

Vulnerability as a pedagogical encounter Inclusion, fraternity and service-learning in the Taléta-PPKE intercultural community model

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Abstract :

This study interprets vulnerability not as a deficiency, a disability or a need for support, but as a relational and pedagogical situation in which the experience of dignity, reciprocity and fraternity can emerge. The starting point for the study is the collaboration between the Taléta Intercultural Centre and Incubator House and Pázmány Péter Catholic University. In this collaboration, Roma, refugee, children from extremely poor backgrounds and middle-class children, parents, university students, mentors, teachers and representatives of church and community organisations take part in sustained and reflective educational encounters. The study argues that an inclusive community emerges where social differences do not disappear, nor are they fixed as stigmatising categories, but are reinterpreted through shared learning situations, collaboration and pedagogical engagement. The theoretical framework for the analysis is provided by the contact hypothesis, the theory of recategorisation, Catholic social teaching and service-learning. The Taléta-PPKE model is presented as an exploratory case study in which academic knowledge, community service and vocation formation are linked through continuous reflection. The study argues that vulnerability can become a path to fraternity only if it is interpreted not as an object of assistance, but as a shared, reciprocal and institutionally supported space for encounter.

Keywords: vulnerability, fraternity, intercultural pedagogy, service-learning, contact hypothesis

Résumé :

Cette étude interprète la vulnérabilité non pas comme une déficience, une incapacité ou un besoin de soutien, mais comme une situation relationnelle et pédagogique dans laquelle peuvent émerger l'expérience de la dignité, de la réciprocité et de la fraternité. Le point de départ de l'étude est la collaboration entre le Centre interculturel et Maison incubatrice Taléta et l'Université catholique Péter Pázmány. Dans le cadre de cette collaboration, des enfants roms, réfugiés, issus de milieux d'extrême pauvreté ainsi que de familles de classe moyenne, des parents, des étudiants universitaires, des mentors, des enseignants et des représentants d'organisations ecclésiales et communautaires prennent part à des

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rencontres éducatives durables et réflexives. L'étude soutient qu'une communauté inclusive émerge là où les différences sociales ne disparaissent pas et ne sont pas non plus figées comme des catégories stigmatisantes, mais sont réinterprétées à travers des situations d'apprentissage partagées, la coopération et l'engagement pédagogique. Le cadre théorique de l'analyse est fourni par l'hypothèse du contact, la théorie de la recatégorisation, la doctrine sociale catholique et le service-learning. Le modèle Taléta-PPKE est présenté comme une étude de cas exploratoire dans laquelle le savoir académique, le service communautaire et la formation vocationnelle sont articulés par une réflexion continue. L'étude soutient que la vulnérabilité ne peut devenir un chemin vers la fraternité que si elle est interprétée non comme un objet d'assistance, mais comme un espace de rencontre partagé, réciproque et soutenu institutionnellement.

Mots-clés: vulnérabilité, fraternité, pédagogie interculturelle, service-learning, hypothèse du contact

1. Introduction: a pedagogical reinterpretation of vulnerability

In discourses on education, the concept of vulnerability is often associated with categories such as disadvantage, risk, deprivation or the need for support. We describe as vulnerable the child living in poverty, the refugee pupil, the family struggling with housing insecurity, the community affected by segregated education, the pupil exposed to bullying at school, or the parent who, due to a lack of personal experience of school, finds it difficult to understand their child's educational opportunities. This interpretation is important because it highlights the social, institutional and cultural circumstances that push certain children and families to the margins of the education system. At the same time, such a deficit-focused approach to vulnerability can easily give the impression that vulnerability is a characteristic exclusive to those living on the social periphery, whilst schools, universities, middle-class families, teachers and institutions are portrayed as infallible, stable actors capable of providing unidirectional support.

