



**GLOBAL COMPACT  
ON EDUCATION**

*Dicastery for Culture and Education*

**Journal**

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Lectio by Card. J. T. De Mendonça on Education and GCE, at the Opera Sant'Alessandro Foundation in Bergamo

## **EDUCATING TODAY AND TOMORROW. THE CHALLENGES OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

Most Reverend  
Excellency Monsignor  
Francesco Beschi (Bishop  
of the Diocese of  
Bergamo),  
Most Reverend Rector  
Don Emanuele Poletti  
(Rector of the Opera  
Sant'Alessandro),  
Distinguished civil  
authorities, chancellors  
and educational  
coordinators, teachers,  
students, parents and all  
those present.

Let me first of all express  
my joy to be here with you  
today, to reflect together  
on the great educational  
mission entrusted to us,  
and in particular to reflect  
on our educational action  
in the context of the  
Catholic schools in which  
we work.

Indeed, it is important  
every now and then to  
stop and reflect on what  
we are doing, to  
rediscover the founding  
inspirations of our actions.

I was pleased to see that  
for the past two years you have started a training  
course on the theme of the Catholic identity of your  
schools, which is leading you to highlight the 'red  
thread' that holds all your educational projects  
together and that relates to Gospel values.

In this reflection of mine, for the sake of practicality, I  
would like to stick to the five issues that you have  
presented to me in the letter-invitation, and that have  
repeatedly come up among the lecturers. In this way  
I hope to focus on the issues that are priorities for you.

### *1. Identity of the Catholic school*

The first question you raised concerns the identity and  
role of the Catholic school in our time.

This is a central issue and one that I have addressed  
on many occasions during my first year and a half as  
Prefect of the *Dicastery for Culture and Education*.



**FONDAZIONE OPERA  
SANT'ALESSANDRO**  
Qui si diventa grandi.

Lectio magistralis del Cardinale  
**José Tolentino de Mendonça**  
Prefetto del Dicastero  
per la Cultura e l'Educazione

**23  
MARZO**  
ore 14.30

**Auditorium  
Sant'Alessandro**

Via Garibaldi 3/h  
Bergamo



Here, however, I am addressing the issue not at a  
general level, but at a particular one, centred on the  
reality of Lombardy, a land of great educational and  
pastoral tradition. It is enough to recall the great Holy  
Pastors starting from St. Ambrose, St. Charles  
Borromeo, to the recent Holy Popes, St. John XXIII  
from Bergamo and St. Paul VI, protagonists of the  
Vatican Council that promulgated the Declaration  
'*Gravissimum Educationis*' on Christian education (of  
which next year is the 60th anniversary).

Among the 22 Saints of the Church of Bergamo,  
several were educators. We would also like to  
mention some founders of congregations with an  
educational charisma, such as St Girolamo Emiliani  
(in whose schools Alessandro Manzoni and St Luigi  
Guanella, among many others, studied), St Paola  
Elisabetta Cerioli (whose son Carlo was the first pupil

of your school Sant'Alessandro), St Luigi Palazzolo and others. This pastoral and educational wealth has for centuries forged the culture and soul of the people of Lombardy and Bergamo, faithfully anchored to their Christian traditions.

The context, however, as you have pointed out, is changing radically, and as in many other parts of Europe, Lombardy is becoming increasingly multicultural and characterised by a complexity from the point of view of the sociology of the religious. I think that precisely for these reasons there is even more urgency for the presence of the Catholic school, which in various contexts, becomes the last channel for interfacing with today's young people and their families. It is necessary for us as leaders and educators to present ourselves with a clear identity and not be afraid to offer our Christian proposal, without wanting to exclude or condition those who think differently. Parents who enrol their children in our Catholic schools know, or must know, that what we propose is education according to the style and vision of Jesus, and if we cannot demand from them an adherence to the Christian faith, we can however demand respect for it and affirm our right/duty to propose it in our schools.

