

The Global Compact on Education as a reinterpretation of the role of school in the 21st century

Zoltan Gloviczki¹

Resumen

La relación entre la psicología moderna y las enseñanzas de la Iglesia católica sobre educación y pedagogía, tal y como las formuló el Concilio Vaticano II, es evidente. El Pacto Mundial sobre la Educación también refleja los retos contemporáneos del sistema escolar, como el problema de la educación masiva y la obsolescencia de la mera transferencia de conocimientos. La visión del papa Francisco ofrece claves con base científica para el desarrollo de la educación personal e institucional general en el siglo XXI.

Palabras clave: inclusión, escolarización del siglo XXI, competencias clave, inteligencia emocional, creatividad.

Résumé

Le lien est évident entre la psychologie moderne et les enseignements de l'Église catholique sur l'éducation et la pédagogie, tels que formulés par le Concile Vatican II. Le Pacte mondial pour l'éducation reflète également les défis contemporains du système scolaire, tels que le problème de l'éducation de masse et l'obsolescence de la transmission pure des connaissances. La vision du pape François fournit des clés scientifiquement étayées pour le développement de l'éducation personnelle et institutionnelle générale au XXI^e siècle.

Mots clés : Inclusion, éducation du XXI^e siècle, compétences clés, intelligence émotionnelle, créativité

Abstract

The link is obvious between modern psychology and the teachings of the Catholic Church on education and pedagogy, as formulated by the Second Vatican Council.. Also the Global Compact on Education reflects to the contemporary challenges of school system, like the problem of mass education and the obsolescence of pure knowledge transfer. Vision of Pope Francis gives

¹ Apor Vilmos Catholic College, Vác, Hungary

scientifically supported keys to development of general personal and institutional education in the 21st century.

Key words : inclusion, 21st century schooling, key competencies, emotional intelligence, creativity

Traditional aims of public education

Why is there a need to reinterpret the role of school in the 21st century, and to what extent does the Global Agreement on Education provide relevant guidance for educational science in this search for a path?

Ancient civilizations increasingly expanded the need for people who were literate. Thus, instead of being “one” possible career model, literacy and numeracy soon grew into a whole set of career and job opportunities. Thanks to the latter, the frameworks and methods of public education quickly developed, which in many respects resembled today’s school from the beginning. The main stream of school history in the narrow sense has been the development of competencies necessary for high-level communication, and especially written communication, together with the apparent by-product (sometimes its purpose?) of these, the function of social selection.

How did the school lead to its current (19th century) role, as a general science communicator? In the late stages of the development of the ancient school, certain important subject areas appear in education. We traditionally call these the “seven liberal arts”. In fact, we are talking about seven areas of education whose ancient name is on the border between our current words “craft/technical knowledge” and “art”. It is no coincidence that its Greek equivalent, “tekhné”, is more limited to the former concept (technique), while the Latin “ars” brings to mind the latter (artistic). “Free” because these are topics befitting a free person – unintentionally reinforcing the motif of social selection. These seven liberal arts are grammar, i.e. the correct use of language; dialectic, or initiation into logical thinking and persuasive debate; and rhetoric, or – building on the former two – the “art” of creating persuasive and stylistically and logically demanding oral and written texts. These three are the foundation period, the first three years, i.e. the trivium stage, in memory of which we still call basic knowledge “trivial”. Then comes the four-year quadrivium, musica, astronomia/physica (natural science), arithmetica (calculation) and geometry – where we are not faced with four “subjects” chosen at random from today’s perspective, but rather sets that carried the entire contemporary picture of the phenomena of the known world in a simplified form: so that the speakers and scribes who graduated at the end of the training would not only be able to speak and write, but also have something to talk and write about. For centuries, school knowledge of geography, natural phenomena, and history was a kind of “accompanying” of mastering high-level Latin reading and writing, which was the subject of the texts read and the writings written about. At the same time, it was “useful” knowledge that maintained the same opportunity later on, representing the common education of the social group whose members were all raised in this training and lived their lives in this conceptual system. The elements of subject knowledge hidden in the texts then began to emerge as specialized subjects in the 17th-18th centuries, and this process gained particular importance during the age of Enlightenment.

