

Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice Foundation

DUBLIN PROCESS SEVENTH CONSULTATION MEETING ON ETHOS, EDUCATION AND TRAINING: Avenues toward equality and ethical behaviors in the digital era

Short summary A global education agenda Elena Beccalli

Many thanks to the Chairwoman of the Centesimus Annus pro Pontifice Foundation, Anna Maria Tarantola, for inviting me to summarize the debate of the Seventh Consultation, that focused on the role of education and training in fostering new goals and models oriented to solidarity, justice and respect. My role today is to attempt to propose a synthesis of the main outcomes of the closed-end debate in light of the spirit of “dissemination” characterizing the Foundation.

1. EDUCATION AS A STRATEGIC INVESTMENT

To foster a sustainable and integral development in the long-term, it is **strategic to invest in education** as a crucial tool for preparing the younger generations¹, with such a strategic role being a recurrent concept in this seventh consultation. Coherently, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development² (i.e. the UNESCO agenda to wipe out poverty through sustainable development), although full of trade-offs among and within the goals, recognizes that education is essential for the success of all 17 of its goals.

Such strategic role of education arises from the need (i) to elaborate new models of economic and social development, and (ii) to bridge the gap of inequality.

(i) To elaborate new models of development, we need to conceive economics and finance as based on an ethics focused on the person and his relational nature, and not just as a rational economic agent. This means to overcome some common conceptual errors: the reduction of profit to the monetary optimization of income, which forgets goods such as trust, justice and cooperation; the constraint of business within the boundaries of profit maximization, so as to exclude the dimension of gratuity; the reduction of well-being to the accumulation of money, forgetting the quality of life in terms of human relationships.³

To elaborate a new model of development, as noted by the Holy Father in his address to the members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See, adults do not have to abdicate their proper educational responsibilities “in order to guide young people to spiritual, human and social maturity”. We are asked to respond to the invitation of the Holy Father to “serve more”, that Anna Maria Tarantola reminded us at her opening address.

¹ Angelo Vincenzo Zani, *Educational and training challenges: preparing young generations for the future*. Paper prepared for CAPP Foundation 7th Dublin Process consultation, Milan January 30-31, 2020.

² UNESCO, *Education 2030. Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for Implementation of SDG 4*, Paris 2017.

³ Elena Beccalli, Andrea Perrone, *Ma una finanza etica è possibile?*, Vita e Pensiero Plus n. 59, 25 gennaio 2020.

(ii) To bridge the gap of inequality, it is necessary not only to implement innovative economic policies in tax matters and public investment but more importantly to **guarantee access to education**.⁴ Income polarization, and more generally unequal distribution of wealth and social exclusion, is documented in every country over the last decade. Data from the Global Wealth Report 2019 are impressive: 56.6% of population in the world owns 1.8% of global wealth, whereas 1% of population owns 44% of wealth.

Income inequality is clearly associated to different opportunities of access to education. Education makes the difference as a generator of material benefits and social outcomes, and this is supported by many data as well as real life cases discussed during the Consultation Meeting. The most recent UNESCO and International Education Commission report demonstrate that education reduces inequality. In fact, for each additional year of study, the individual income increases by 10% and inequalities in professional careers diminish by 39%. Furthermore, by ensuring all children access to education, per-capita GDP in the poorest countries in the world is expected to increase impressively. In a nutshell, school education promotes growth, reduces poverty and reduces inequalities.

All this highlights the material value creation by higher education, and the monetization of such value. Despite such a documented social and economic value of university education, the future of university education is uncertain due to four main forces (technological innovation, radical professionalization, globalization and the institutional disruption of the knowledge society).⁵

In short, to address the anthropological transformation, the so-called “era of change” due to the evolution of new technologies and sciences, education plays a strategic role in re-thinking categories and frameworks, and in providing appropriate and up-to-date responses. Education becomes a mean of adaptation in a context of unprecedented rapid and radical transformation.