The multiculturalism that characterises our school environments must be seen, as Pope Francis often repeats, not as an obstacle, but as a possibility that opens the hearts and minds of our students (and us educators) to a world dimension, helping us to overcome the localism underlying our way of thinking and educating. We have the mission of educating the future citizens of the world who, right from the school benches, must learn to coexist and dialogue with each other.

If so many students and families in our school world seem indifferent to religious questions, this is no reason to keep silent about what Pope Francis calls the 'truths that give meaning to life'. We can and must engage in an open dialogue with them on fundamental existential questions, such as the question of truth. In the face of the babbling of our interlocutors who search in a fumbling search for answers regarding the question of truth, we confidently propose the figure of Christ, Way-Truth-Life, because the search for truth on our part is always accompanied by the certainty that we already know the source of truth, as St John Paul II tells us in "Ex corde Ecclesiae" (No. 1) and we are reminded by the Instruction "The Identity of the Catholic School. For a Culture of Dialogue" (2022. no. 20).



This last 'Instruction' also reminds us that the Catholic school, while having a Christian inspiration, must nevertheless be a 'school for all, especially the weakest' (§22). There are Catholic schools, especially

in areas of the Islamic world, where more than 90% of the students are not Catholic. Another interesting fact is that 40% of students in Catholic schools are African. This multicultural and multi-religious component of our schools is an opportunity to make them a laboratory of peaceful coexistence and respect for diversity (the subtitle of the Instruction 'The Identity of the Catholic School' is properly: 'For a culture of dialogue'). The Instruction also reminds us that in order to open a Catholic school and to obtain and maintain recognition of this title, the consent of the competent ecclesiastical authority, which is the bishop, is necessary (§56), while the Holy See, through the Dicastery for Culture and Catholic Education, will have a subsidiary responsibility by helping Catholic schools to fulfil their mission (§65).

## 2. The centrality of the Christ figure in our educational action.

And here I immediately connect to the second question you raised about how Christ can be a reference point for our educational projects?

We have already anticipated the answer: the centrality of Christ in our educational action is founded in the truth that He is the Way-Truth-Life. This is not a dogmatism that we want to impose, but it is the reason for our life that we want to propose to everyone as a gift. Starting from this assumption motivates and orients our educational commitment.

In our schools, we can never ignore the figure of Jesus Christ who is central not only to the Church's pastoral action, but also to its educational action. The Instruction on the Identity of Catholic Schools emphasises that 'the educational action pursued through schools is not a philanthropic work of the Church to support a social need, but an essential part of her identity and mission' (§10). The Church's identity is the Gospel and its mission is to evangelise. The identity of the Catholic school therefore is the Gospel and its mission is to evangelise. This does not mean proselytising but proposing the Gospel values that are valid for all.

We, as Christians working in the world of education, must also be attentive to the educational proposals made at the international level. An important impetus for educational reform was provided by the Report to Unesco by the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century - '*In Education a Treasure*'. It emphasises the role of education for personal and social development and for building relationships between individuals, groups and nations. This Report launches the four famous and successful pillars of education that should inspire school reforms and teacher training curricula for the third millennium: 1) learning to know; 2) learning to do; 3) learning to be; 4) learning to live together with others. The Report also emphasises the idea of lifelong education.

The educational projects of our Catholic schools are based on the conciliar declaration '*Gravissimum educationis*' (1965) and the more recent '*Global Compact on Education*' (2019). Pope Francis, at a meeting on the **Global Compact on Education**, also points to 4 principles of education: "The fundamental principle of 'know thyself' has always guided education, but it is necessary not to neglect other essential principles: 'know thy brother', to educate in

the acceptance of the other (cf. *Brothers All; Document on Human Brotherhood*, Abu Dhabi, 4 February 2019); "know creation", to educate to care for the common home (cf. Enc. *Laudato si'*) and "know the Transcendent", to educate to the great mystery of life. We are concerned with an integral formation that is summed up in knowing oneself, one's brother, creation and the Transcendent". "Knowing the Transcendent" translates in our Catholic schools into knowing Jesus Christ, who for us is not an optional extra or one proposal among many, but is the central figure of our educational action.

