Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to Participants at the Seminar “Education: The Global Compact” Organized by the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences

Dear Friends,

I offer you a warm greeting on the occasion of this Seminar promoted by the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences on “Education: The Global Compact”. I am pleased that you are reflecting on this theme, since today there is a need to join forces in order to achieve a broad educational covenant aimed at forming mature persons capable of mending, mending the fabric of human relationships and creating a more fraternal world (cf. *Address to the Diplomatic Corps*, 9 January 2020).

An integrated and quality education, and the standards set for graduation, continue to represent a global challenge. Despite the objectives formulated by the United Nations Organization and other bodies (cf. Goal 4), and the important efforts made by some countries, equality of education has not yet been achieved in our world. Poverty, discrimination, climate change, the globalization of indifference and the exploitation of human beings all prevent the flourishing of millions of children. Indeed, for many, these are an almost insurmountable wall preventing the attainment of the goals of sustainable and guaranteed development proposed by the world’s peoples.

Basic education today is a normative ideal throughout the world. The empirical data in your possession show that much progress has been made in giving boys and girls access to schooling. Today, the enrolment of young people in primary education is almost universal and it is clear that the gender gap has been narrowed. This is a praiseworthy achievement. Nonetheless, each

generation needs to consider how best to hand on its knowledge and its values to the next, since it is through education that men and women attain their maximum potential and become conscious, free and responsible. Concern for education is concern for future generations and for the future of humanity. It is a concern profoundly rooted in hope and it calls for generosity and courage.

Education is not merely about transmitting concepts;that would be a legacy of the learning that has to be overcome, that is, it is not only the transmission of concepts. Education is an enterprise that demands cooperation on the part of all involved – the family, the school and social, cultural and religious institutions. In this sense, in some countries it is said that the educational compact is broken because this social participation in education is lacking. In order to educate, one has to be able to combine the language of the head with the language of the heart and the language of the hands. In this way, the student can think what he or she feels and does, can feel what he or she thinks and does, and can do what he or she feels and thinks. A total integration. By encouraging this training of the head, the heart and the hands, intellectual and socio-emotional education, the transmission of individual and societal values and virtues, the teaching of a committed citizenship concerned for justice, and by imparting the abilities and knowledge that can prepare young people for the world of work and society, families, schools and institutions become essential vehicles for the empowerment of future generations. [If it is so] We can’t speak, though, of a broken educational compact. This is the compact.

Today what I have called the “educational compact” between families, schools, nations and the world, culture and cultures, is in crisis, and indeed in a state of breakdown. That breakdown is serious, and it can only be fixed through a renewed universal effort of generosity and cooperation. This breakdown in the educational compact means that society, the family and the different institutions called to educate, have all delegated the decisive task of education to others. In this way, the various basic institutions and the states themselves have evaded their responsibilities and faltered in this educational compact.

Today we are called in some way to renew and consolidate the dedication of all – individuals and institutions – in favour of education, in order to forge a new educational compact, because only thus will education be able to change. To achieve this, there has to be an integration of disciplines, culture, sports, science, relaxation and recreation; for this reason, bridges have to be built to “jump over” (if you allow me that word) the forms of enclosure that trap us in our little world and to launch into the global open seas in respect for all traditions. Future generations must have a clear understanding of their own tradition and culture – this is non-negotiable – in relation to other traditions, in such a way that they can develop their own self-understanding by encountering and appropriating cultural diversity and change. This will enable the promotion of a culture of dialogue, a culture of encounter and mutual understanding, in a spirit of serenity and tolerance. An education that enables young people to identify and foster true human values from an intercultural and interreligious perspective.

The family needs to be given its proper place in the new educational compact, since its responsibility already begins in the maternal womb and at birth. Yet mothers, fathers, grandparents, and the family as a whole, in their primary educational role, need to be helped to understand, in the new global context, the importance of this early stage of life and be prepared to act accordingly. One of the fundamental ways to improve the quality of education on the scholastic level is to achieve greater participation of families and local communities in educational projects. This is essential to an integral, focused and universal education.

On this occasion, I wish also to pay homage to teachers – who are always underpaid – so that, faced with the challenge of education, they will persevere with courage and tenacity. They are “artisans” who shape the coming generations. By their knowledge, patience and dedication, they communicate a way of living and acting that embodies a richness that is not material but spiritual, and creates the men and woman of tomorrow. This is a great responsibility. Consequently, in the new educational compact, the function of teachers, as educators, must be acknowledged and supported by every possible means. If our objective is to offer each individual and every community the level of knowledge needed to enjoy their proper autonomy and to be capable of cooperating with others, it is important to ensure that educators are trained in accordance with the highest qualitative standards at every academic level. In order to support and promote this process, it is necessary that they be given access to suitable national, international and private resources, in such a way that throughout the world they can carry out their tasks in an effective way.

In this Seminar on “Education: The Global Compact”, you, academic leaders from some of the most respected universities of the world, have identified new springboards for making education more humane and equitable, more satisfactory and more relevant for the disparate needs of the economies and societies of the twenty-first century. You have examined, among other things, the new science of the mind, the brain and education, and the promise of technology, in order to reach children who presently lack opportunities for learning, as well as the important issue of the education of young refugees and immigrants worldwide. You have considered the effects of growing inequality and climate change on education, and reflected on the tools needed to reverse their effects and to lay the foundations for a more humane, healthy, equitable and prosperous society.

I spoke of three languages: the mind, the heart and the hands. When we speak of roots and values, we can speak of truth, goodness and creativity. Yet I do not want to finish these words without speaking of beauty. We cannot educate without leading a person to beauty, without leading the heart to beauty. Forcing my talk a little, I would say that an education is not successful if you do not know how to create poets. The path of beauty is a challenge that must be addressed.

I encourage you in the important and exciting task that is yours: to cooperate in the education of future generations. What you seek to accomplish has to do, not with the future, but with the

present, here and now. Go forward, and may God bless you. I pray for you, and I ask you to pray for me. Thank you very much.

© 2025 - The Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences