

**Prof. Giovanni Marseguerra:** I am very pleased on behalf of the Foundation's Scientific Committee to welcome all of you to this 2020 edition of the CAPP Consultation. I am particularly pleased to host this meeting in my University and I want myself warmly thank Rector professor Anelli for his hospitality during these two days of our gathering.

Our Foundation, as you all know, along its almost twenty-seven years of life, has constantly worked to spread and endorse Catholic social teaching on economic and social issues of specific relevance. As far as our method of work, we always tried to firmly uphold principles and interpret events in the light of these principles in order to advance new effective operational suggestions. In sum, our work has always been characterized by an effective combination of reflection and implementation.

We are here today to reflect together on the role of education to promote sustainability and human development. Pope Francis in the *Laudato sì* is very clear on the importance of education: "*Good education plants seeds when we are young, and these continue to bear fruit throughout life (Pope Francis, Laudato sì, n. 213). ..change is impossible without motivation and a process of education*" (Pope Francis, *Laudato sì*, n. 15). The strict link between education and the type of human relations prevailing in a society has been emphasized several times by the Holy Father. In His address to our Foundation on May 2018, for example, he is very clear on this: "*The current difficulties and crises within the global economic system have an undeniable ethical dimension: they are related to a mentality of egoism and exclusion that has effectively created a culture of waste blind to the human dignity of the most vulnerable. [.]..the ethical dimension of social and economic interaction cannot be imported into social life and activity from without, but must arise from within. This is, of course, a long-term goal requiring the commitment of all persons and institutions within society*".

Therefore, the key element to build from within an ethical dimension of social and economic interaction is education. In this respect, education is the crucial engine for building a new sustainable

and inclusive economic mode. The point is to identify how education in the digital era might and should contribute to build an inclusive society based on authentic values and integral human development.

In His address to the students of the Jesuit schools of Italy and Albany (June the 7th 2013), so at the very beginning of His pontificate, Pope Francis says: *"In your schools you take part in various activities that accustom you to not retreating into yourselves or into your own small world, but rather to being open to others, especially the poorest and neediest. They accustom you to working hard to improve the world in which we live. Be men and women with others and for others: true champions at the service of others"*.

Thus, education is the fundamental factor of development. No country can achieve sustainable economic development without substantial investment in human capital. Education enriches people's understanding of themselves and world. It improves the quality of their lives and leads to broad social benefits to individuals and society. In the last two decades the world has deeply changed and it is still rapidly changing today. In the light of this, education must also change. The deep transformations that today societies are undergoing everywhere require to conceive new forms of education capable to foster the type of knowledge that societies and economies need today and in the future.

According to a recent publication of UNESCO<sup>1</sup>, in line with a similar definition of the European Science Foundation, knowledge *"may be understood as the way in which individuals and societies apply meaning to experience. It can therefore be seen broadly as the information, understanding, skills, values and attitudes acquired through learning. As such, knowledge is linked inextricably to the cultural, social, environmental and institutional contexts in which it is created and reproduced"*<sup>2</sup>. This means that literacy and numeracy are still necessary but by no means sufficient for a modern education programs. We need to move beyond these elementary pieces of knowledge to focus on

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), *Rethinking Education - Towards a global common good?*, UNESCO publications, Paris, France, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> ibidem, page. 16.

learning environments and on new approaches to learning for greater justice, social equity and global solidarity. Students must learn how to live on a planet under the pressure of climate change and where inequality with its many dimensions is spread everywhere. And must learn the basis of respect and equal dignity to promote, all together, the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

It is worth remembering that climate change is not only one of the 17 Social Development Goals specified in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is one of the most crucial challenge of this century. In the short and medium term is crucial both to correctly identify the correct responses to address this challenge and to implement the appropriate measures necessary to face its adverse impacts. But in the long term, the key element is education. Education may both raise awareness and foster behavioral change for climate change mitigation. Furthermore, the full process of energy transition, i.e. the collective migration to using alternative non-carbon renewable sources, requires to be fueled by an effective education process to promote appropriate individual behavior. In this respect, a change in beliefs and in perceptions is the essential prerequisite. If we are really willing to transform the world within which we live, education has to be at the heart of our approach. As clearly indicate by Pope Francis in the *Laudato si'*: "*Environmental education should facilitate making the leap towards the transcendent which gives ecological ethics its deepest meaning. It needs educators capable of developing an ethics of ecology, and helping people, through effective pedagogy, to grow in solidarity, responsibility and compassionate care*" (n. 210).

In sum, through education we want to build a new social and economic model from the bottom. Finally, let me say that of course a crucial background issue strictly related to education is that of inequality. We live today in a deeply unequal society which in many respects is falling apart. Inequality between young and old, between men and women, between locals and immigrants, between those who have a job and those who don't, between those who have the capabilities to keep up with technological change and those who don't. In this

respect, education is the key element and probably the only effective tool to reduce and eventually eradicate inequality.

On all these issues, we are called to reflect in our meeting today and tomorrow. I am sure that our reflections will contribute to generate the new model of social life which the Holy Father is forcefully supporting and promoting. Thank you.