### 3. Teachers

Let us now turn to the third topic you proposed, which concerns Catholic school teachers.

The pedagogist Giuseppe Vico of the Catholic University of Milan had already warned several years ago that the crisis in education has deep roots in contemporary culture and is also a consequence of the crisis of educators. He had characterised the contemporary era as the era of the 'ontological desert', of the 'eclipse of reason' understood as the lack of education to autonomous thinking, values and affectivity. Ideologies have replaced the rationality of the individual; science does not deal with the ultimate and supreme problems, it has nothing to say about the 'misery of our life' and the meaning of human existence. Science does not deal with the question of truth, but only with what is useful, here and now, questioning the transcendental dimensions of life. This has led to a horizontalisation of existence, to a closure of the horizons of freedom and truth narrowed down into the anguish of empirical life, to a 'crisis of ends' that is a symptom of the crisis of ethics and the attempt to annul metaphysics. Rationality is reduced to its mathematical expression. With the 'death of God' everything becomes possible, and indeed everything has been possible.

Pedagogy, in the face of ideologies, was unable to develop strong ideas on the truth-freedom relationship, but fell victim to ignorance of ends, or the false idea of ends. This is how, after the Second World War, we went from dictatorship to consumerism. A society without meaningful horizons was created and education was unable to oppose anything to the new ideologies: only silence. The crisis was ethical. An 'ethics of change' that can overcome the prejudices of post-modernity and limit the domination and violence of technology is becoming more urgent today. It is necessary for rationality to become critical again, overcoming scepticism, in order to find new reasons. In the same way, pedagogy must be able to present new educational projects guided by strong ideals, in order to make the question of truth re-emerge and re-propose the question of the ends of education. The crisis of ends is linked to the crisis of educators who are not driven by strong ideals, who do not seriously question themselves on the question 'why live' and who have nothing for which it is really worth giving their lives.

Just remember Franz Kafka whose death centenary falls this year: his novels are a metaphor for the paradox and absurdity of contemporary man's life. Pedagogy cannot resign itself to this logic and endorse the idea of an education devoid of great ideals. A fundamental principle of education is the one

launched by Pope Francis: 'Know the Transcendent, to educate to the great mystery of life'. The Holy Father recalls the duty of educators to transmit the truths that give meaning to life.

### 4. The spiritual motivations of our work

You ask me as a fourth point: "What are the spiritual motivations to fuel our work?".

I think that the main motivations can be found in a '*theology of education*' that seeks to combine the dimensions of the pedagogical sciences with the educational ideals we find in Holy Scripture. I therefore invite you to continuous training ("*lifelong learning*") that nourishes not only your scientific preparation but also the spiritual and theological dimension of education. Let us not forget that ours is not only a profession, but above all a mission. *The theology of education* will be of great help both in schools and in university pastoral work.

Another equally valid 'motivation' to nourish our work is in my opinion the one launched by Pope Benedict XVI and taken up strongly by Pope Francis of the '*Via pulchritudinis*': educating to beauty is one of the highest and most stimulating ways of educating.



In a message to young people on the occasion of a meeting on the **Global Compact on Education**, Pope Francis invites them to enter into a '**Global Pact of Beauty**'. I would like to quote some intense passages from this message that I consider very motivating for our educational work: "Dear young people, let your beauty emerge! Not the one according to the fashions of the world, but the real one. In a world suffocated by so much ugliness, may you bring that beauty that has always belonged to us, from the first moment of creation, when God made man in his own image and saw that he was very beautiful. This beauty must be spread and defended. Because if it is true, as Prince Myškin said in Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*, that beauty will save the world, we must be vigilant so that the world saves beauty. To this end, I invite you to enter into a '**global pact of beauty**' with all the youth of the world, because there is no education without beauty. "You cannot educate without inducing beauty, without inducing the heart to beauty. Forcing the issue a little, I would dare say that an education is not effective if it does not know how to create poets. The path of beauty is a challenge that must be faced". These words are also addressed to us educators: one cannot educate without inducing beauty. The Pope continues his message by specifying what kind of beauty we need to educate to: "The beauty we are talking about is not that bent on itself, like Narcissus