New aims of the era of Enlightenment

The end of the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century are the key moments in the development of our current school image. The formation and consolidation of today's academic disciplines, scientific classification, scientific conceptual systems, the idea of the collectability and transferability of scientific knowledge, and the repeated consolidation of the borderline that for children with certain socio-cultural backgrounds, schooling is a given, while for others it is an opportunity only in exceptional cases – mainly in the school stages above elementary school.

The scientific revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries, and then the encyclopedic aspirations of the French Enlightenment, laid the foundation for the intellectual optimism that later reached its peak in the positivism of the second half of the 19th century, with the birth of our traditional schools today. The world is cognable, and it is only a matter of time before this state is reached. The knowledge gained from it can be researched, experimented with, collected into encyclopedias and manuals, and then the same knowledge can be extracted for children and young people. The goal of school is to pass on this knowledge.

Science itself has long since moved beyond this era, several times, in the right rhythm. From Werner Heisenberg's philosophically significant „uncertainty relation” in the 1930s, which showed the limits of the world's experienceability and thus its knowability, to Edward Lorenz's chaos theory, to the era of big data. Today, everything is just a model and a hypothesis. Analyzing our time, the use of the acronym VUCA has become common in social sciences and economics, i.e. volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity, which characterize our current world. The characterization that we all feel on our skin and are confirmed in our everyday lives could, on the one hand, make us uncertain, but on the other hand, it is a fact before us: we have to start with this world, and we are raising our children in this world.

However, the school curriculum, rooted in the 19th century, has remained unwaveringly true to the myth that has been developing for two and a half centuries. Every corner of the world and its functioning can be known and the more we know about it (and the amount of knowledge available to us has increased revolutionarily, primarily in the field of natural sciences), the more we have to squeeze it into our textbooks. In the sea of information, the context, the essence, but also the knowledge itself is lost. The image of the good student with encyclopedic knowledge also becomes a myth. Yuval Noah Harari also describes the image of the “rational person” associated with the myth of knowledge as fiction, a kind of “Western fantasy”, while in reality he considers it a general human characteristic that the basis of our thinking and decisions is much more based on our emotional world, on simplifications based on superficial information – and no less on group dynamics².

Parallel changes in the social environment of public education

In parallel, however, the group of children who set out to acquire knowledge has also undergone a dramatic change. Observing the percentages of world literacy between 1820 and 2020, based on the data of those who participated in any form of registered, institutional

² 21 Lessons for the 21st Century. London. Jonathan Cape. 2018.193.

education up to the age of fifteen, compared to the total population³, we can see a huge, linear growth from approximately 17% to 87%. The urbanization of the 19th century did not leave a trace in the process, as the proportion of those receiving institutional education increased from 17.2% to around 30% between 1820 and the turn of the century. However, the number in 1900 shows an increase of almost 300% today. In absolute terms, the approximately 13% of students missing from the system in 2020 is obviously alarming, which means that in the primary school age group, globally, there are up to a hundred million children out of school, mostly in Africa. However, let us keep in mind this more fortunate half of the world, in Europe, where the proportion exceeded 90% in the middle of the 20th century, while at the turn of the millennium it was 99.8%, compared to the 65.4% result in Sub-Saharan Africa at the same time⁴. Inclusion, so often emphasized by the Holy Father and the Pact, is today not only an ethical demand, but also a recognition and demand for the reality of education. And when Pope Francis consistently urges the elimination of the “culture of discarding”, he is not only formulating an ecological critique of physical discarding, but also the necessary paradigm shift in schooling that results from the fact that the previous school, which trained the social elite, which by its nature was a means of social selection (and unfortunately this tradition still lives on in practice), is replaced by a school for everyone, where selection, “discarding”, becomes incomprehensible not only ethically, but also strategically.

Finally, the world surrounding children has also changed. Our children used to (and still do) sit at desks, use books, notebooks, and writing instruments, follow teacher instructions in a disciplined and impeccable manner, and recall and reproduce them, competing with ourselves and our peers to evaluate their efforts with the highest possible positive integer on a scale that varies from country to country. Just like the adults of the past. Pope Francis, following previous church guidelines, calls out the unsustainability of these frameworks of traditional, formal school education, proposing the strengthening of network learning and informal learning. Our parents and grandparents, each one of them, performed the work process assigned to them while sitting or standing at their workplace, in a research office, in a shoe factory, in a secretariat or behind a steering wheel. Not today. We hardly find an adult working person who performs homogeneous tasks divided into work phases, in addition to this: alone, competing with colleagues. The world of work increasingly consists of teams working on solving complex problems and creating new solutions. A complex problem does not necessarily mean the development of a medicine against an epidemic, but the preparation and organization of an organizational meeting, a corporate event, or the solution of a technological problem in a factory. But it is also typical of this era that no one has been awarded on his own the Nobel Prize in Natural Sciences for decades. This not only draws our attention to the ethos of cooperation – and most often not – but also to the chances of increasingly specialized expertise in dealing with problems, which can only be achieved by connecting with each other. Innovation and creativity are not simply sympathetic ethical values: today's economic and related social, and even individual existence and development are unthinkable without them. Not to mention critical thinking, which in the information tsunami surrounding us today would be the key to our survival – often literally – from the simplest technical problem-solving at home (cooking, repairs) to the most complex issues of civilization.

³ source of data: University of Oxford Our World in Database <https://ourworldindata.org/global-education>

⁴ van Leeuwen, B. and J. van Leeuwen-Li: Education since 1820. in: van Zanden, J., et al. (eds.): How Was Life? Global Well-being since 1820. Paris. OECD Publishing. 2014. 94. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264214262-9-en>

Real challenges of today

As we can see, the often condemned infocommunication revolution is only an accompanying phenomenon of the internal crisis of the school of the 20th-21st centuries. Just as Pope Francis and the Global Compact for Education do not call for curbing the information-technical revolution, but rather carry a positive message of experiencing our common and communal humanity. When the Pact sees the need to replace the world of technology with the real world 276 , it offers us the simplest and most effective strategy. When we are confronted with the sometimes frightening characteristics of Generation Z (and then the other, later) compared to older generations, we must not forget that man is man. The moment the fundamental characteristics of homo sapiens sapiens change in us, we become a different species, even if this statement in this form is a confusion of images and concepts, thereby confirming that there is obviously no such process. A person is a person, a child is a child, and our organism, nervous system, thinking, behavior, and relationships are inherently and fundamentally designed to function in the same way as 500, 1,000, or even 10,000 years ago, to be more precise and clear: from the creation. However, external influences exert enormous pressure on these functional characteristics and can strongly influence our actual human existence. But this is not a phenomenon resulting from our anthropological change. We are born with the same chance and set of opportunities as our predecessors. And the gamma to omega, then the aleph, beth, and gimel generations will be born with them as well. This fact, supported by brain research, is only strengthened by our faith in our created humanity. Science also supports that today's child desires the real world, environment, living connection with other spheres of the created world, human dialogue, and community just as much as his grandparents and ancestors. It should not be mistaken that the plasticity of their brains allows for and adapts to the effects of an artificially altered environment. However, the emergence of virtual games, social media, tablets that are in the hands of children and that tie infants down are the results of the adult world's mistaken strategy. A strategy that, for the time being, holds the adult world captive, and its overcoming can only be the result of a societal awareness and cooperation. It is no coincidence that the most important message of Pope Francis and the Pact in the educational revolution is the creation of cooperation and unity.

The Church recognizes the challenge

The desire to renew the school is not new in our Church. Starting from the educational philosophy work of Jacques Maritain, primarily the publication of his discussion paper entitled *Education at the crossroads*, through the synodal document *Gravissimum educationis*, which partly reflects his intellectual influence, the epoch-making guidelines of the Congregation for Education and the Dicastery for Culture and Education have drawn attention one after another. Maritain also draws our attention to the fact that the school, which became intellectualized in the age of enlightenment, also lost its goals when it lost its image of man that could be interpreted as a goal and began to organize its activities around its own message instead of the idea of a goal⁵. In his message, Pope Francis states: “Goals: the protection of our common home, universal solidarity in a more inclusive society. To achieve the goal, as for all changes

⁵ New Haven and London. Yale University Press. 1943.

at a social level, the renewal and power of education are needed. We do not teach, but we educate young people. With a more open and inclusive education, capable of patient listening, constructive dialogue and mutual understanding. We need to train mature people who are able to overcome the disintegration and discord experienced in many areas.”⁶ At the same time, he formulates the long-unspoken goals, which, by the way, were not crystallized in such expressis verbis in the previous guidelines of the Church, and he also creates a concise strategy for achieving the goals. It shows the path of shared education, but avoids the trap of indoctrination, also criticized by Maritain, and places the person at the center as the basis of education - following the often repeated principle of Gravissimum educationis.

