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How does Francisco see education?



**GLOBAL COMPACT
ON EDUCATION**



This study of the vision of the education of Pope Francis was based on seven main documents of his pontificate.



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How does Francisco see education?

Luiz Fernando Klein S.J.

This study of the vision of the education of Pope Francis was based on seven main documents of his pontificate: the encyclicals *Laudato si'* (24/05/2015) and *Fratelli tutti* (03/10/20) and the apostolic exhortations *Evangelii Gaudium* (11/24/13), *Amoris Laetitia* (19/03/16), *Christus Vivit* (25/03/16) and *Querida Amazonia* (03/03/20). There is no explicit reference to education in his encyclical *Lumen Fidei* and in the apostolic exhortation *Gaudete and Exultate*. 10 speeches and audio messages from Pope Francis to various audiences were also taken into account.

1

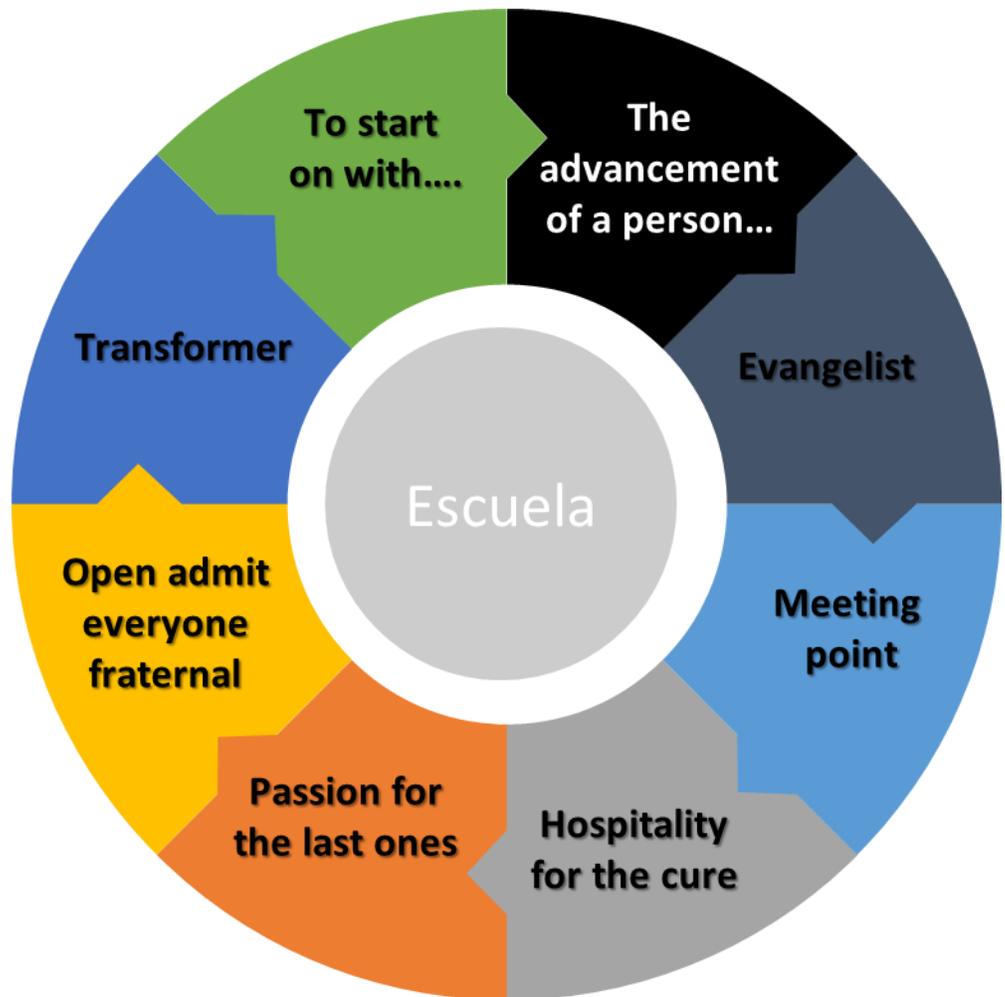
WHAT IS SCHOOL?

Francisco considers the school beyond its geographical boundaries and walls. He defines it as a platform for bringing children and young people closer together (Christus Vivit, n.221). The platform is not for itself. It is the platform, the support area that serves as the basis for other operations. It is also a privileged place for the promotion of the person (Id. 221), for the evangelization of young people (Id. 222).