who, falling in love with his own image, ended up drowning in the lake where he was reflected. We are talking about that beauty that never fades because it is a reflection of divine beauty: for our God is inseparably good, true and beautiful. And beauty is one of the privileged ways to reach Him'.

The Pope says that 'an education is not effective if it does not know how to create poets', and by poets he means artists of every art and not just of the word. Your land of Bergamo is home not only to great saintly pastors and educators, but also to great artists, and it would suffice to mention just a few names such as the painter Michelangelo Merisi known as Caravaggio, the musician Gaetano Donizetti, the sculptor Giacomo Manzù, the film director Ermanno Olmi, etc. Our Catholic schools should deepen their knowledge of the spirituality underlying the works of these artists, which can certainly become a reason for a very fruitful



educational itinerary and a stimulus for the emergence of new artistic sensibilities among our students. In the same way, we should encourage the development of artistic-educational itineraries that help decode the artistic heritage to teach children and young people to appreciate art and cultural heritage, including the religious heritage.

##### 5. Great challenges

The last question you raised concerns how to face the great challenge of Pope Francis' **Global Compact on Education**. Launched by the Pope in 2019, the GEP is a major project still in the growth and development phase, which has already sparked worldwide, an awakening of attention to the major issues of education. Pope Francis has sensed that the world will change through education, but it is first necessary to change education. From an education based on the idea of competitiveness and excellence for only a few, to an education based on the idea of solidarity and excellence for all. This is why the Holy Father invited all those working in the world of education and culture to form a global alliance to educate the younger generations in universal brotherhood. How to face this great challenge? By embracing it with enthusiasm and studying it in detail in order to apply it to one's own school or educational organisation. To the young people at WYD in Lisbon Pope Francis said: "I invite you to study the **Global Compact on Education** and become passionate about it" and so I too relaunch this invitation of the Pope to all of you: Study the **Global Compact on Education** and become passionate about it, you will discover how it will be an

extraordinary opportunity to renew your schools and your educational mission. To achieve the goal of universal brotherhood, Pope Francis indicates the seven paths on which we must all commit ourselves: put the person at the centre of our educational action; listen to the younger generations so as not to draw educational projects according to our visions that do not correspond to those of our recipients; promote the presence of women not only in the number of students, but also in the number of leaders and teachers in the various educational organisations; make the family more responsible by making it aware that it is the first educator of its children; open up to welcoming especially the most fragile so that no one is left out; study new ways of understanding the economy, politics, development and progress at the service of mankind and finally take care of the common home with serious policies and more ecological choices.

Two years after Pope Francis' **Education Compact**, Unesco is launching the new **Social Contract for Education** in 2021, which traces many of the themes of the *Global Compact on Education*, such as education to the principles of cooperation and solidarity, attention to ecology, valuing teachers, inclusion, equity, and involving everyone in building the future of education.

In detail, the recent Unesco Report, entitled "Re-imagining our futures together: a new social contract for education", indicates the areas for immediate action: 1) Transforming pedagogy through cooperation and solidarity, abandoning pedagogical modes and assessment methods based on exclusion and individual competition and favouring cooperative and solidarity-based approaches in learning. 2) Redefining the relationship between education, knowledge and values by overcoming the traditional view of curricula as a mere list of subjects, emphasising ecological, interdisciplinary and intercultural learning. 3) Recognise the crucial role of teachers who will have to work in teams, networking with other educational organisations. 4) Redesigning schools by adapting them to specific needs and individual contexts. 5) Expand the concept of education as a process that takes place in multiple places and stages of life (*lifelong and lifewide learning*).