This study, by contrast, takes as its starting point the premise that, in a pedagogical sense, vulnerability is not merely a state but a relationship. It describes not only who is in need of help, but also who becomes approachable in the encounter, who is compelled to rethink their own assumptions, and who recognises their own responsibility in safeguarding the other's dignity. In this sense, vulnerability does not confine a person to the category of lack, but can open up the possibility of reciprocity, fraternity and shared learning. The pedagogical question is therefore not merely how to support vulnerable groups, but also how the educational institution itself can become a space capable of recognising its own vulnerability: namely, that it loses its sense of identity if it fails to remain accessible to the poor, the marginalised and those without a voice.

The empirical and reflective starting point for this study is provided by the collaboration between the Taléta Intercultural Centre and Incubator House and Pázmány Péter Catholic University. Taléta was established in March 2022, following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, originally to support refugee children – mostly of Roma origin and from situations of extreme poverty – whose connection to school had previously been severely damaged or virtually non-existent. Some of the children had completed several years of schooling whilst receiving little or no genuine educational guidance; both they and their parents were illiterate, and for many of them, school was not a place of learning but one of invisibility, silence and rejection. Taléta's

first educational task was therefore not to make up for missed curriculum content, but to rebuild trust in school, in learning and in the presence of adult educators.

Since then, the programme has evolved into a complex, intercultural and inclusive learning space, bringing together children from backgrounds of extreme poverty, Roma, refugee children, those affected by housing poverty, middle-class Roma and non-Roma pupils, university students, parents, teachers, psychologists, social workers and members of the church community come together. Taléta does not operate as a segregated support group, but rather as a deliberately mixed, shared space for learning and community life. In doing so, it creates a pedagogical environment in which social differences are not merely problems to be addressed, but can become resources for learning, self-understanding, community-building and the joy experienced within the community.

2. Methods and authorial positioning

This study is based on an exploratory case study and reflective practitioner research approach. Its aim is not to provide a quantitative impact assessment of the Taléta–PPKE programme, but to interpret a complex pedagogical practice through theoretical, hermeneutic and theological frameworks. The analysis draws on the author's sustained professional involvement in the Taléta Intercultural Centre, where she has participated in the pedagogical design, mentoring processes and reflective interpretation of the programme.

The empirical material of the study consists of several interrelated sources: long-term pedagogical observations within the Taléta community; professional documentation related to mentoring, learning support and community programmes; weekly supervision sessions and case discussions with university students and professionals; reflective accounts of children's, parents' and mentors' participation; and previously published scholarly and public texts on the Taléta model. These materials are not treated as statistically representative data, but as interpretative sources that make it possible to analyse the pedagogical meaning of vulnerability, encounter and inclusion. From a methodological point of view, the paper is situated at the intersection of intercultural pedagogy, service-learning research and theological-educational reflection. The Taléta–PPKE model is therefore presented not as a closed or universally transferable model, but as an illustrative and theory-generating case. The study seeks to identify those pedagogical conditions under which vulnerability may be transformed from an object of assistance into a shared space of dignity, reciprocity and fraternity.

The limitations of the study must also be acknowledged. The claims presented here are based on reflective professional experience and case-based interpretation rather than on controlled empirical measurement. Further research would be needed to examine the long-term effects of the programme on learning motivation, parental aspirations, school integration, prejudice reduction and the professional development of university students.

3. Vulnerability, poverty and the school's sense of identity

3.1. The pedagogical implications of vulnerability

The pedagogical interpretation of vulnerability is closely linked to the question of who has access to school and who remains excluded from its true community. In the Christian educational tradition, the school is not merely an institution for the transmission of knowledge, but a place for the formation of the whole person and for opening up the community. If school becomes inaccessible to the poor, the Roma, refugees or those living on the margins of society,

then this is not merely a case of social injustice; it also undermines the school's own educational mission. In this sense, the loss of the poor is not a statistical loss, but a pedagogical and theological failure.