The school is not limited to its limits and schedules. It transcends them, pointing to the surrounding reality and the world, offering an educational proposition for life. A more comprehensive view of the school was recently formulated by Pope Francis, in his message to the Jesuit schools of Latin America, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of their Federation (FLACSI), declaring eight vows:

- a) That our schools form hearts **convinced of the mission** for which they were created.
- b) That schools are "**posada schools**" where they can heal their own wounds and those of others.
- c) That schools are truly open doors and not just speeches, **where the poor can come** in and go out to meet them.
- d) That they **do not** become entangled in a **selfish elitism**, but rather that they learn to live with all, where the fraternity lives.
- e) That they **learn to discern**, to read the signs of the times, to read their own life as a gift to be thanked and shared.
- f) That they have a **critical attitude** towards development, production and consumption patterns that shamefully push for inequality.

- g) That schools **be sensitized and sensitized.**
- h) That they be **schools of disciples and missionaries.**



2

WHAT IS EDUCATION?

Francisco considers a triple identification profile of education.

ACT OF LOVE

Education is an act of love, because it generates life in its multidimensionality. It takes people out of their selves, helps them to become familiar with their interiority, to exercise their potential, to open up to transcendence, to include those who are rejected in the circle of life. Education is a dynamic reality, a movement that brings people out¹. *I am convinced, says the Pope in Laudato si', that any change needs motivation and an educational path* (n.15).

ACT OF HOPE

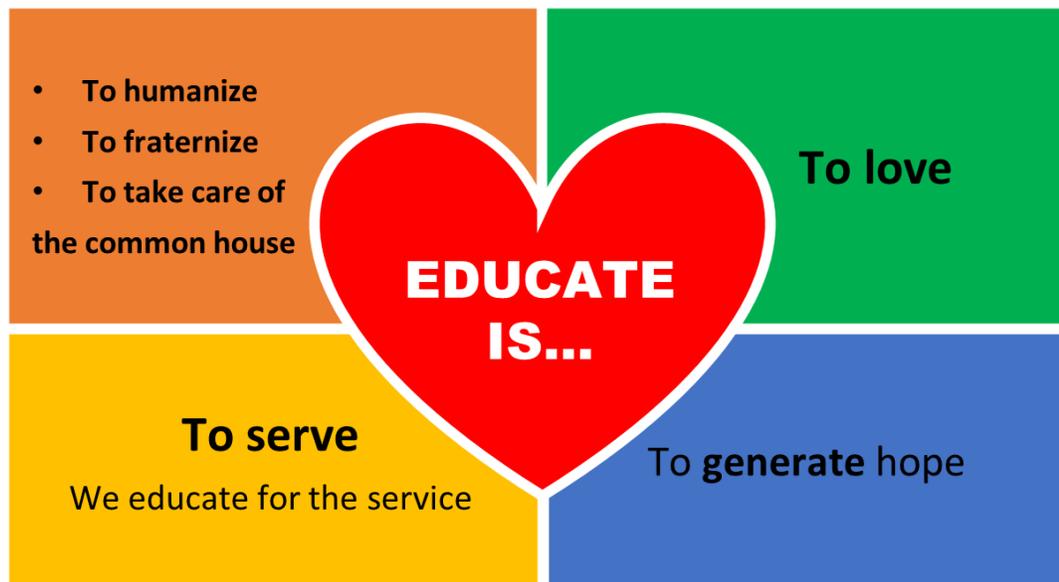
Education is also an act of hope which helps to break the vicious circle of skepticism, incredulity, the crystallization of conceptions and attitudes contrary to the dignity of the human being. The cry of Pope Francis to the various publics is reiterated so that they do not lose hope, because a globalization without hope and without horizon is exposed to the conditioning of economic interests which are often far from a correct conception of the common good and produce easily tensions, economic conflicts, abuse of power².

¹ Address to the Congregation for Catholic Education, 20/02/20.

² Address to the *Gravissimum Educationis* Foundation, 25/06/18.

HUMANIZATION FACTOR

Finally, education is a factor of humanization of the world, since it makes it possible to break individualism, to appreciate the differences, to discover fraternity, to take responsibility for the



environment. It is the natural antidote to the individualistic culture which sometimes degenerates into a true cult of self and the primacy of indifference³.

³ Video-message at the Global Compact on Education Meeting, 15/10/20.

3

WHAT EDUCATION IS NOT

Francisco denounces conceptions of the educational process that are incompatible with contemporaneity. It rejects the hegemony of content, unfortunately still present in many schools. To educate, he says, is not only to transmit concepts, it would be a heritage of the Enlightenment that must be overcome, that is to say not only to transmit concepts⁴. Education cannot be nominalist, in the sense of transmitting to the pupil only the content of the concepts, in a way which does not complete everything that is human because the person, in order to feel like a person, must feel, must think, to make these three languages so simple: the language of the mind, the heart and the hands⁵. The educational concept as the transmission of content is finished, it is exhausted, underlines the Pope⁶, because formal education has become impoverished because of positivism. He only knows an intellectual technicality and the language of the head. And that is why he is getting poorer⁷.

The Pope is also reacting to attempts to separate spiritual formation from cultural formation, on the pretext that study is useless if something concrete is not taken into account. And this justifies: the

⁴ Address to the Education Seminar: The Global Compact, 07/02/20.

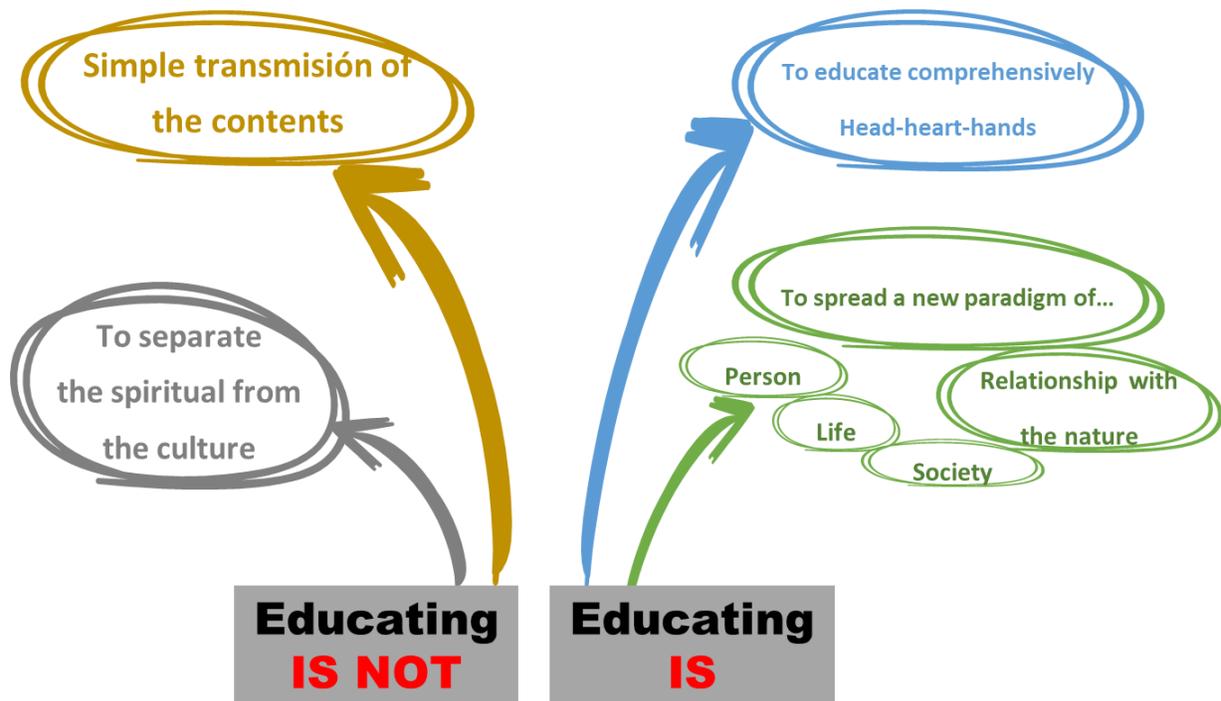
⁵ Message to the 24th Inter-American Congress of Catholic Education 13-15/01/15.

⁶ Idem, ibidem.

⁷ Address by Pope Francis at the World Congress 'Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Passion that Is Renewed', 21/11/15.

study is used to ask questions, not to be anesthetized by banality, to seek meaning in life (Christus Vivit, n.223).

The school that does not strive to diffuse a new paradigm about the human being, life, society and the relationship with nature will be ineffective and will perpetuate the model of consumer life (Laudato si', n.215).



4

THREATS TO EDUCATION ⁸

In his modern day reading, Pope Francis lists five factors that threaten education.

EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITY

There is educational inequity, an 'educational catastrophe', with 260 million children out of educational activity, due to lack of resources, wars and migration. The wealth of 50 richest people in the world could take precedence over the health care and education of every poor child⁹.



⁸ I return in this item to some elements presented in my book: Pope Francis: The New Education and the Global Educational Pact (CPAL, 2021).

⁹ Speech at the Seminar on New Forms of Solidarity, 05/02/20.

INSUFFICIENT PROGRESS

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DECONSTRUCTION OF HUMANISM

The Pope considers the "deconstruction of humanism" as one of the main difficulties of education today, due to individualism, indifference, the dictatorship of results, elitism in the world. education and "acceleration". Francisco invented this neologism to denounce the existence of a vortex of speed, constantly changing the reference points¹¹.

TECHNOLOGICAL MEDIA AMBIGUITY

The fourth threat factor for education is the ambiguity of the technological age. The uncontrolled and uncritical use of digital resources and the abundance of stimuli and attractive and continuous images, alter relationships between human beings, cause psychological disintegration, loss of identity, poverty of interiority and a lack of transcendence. Today, says the Pope, there is a

¹⁰ Speech at the Seminar on Education: The Global Compact, 07/02/20.

¹¹ Video-message to the OIEC Congress, 08/06/19.

tendency to positivism, that is to say to education in the value of immanent things, and this occurs as well in countries of Christian tradition as in countries of pagan tradition. And that does not bring children into total reality: it lacks transcendence. For me, the biggest crisis in education from a Christian perspective is its closure to transcendence¹².

THE BREAKING OF THE EDUCATIONAL PACT

The breaking of the educational pact - that is to say: between school, family, government and society - is another factor that destabilizes education and that Pope Francis vehemently describes in several statements. This phenomenon comes from the resignation of those who should jointly assume the educational responsibility, but delegate it to the teacher. As a result, education has become elitist, discriminatory, selective. It seems, says Francisco, that only people with a certain level or cultural ability have the right to education; but certainly not all children, all young people have the right to education. And he concludes: it is a reality that shames us. It is a fact which leads us to a human selection and that instead of uniting men, it separates them, it also separates the rich from the poor, it separates one culture from another¹³.

¹² Address to the World Congress 'Educate Today and Tomorrow. A passion that is renewed', 21/11/15.

¹³ Idem, ibidem.

5

PROBLEMS AND APPROACHES TO EDUCATION

In the encyclicals and apostolic exhortations of Pope Francis, there are about 80 brief references to education, in which there are four themes that he develops more broadly: education in values, education in the faith, sex education and ecological education.

In the exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, in addition to several references to education, the Pope reserves a chapter for it entitled *Strengthening the education of children*, with 59 articles. He deals with various aspects: the education of goodwill, habits and emotional tendencies for the good; ethics training; progressive appropriation of values; adequate education for discipline and self-control; family life as an educational context; positive and safe sex education; and how to transmit the faith. Education in values.

EDUCATION IN VALUES

For Francisco, education in values must present the desired end as good, attractive and satisfying, rather than the more demanding aspects of effort and renunciation (*Amoris Laetitia*, n.265). Learning and the persevering process of appropriating values lead the pupil, according to his age group, to the maturation of habits, which are the basis of external attitudes. Freedom must be encouraged and become the driving force behind the spontaneous practice of good.

In this way, says the Pope, the virtuous life builds freedom, strengthens it and educates it, preventing the person from becoming the slave of compulsive dehumanizing and anti-social tendencies (Id. n.267).