##### Conclusion

In conclusion, dear educators, I want to thank you for the work you do in the diocese through your many Catholic schools. Through the invitation of the **Global Compact on Education**, the Holy Father invites you to make a chorus, to network, to become a significant interlocutor within the territory in which you operate, in a constant dialogue with the educational and social realities present. Do not forget that the greatest treasure we have to offer is Jesus Christ who said "I am the way, the truth and the life" (Jn 14:6).

Bergamo, 23-3-2024

Cardinal José Tolentino De Mendonça  
Prefect of the Dicastery for Culture and Education ■

In the Preface to the German book KulturDiakonie, Cardinal De Mendonça talks about the **Global Compact on Education**

## CULTUREDIAKONIA. OPPORTUNITIES FOR TOMORROW'S CHURCH

(From the presentation sheet)

*The concept of Cultural Diakonia (Gotthard Fuchs) or CultureDiakonia (Ludwig Mödl) is largely misunderstood. This creates space and a need for interpretation: What concept of culture should be applied in the (Catholic) Church in order to be understood and accepted as a meaningful part of a modern, vibrant society? How can the Gospel, the message of the Kingdom of God and contemporary culture be united so that life, living space, living environment can be shaped in a meaningful and humane way?*

*These questions, discussed here, are closely linked to current efforts to reform the Church.*

*The contributions by José Tolentino, Cardinal Calaça de Mendonça, Gianfranco Ravasi, Wolfgang Beck, Ralph Bergold, Reinhold Bernhardt, Friedrich M. Ebertz, Friederike Dostal, Marc Grandmontagne, Bernhard Kirchgeßner, Stefan Klöckner, Jakob Johannes Koch and Ludwig Mödl*

*question the Church's understanding of culture and diakonia, attempt to define the concept of cultural diakonia and identify its problems.*

*They address the current relationship between the church (mainly Catholic) and culture in modern society and shed light on the potential of the relationship between church and culture or culture as a locus of theology, homiletics and pastoral care, the new evangelisation and transmission of the faith, as well as the cultural engagement of the church as a factor in diaconal church action or in a social or cultural-political context.*

### PREFACE BY CARDINAL J.T. DE MENDONÇA

More than fifty years ago, the controversial Italian intellectual, Pier Paolo Pasolini, reflecting on the idea of culture, stated with ruthless lucidity: 'We intellectuals always tend to identify 'culture' with our culture: hence morality with our morality and ideology with our ideology. This means that we express, by this, a certain irrepressible racism towards those who live, precisely, another culture'.

Recently, other intellectuals have highlighted the binomial culture-xenophobia, showing how in some circles certain terms have been replaced with the more neutral word 'culture', concealing the underlying discriminatory intent. Since it is not possible nowadays to speak of 'racial difference', because one would be overwhelmed by accusations of xenophobia, one speaks of 'cultural difference', not in



order to affirm the plurality and richness of diversity, but to draw discriminatory boundaries between people: this is my culture, my tradition that is different from yours.

The transition then to the hierarchisation of cultures, as an antidote to alleged relativism, is very short.

Pope Francis in his magisterium has repeatedly reaffirmed the equal dignity of every culture and the richness of diversity symbolised in the figure of the polyhedron (Evangeli Gaudium) and has clearly illustrated the dialectic between the local and the universal (Brothers All 142-149): 'The universal must not be the homogeneous, uniform and standardised dominion of a single prevailing cultural form, which will eventually lose the colours of the polyhedron and be disgusting' (FT 144). The whole encyclical Fratelli tutti is a hymn to the richness of diversity and equality (we are all brothers).

The binomial culture-racism can be broken down and replaced by the binomial culture-diakonia understood in a twofold sense: of culture that places itself at the service of the human advancement of all, with special attention to the most needy, and on the other hand, of diakonia as cultural commitment, that is, as the Church's care for the promotion of culture, its protection, the safeguarding of its heritage and the redemption of the cultural tradition of every people.