The pedagogical interpretation of vulnerability cannot be separated from the collective memory and social determinants that shape the participants' self-understanding. András Máté-Tóth describes the religious and social processes in the Central and Eastern European region using the concept of 'wounded collective identity', in which historical traumas, a sense of threat and a constant need for self-determination act as defining interpretative forces (Máté-Tóth, 2022)². Children and families coming from backgrounds of segregated education, refugee status, extreme poverty or institutional invisibility not only face individual disadvantages but are also part of collective experiences that shape their relationship with school, authority, trust and the future. An inclusive educational space therefore not only addresses learning gaps but can also become a place where wounded self-perceptions meet and are reinterpreted.

3.2. Vulnerability involving multiple actors

Both the conciliar and contemporary interpretations of Catholic education emphasise that the right to education stems from human dignity. According to the declaration **Gravissimum educationis**, every person has the right to an education that takes into account their personal dignity and their vocation within the community. This statement takes on particular significance amidst today's educational inequalities. Poverty, housing insecurity, ethnic exclusion, migration or a history of segregated education are pedagogical challenges to which schools – and Christian schools in particular – must respond. If access to quality education becomes a privilege, then the school will serve to perpetuate social divisions.

In this context, vulnerability is not the sole preserve of poor children. A school is also vulnerable if, in its efforts to preserve privileges, it loses its pedagogical courage. A middle-class community is also vulnerable if it does not engage with the full spectrum of social reality and therefore begins to regard its own world as natural and universal. A teacher is also vulnerable if they have not been prepared to educate children from different social and cultural backgrounds together, and who therefore stands helpless in the face of conflicts, misunderstandings or transgenerational wounds. Students are also vulnerable when they enter a field setting driven by professional idealism but, without prior preparation, can easily become trapped in the illusions of their own role as helpers.

This is precisely why the Taléta experience is not merely about how to help children living on the margins. It is at least as much about how those living in the centre – members of the majority society, trainee teachers, and representatives of the church and academia – can relearn their own responsibilities. Inclusion is not the distribution of handouts, nor is it well-meaning, occasional awareness-raising, nor is it merely getting to know another's exotic culture. **In a pedagogical sense, inclusion is a sustained, structured and reflective presence, in which the other is not a passive recipient but an active, vocal and contributing individual.**

² Máté-Tóth András, *Wounded collective identity and the interpretation of religion*, Erdélyi Társadalom, 20. évf., 1. sz., 2022, 11–22.

4. Intercultural pedagogy as a dialogue between traditions

Intercultural pedagogy is often presented as the development of tolerance, openness, empathy or freedom from prejudice. These dimensions are indeed indispensable, but on their own they do not capture with sufficient depth what takes place in pedagogical encounters. Cultural, social or religious differences bring different interpretative horizons into contact with one another. Pupils, parents, teachers and institutions may have different ways of thinking about learning, school, authority, the role of the child, the future, success or social responsibility. The intercultural pedagogical situation is therefore always a hermeneutic situation as well: an encounter between interpretative horizons.

Tradition is not merely a legacy of the past, but a system of meaning that operates in present-day actions and decisions. It determines what we regard as natural, valuable, desirable or alien. The learner does not enter the educational space as a culturally neutral individual, but as a bearer of family, social, religious, linguistic and cultural experiences. The same is true of the teacher and the institution. A significant proportion of educational conflicts stems precisely from the fact that these horizons of tradition clash with one another without reflection.

According to Wiedenhofer's interpretation of tradition, tradition possesses logical, hermeneutic and pragmatic dimensions (Wiedenhofer, 2006)³. The logical dimension refers to the internal order of tradition and its claims to truth; the hermeneutic dimension to the fact that tradition always lives on through interpretation; whilst the pragmatic dimension refers to the fact that tradition shapes actions, relationships and community patterns. In the Taléta educational setting, these dimensions manifest themselves in very concrete ways. A parent coming from a background of extreme poverty may associate different meanings with the school than a highly qualified middle-class parent. For one, the values and tools for reflection offered by the inclusive school may provide a new language for recognising their child's potential; the other arrives with their own patterns of reflection, school strategies and visions of the future. Within the shared pedagogical space, these interpretations do not simply coexist side by side, but enter into a relationship with one another. A distinctive feature of the women's embroidery circle at Taléta is that, whilst embroidering, the illiterate Roma woman and the university lecturer plan their children's futures together as they embroider and chat, each contributing reflections drawn from their own traditions to the shared discussion.