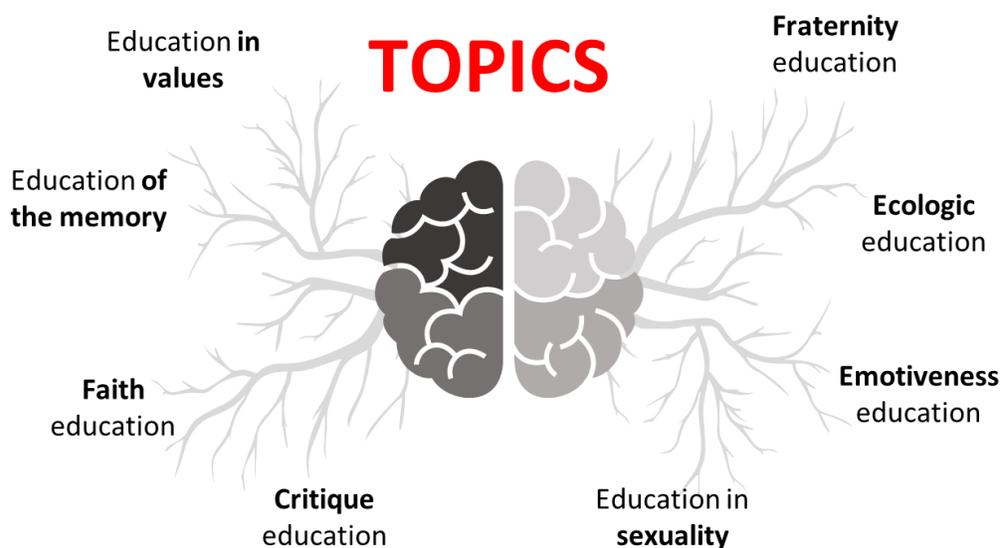
EDUCATION IN THE FAITH

Education in the faith is the prerogative and the mission of the family. He receives the support of the Church to become aware of his mission and to engage with ardor. Grandparents, with their wisdom, can make a decisive contribution to this mission (Id. N.262).

The Pope does not refer to the contents of education in the faith, because he understands them more as a transmission of the family experience of prayer and of missionary commitment. The transmission of the faith, he says, supposes that the parents live the real experience of trust in God, of his search, the works [of God] ... (Id. N.287). Family catechesis is not dogmatic or proselytizing, but flexible, respectful of the freedom and the existential situation of children. For young people, this allows them to invest more in their daring and responsibility than in the rules (*Christus Vivit*, n.233).

SEX EDUCATION

The Pope regrets that sex education is not taken seriously (*Amoris Laetitia*, n.285) and defends that it must be positive and prudent, precisely in a cultural context which tends to impoverish it and reduce it to information or recipes for "safe sex" (Id. n.280, 283). Therefore, says Francis, it is not necessary to deceive young people by leading them to confuse plans: attraction "creates for a moment the illusion of union", but without love, such a union leaves them. strangers as distant as before " (Id. n.284).



Francisco also devotes an article to gender identity, explaining that the masculine and the feminine are not rigid, but we cannot separate them because they are the work of God, before all our decisions and experiences and in which he there are biological elements which it is impossible to ignore (Id. n.286).

ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Another subject in which Francisco is developing is that of ecological or environmental education, which cannot be limited to scientific information and advice on reducing costs and preventing environmental risks. In the encyclical *Laudato si'* there is a chapter devoted to ecological education, entitled: Ecological education and spirituality. The Pope stresses the need for humanity to change its mentality and its ways of acting and, for this, to rely on education, an essential factor. Awareness of the gravity of the cultural and ecological crisis, says Francisco, must translate into new habits. Many are aware that current progress and the mere sum of objects or pleasures are not enough to give meaning and joy to the human heart, but they do not feel able to give up what the market offers them (n.209) .

It is necessary, defends the Pope, the creation of an "ecological citizenship" (n.211), which is not limited to information, but helps to form the conscience of the population to resist utilitarian pragmatism, to admire and to love. the beauty. of the world, to practice responsible austerity, to take care of the fragility of the poor and of the environment (n.215). To overcome bad behavior towards the environment, it is necessary to insist on a change of mentality, which is the task of the school, because education will be ineffective and its efforts fruitless, if it is not so concerned with disseminating a new paradigm in relation to the human being, to life, to society and to the relation to nature. Otherwise, the paradigm of consumption that is transmitted through the media and through the efficient gears of the market will continue to advance (n.215).

In the Querida Amazonia exhortation, the Pope stresses the need for an integral ecology, which requires education rather than technical considerations, which will be useless if they do not change, if we do not encourage him to choose another mode of life, less voracious, more serene. , more respectful, less anxious, more fraternal (n.58).

OTHER TOPICS

In his main writings, Pope Francis also deals with critical education (Evangelii Gaudium, n.64), education for emotionality (Amoris Laetitia, n.148), education for fraternity (Id. N. 194) and remembrance education (Id. 193).