The new pastoral demands today oblige us to broaden this diaconal sense, making it migrate from a 'charitable vision' to a 'cultural vision', verifying how diakonia broadens the meaning of culture and culture broadens the meaning of diakonia. More concretely, thinking of culture from a diakonia perspective implies seeing culture not as an elitist patrimony or an argument in favour of certain radical ideologies, but a culture 'at the service' of humanity: a culture that is capable of translating the desires of the human (GS 1), of questioning certain political systems and undermining social conformism against all attempts to dehumanise the human (FT 115).

In the opposite sense, to think diakonia from culture is to expand it to all cultural forms, for a more inclusive and universal culture. Diakonia destabilises the 'temptation to make a culture of walls' (FT 27), in favour of a 'culture of encounter' (FT 30). For no one is saved alone, and the salvation of the other is also my responsibility.

From the binomial culture-diakonia follows another indissoluble binomial which is that of culture-



education: the culture of encounter, of universal brotherhood, of peace can come about through precise educational projects. For there to be a change in the world, Pope Francis has repeatedly said, education must change. To this end, the **Global Compact on Education** project, which aims to educate everyone to universal brotherhood, outlines 'obligatory' paths that pass through the affirmation of the centrality of the person, of young people, of women, of the family, of the other, of society and of the environment.

The Pontiff's recent decision to unite the Pontifical Council for Culture and the Congregation for Catholic Education into a single Dicastery for Culture and Education also confirms the inseparability of the culture-education pair.

Another binomial that in our view proceeds, or rather precedes the previous two, is that of culture-rationality. In our cultural context marked, among other crises, by that of rationality, the diaconal service of culture must consist in bringing man back to reason. Throughout the course of history, the Church has repeatedly found itself having to play the role of defender of rationality in the face of various attempts to de-Hellenise faith, as Benedict XVI masterfully recalled in his famous Regensburg speech. Even Habermas, in his 2000 dialogue with the then Cardinal Ratzinger, acknowledged that 'a radical scepticism towards reason is certainly originally foreign to the Catholic tradition'.

A culture that is not rational, and therefore irrational, cannot be culture. This is why it is necessary to recover the idea of extended rationality that underlies every culture. In fact, every culture possesses its own rationality that must be safeguarded and enhanced, contrary to what has often been done in the past in forced evangelisations that have wiped out local cultures. In his recent speech on the occasion of the delivery of the '**African Educational Pact**' by a delegation from that continent, the Pope recalled that: "Christianity marries with the best part of every culture and helps to purify what is not authentically human, and therefore not even divine".

The invitation to all cultures to open up to the 'vastness' of reason, which Benedict XVI had launched in Regensburg as the great task of the university, is the task that expands to a cultural diakonia that watches over, on the one hand, the rationality of every culture, and, on the other, the rationality of reason, since many ideas of reason in the modern and contemporary era are actually irrational. The task of a cultural diakonia will be to awaken the world to reason and revive a strong thought that considers truth as a condition of freedom, because a 'weak thought' can never have access to the reasons of freedom.

Cultural diakonia will have the mission of reminding man of the beauty that has always belonged to him: God is not only the supreme of reason, as the Logos who is in the beginning of everything, but he is also the supreme of beauty, and if the man he created is 'very beautiful' it is because he made him in his own image and likeness.

Cardinal José Tolentino De Mendonça  
Prefect of the Dicastery for Culture and Education ■

## OIEC Council members write to the Prefect LETTERS TO THE PREFECT OF DCE



6

*At the meeting last 6 December with the General Council of the OIEC, Cardinal J. Tolentino de Mendonça Prefect of the Dicastery for Culture and Education, invited those present to write a letter in response to three questions he had posed concerning education. These letters were collected and published in a booklet. Below we present excerpts of the answers to the three questions.*

### 1) How do you see education today?

"Education is more than ever not only a necessity but an emergency. We are convinced that education is one of the best ways to change the world. This is why it is an area that needs to be taken care of on a personal, social and institutional level; above all, we must invest all possible resources to optimise and create the necessary conditions to continually reinvent an education that is conceived holistically, in the sense that we must cultivate the concept of the integral person and of education in its totality, so that it is at the same time a response for today's children and young people with an eye to the future. Young people must be trained to live the present positively in relation to others and empowered to face the future. One of the essential tools to achieve this is cooperation. Only if we come together can we do something. Therefore, the **Global Compact on Education** makes perfect sense in the present context' (Soeur Martha Seide).