Intercultural competence is therefore not merely a communication skill or cultural knowledge, but a capacity for reflective interpretation. It is not enough for the teacher and the mentor to be open-minded; they must also be able to recognise their own preconceptions. What do they think about poverty? What do they associate with Roma identity? What do you expect from a 'good parent'? What concept of academic success do you regard as natural? When do you interpret a child's behaviour as a lack of motivation, and when do you recognise that it stems from institutional invisibility, bullying at school or the experience of transgenerational exclusion? Hermeneutic intercultural competence lies precisely in the teacher's ability to shift their own perspective and to interpret their understanding of the other not as external observation, but as a shared process of meaning-making.

³ Siegfried Wiedenhofer – Torsten Larbig szerk., *Tradition and Tradition Theories: An International Discussion*, Münster, LIT Verlag, 2006.

5. A pedagogical and hermeneutic interpretation of the contact hypothesis

Gordon W. Allport's contact hypothesis provides an important theoretical framework for interpreting the Taléta model. According to Allport's classic thesis, a properly structured relationship between members of different social groups can reduce prejudice and promote mutual understanding. Among the conditions for this, equal status, shared goals, cooperation and institutional support play a key role (Allport, 1954)⁴. Subsequent research, particularly the meta-analysis by Pettigrew and Tropp, has confirmed that intergroup contact can have a significant prejudice-reducing effect even when not all the classic conditions are fully met (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006)⁵. In their large-scale, multi-country study, Hässler and colleagues demonstrated that positive contact can also make members of majority groups more open to supporting social change, particularly when the relationship is personal, cooperative and based on solidarity (Hässler et al., 2020)⁶.

However, applying the contact hypothesis to Taléta immediately raises a fundamental difficulty. Equal social status cannot, in a formal sense, be achieved in a space where the child of illiterate parents, a pupil from a mother-and-child home, a child from a large family living in a 35-square-metre flat, a pupil from an elite grammar school, a university student and a middle-class parent all come together. Social differences cannot be erased simply by placing participants in a shared space. Indeed, if the encounter is not accompanied by pedagogical guidance, these differences may even give rise to new hierarchies, paternalistic roles or reinforced prejudices.

For this very reason, Taléta's approach is not based on denying status differences, but on pedagogically reframing them. In shared learning situations, drama-based educational programmes, music sessions, sport, shared play, tutoring and career guidance, participants are not defined solely by their social categories. A shared goal, cooperation, lasting relationships, emotional security and institutional support create a pedagogical space in which, alongside the categories of 'them' and 'us', a shared form of identification can emerge: we are those who learn together, play together, create together and strive together to move forward.

This process can be described using the theory of recategorisation. According to Gaertner and Dovidio's joint model of internal group identity, one way of reducing prejudice is for a broader, shared identity to develop alongside or in place of previous group boundaries (Gaertner et al., 1989; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000)⁷. In Taléta, student identity can become such a mediating category. The child is not merely 'poor', 'Roma', 'refugee' or 'lagging behind', but a learner, a peer, an actor, a creator, an inquirer, a helper and a participant. Nor is the middle-class pupil merely a 'helper', but a collaborative peer who is learning themselves. The trainee teacher is present not as a saviour, but as a companion and a learner-professional. The pedagogical space thus does not eliminate differences, but creates new forms of relationship in which differences do not serve solely to separate.

⁴ Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*, Cambridge, MA, Addison-Wesley, 1954.

⁵ Thomas F. Pettigrew – Linda R. Tropp, *A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory*, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90. évf., 5. sz., 2006, 751–783.

⁶ Tabea Hässler et al., *A Large-Scale Test of the Link Between Intergroup Contact and Support for Social Change*, *Nature Human Behaviour*, 4. évf., 2020, 380–386.

