

**Ethos, Education and Training:
Avenues toward equality and ethical behaviors in the digital era
Seventh Consultation Meeting**

**Milan, January 30th – 31st, 2020
Catholic University of the Sacred Heart**

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Development, equity, ethics are the levers of all of mankind's advancements.

But let me be more precise.

By development I mean lasting social and economic progress. A simple recovery from a negative phase of the economic cycle, even a slump - such as the one some countries suffered after the financial crisis of twelve years ago - is not enough to qualify as development. Development is a universal concept, not limited to emerging countries. Using a car metaphor, it means having a powerful and elastic engine and running at high speed, not having a weak engine just capable of pushing the car at walking pace, like Italy did in the last 25 years. Let's remember that economic and social development go hand in hand: you may have a thriving economy and a blocked society for some years but not for long: that's a repeated lesson in history.

Equity is a goal per se, but it's also a fundamental ingredient of development. A collectivity is equitable when the degree of inequality in the distribution of income and wealth among its individuals is kept under a threshold of social acceptability, and when the opportunity of having a better life than that of one's parents is equally available to every person at her birth and depends only (or mostly) on individual merits, not on the family of origin. President Gros Pietro illustrated in his speech how such conditions were put in question in many countries in the last decades. On the other hand, statistical evidence on the causal link between equity and development tends to prove that countries with a more equitable society produce more economic growth.

Ethics requires a subtler analysis. Ethics is the application, to our ordinary lives, of the moral principles prevailing in the community to which we belong. Those moral principles may descend from a religious creed or from a secular constitution: hence, they may differ from individual to individual, from community to community, but a common core is there: for instance, the "thou shalt not steal" precept. Legality, that is, obeying the law, is an important aspect of ethics. Again, it is a

goal per se, especially in truly democratic societies; but it is also a factor of economic development, and in turn it may be enhanced by the latter, in a virtuous circle.

So, development, equity, ethics are intertwined, sometimes in a two-way relationship. Education underlies all three.

Education, that is the passing from one generation to the other of the available knowledge, has always been central in the evolution of human communities since the Stone Age. But as knowledge became more articulated and specialized it also became exclusive. Only in modern times has education started involving masses of young people, although with differing degrees in different societies. Schools and universities can teach students how to innovate in regard to established points of view and know-how: that, nowadays, is key to any economic development. They can diffuse opportunities of social improvement, thus increasing equity. They can heighten the ethical standards of students, all the more if students are aware that increasing their personal capital of knowledge through education implies, all things being equal, more opportunities in terms of future jobs and earnings.

Should education be more a public or a private concern? For sure, the equity and ethical dimensions of education are public goods, as economists say, requiring public policies. But a warning is needed: equity should not be confused with egalitarianism. Education should always reward individual merits, which seems more in line with a private than a public attitude. However, every member of society should be given the means to acquire knowledge and intellectual capacities, and this has to be predominantly a government's task. Models can vary around the world as to the implementation of such principles - from a totally state-owned education system to an important role for private sector education institutions - but nobody can deny that education is at the center of any advancement of well-being in our societies.

Companies are requested to give their contribution. It's in their own interest, apart from any ethical obligation.

I will make here the case of TIM, the company I represent. TIM is a high-tech company, it competes by using and proposing technological solutions that are at the forefront of research. Just think of 5G! TIM not only needs highly skilled employees but also customers able to understand the nature and value of the services it offers to them. Education and training in the countries where TIM operates are essential.

I will briefly touch upon only four out of TIM's many initiatives currently underway in Italy in the field of education and training: Digital Resurgence and Digital School, directly managed by TIM; TRIS and UniStem projects, funded by TIM Foundation.

Digital Resurgence aims at disseminating basic digital capabilities - in particular how to access and use Internet - among that part of the population that is on the "wrong" side of the digital divide. Trucks are touring more than 100 small cities in Italy offering simple tutorials - often on the street - to bystanders. Our ambition is to reach, directly or indirectly, one million citizens this year. More than 400 trainers, all TIM employees, are involved in this initiative. Public administration's digital services are a special focus of our lessons, thus contributing to their diffusion and success.

The Digital School was created in partnership with the Ministry of University and Research, with the aim of familiarizing school teachers and students with digital tools. This year we want to involve 5,000 girls and boys in secondary schools all over Italy in a program including internet of things, robotics, even notions of programming and computational thinking: the ultimate goal is transforming them from passive to active tech users.

The TRIS project, realized in cooperation with the National Research Council and the National Headmasters Association, addresses a very thorny issue: students who cannot physically get to their school premises because they are seriously ill. The project, started in 2013, promotes the use of technology in order to enable those students to virtually attend online, and take part in the same lessons as their classmates.

Unistem Tour was launched last year in collaboration with the Milan State University. The main objective is to enhance the scientific culture in Italian secondary schools, by putting some of the world's most renowned scientists in contact with thousands of students, throughout the Italian territory.

These are only a few examples, to give you a flavor of the big effort TIM is making in this field. They prove how important the role of companies is and should be in strengthening and imparting youth education and adult training.