There are very few traces of these renewal processes within the walls of the school. Yet the secular world is also working on a strategy for moving forward. Even if it does not start from the complexity of the Christian image of man, the demands arising from the transformation of the labour market. Today's adult existence have been mapped by the theory of pedagogy, and the set of competencies required today, in the foreseeable near and distant future, to which we should shift the focus of the school, is at least known to most researchers and practical professionals. We call these "21st century competencies" beyond professional circles (the creator of the concept group was Charles Fadel, who has been intensively analysed the role of artificial intelligence as well)⁷. These are creativity, cooperation, communication and critical (differentiating) thinking. After the English initials of the four concepts coincide, they are called also 4C competencies. But how much do these educational needs harmonize with the ideas of the Global Compact on Education?

From „21st century competencies” to the Global Compact on Education

Creativity, cooperation, the development of the necessary communication, the handling of complex tasks, and the development of critical thinking can all be easily mapped into the process of education and training. In reality, there are a huge amount of those social and natural questions that excite children. These are even simple in terms of the curriculum, but complex, through the solution and processing of which students could develop, by cooperating in group work, looking for solutions and not following instructions, debating and arguing with each other. By handling group formation in a professionally planned manner, we would gain the key to reducing the huge differences between children and avoiding failures.

The need for critical thinking, or as the Compact puts it: “developing the ability to distinguish in young people”⁸ at the same time resolves the dilemma and even the debate about whether schools should abandon the practice of imparting cultural and scientific knowledge. Of course not. After all, the fundamental need of young people who are capable of making decisions and are able to navigate is the thorough acquisition of elementary knowledge. As the Pact puts it: “the dominant consumer society wants there to be no educated, critical and cooperative people at all or at most to a negligible extent”⁹. Later it is put like this: „But is it a

⁶ Messaggio del Santo Padre Francesco per il lancio del Patto Educativo, *Educatio Catholica* 5 (2019) 4. 177–179. 178.

⁷ Bialik, M. – Fadel, Ch.: *Skills for the 21st Century. What Should Students Learn?* Boston. Center for Curriculum Redesign. 2015.

⁸ Patto Educativo Globale – *Instrumentum Laboris*, *Educatio Catholica* 6 (2020/1-2) 270–287. 276.

⁹ *ibid.* 286.

fundamental characteristic of school to educate for conformity?” Undoubtedly, its fundamental and inalienable task is to introduce children to the knowledge of the cultural and social network of the adult world and to orient homely in them. As a first refinement, let us just state that all this is not done in the interest of society, in order to carve as few problematic building blocks as possible from children, but in the interest of children, so that they become happy and successful adults, as a result of which the fabric of society can also be preserved and further developed. Creativity is not some kind of willful pushing aside of this polishing process, and perhaps not what we believed a few decades ago, when the concept of 21st century competencies was formed. Its significance in education is not that the child becomes suitable for the current expectations of the labor market, nor that he can overcome artificial intelligence. But equally, it is not that he “creatively” contradicts tradition and rebels against existing operating principles. Creativity is not that we determine the result of 2×2 as 5, and it is not that we creatively smear watercolors on the walls of the school by breaking the rules. We call these different. The main need for creativity is the development of adaptability to deal with a changing world. Important characteristics of creativity are the ability to resist crowd influence, the determination to overcome obstacles, the redefinition of problems, and most importantly, the realization and practice of the need to develop as humans. And the same is true for society, which needs creativity in the process of collective pathfinding¹⁰.