⁷ Samuel L. Gaertner – John Mann – Audrey Murrell – John F. Dovidio, *Reducing Intergroup Bias: The Benefits of Recategorization*, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57. évf., 2. sz., 1989, 239–249.

A hermeneutic extension of the contact hypothesis is therefore necessary. Well-organised contact not only changes attitudes but also shifts interpretative horizons. Participants may begin to see the other's social situation differently, as well as their own preconceptions, the meaning of ' ' learning, and their own role. The mentor, for example, learns not only how to tutor, but also how narrow their own middle-class conception of learning can be compared to the reality of a child living in extreme poverty. The child, meanwhile, not only receives help with their schoolwork but also experiences that their presence matters, their questions are understood, their progress is visible, and their existence does not go without a pedagogical response.

6. The Taléta–PPKE model as an inclusive educational space

6.1. The pedagogy of encounter

The history of the Taléta Intercultural Centre can be understood as a history of encounters. The programme was originally launched to help Roma refugee children from Transcarpathia gain access to school and receive learning support, but very quickly evolved into a broader inclusive community space. Alongside the children came their classmates, local children, the children of mentors, middle-class families, university students, volunteers, teachers and specialists. The programme's pedagogical decision was not to send any children away, nor to organise yet another segregated 'catch-up' island. The solution was inclusive education and community engagement: children from different social and cultural backgrounds learning, playing and creating together.

This decision was significant both from an educational and a social perspective. **The wounds of segregation cannot be healed in yet another segregated space.** If one of the most profound experiences of exclusion is that social groups do not come into contact with one another, then the educational response cannot be to further segregate differences, even if this is done with good intentions or in a loving manner. Taléta's fundamental insight is that social mobility is not solely a matter of academic achievement, but also a process of building relationships and making sense of the world. A child coming from deep poverty is given a chance not only through tutoring, but also by being placed in an environment where their vision of the future, their identity as a learner and their self-esteem are reaffirmed.

Taléta operates within a comprehensive development framework on a weekly basis. In addition to learning support, tutoring and career guidance, the programme comprises sports activities, drama and creative music programmes, self-awareness groups, collaborative work with parents, adult education and community events. Mentor-mentee relationships take place on an individual basis and in small groups. Pedagogical, psychological, special educational and social perspectives are integrated into the programme. This interdisciplinary collaboration ensures that work with children is not merely focused on academic development, but addresses the learning, emotional, family and community dimensions together.

6.2. The pedagogy of presence

One of the programme's most important elements is the pedagogy of presence. Here, 'presence' does not mean passive attendance, but rather an attentive, interpretative, supportive and engaging pedagogical act. For children, the most important experience is often that someone speaks to them, waits for them, responds to them, and does not allow them to become

invisible. In many cases, it is precisely the withholding of words, the lack of pedagogical attention, and the failure to acknowledge their existence that have caused the deepest harm in previous school experiences. The pedagogy of presence responds to this: it affirms that those who are present matter.

A defining feature of Taléta's operation is that the university is present not as an external supporter, but as a learning and serving partner. Students from PPKE get involved in mentoring, teaching and community development roles, often within the framework of credit-bearing placements, pedagogical training and reflective practice. Students not only carry out service work but also shape their own professional identities. Direct encounters with social differences develop their intercultural sensitivity, conflict management skills, pedagogical creativity and sense of vocation. At the same time, field experience only becomes learning when accompanied by structured reflection. At Taléta, therefore, supervision, case discussions, shared professional interpretation and ongoing training play a key role.

