

Congregation for Catholic Education

WORLD CONGRESS

“Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion”

Rome-Castel Gandolfo 18-21 November 2015

FINAL COMUNIQUE

1. Aims of the Congress

In **celebrating** the fiftieth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council’s Declaration *Gravissimum Educationis* (28 October 1965) and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Apostolic Constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (15 August 1990), the Congregation for Catholic Education intended – by means of a World Congress – to relaunch the Church’s commitment in the field of education. In the years following the Council, the Magisterium has repeatedly spoken of the importance of education and the contribution that the Christian community is called to offer in this matter, especially where an educational emergency is most clearly evident. In fact, Catholic centres of education are not only “*dispensers of skills*”, but, by their very nature, are intrinsically places of encounter, dialogue and mutual growth, within an process of *education for life* that is open to others in view of the *common good*.

To celebrate the anniversaries of these two documents of the Magisterium meant not only dwelling on their contents with a focus on the past; it was also a chance to consider what these documents have achieved in the Christian community, as well as to discuss the issues of today. Therefore, the sessions of the Congress were seen as opportunities for getting to know one another and for all of us to **renew our passion for education**; to analyze together the challenges that today lie before those who work in this field; to give renewed vigour to our work; and to be able to compare our experiences with those of so many other people, all representing different circumstances and coming from centres of learning facing different situations. The Congress give rise to a stronger sense of belonging to one great educational project that forms a common bond: from that of Catholic schools and universities, to that of educational associations, as well as numerous other groups involved, on various levels, in the formation of young people according to the Christian vision. All these categories are expressions of the one Church, which evangelizes by

means of an educational project that is spreading the same message of light and hope in every part of the world, to the benefit of young people, especially those who live in more difficult and poorer geographical areas.

2. Preparations for the Congress

In June 2012, following a directive from the Cardinal- and Bishop-Members of the Congregation, a **seminar** took place in Rome, with experts from all over the world. The participants' statements were put together in the document "*Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion*" (2014), which formed an *Instrumentum Laboris* for preparing the Congress. The text made reference to the essential reference points of the Declaration *Gravissimum Educationis* and the Constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, as well as to the fundamental characteristics of Catholic schools and universities, and indicated the challenges to which all educational institutions and associations are called to respond with their own specific project. The *Instrumentum Laboris*, which concluded with a questionnaire, was sent to Catholic bodies involved in education (Bishops' Conferences, religious congregations, associations both of schools and of universities, parents' groups, as well as other interested parties). The abundant material received in reply to the questionnaire was analyzed by the School of Higher Education "*Educating for Encounter and Solidarity*" (Italian acronym, EIS) of the Free University Mary Most Holy Assumed into Heaven (Italian acronym, LUMSA) in Rome. This academic effort gave birth to another document, which formed the *Lineamenta* for the participants at the Congress.

The preparations for the Congress progressed alongside a **Forum celebrated at UNESCO** in Paris on 3 June 2015. This was organized by the Congregation for Catholic Education together with the Permanent Observer of the Holy See, and witnessed the presence of 400 participants: ambassadors, university presidents, principals of Catholic schools, representatives of educational associations, principally from Europe. This initiative, *inter al.*, coincided with the seventieth anniversary of the founding of UNESCO. The Acta were published in the first volume of the Congregation's new periodical *Educatio Catholica*.

Preparations for the Congress also took place within associations and federations both of Catholic schools and Catholic universities, within some Bishops' Conferences, within the Commission for Education of the Major

Superiors of Religious Congregations, and within other educational bodies, which promoted various **initiatives**, seminars and conventions to examine in greater depth the themes proposed, following the guidelines indicated by the *Instrumentum Laboris*.

3. The Various Parts of the Congress

The Congress had two plenary sessions: the opening session, and the closing session with the participation of Pope Francis, which took place in the Paul VI Audience Hall in the Vatican. On 19 and 20 November, however, the participants divided into two groups. In the Auditorium on Via della Conciliazione in Rome the Assembly of OIEC (*Office International pour l'Education Catholique*) took place, whereas the other participants continued their meetings at the Centro Mariopoli in Castelgandolfo, subdivided into one group for schools, another group for Catholic universities and IFCU (*International Federation of Catholic Universities*), and a third group for the jurists of ELA (*European Association for Education Law and Policy*).