2) What do you recommend? What would be the challenges? What needs have you identified? What would be important for the Church to convey in its teaching?

(continued on page 8)

## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN CULTURE AND EDUCATION



7

*On the morning of 22 March 2024, a Training Seminar for the staff of the Dicastery for Culture and Education was held at the General Curia of the Society of Jesus, dedicated to the issues of Artificial Intelligence in culture and education.*

*After the welcome greetings of Cardinal Prefect José Tolentino de Mendonça, the first part began, coordinated by H.E. Monsignor Paul Tighe, in which an introduction was made to the knowledge of new AI-based technologies and the situations and trends facing universities and schools. In this first part, speakers were Jordan Wales, Associate Professor of Theology at Hillsdale College and Noreen Herzfeld, Reuter Professor of Science and Religion at St. John's University and College of St. Benedict (USA). In the second part, moderated by H.E. Msgr. Cesare Giovanni Pagazzi, the topic of the future of education in the context of AI was discussed. The different concepts of intelligence and the implications for education were explored, focusing on the future of education in relation to the transformations of AI and digital technologies. Prof. Giuseppe Riva, Director of the Humane Technology Lab at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (Milan) spoke. The third and final part, moderated by Fr. Antonio Spadaro, dealt with the topic "A cultural narrative of digital transition". It reflected on the impact of AI in the broader cultural perspective of which educational institutions are part. The speaker was Alessandro Baricco, writer and intellectual, author of several novels and the essay 'The Game' about the evolution of the digital world. After each presentation, seminar participants intervened with questions and contributions.*

*Artificial Intelligence is one of the subjects of study in the five thematic research areas of the **Global Education Compact**, namely the area of Technology, with a special focus on its application in the field of education.*

It emerged from this seminar on AI that, despite some inevitable criticalities encountered in the application of AI in the world of education, the Church's attitude towards the AI revolution is one of positive openness. No sterile crusade has been undertaken, as often happened in the past in the face of every novelty, thus avoiding repeating the mistakes made with anti-modernism. In fact, Pope Francis in his recent speeches invites us to "clear the field of catastrophic readings" in the face of "the accelerated spread of marvellous inventions", because we are in any case faced with "an indisputable qualitative leap".

Indeed, there are several advantages of applying AI in education. AI favours a more personalised education that takes into account the needs of each student as opposed to a standardised one-size-fits-all education conceived as a Procrustean bed; it makes it possible to overcome the spatial and temporal limits of education that is not limited to formal environments (schools, universities, training centres) and the early years of life; a virtual tutor can also be an important support for the teacher as he or she possesses unlimited and self-generating information. Teaching through AI can boast greater objectivity as this tool disregards teachers' moods, tiredness, ideologies and prejudices, especially at the time of assessment. *Last but not least*, the use of AI allows for a much cheaper and thus more democratic education that guarantees access to quality education for all, not just the elite. In this regard, when I was in Africa, I often told the students at my university that AI is a revolution that favours the poorest countries above all, because all the students in the world from the smallest school to the most important university, when they sit in front of a computer, will find the same endless opportunities for an education of excellence for all. We are also convinced that AI cannot replace teachers, but it will certainly be a formidable support tool for them.





