ARSO schools
- 2.1.3.2 Non-ARSO schools (public and private)
- 2.1.3.3 Curriculum development
- 2.1.3.4 Education Services Office

Churches are encouraged to make use of the “Instituut van Christelike onderwys” for advice and guidance.

- 2.1.4 As a Reformed higher education training institution, AROS has grown over the past ten years to have more than 600 students in 2014, and this growth is expected to continue. Currently AROS only trains prospective junior primary teachers, but hopes to offer other qualifications in the future. The majority of these students report that they are members of the Dutch Reformed Church (45%), 8% are Reformed, Apostolic (including Doxa Deo) is 9%, the Netherdutch Reformed Church of Africa (NHKA) is 6%, followed by members of a wide variety of charismatic and other denominations (even two Roman Catholics). The students receive four years' (compulsory) Biblical Studies and Doctrine of Faith and Normative Education. It is a privilege for AROS to be able to expose these students to the Reformed doctrine. AROS also sees itself as a continuation of the line that deals with the practice of Christian science.

AROS has already applied to the Council on Higher Education to expand the qualifications they offer from BEd (foundation phase) to BEd (intermediate phase) and a diploma for nursery school teachers.

- 2.1.5 In 2013 the “Onderwys Teologiese Vereniging” (OTV) was established. In cooperation with the Faculty of Theology of the Potchefstroom Campus of the NWU, they offer the NWU BTh degree to prospective teachers and others. In this way the OTV hopes to provide students with a solid theological foundation to build upon. In 2014 there were two students who in the future will hopefully be able to contribute greatly, especially with the upgrade and expansion of a Christian curriculum.
- 2.1.6 A database of about 2000 Christian teachers in the country has been compiled, but not yet optimally exploited.

2.2 *Concerning the BCVO*

- 2.2.1 The BCVO currently provides approximately 40 member schools and 10 non-member schools with a complete education service, namely, curriculum development, standardization, assessment, training, Bible Education, Sports and Culture. There are currently about 3 000 children enrolled with the BCVO.
- 2.2.2 The foundation of the BCVO lies in the practice and promotion of the Biblical Christian Reformed Calvinistic beliefs as outlined in the three formularies of unity and in the cultural experience of the Afrikaner, which is also inherently part of the church history of the Reformed Churches in South Africa. By exercising our culture we recognize and honour God who, in His eternal counsel, decided to establish people here and to refine them. We see this particularly in the vow of Jan van Riebeeck, the fleeing of the Protestants from the tribal homelands, the Great Trek, the vow at Blood River and many other examples. This stands in stark contrast to the pagan satanic practices and cultures where ancestors are worshiped and witchdoctors are honoured.
- 2.2.3 In the BCVO schools Biblical Education is a compulsory promotional subject in all grades and God's omnipotence and providence is pointed out to the children and strengthened in all subjects.
- 2.2.4 The BCVO actively protests against the current school system where all religions are treated as equal and where our children are expected to participate in pagan practices. Also against a system where evolution is taught as "the only logical truth" and therefore the omnipotence of God is denied. This stands in stark contrast to our confession that God created everything out of nothing through his Word.

- 2.2.5 In the CVO schools LO (Life Orientation) has been replaced with CLO (Christian life orientation) so that our children are not taught about human rights and the haughtiness of man, but about our serviceability to God and our neighbour, and our stewardship according to the creation command.
- 2.2.6 BCVO currently serves several schools in smaller and remote towns where education in the local public schools have completely decayed. Here we also serve many children who are financially unable pay high school fees. Therefore, it is often difficult for schools to survive financially.
- 2.2.7 The BCVO maintains a good relationship with all the local churches with a reformed confession. This is put into practice by inviting reverends to observe openings and even to be part of the Bible education.
- 2.2.8 The ageing teaching corps is a major concern and the schools are finding it increasingly difficult to find well-qualified teachers in certain subjects, especially in Mathematics, Science, Accounting and English.
- 2.2.9 The BCVO requests all believers for prayer and assistance in the great task to advance Christian Reformed education in a society where sports and humanism has become more important than faith and serviceability.
- 2.3 *Concerning Home Schooling.*
The Deputies have done no work in this regard.
- 2.4 *General trends in education*
- 2.4.1 The shortage of qualified teachers in the country continues. The capacity of tertiary institutions to provide in this deficit is much less than the number of newly-qualified students who become teachers every year. Although the Department of Higher Education and Training's White Paper of November 2013 contains prospects of the establishment of teacher training colleges (back to the old normal colleges), it is not something that will be done soon, and will take much longer to show results. The deficit gives a Reformatory institution like AROS opportunity to train students from God's Word to exercise great influence in the community through a Christian curriculum.
- 2.4.2 The extent of private/independent education/schools continues to increase, but unfortunately not where Christian private education is concerned. Private education is becoming more and more of an elite education for rich people's children, regardless of colour. The private sector makes use of the need for good education by erecting more and more schools (for example, the Curro Group). Christian school groups like ARSO and BCVO schools have mixed results that vary from place to place.
- 2.4.3 In addition it should be mentioned that the toxicity against Christianity (and against independent education) that up to a few years ago was clearly noticeable in government circles, looks as if it has been reduced, especially on an informal level. Of this we can gratefully take note.
- 2.4.4 The February and the March issue of *Die Kerkblad* published a total of 15 articles on the importance of Reformed education. There were a number of insights and conclusions, but Deputies are asking themselves the question of how to bring all this into practice.
Examples of a few conclusions: That the Christian teacher is called upon to stand firm; That children should learn not to think and live apart from God and His Word in respect of all activities and subjects; How important a loving bond is between teacher and child; The teacher must cultivate love for God, his Word and his creation; That teachers should be examples and mentors; That parental involvement is a requirement; That Church Councils play an important role regarding education in terms of supervision, equipping, activation, promotion of cooperation; That the hands of Christian teachers should be strengthened; That Reformed private schools should develop from nursery schools; That teachers' and theological education should be more closely connected; That reverends should also become involved in education;

That the Reformed should give active support to public and private schools, partnerships, and that new forms of education and the use of modern technology should be researched and utilized.

Some more practical applicable thoughts were for example: that parents and churches should become more involved in schools and in reformatory education initiatives; That service groups to promote Reformed education be formed in congregations; That the correct initiatives should be funded and supported, like through the establishment of a trust.

- 2.4.5 It is the Deputies' conviction that if church members and churches do not give more attention to the Reformed education and training of youth in public and private schools, the future of the GKSA looks dark, from a human's perspective. Therefore, much more attention and energy and resources are necessary.

Decision: Points 2.1 to 2.4.5 noted.

3. Matters that the Synod decide on

- 3.1 That congregations are called upon to pray for our Father's grace for education in South Africa.
- 3.2 That parents are called upon to become actively involved in the education and training of the youth in public and private schools.
- 3.3 That AROS is requested to continue its work of training teachers on a Christian foundation and further expand it to the establishment of a free Reformed Higher Education Training institution.
- 3.4 That the to-be-appointed Deputies continue to liaise with institutions involved in public and independent Christian education and home schooling, with the aim informing congregations about this and assisting them.

Decision: Points 3.1 to 3.4 approved with great thanks.