The conferences were arranged in such a way as to concentrate on four principal themes: **identity and mission** of Catholic institutions; the various **stakeholders** in education; the **formation of formators**; and today's **challenges** affecting the field of education. Each theme was first explored at length in a lecture. Afterwards, various experts, coming from differing circumstances, spoke about their own practical experiences. Finally, further points were offered for reflection. The opportunities for open discussion brought the participants into contact with real experiences of service to education, which helped them feel involved.

The Congress confirmed our belief that there is a firm link between the identity of educational institutions (Catholic schools and universities) and their mission. Today, just as in the past, the Catholic educational mission flows from the very identity of the Church, which finds its practical expression in the command to evangelize: "*Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation*" (Mk 16:15). Therefore, our attitude should not merely be reactive, a defensive closing in on ourselves vis-à-vis secularized society, which encourages the values of competitive individualism and which legitimizes - indeed increases - inequality and seems to defy education in its most profound values (primacy of the human person, value of community, search for the

common good, care for the weak and concern for those left behind, cooperation and solidarity, etc.). Instead, Catholic schools and universities are called to assume a proactive attitude aimed at re-affirming the value of the human person; rising above standards that are exalted without question: profit and usefulness as the measure of all choices; efficiency; individualistic competition; and success at all costs.

Many stakeholders interact in our educational institutions. The particular characteristic of this presence and activity of various subjects within a Catholic school or university is that they form a *community*. The essential traits that characterize this community are those that mark it as being professional, educational and evangelizing.

The key to building up these communities and, at the same time, the re-affirmation of the Catholic school's and university's identity and specific mission, is the formation of formators. The community of a Catholic educational institution must be formed by teachers who possess solid, professional expertise that can claim autonomy and the ability to plan and evaluate, form relationships, be creative, be open to innovation, and show a sincere interest in research and experimentation. The teachers, however, must also be fully aware of their role in education, of their own true identity, and must feel compelled to love the service to culture that they render to society, carrying it out with dedication and conviction. Today we perceive the urgent need for both initial and on-going formation of educational leaders, teachers and educators. It must be underlined that the aim of formation is to build up and consolidate the community of educators, so as to carry out an educational mission that is ever more shared by consecrated religious and lay people. Therefore, we must create a really and truly shared formation, which can absorb and harmonize the specific formative contribution both of the religious and of the laity.

The Congress, then, highlighted the major challenges for education that Catholic schools and universities are facing in the world today, in a multicultural society undergoing profound changes. These challenges can be boiled down to one point: we must promote a holistic educational journey for young people, entrusting its care and guidance to an educating community of evangelization, within which the identity of the educational institution itself is lived out in a life-giving way. In particular, three challenges emerged, which form the principal areas for attention on the part of educational communities in their work of formation and

evangelization: the challenge of a holistic formation; the challenge of formation and faith; and the challenge of the peripheries, the poor and the new forms of poverty.

4. Methodology of the Congress

The programme was constructed around three interlocking pathways of reflection and work.

The **first pathway** consisted in the moments of prayer, in particular the proclamation of the Word of God as the principal source from which we draw strength and inspiration for renewing our passion for education. Our prayer was focussed on four icons: a) Jesus the Teacher of those seeking a sure guide. In this icon, we can see the desire of people's hearts today, who knock at the doors of our institutions and await a response. b) The parable of the sower, who abundantly spreads the good seed onto every kind of soil. In this parable, we see the duty of the Church to accept all, without distinction, into her educational institutions, to offer everyone a quality education, without regard for the various kinds of terrain on which we must labour. It is a culture of inclusion. c) Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. This icon is a reminder not to be afraid to present clearly the identity of our institutions and the specific characteristics of our educational projects, which draw their inspiration from the anthropology and values rooted in the Gospel, which are open to the encounter with the various cultures and societies. d) The command of Jesus to the apostles: "*Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation*" (Mk 16:15). This is the same command that the Church repeats today to each of us, so that – with our teaching, study, research and dedication – we can speak to the world a word able to create fraternity, peace and unity.