Creativity is not disorder. In fact, one of the most important aspects of the so-called Big Five test, which measures and helps develop creativity, is the presence of order in and around the person¹¹. Conscientiousness or responsibility is a characteristic of responsible, persistent, purposeful, well-planned individuals. Many also define it as regulation, but it is important to emphasize that it does not mean compliance with external rules, but a coherent internal regulation. But a typical question, for example, is our relationship to order itself in general. Anyone who leaves their belongings scattered or feels comfortable in a messy environment - deviates in a negative direction in the test! And how can creativity be raised? The Global Compact on Education gives us one of the fundamental keys to raising a creative person when it sets the goal of raising a questioning attitude¹². The basis of creativity is curiosity and questioning. Let the child ask questions and teach him to do so! Let him see the problem and look for its solution!

Beyond a cognitive development

Based on neurophysiological and cognitive psychological studies of recent years, it has also become certain that phenomena such as the development of emotional intelligence, emphasized by the Compact, as well as other activities characteristic of the left hemisphere, such as the arts, play, and movement, cannot be separated from orderly, cognitive “school” functioning. It is not simply good if we develop these as well, but they are inseparable from the development of the whole person, including cognitive development. Human emotional intelligence does not only

¹⁰ see Tate, N.: *The Conservative Case for Education. Against the Current*. London. Routledge. 2018. 222.

¹¹ Hornberg, J. - Reiter-Palmon, R.: Creativity and the Big Five Personality Traits: Is the Relationship Dependent on the Creativity Measure? In: Feist, G.J. - Reiter-Palmon, R. – Kaufman, J.C. (eds.): *The Cambridge Handbook of Creativity and Personality Research*. Cambridge Handbooks in Psychology. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. 2017. 275-293.

¹² *Patto Educativo Globale – Instrumentum Laboris*, *Educatio Catholica* 6 (2020/1-2) 270–287. 279.

mean the existence of emotions, but in our real functioning it is also in a very complex relationship with the cognitive sphere of intelligence. In the case of a patient who becomes emotionally incompetent as a result of a brain tumor, it can be observed that the “importance” order of people, things, and phenomena is lost, and with it also the ability to recall them, the ability to fully consider options, and the possibility of connecting concepts and emotions – and the strategic thinking is also impaired¹³. The order of importance of information and information acquisition, which is also an element of an effective thinking strategy, is also related to the motivation arising from emotional intelligence.

The ecological aspect highlighted by Pope Francis is also enriched with new dimensions in the Compact. The environmental crisis appears as a crisis of relationships¹⁴, and in general as the already mentioned problem of the child's distance from reality, from real life. Throughout childhood, all offline phenomena have a dramatic significance, from breaks to physical exercise, to all forms of social relationships. The physical contact with nature, exercises of children are a condition for all perception and thinking, because it enables orderly stimulus processing through a kind of neurological harmony. Let us think of forms of move that lead to abstract concepts such as the development of balance, keeping rhythm, keeping in line, keeping direction, and controlling eye movement. These can then be slowly connected to intellectual and artistic development through singing, dancing, rhymes, and poems. As we have already mentioned, this connection itself, the synchronous use of our cerebral hemispheres, also has a developmental effect. But all this in reality! Standing up in real life situations requires and offers spontaneous reinforcements that are written into our implicit memory. Small routines that are important in life (movement patterns, actions, communication elements) are not part of our explicit memory, we do not usually recall them, sometimes we cannot even say them (how to swim, ride a bike, etc.). But we learn. Their formation and development require continuous repetition, patterns, and reinforcements. Experiencing physical reality, such as playing in the physical sense, “playing around” is fundamental to the healthy development of the nervous system, and is a source of pleasure for the brain, the positive effects of which we have already spoken about. Similarly, play based on human interaction is accompanied by the stimulating feeling of “being loved” and “being noticed”. The impersonal stress of computer games does not encourage this process. The child craves this playfulness when he feels safe – especially in a pair situation, where the attention and feedback of the partner are clear. Free exercises, running, jumping, balancing, playing with a ball, and even frolic are essential for sensorimotoric development, even at preschool age. All of these provide necessary impulses to the nervous system. Movement, combined with vision, hearing, touch, smell and taste, forms imprints in the brain that generate new and new connections between nerve cells, which not only restructures the brain in an imaginative way, but also develops, and new abilities and skills can be linked to the development of new brain structures. And those connections that are not repeated, appear less frequently in the child's life, wither away. This brain plasticity is more important in early development, but its impact on later learning is also enormous.