Alessandro Baricco, before presenting some ideas extracted from his essay 'The Game' on the 'history' of digital evolution, said that he had

prepared himself to make a kind of apologia for the digital world because he feared he would encounter a closure towards Artificial Intelligence in the church environment. To his amazement, however, he had to change his mind when he encountered an unexpected openness towards it. In his speech, Baricco proposed changing the name of 'Artificial Intelligence' to 'Extended Intelligence' because in his opinion this new terminology would better define its nature, which extends to a much enlarged dimension of reality.

For my part, however, I think the term to be changed is not 'artificial' but 'intelligence', because here we are not talking about intelligence but rather a machine programmed to do what it does and which starts and stops with a button when man decides. So neither artificial intelligence nor extended intelligence, but merely a tool for processing complex data, because where there is no intentionality, understanding, consciousness, creativity, there is no intelligence. If a robot is programmed to embrace, kiss, caress, we cannot speak of 'artificial love', or if it were programmed to talk about God, profess faith, go to mass, receive

baptism, and perhaps behave much better than a Christian, it would we could not speak of an 'artificial intelligent believer'. Similarly, if a robot is programmed to process data and perform complex calculations, we cannot speak of 'artificial intelligence' because this terminology may lead some people to imagine dystopian scenarios of machine domination or loss of control by humans. So what can we call it? Let's call it whatever we want, but not intelligence. I prefer to call it 'Artificial Processing' and this name also seems to appeal to ChatGPT who replied: "The term 'artificial processing' could certainly better reflect the nature of the capabilities of computer systems such as myself. This term emphasises the process by which computers process data, instructions and algorithms to perform specific tasks".

This is an intelligent response, but the person who gave it is not intelligent, because he only responded to what he was programmed to do.

P. Ezio Lorenzo Bono, CSF  
Secretariat for the Global Compact on Education ■



GLOBAL COMPACT  
ON EDUCATION

**Journal**

NOTE: The original edition of the Journal is in Italian. We refer to it in case of any inaccuracies in the translation.

## LETTERS TO THE PREFECT OF DCE

(continued from page 6)

"Keeping up with technological advances and integrating them into the education system is a big challenge for us. This is because we lack access to technology and adequate training for teachers, students and pupils" (Rev. Zephyrinus Yem Mbuh, SD).

"Believe in education as a tool for change, as an act of hope. We must face the challenge of individualism and competitiveness by choosing to work together, sharing talents and goods. Make the **Global Compact on Education** launched by the Church effective. Recover the spirituality of communion and synodality" (Soeur Martha Seide).

"The Church should insist on the formation of the integral man in all his dimensions, human, intellectual, spiritual, relational and ecological. It should insist on the values that find their meaning in God; insist on the virtues that tend to disappear. Continue to raise awareness and spread the **Global Compact on Education** (Father Didier Affolabi).

"Teaching is a collective task. We come from a competitive, fragmented and individualistic paradigm... Today it is more necessary than ever for teachers to work collaboratively, horizontally and vertically, within the school and outside the school, in collaboration with other schools and other educational and social groups. There is an urgent need to acquire collaborative skills, to encourage collaborative practices among teachers within schools and with other schools' (Brother Juan Antonio Ojeda Ortiz).

"Let's develop happiness at school, let's make its projects live in connection with the **Global Compact on Education** where the person is really at the centre" (Hervé Lecomte).

3) *What other questions should you consider to improve Catholic education in your area?*

"Taking into account the issue of new information and communication technologies and social networks in general regarding their correct use for a useful and constructive, virtuous and responsible use. To work constantly to improve the living and working conditions of teachers, without forgetting ongoing formation in the sense of the values and spirit of the Church' (Father Didier Affolabi)".

"Even if new orders and requests arrive, the school remains unchanged, with the same structure as always. It is true that there are new technologies and renewed methodologies in the classrooms, but the profound transformations of recent times have not yet entered the school ecosystem. ... Adjustments and changes are being made, but today the school format is at the limit of its possibilities for improvement. Changing a few things will not succeed in renewing the core concept of education. Change must necessarily be systemic and participative" (Francisco Varela Borrazàs). ■