The **second pathway** was that of the talks, focussed on the four themes, which were supplemented by people narrating their experiences, showing the variety and richness of what is offered in Catholic institutions in different parts of the world. The contributions expertly examined the points emerging from the *Lineamenta*, while also offering personal reflections that proved most useful for looking at the future of our dedication to education.

The **third pathway** was informal, bound up with all that happened in personal meetings and discussions, which helped us to know each other

better and to form new working relationships. This was a great opportunity, used well, for building up a “global” educating community, one big family of Christian education.

5. Service to Education

At the conclusion of the Congress, the Secretary of the Congregation for Catholic Education gave a presentation on the service that the Congregation aims to provide so as to promote the educational mission of the Church.

a) The 210,000 schools and the 1865 Catholic and ecclesiastical universities, attended by a total of around 60 million students, together with all other associations dedicated to the field of education, are involved in realizing the objectives of UNESCO, which – in its World Forum “Education 2030” held in May 2015 at Incheon, South Korea – re-affirmed its dedication to **education for all**, launched in 1990 at Jomtiem and renewed in 2000 at Dakar. The declaration establishes some fundamental goals for 2030: a commitment to extending, more and more, access to education for those who are currently excluded; a commitment to guarantee inclusion and equality, so as to overcome the various forms of marginalization; to assure the quality of teaching, so as to improve learning; to promote forms of life-long learning; etc. The Congregation for Catholic Education, as well as all Catholic educational institutions, share these goals and intend to offer their own contribution towards achieving them.

b) Furthermore, the Congregation, in cooperation with associations of Catholic schools and universities, commits itself to **reworking the results of the Congress**. After their publication and dissemination on-line, these results will allow us to prepare a manifesto for education, which – starting again from the Declaration *Gravissimum Educationis*, the Apostolic Constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* and the guidelines of the Church’s Magisterium – will set out once more, in an updated format, the anthropological foundation and the basic values for guaranteeing, for the coming decades, a quality educational service with a Christian inspiration. This task will be realized in concert, following the collaborative style that was adopted for drafting the *Instrumentum Laboris* and the analysis of the responses to the questionnaire from which the *Lineamenta* of the Congress were drawn. With this first significant undertaking as our starting-point,

we shall also be able to draw up, in future years, a **Directory** for Catholic education, and especially guidelines for the formation of formators.

c) Recently, a **School for Higher Formation “Educating to Encounter and Solidarity”** was established at the LUMSA Catholic University in Rome. This School aims, *inter al.*, to promote activities of academic research, in cooperation with universities and specialized academic centres in various countries. The School, and others like it, can be of great service to all educational institutions in preparing projects that follow the pedagogical paradigms contained within the Church’s Magisterium, so as to respond to the challenges of today.

d) Following a request from the Congregation for Catholic Education, Pope Francis, on 28 October 2015, established the **Foundation *Gravissimum Educationis***, in memory of the fiftieth anniversary of the promulgation of *Gravissimum Educationis*. In his Chirograph, the Pope, quoting the document of the Council, writes: “The Church recognizes that ‘the paramount importance of education in the life of men and its ever-growing influence on the social progress of the age’ are profoundly linked to the fulfillment of ‘the mandate she received from her divine founder to announce the mystery of salvation to all men.’”

One of the principal aims of the new Foundation is to promote research, study and publications on Church thought with reference to education and Catholic culture in schools and universities, as well as supporting international events of an academic nature.

e) To answer the need for coordination and harmonization of forces in the field of education, as a fruit of the World Congress, we shall study how to establish a **Council for Educational Cooperation** within the Congregation for Catholic Education. In fact, this means giving more practical expression to a task assigned to us by the aforementioned *Gravissimum Educationis*, in n. 12, with the following expressions regarding Catholic schools and universities:

“every means should be employed to foster suitable cooperation between Catholic schools, and between these and other schools that collaboration should be developed which the good of all mankind requires”;

“let the universities also endeavor to work together by promoting international gatherings, by sharing scientific inquiries with one another,

by communicating their discoveries to one another, by having exchange of professors for a time and by promoting all else that is conducive to greater assistance.”

In past decades, OIEC and IFCU have performed an admirable service of providing such coordination. However, besides these two organizations and the religious congregations, there are many other associations, more or less developed and well-known, which operate in the field of education – schools, extracurricular schooling, and universities – that need to find a point of reference on the level of the universal Church.

6. Message of Pope Francis

Pope Francis participated in the closing session of the Congress, and responded to questions put to him. In his answers, he developed some important points for education.

a) Firstly, he recalled the **complete value of education**, which, “as a great thinker once said, ‘Education means introducing people into the whole truth.’”¹ Therefore, “we cannot speak of *Catholic education* without speaking about *humanity*, because in fact Catholic identity is God who became man.” Therefore, “to educate in a Christian manner is to lead young people and children forward in those human values present in all that is real, and one of these realities is transcendence. [...] The greatest crisis in education, from the Christian point of view, is this closing off from the transcendent. [...] We must educate in a human manner, but keeping our perspectives open. Any form of closing off is unhelpful for education.”

b) Pope Francis criticized the current **breakup of the educational alliance**, with the result that “education has also become too selective and elitist.” “The educational alliance between the family and the school – it is broken! We must start over again. The educational alliance, too, between the family and the State – it is broken. [...] Educators are among the worst paid workers – what does this say? It says that the State is simply uninterested. If it were interested, things would not be like this. The educational alliance is broken. And this is where our work comes in, to find new pathways.”

¹ Unofficial translation into English of Pope Francis’ speech, given in Italian.

We need to look for “**emergency education**” by means of some new pathways:

- **Informal education.** “We must focus on ‘informal education’, because formal education has become impoverished due to the legacy of positivism. It only understands intellectualistic technical skill and the language of the head. And therefore it has become impoverished. We must break with this scheme. And there are experiences with art, with sport... Art, sport – they educate! We must open up to new horizons, create new models... [...] There are three languages: the language of the head, the language of the heart, the language of the hands. Education must move along these three roads. It must teach us to think, help us to feel things correctly and accompany us in what we do, that is, so the three languages are in harmony; that the child, the young person thinks what he feels and what he does, feels what he thinks and what he does, and does what he thinks and feels.”
- **Inclusive education.** “An education becomes *inclusive* when all have their place; inclusive also humanly speaking. [...] A true school must teach concepts, attitudes and values.”
- **Risk-taking education.** “An educator who does not know how to risk is useless for education. A dad and a mum who do not know how to risk do not educate well their child. To risk in a reasonable way. What does this mean? Teaching to walk. When you teach a baby how to walk, you teach him that one leg must be firmly planted, on the ground that he knows, and with the other leg he seeks to go forward. Thus, if he slips he can defend himself. This is educating. You are sure about this point, but this one is not definite. You must take another step. Perhaps you will slip, but you get up, and go forward... The true educator must be a master of risk, but reasonable risk.”

c) Finally, Pope Francis placed some challenges before educators. Firstly, the challenge of the **peripheries**. “Leave those places where there are lots of educators and go into the peripheries. Seek there. Or, at least, leave behind half! Seek there the needy, the poor. And these have

something that the young people in the richer areas do not – it is not their fault, but it is a sociological reality – they have the experience of survival, and of cruelty, and of hunger, and of injustices. They have a wounded humanity. And I think that our salvation comes from the wounds of a wounded man on the Cross. They, from those wounds, draw wisdom, if there is a good educator who can lead them forward. This is not a case of going there to do charity work, to teach them to read, to give them something to eat ...no! This is necessary, but is provisional. It is the first step. The challenge – and I encourage you – is to go there to make them grow in humanity, in intelligence, in values, in attitudes, so that they can go forward and bring to others those experiences they do not know.”

Another challenge is that of **breaking down walls**. “The greatest failure that an educator can have is to educate ‘within the walls’.” To educate within the walls: walls of a selective culture, the walls of a culture of security, the walls of a social category that is affluent and no longer goes forward.”

The third challenge is that of **rethinking the works of mercy in education**. “In this Year of Mercy, is mercy only giving alms? Or, in education, how can I perform the works of mercy? That is, they are the works of the Love of the Father. [...] What can I do so that this Love of the Father, which is especially underlined in this Year of Mercy, enters into our educational efforts?”