Our physical activities simultaneously ensure specific brain function (blood supply) and the basis of our normal physiological functioning as a whole, which is a stable background for more complex brain function. Physical activity can of course also lead to fatigue. Moreover, in a frustrated, negative mood, for example in a physical education class loaded with aggressive, unfulfillable tasks, it can more easily lead to nervousness, anger, and rage than in a theoretical

¹³ Zimbardo, P. – Johnson, R – McCann, V.: *Psychology: Core Concepts*, Books a la carte. Boston MA. Pearson. 2017.368.

¹⁴ Patto Educativo Globale – Instrumentum Laboris, *Educatio Catholica* 6 (2020/1-2) 270–287. 280.

environment. However, the clear effect of physical activity carried out in a positive mood is an even ecstatic increase in good mood and a sense of happiness.

Creating emotional security and balance is also an indispensable prerequisite for the well-founded development of the more complex mechanisms of decision-making, self-control, self-knowledge, and empathy in young children. As part of self-knowledge, the knowledge and awareness of these processes are also an important element of development (I am aware that fatigue, anger, and fear influence my conscious activities). All of this is also part of developing empathy, since we must notice the same thing or adapt it through communication for the other person.

Schooling as a source of happiness

Going even further, it has now become certain that despite the tradition that school must be somehow endured and survived, human happiness and a sense of happiness are inseparable from spiritual and complete human development. We believe that our happiness stems from our life in harmony with God's plan. If we choose a social science analysis of the feeling of happiness, we will encounter interesting approaches and facts even from a lay perspective. Based on the name of the international happiness survey that has been running for ten years, it may seem at first glance to be a typical initiative aimed at satisfying the tabloid press. In fact, it is a measurement and analysis supported by the UN, carried out by the Gallup Institute, and backed by research centers at major universities¹⁵. The purpose of the measurement is not some kind of playful comparison, but to serve the UN's efforts towards sustainable development. The list of 137 countries clearly shows the hegemony of the Northern European states at the top. It is not true that there is no detectable correlation between GDP and the ranking – at least the first and last stages – but we find the Czech Republic, Slovenia, and even Romania and Slovakia in 18th to 29th place, while Japan and South Korea, for example, lag far behind them. Part of the result of the measurement, and part of its methodological basis for some time now, is the system of criteria for how the feeling of happiness is made up of certain articulate components. Is it clear why people living in “lucky” circumstances and those living in troubled, poor, war-torn conditions consider themselves happy or unhappy here and there? At first glance, these are also very disparate data. A deeper analysis concludes the following lessons. The trust between people and the quality of social relations (especially in times of crisis), the extent of selfless giving and the spiritual, intellectual and physical goods received from selflessness, or even the experience of a high level of these as an external observer, i.e. the presence of altruism and charity in a given society, as well as the good state (legal certainty, justice, fairness, certain common values - we will not enter into a political science explanation here). Far be it from us to engage in national characterology, but it is difficult to resist the temptation to add that there may also be national traditions that a society traditionally feels its happiness or unhappiness more strongly, and mainly communicates it with others. It is also a psychological fact that the closeness of our expectations and reality to each other is sometimes a more important aspect than reality itself. However, it is precisely this duality that brings us back to our original question.

What does all this mean in the mirror of the virtual, artificial world? The same reason why a significant group of young people conquered by the virtual world constitute a special group

¹⁵ <https://worldhappiness.report/about/>

of hopeless people in the search for happiness, completely independent of real space and societies. In other words, the virtual world, regardless of everything, can make you unhappy in itself. Yet they are also looking for happiness. The fact that they escape from reality into virtuality, which gives easier and seemingly positive feelings, from porn to the euphoria provided by games, is only the first step. The next, actually encouraging, but not yet addressed on a social level, phase is that they also realize: the artificial world does not work. As a result of the double disillusionment, the consumption of antidepressants and generally medication by young people living in welfare states rises to unprecedented heights. The good news, then, is that according to natural science, people do not find their happiness in artificial feelings either. Human experiences, human relationships, functioning human communities, and the experience of human prosociality are what we as humans need for happiness. The qualitative and quantitative limits of our performance, along with their discovery and acceptance. Therefore, the condition for the happiness and thus prosperity of our children is that they learn about human trust, the joy of spiritual, intellectual, and physical goods received selflessly from people, and the experience of selfless giving on a personal and social level, whether as observers or participants. As the key message of the Compact is the central role of relationship in education, education for community and service¹⁶.