In the apostolic exhortation Dear Amazon, the Pope mentions the poor with reference to the education that should be offered to them to develop their capacities and their empowerment. It must be an adequate education to cultivate without tearing away, to grow without weakening the identity, to promote without invading (n.28).

6

EDUCATE THE FAMILY

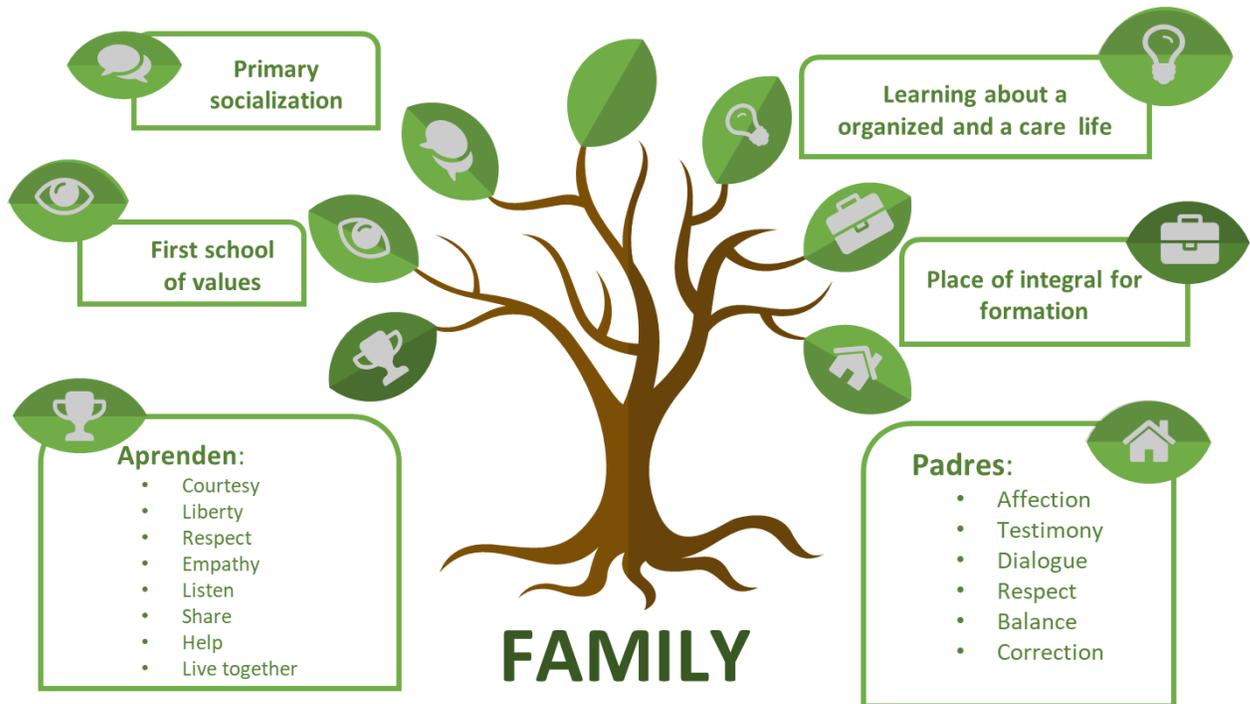
Among the themes or pedagogical approaches that the Pope addresses in greater depth in the encyclicals and exhortations, the educating family stands out, in *Laudato si'* and *Amoris Laetitia*.

In *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis enumerates the characteristics of the meaning and role of the family. The family is the environment in which life, a gift of God, can be welcomed and appropriately protected. It is the seat of the culture of life, unlike the culture of death. In the family, the first learning of a neat and orderly life takes place, with the good use of things, order and cleanliness, respect for the local ecosystem. It is also the place of integral formation where the different dimensions of the person develop. Small acts of courtesy are learned in the family that help build a culture of shared life (n.213).

In *Amoris Laetitia*, he affirms that she is the protagonist of an integral ecology (n. 277); it is the place of support, accompaniment and guidance (n. 260); it is the one who provides a basic education (n.263). It is the first school of human values, in which the good use of freedom is learned (Id. N. 274). It is the space of primary socialization, where one learns to place oneself in front of the other, to listen, to share, to endure, to respect, to help, to live together (n.276).