2. THE GLOBAL COMPACT IN EDUCATION

Given the unprecedented rapid and radical transformation, the task for education is challenging, and we all are called to participate in the development of a new educational agenda. To give impulse to this task, the Holy Father promotes next 14 May a meeting on *Reinventing the Global Compact on Education*, with the aim to renew “our dedication *for and with* young people, renewing our passion for a more open and inclusive education, including *patient listening, constructive dialogue* and better *mutual understanding*.”

Given the complexity of the task, as clarifies the Holy Father, we need an educational alliance based on an **educating village** for “an education that integrates and respects all aspects of the person”⁶, combing studies and everyday life, teachers, students and their families, and civil society. In line with the idea to find other ways of envisioning economics, politics, growth and progress, highlighted in the *Oeconomicae et pecuniariae quaestiones*, the human person has to be at the centre of this village. The new education agenda cannot disregard the human person: due to the radical depth of the outcome, this new agenda strikes and commits all institutions involved in the educating village

Following on, the question of the Seventh Consultation Meeting of the Foundation is “whether and how universities and the business and finance communities have the means and tools to educate and train the young and create a working environment conducive to ethical behaviours, keeping in mind not just one’s own interest but that of the common good”⁷,

⁴ GianMaria Gros-Pietro, On the role of companies and banks in education. Paper prepared for CAPP Foundation 7th Dublin Process consultation, Milan January 30-31, 2020.

⁵ Isabel Capelo Gil, The value of values. On Catholic universities today. Paper prepared for CAPP Foundation 7th Dublin Process consultation, Milan January 30-31, 2020.

⁶ Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the launch of the global compact on education, 12 September 2019.

⁷ Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice Foundation, Ethos, Education and Training: Avenues toward equality and ethical behaviors in the digital era. Seventh Consultation Meeting agenda.

3. WHAT IS BEING DONE TODAY WITHIN UNIVERSITIES AND CATHOLIC UNIVERSITIES?

The strong socio-economic, political and cultural pressures require universities to identify responses, and this challenges the very *vocation* of the university. Universities (and especially their teachers and researchers) do not just have to prepare qualified professionals in various disciplines, but also proponents of the common good, and creative and responsible leaders and politicians with a proper vision of the person and the world.⁸ It was said that in higher education we need to be prepared to train not only the best professionals of the words, but also the best professionals for the world, and this is something Catholic universities can do naturally.

To this end, universities are asked to be open to examine the *aims* and *methods* used in their educational mission, and each disciple is asked to question the *why* (that is to reflect on its foundation and purposes). The question is: are we teaching the right things in the right manner? Therefore the question concerns the *what* and the *how*⁹.

As for the *what*, that is the aims of education, as suggested by the Rector of Università Cattolica Franco Anelli at the opening ceremony of the academic year last November, the mission of universities is to “develop new cultural, social and moral codes that bring the person back to the center, [...] This cannot mean abandoning the experimental method in the empirical sciences; rather, we are asked to promote thinking based on value systems that act as terms of reference”¹⁰. In other words, the identity and mission of universities, and especially of Catholic universities, revolves around the proposition “**create value with values**”¹¹, that enlarges the mainstream view of material value creation via education. This requires to address two key questions: “What are we good at?” (namely, to look for truth via research and teaching) and “What are we good for?” (namely, to contribute to the good of society, striving for a deeper dialogue to drive dignified living, in the service of our common house). In a world where traditional jobs are undergoing an unprecedented change, especially Catholic university education should aim to provide adequate skills that may promote the employability not just in current but in future jobs, and should do so by placing our values as a reference.

As for the *how*, that is the methods of education, universities should not reduce education to technical instruction or to simple transfer of concepts and information (that would represent a fragmented education). Universities instead should promote education methods that embrace the three kinds of language: “the language of the mind, the language of the heart and the language of the hands”¹². Therefore, universities should not just develop scientific and theoretical knowledge, but also the students’ conscience and practical abilities.

Relatedly, technological and digital innovation challenges education methods, given that it can rapidly disrupt the medium of instruction, forcing universities to adapt one-to-many presence-based classes to tech pumped methods in many-to-many learning environments.¹³ However, education needs digitalization as a mediator not as an aim per se. Possible advantages in teaching might arise from new technologies. The application of artificial intelligence could be of help to traditional teaching methods, by individualizing the pedagogical approach and by providing an ideal platform especially for mathematical and scientific subjects.¹⁴ The application of blockchain could innovate

⁸ Message of His Holiness Pope Francis at the Forum of the International Federation of Catholic Universities, 4 November 2019.

⁹ Gianmario Verona, Discussion prepared for CAPP Foundation 7th Dublin Process consultation, Milan January 30-31, 2020.

¹⁰ Franco Anelli, *Dall’Università Cattolica un pensiero per il Paese*, Vita e Pensiero n. 1, 2020.

¹¹ Isabel Capeloa Gil, The value of values. On Catholic universities today. Paper prepared for CAPP Foundation 7th Dublin Process consultation, Milan January 30-31, 2020.

¹² Message of His Holiness Pope Francis at the Forum of the International Federation of Catholic Universities, 4 November 2019.

¹³ Isabel Capeloa Gil, The value of values. On Catholic universities today. Paper prepared for CAPP Foundation 7th Dublin Process consultation, Milan January 30-31, 2020.

¹⁴ Angelo Vincenzo Zani, *Educational and training challenges: preparing young generations for the future*. Paper prepared for CAPP Foundation 7th Dublin Process consultation, Milan January 30-31, 2020.

traditional certification systems by enabling the so-called stackable curriculum based on credits; such a solution would create stronger ties to businesses but could also disrupt the very idea of degree. Education needs digitalization also to enable universities to deal with the constant increase in the number of students: according to OECD projections¹⁵, the global population of university graduates is expected to nearly double over this decade to reach 300 million by 2030. To be able to serve such an increased number of students, in light of the global mobility of students, methods based on online courses will be increasingly needed. This determines a challenge for universities: to promote the language of mind, heart and hands, and to avoid emptying the teaching of the personal dimension, universities will need to increasingly integrate the traditional person-to-person methods (based on the direct interaction between students and teacher) with technology mediated approaches and online delivery channels, by imagining innovative and more sophisticated blended methods with the person at the centre.

4. WHAT IS BEING DONE TODAY WITHIN COMPANIES AND BANKS?

The appeal of the Holy Father “for a more open and inclusive education” echoes the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 which aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”, effectively summed up as “leaving no one behind”. For this purpose, companies and banks can play a role by supporting and stimulating public institutions in fostering access to education and lifelong learning, in application of the subsidiarity principle. This role appears especially important in light of the perceived lack of prominence of universities in national strategic planning policies (just consider that in Europe national accounts do not include education in “investments” rather in “consumption”)¹⁶ and in light of the attack on expert culture by disruptive entrepreneurs.

As for the *access to education*, along public intervention, corporate involvement could provide additional resources to private and public educational institutions. This is especially important given that the cost of secondary and university education in many countries has increased beyond the reach of many families. Companies and banks’ initiatives currently span across several lines: (i) financial enabler of access to education; (ii) financial enabler of better education and research; and (iii) recruiting enabler.¹⁷ As for *lifelong learning*, given the extant and rapid professions’ transformation, it is crucial that public and corporate policies help workers to manage the transition with the least possible disruption. Companies and banks’ initiatives currently include: supporting personal talent, favoring the re-skilling or up-skilling via training, and training senior managers to face new business challenges by giving value to knowledge, creativity, cooperation, pro-activity, merit and social impact.

Nevertheless, there is a more general question as to **what research education can do for the corporate sector**. This is especially important because we are in a context with a lack of trust in business: companies continue to increase their engagement on issues of social responsibility, but despite this increased engagement, managers and companies are expected to do more and are not widely trusted. We first need to acknowledge that a certain model of capitalism has failed, and new frameworks are needed. Although profits are still to be considered important, the “shareholder

¹⁵ OECD: Number of degree-holders worldwide will reach 300 million by 2030. 17 July 2019.

¹⁶ Elsa Fornero, Discussion prepared for CAPP Foundation 7th Dublin Process consultation, Milan January 30-31, 2020.

¹⁷ GianMaria Gros-Pietro, On the role of companies and banks in education. Paper prepared for CAPP Foundation 7th Dublin Process consultation, Milan January 30-31, 2020. Gros-Pietro illustrated the following actions taken by the bank where he seats as a chairman: (i) financial enabler of access to education: students’ loans based only on merit with no personal and family’s guarantees, scholarships, financial endowment for chairs; (ii) financial enabler of better education and research: financial support for projects against poor education and the drop out phenomenon, support to teachers via free online platforms to promote innovative teaching approaches, financial support of competence centers, grants for research related projects; and (iii) recruiting enabler: partnerships to enhance job finding, joint recruiting initiatives between companies and universities, orientation projects.

primacy norm” – advocated by Milton Friedman - is put into question. Profits and shareholder values cannot be put aside, but “delivering value to customers”, “investing in employees”, “dealing fairly and ethically with suppliers”, “supporting the communities in which the companies work” (that are the main statements of the US Business Roundtable held last August) represent good policies to maximize the long-term value of a corporation¹⁸, although not always straightforward to achieve in a context of global corporations

Here the intersection with research and teaching in business schools and universities is very evident. It becomes a responsibility of business schools and universities to elaborate and disseminate innovative frameworks that cover a plurality of conceptions of the purpose of the corporation and more in general economics. At this regard, there is no shortage of frameworks alternative to the mainstream shareholder theory; just refer to the idea of social enterprise (“doing well and doing good”); the triple bottom line framework that accounts for people, profits, and planet; Michael Porter’s well-known framework of creating shared value; corporate philanthropy; business and human rights; stakeholder theory; CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility), and the very recent Nien-hê Hsieh “societal value proposition”. These find echoes in the experimental approach for the fight against global poverty by Michael Kremer, Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo, Nobel prizes in economics in 2019; and in the behavioral economics by Richard Thaler, Nobel prize in economics in 2017.

In short, education can help corporations in re-thinking the very concept of enterprise as an entity harmonizing shareholder value with societal value with an ethical focus on the person and common good. Vice versa corporations can help education in application of the subsidiarity principle.

Let me conclude by sharing with you an experiment we are currently conducting at Università Cattolica jointly with the Archdiocese of Milan. Re-thinking the framework for and with young people, we have launched a multi-voice dialogue to enhance the document *Oeconomicae et pecuniariae quaestiones* in an educational perspective. Built as an interdisciplinary project, aimed at all students from all disciplines and appropriately recognized in the university curriculum, the project is based on labs¹⁹, involving together students, academics and industry operators. Students become the pivotal player actively engaged in rethinking economic and financial models, equipped with the necessary tools and guidance.

The response to the proposal was surprising, in terms of quantity and intensity of interest: about 700 students and 80 academics and professionals are participating in the labs. A sign of a desire for reflection and construction, which deserves to be supported with intelligence and decision.

¹⁸ GianMaria Gros-Pietro, On the role of companies and banks in education. Paper prepared for CAPP Foundation 7th Dublin Process consultation, Milan January 30-31, 2020.

¹⁹ The labs deals with twelve thematic areas, associated with the main topics covered by the document such as general issues relating to the purposes and regulation of the financial system, and more specific topics (like good credit practices, social and environmental sustainability and new reporting practices and models of financial biodiversity), without neglecting cutting-edge issues such as cryptocurrencies and FinTech. There is no lack of labs devoted to the political dimension of the financial markets, overcoming inequalities, a critical rethinking of the enterprise's objectives, work, consumption and the relationship between economy and gratuity.