The role of empathy in the education

The importance of empathy, interpreted as a synonym for “attentiveness” and “attunement”, has been known since the second half of the 20th century, and its successes have been documented from Rogerian psychotherapy to healthy human relationships and social integration, from successful leadership to pedagogical efficiency. Our knowledge of empathy, which was accumulated in the 1970s and 1980s, even without the confirming effect of later neurophysiological and brain research results, provided important and inappropriate lessons and suggestions, even in the direction of renewing our pedagogical culture. At that time, however, these attention-grabbing aspects were so far removed from our understanding of the purpose and essence of school education that their significance was only recognized and acknowledged in isolation. If we had known the relationship between empathy and our cognitive activities more deeply then, perhaps many important ideas would have had a greater impact. Moreover, the so-called social neuroscience, based on further experimental observations of empathy, was still met with a skeptical professional reception in the 1990s, but since the early 2000s, institutes and laboratories researching the topic have been established at the most important universities. The everyday experiences that are the subject of this new branch of research range from the effect of loving glances to the contagiousness of yawning. The essence is that our conscious existence, behavior, and thinking are shaped by our emotions that develop during our relationships with others, and this surface does not remain just a background, but the two planes constantly interfere with each other. Influencing our mood with tone of voice, tone of voice, even with our completely secret inner tensions or joy that settle on our facial muscles, the contagious spread of emotions are brain processes that can now be detected with modern imaging MRI and fMRI procedures. This attunement to each other, in its fullest, complex form, sympathy is a shared passion in the original Greek sense of the word, which gives strength, fills us with a good feeling, stimulates, it is not some mysterious force.

¹⁶ Patto Educativo Globale – Instrumentum Laboris, *Educatio Catholica* 6 (2020/1-2) 270–287. 287.

Today we can not only describe it, but we also know its operating mechanisms and can even influence it. It is based on mutual attention, sharing positive feelings and, in addition to verbal agreement, nonverbal and then verbal coordination. And all this can be learned, even if studies show that people are hypersensitive to the authenticity of these factors. For example, intentional imitation and following does not arouse sympathy. It is not possible to completely hack what we today call the “chemistry” between people. However, intentionality can be important in a high degree of attention and awareness of this phenomenon.

The entire environment that affects the individual or the community can also be intentionally shaped – which then enhances the effect on the individual. The culture of love is opposed to blocking fear, threat inhibits, while positive mood strengthens. And here it is not just about good mood, but also about the fact that such a positive state then interacts with the conscious functioning of our brain, positively influencing it. The positive environment also has a stimulating effect on the connection of those present in the environment, which then enables or enhances interpersonal network functioning. The mirror neurons responsible for this stickiness, which were discovered as a result of electrical examinations of the brains of monkeys in the 1990s, also determine the spontaneous imitative learning of young children. But they do not fade into the background after early childhood either. Empathy, which was still mysterious in its details at the time, was already, according to Darwin, the basis of human sociability (although it is also characteristic of several animal species), and one of our most important survival strategies. Today, it no longer serves the survival of the person, but rather their viability and social existence.

Elementary empathy, its level and quality, is a given, but it can be developed into a competence that is supplemented by social knowledge and an effort to pay attention, understand, and consciously influence our actions and thinking through all of these. Behavior (one of the conditions for identification) and self-discipline (either influencing our own radiation or controlling external radiation) are also such social knowledge. Today we know that social knowledge is not just the application of general intelligence in social situations. In this approach, social skills in humans become elements of a much more complex system beyond applicable knowledge. But elementary empathy itself can also be developed through learning, practice, and awareness.

