

Input

Educational and training challenges: preparing young generations for the future

Consultation *Ethos, Education and Training: Avenues toward equality and ethical behaviors in the digital era*,
CAPP Milan, January 30-31, 2020

Your Eminency, dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

first of all, I would like to thank Prof. Tarantola and the Foundation for inviting me to this consultation and giving me the opportunity to complement Archbishop Zani's remark on Educational and training challenges.

I very much like the three fundamental directions – 1) organizing thought, 2) opening up to the Absolute and 3) developing fraternity – Archbishop Zani pointed out in order to give orientation for the necessary further development and stimulation for Catholic higher education facing the challenges of our time.

These three criteria are very similar to three guiding principles Father Adolfo Nicolás S.J., the former Superior General of the Society of Jesus, highlighted in his prominent key note at the occasion of the first meeting of all nearly 200 worldwide Jesuit Universities in Mexico City, April 2010. The motto of the Conference was “Networking Jesuit Higher Education: Shaping the Future for a Humane, Just, Sustainable Globe”,

Already 10 years ago, in 2010, Fr. Nicolas analyzed the new context of globalization, with the exciting and huge possibilities this new “explosion of interdependence” is providing on the one hand, and the serious (social, ecological and cultural) problems it has brought to our world on the other side.

Father Nicoals invited to consider three distinct but related challenges to the shared mission of Jesuit higher education

- First, promoting depth of thought and imagination.
- Second, re-discovering and implementing “universality” in the Jesuit higher education sector.
- Third, renewing the commitment to learned ministry.

Let me briefly, describe this principles in general and with special regard to economic and business education – because this field is especially important for futures elites and “change actors”, and this is the area I can provide some expertise and experience as an economic ethicist !

I. Depth, Universality, and Learned Ministry

Depth and Organizing Thought are very much similar:

I think Fr. Nicolas was right in analysing globalization as an era of “globalized superficiality” – For all opportunities this “explosion of interdependence” is providing, there is a superficiality of thought, vision, dreams, relationships, convictions at the same time.

There is a need for deeper analysis and reflection to respond to this. Thus, higher education should be committed to foster deeper analysis, reflection and discernment and through this, to promote personal growth. Personal growth refers not only to intellectual development but also the importance of “whole person” education, drawn both from the humanistic tradition as well as Christian anthropology’s emphasis on human dignity.

Our students should be empowered to think critically and

- to use reasonable arguments instead of opinions,
- informed and reasoned values instead of bias,
- substantive commitments instead of convenient action.

This “Depth of thought” finally involves a profound engagement with the real;

The principle of “Universality” could deliver an added-value, especially with regard to an integral perspective:

- Universality underlines the need of interdisciplinary learning – knowing, understanding and critically reflecting the method, and corresponding normative premises of other disciplinaries,
- Transdisciplinary learning: At the same time, it demands to create an integrative process of societal learning and socially relevant knowledge by bringing together various stakeholders.
- Intercultural learning: And thirdly, we need to encourage students to thickly reflect about values by looking at their cultural, historical and philosophical foundations. It enables students to negotiate values in a self-reflective manner, particularly strengthening their ability to enter intercultural and interreligious dialogues

Through this, we encourage our students to engage in society in responsible and thoughtful ways - caring for the world, engaging for the common good in the best sense of the world. This is in my understanding what archbishop Zani called “developing fraternity” or Fr. Nicolas “Learned Ministry”

II. Reframing Economic Theory regarding the Sustainable Development Goals

Let me illustrate this for an integral economic higher education with special regard to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals – through interdisciplinary informed critical reflecting the standard model of economics!

II.1 Questioning the Supply-side Dominance of Neoclassical Growth- and Production Theory (important for SDG 12)

Neoclassical economic theory views growth as predominantly a supply-side phenomenon, and frequently neglects the demand side.

- To ensure that there is a growing demand that equals supply and sustains it, most economists assume, inter alia, that people always prefer to have better quality goods, and more of them.
- Thus, companies have an incentive to produce the goods that match their potential customers' 'insatiable' desires for consumption and possession. If they were to succeed in this, then they would also be able to sell their additional products and realise their profits.
- This postulate of customers' 'insatiable' desires is – against the positivist's claim – not value-neutral; and there is a controversies debate whether it is correct to assume that these insatiable needs exist.
- In any case, the level of propensity to consume is not simply a fixed anthropological value. Obviously, there is a human urge towards the goal to flourish and to leave a good life. But, if we see the need not only for efficiency, but also for sufficiency towards an integral ecology, we need to balance the production and demand side of economy theory and to think more about the consumers preferences in which the neoclassical theory is not interested until now.

II.2 Broadening the simple concept of Human Well-being (important for SDG 9)

Closely connected to this is the need to broaden and to ethically inform the simple economic concept of Human Well-being which also assumes given human preferences which follow the more the better!

The assumption is the simple equation:

land, labour and capital → (generates) income → (enable humans to demand more) goods and services → (which raises) personal well-being

Thanks to the work of nobel prize winner Amartya Sen we need to come to different theories (“Narratives”) of Personal Well-Being: Decisive for human well-being is not simply economic

income, but the capabilities to achieve these goals they strive for (functionings). The assumption is that individual Preferences are not simply given or determined, but we have to understand the mechanism of preference formation, especially also the social influences on preference formation and decision making!

II.3 Broadening the simple concept of Common Goods

“Social Dilemma Structure” of Common goods: “Prisoners’s dilemma” based on rational choice model with “Avoiding Bad” as main strategy

(Conditioned) Cooperation for establishing/preserving Common goods: “Social tipping dynamics” for Transformation; “Change actors” who strive for good (transformative consumption, production, finance)