7. Vulnerability as mutual learning

7.1. The multidirectional paths of reciprocity

One of the most important lessons from Taléta's pedagogical experience is that vulnerability is not a unidirectional category. At first glance, children and families coming from deep poverty, affected by school failure, refugee status, housing insecurity or illiteracy, appear to be vulnerable. This is true, but it is not the whole picture. In the encounter, the vulnerability of the middle-class child also becomes apparent: in their own closed world of experience, in their prejudices, fears or in the uncertainty that encountering social differences can cause. The vulnerability of the trainee teacher also becomes apparent: in the fact that the knowledge acquired during their training does not always provide an immediate answer to the pedagogical consequences of extreme poverty, trauma, invisibility at school or family breakdown. The vulnerability of teachers also becomes apparent: in the fact that they are often left ill-equipped, overburdened and without support to deal with social inequalities for which they have received insufficient preparation at either an institutional or a training level.

Mutual learning does not mean relativising these differences. It is not a question of everyone being 'equally' vulnerable, or of structural poverty and middle-class insecurity being experiences of equal weight. The differences are real, often dramatic, and demand institutional accountability. Reciprocity rather means that every participant in the encounter can change. The child living on the periphery does not merely receive, but also gives: knowledge, experience, language, attention, and community strength. The middle-class child does not merely help, but also learns: about different ways of life, about their own privileges, and about the possibilities for collective action. The trainee teacher does not merely apply their knowledge, but reinterprets it. The institution does not merely provide a service, but re-examines its own mission.

7.2. The story of The Little Prince's voice

In Taléta's stories, this reciprocity becomes visible in specific scenes. One such moment is when an illiterate Roma mother writes her own name for the first time and, together with the university student mentor working with her, rejoices in her success. The scene is not merely an achievement in adult education, but a moment of regained dignity, of finding one's voice and

of recognition. Another such moment is when, during a drama camp performance, a young Roma refugee boy answers the question ‘Who are you?’ by saying: ‘I am the Little Prince.’ The significance of this answer lies not in the casting, but in the fact that a child living on the margins becomes the focus of attention – and indeed a speaking subject - within the shared educational space. The question is not asked on his behalf by the teacher, but by another child. It is asked by a white, middle-class pupil at an elite Catholic grammar school. And the answer is not about the Roma boy: it comes from him.

The story of washing up together also demonstrates the pedagogical power of vulnerability and reinterpretation. A Roma boy, for whom certain household chores are considered ‘women’s work’ within his family and cultural traditions, joins in with the washing-up not because of a teacher’s instruction, but following the natural presence and example of older, middle-class boys at the secondary school. What takes place here is not the direct imposition of norms, but a shift in cultural meaning. What was previously a rejection rooted in the defence of identity is transformed, through shared presence, into a reinterpreted action. This scene clearly illustrates that pedagogical change often arises not from explanation, but from a well-structured, authentic and relational presence.

Vulnerability, as the deepest dimension of mutual learning, can perhaps best be captured in the fact that the participants encounter not merely one another’s problems, but one another’s dignity. The poor child is not an illustration of poverty; the Roma parent is not a sociological case study; the middle-class mentor is not a saviour; the university is not an external expert. They are all participants in a shared pedagogical space where the presence of the other shapes their own self-understanding. This is the pedagogical potential of fraternity.

8. Service-learning and vocation formation in Catholic higher education

8.1. Engaging with social needs

The Taléta-PPKE collaboration can also be viewed as a Catholic higher education model of service-learning. Service-learning is a pedagogical approach that organises community service and academic learning into a mutually reinforcing process. Its essence lies in students participating in activities that respond to real social needs, and linking their experiences to their studies through continuous, structured reflection (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Bringle & Hatcher, 1999)⁸. Service is thus not mere volunteering, nor does learning remain purely theoretical knowledge acquisition. The unity of the two creates a formative process in which knowledge, action, ethical sensitivity and the interpretation of one’s vocation are intertwined.