Created humanity versus the cult of information

A specific strategy in raising children is to exploit the connections between the (in fact, never separable) cerebral hemispheres in order to develop social intelligence and thereby achieve greater performance. The intellectual approach (rules, reasoning) of a child who is fundamentally driven by emotion leads to complete failure, just as the loving but intellectually unsatisfactory treatment of an intellectually hungry, curious, inquiring child – however, all intellectual connection and thinking together is facilitated by prior emotional attunement. This same attunement to each other then also enhances motivation. Successful, joyful joint actions are also central factors in the creation of a broader community and communal existence, at the same time as a task, as a problem-solving and as an interpersonal experience. The striving for joint activity is a biological characteristic of our human species – if we do not suppress it with other “experiences” and impulses. Cooperative animals engage in so-called parallel

cooperation: there is no pre-planned or controlled role allocation or planning. So naturally, we would not be able to do anything about the social activity of wolves or lions in education. However, we can do it with humans. And so is our task.

This species-specific, security-giving, joy-giving, performance-enhancing social intelligence can be developed beyond conscious and practiced mutual attention through appropriate self-representation (sharing) and education to care for each other. However, the technical basis of everything is human communication. However, this also takes communication to a higher dimension than communication, information transfer and decoding. Therefore, it is important to develop an advanced communication toolkit in children, through the most diverse and richest possible linguistic preparation. Perhaps understanding this will also be an explanation and help for them during their many apparent struggles, from linguistic subtleties to the knowledge of artistic communication.

Accepting and experiencing our created humanity as a gift is therefore not only a Christian ethical expectation, but also a condition for our progress in school and our upbringing. This is also the case with the values of our knowledge, which can even be interpreted as a disadvantage. Such as, for example, the increasingly noticeable “slowness” of human thinking compared to the machine, or the diversity instead of manageable uniformity, which has become an even more spectacular phenomenon in schools with the spread of universal compulsory education.

The era of the cult of information, that is, the competition to obtain and possess information in the sea of information, is slowly changing into an era of winning attention. To use the simplest example, the challenge of commercial advertising is no longer the creation and delivery to consumers, but rather how the message created in unlimited numbers and delivered to consumers without obstacles becomes the one where the recipient stops and focuses. The question is not where the Internet user gets to (anywhere), but how he stays there, how he devotes time to something. Time and calm are also the keys to our relationship life. According to Pope Francis' vision, we will have individuals who are open, responsible, and willing to take the time to listen, to dialogue, and to reflect.

The speed, the fastness of the flood of information is deceptive. The psychic need for stimuli has increased, not the speed of processing. At the same time, the duration of enthusiasm for information decreases (in the case of the two youngest generations, it is decided in a few seconds whether they will spend another minute or two on a piece of information), and the phenomenon of so-called time pressure develops, which obviously results from the presence and continuous movement of an unprocessable amount of information. When, according to the Holy Father, “we are experiencing an epochal change, which, based primarily on technical development, contradicts the natural slowness of human adaptability and life with its sheer speed”¹⁷, this is what we are talking about.

Our differences between individuals and groups are on the one hand an unavoidable fact, on the other hand, their presence in schools is increasingly marked for historical reasons alone. It is in vain that we struggle for uniformity. Moreover, this difference: the uniqueness of our thinking, emotions, sensations, and tastes, is a value that distinguishes us from artificial intelligence, an inherent part of our unique humanity. We must admire and cherish it, and leave the same as a legacy to our children.

¹⁷ Messaggio del Santo Padre Francesco per il lancio del Patto Educativo, *Educatio Catholica* 5 (2019) 4. 177–179. 177.

Conclusion

In our paper, we presented the process of reinterpreting the role of school and education, highlighting some aspects. It is not customary to compare the teaching of the Catholic Church with the research and results of educational science and modern psychology. For science, church teaching represents the world of an ideologically and socially narrowed group and system of viewpoints, which it often ignores or views critically, while the Catholic community often treats scientific results with a similar distance, not considering the important teachings to be supported in other ways. However, when the conciliar constitution *Gravissimum educationis* imagines the future of Catholic education in collaboration with modern pedagogy and psychology, it invites us to do so. We have tried to present this reassuring harmony.

Pour citer cet article

Référence électronique

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