This is particularly important in the context of Catholic higher education. The university’s social responsibility is not merely an institutional strategy, but a matter of identity. The dialogue between faith and reason, service to the common good, a commitment to social justice and the formation of the whole person provide a framework in which service-learning is not a supplementary programme, but one possible realisation of the Catholic university’s mission. The unity of ‘head, heart, hands and soul’ emphasised by the Uniservitate programme aptly

⁸ Janet Eyler – Dwight E. Giles Jr., *Where’s the Learning in Service-Learning?*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 1999.; Robert G. Bringle – Julie A. Hatcher, *Reflection in Service Learning: Making Meaning of Experience*, Educational Horizons, 77. évf., 4. sz., 1999, 179–185.

describes this formative process: students learn simultaneously to think, to empathise, to act and to interpret their own vocation within a spiritual and ethical framework.

8.2. Vocation Formation

The student work carried out at Taléta functions as such a vocation-forming space. Trainee teachers and psychologists do not encounter pedagogical problems in laboratory conditions, but in real-life social situations. They come to realise that learning difficulties are not always a matter of individual ability, but may be linked to poverty, housing insecurity, bullying at school, institutional invisibility or a lack of positive family experiences of school. They learn that helping is not a top-down gesture, but rather accompaniment, presence and shared learning. They recognise that good intentions alone are not enough; professional competence, knowledge of the target group, reflection, supervision and a community support network are necessary to ensure that the service does not lead to failure or paternalism.

Continuous reflection plays a key role in professional development. Students interpret their experiences through supervision sessions, case discussions, small-group debriefings and professional discussions. Reflection is not merely technical feedback, but a process of self-interpretation. Questions such as the following come to the fore: how has my perception of the children changed? Which of my assumptions have I had to rethink? When did I feel at a loss? How can I be present without trapping the other person in their dependency? What sort of teacher do I want to be now that I have encountered such concrete forms of social inequality?

In this sense, service-learning develops not only professional competences but also the moral and spiritual dimensions of the vocation. Students can learn that pedagogical knowledge only becomes authentic when it engages with the real needs of the community. The teacher is not a saviour, but a companion; they do not provide ready-made answers, but create a space where others can speak out, learn, and become active agents themselves. This approach is in line with the emphasis in Pope Francis's social teaching that the poor should be seen not as passive recipients, but as active participants in the community. Help becomes fraternal when it does not merely give, but enables the other person to give as well.

9. Parents' vision for the future, understanding of school and the inclusive community

Another important dimension of the Taléta model is working with parents. Educational vulnerability is reflected not only in a child's academic performance, but also in parents' views on school, learning and the future. A particularly fascinating pedagogical question concerns the experiences of parents whose children were initially in a segregated or effectively exclusionary school environment before moving to a more inclusive learning environment. Parents with little or no schooling, and in many cases illiterate, and highly qualified middle-class parents bring very different sets of perspectives to discussions about their children's future. For the former, the inclusive school and the Taléta community often provide a new language of interpretation: they help them recognise that their child's further education, progression to secondary school, acquisition of a vocational qualification, or even a career in teaching is not inconceivable. The latter arrive with established patterns of reflection, educational strategies, visions of the future and institutional awareness.

The encounter between these two parental worlds at Taléta does not follow a pre-determined script. It cannot be predicted in advance what will be the decisive factor: social differences, shared parental concerns, a sense of responsibility for the child, trust in the school, or perhaps differences in institutional experiences. It is precisely this that makes the situation pedagogically significant. A joint discussion between an illiterate parent and an intellectual parent about their children's future can create an intermediate space of interpretation in which the school appears not as an abstract institution but as a shared hope. For a parent coming from extreme poverty, an inclusive educational environment can provide a language of the future; for a middle-class parent, it can make it clear that their own child's development is not independent of the social community in which they learn alongside others.

The parental dimension is therefore one of the keys to the issue of vulnerability and solidarity. Solidarity can be learnt not only amongst children, but also amongst families. When a parent from a background of poverty is treated not as a recipient of support, but as a conversation partner, a host, and a participant in decision-making, the structure of the community changes. In Taléta's practice, a symbolic and concrete example of this is when Roma refugee women welcome guests, make coffee, ask how everyone likes theirs, and strike up a conversation. The role of host reverses the one-way logic of dependency. Those who previously did not dare to speak in the presence of a white, well-dressed, affluent guest become the drivers of the conversation in this shared space. This is not a trivial gesture, but a pedagogical event of social visibility and dignity.

10. Fraternity as a learned pedagogical practice

The study's initial question was whether vulnerability can be a path to fraternity. Based on the experience of the Taléta-PPKE model, the answer is yes, but only under certain conditions. Vulnerability in itself does not lead to fraternity. If vulnerability is interpreted merely as a lack, it can lead to paternalistic forms of assistance, passive roles and the reproduction of hierarchies. If vulnerability becomes a spectacle or an occasional 'sensitising' experience, it does not break down social distance; indeed, it may even reinforce it. Vulnerability can become a path to solidarity only if it is transformed into a pedagogically guided, sustained, reflective and institutionally supported space for encounter.

In this sense, fraternity is neither emotional intimacy nor conflict-free coexistence, but rather a learned practice: learning that the other is not a category but a person with whom one can engage; that difference is not merely a threat but an opportunity for interpretation; that help is not a one-way vector but a mutual learning relationship; that school is not an exclusive club but a gateway to community. The pedagogy of fraternity therefore does not aim to erase differences, but to develop a common language and common practice in which differences do not preclude the mutual recognition of dignity.

The example of Taléta shows that an inclusive community does not come about spontaneously. It requires an institutional framework, professional training, supervision, pedagogical planning, partnerships with the church and civil society, a university presence, parental involvement, and lasting relationships between the children. Learning, playing, creating, drama, music, sport and conversation together are not merely supplementary elements, but the concrete arena for learning about fraternity. Children do not learn dialogue from lectures, but from having to solve tasks together, perform together, rejoice together and work through conflicts together.

At the same time, the pedagogy of fraternity does not serve the interests of those on the margins alone. The middle-class child, the pupil at an elite school, the university student mentor, the teacher and the institution itself all benefit from not shutting themselves off within their own social worlds. Diversity can promote not only social sensitivity, but also cognitive, communicative, moral and identity development. Those who learn to think alongside people from different social and cultural backgrounds will not only become more empathetic but will also be capable of a more complex interpretation of reality. Society as a whole, meanwhile, gains a capacity for dialogue: the ability to respond to differences not with judgement, resentment or fear, but through collective action and a shared search for common ground.

11. Conclusions

A pedagogical reinterpretation of vulnerability calls for us to assess educational institutions not merely on the basis of access, performance or integration indicators, but also from the perspective of whether they are capable of creating genuine spaces for encounter. Schools and universities fulfil their social and Christian mission not merely by speaking of dignity, but by creating pedagogical situations in which dignity can be mutually experienced. The Taléta–PPKE model demonstrates that the pedagogical framing of social differences, service-learning, the hermeneutic interpretation of intercultural competence and the practical application of the contact hypothesis can, together, create a form of community-based learning in which vulnerability is not a point of exclusion but a starting point for connection.

This study does not claim that the Taléta model yields impact assessment results in the classical sense; the experiences presented are reflective pedagogical observations, professional interpretations and insights based on case studies. For this very reason, further empirical research is needed to examine the model’s long-term effects, particularly in the areas of learning motivation, parents’ visions for their children’s future, school integration, students’ career development and the reduction of prejudice. At the same time, the practice described here already raises important theoretical and pedagogical questions: how can vulnerability be interpreted not as a passive state, but as a shared space for learning? How can a child coming from a segregated background become not only supported, but also an active shaper of the community? How can the university relearn its own social mission through community service? How can fraternity become not an abstract ideal, but a pedagogical practice that can be learnt?

The answer lies in presence, dialogue and shared learning. Where the child who was previously invisible at school can speak up; where the illiterate parent can become a host and a conversation partner; where the university student is present not as a saviour but as a learning companion; where the middle-class child encounters difference not with fear but with curiosity; where the school is not a gatekeeper but an opener of doors: there, vulnerability can truly become a path to fraternity.

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