The educational performance of parents is not only a burden or a burden, but a very important, inalienable right and duty that can be

completed, but in no case replaced by other bodies, even by the State, which is hardly subsidiary (n.84).



To help parents in their mission, the Pope suggests that they show their children affection, witness, balance, loving respect, active methods, educational dialogue, loving correction. Recommends the promotion of human sensitivity to disease situations (n.277). He puts on guard against the intrusion of communication technologies into family life (n.278). It encourages parents to guide and warn children of risky situations and to prepare them for challenges. To those who manifest an obsession with knowing where their children are, Francisco suggests that the big question is not where the child is physically, with who he is at the moment, but where he is in an existential sense, from where it is positioned. the point of view of his convictions, his objectives, his desires, his life project (n.261).



Francis concludes the guidelines for the family by calling the Christian communities to support him in his mission (*Christus Vivit*, n. 247).

7

THE BREAKING OF THE EDUCATIONAL PACT

In his encyclicals and apostolic exhortations, Francis mentions only once, in *Amoris Laetitia*, the breaking of the educational pact: Unfortunately, a gap has opened between family and society, between family and school; Today, the educational pact has been broken and, as a result, the educational alliance of society with the family has entered into crisis (n. 84).

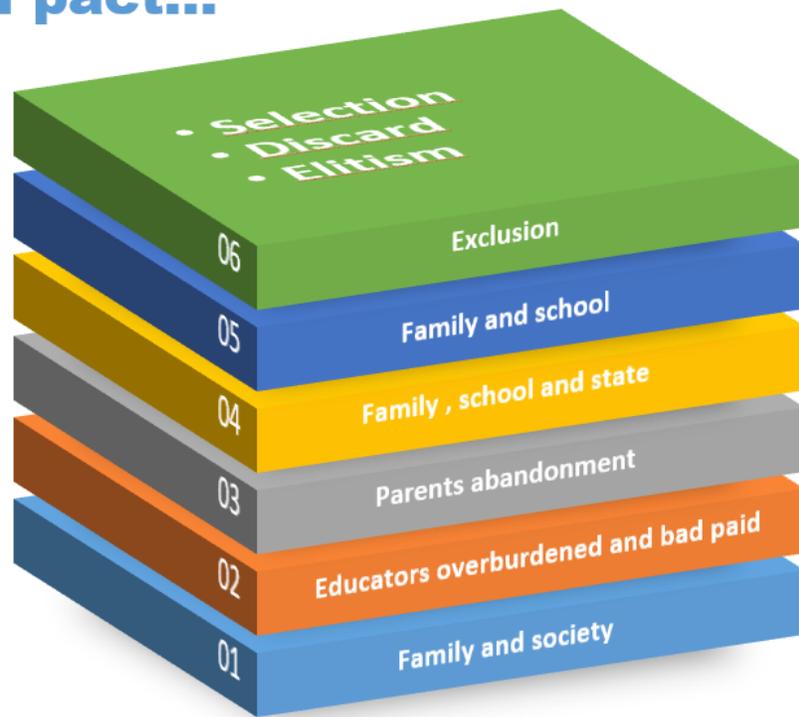
However, in several speeches and video messages, the Pope denounced that the pact was broken because this social competence in education is lacking¹⁴. This is due to the selectivity imposed on education, with the preference of the most gifted and the exclusion of the others¹⁵.

¹⁴ Speech at the Education Seminar, 07/02/20.

¹⁵ Speech at the World Congress 'Educate today and tomorrow. A passion that is renewed', 21/11/15.

This rupture is so serious that there is no longer any way to sew it, since education has become selective and elitist and the organs of alliance - society, the family, the authorities of society - have given up their responsibility, handing it over to educators, often overworked and unrecognized¹⁶.

BROKEN pact...



¹⁶ Speech at the closing of the World Congress of Scholas Ocurrentes, 05/02/15).

8

PROPOSAL FOR A NEW TEACHING

AFFIRMING HOPE

The proposal for educational renewal that Francisco suggests in the various declarations, starting in 2015, is based on the conviction that education, in addition to the notes mentioned above, is an act of hope. It is a dynamic reality which leads the Pope to affirm that we know the transformative power of education: to educate is to bet and to give the present hope which breaks the determinisms and fatalisms with which the egoism of the strong, the conformity of the weak and the ideology of the utopians wants to prevail as many times as the only possible way¹⁷.

RESPOND TO INDIVIDUALISM

Since education is also a natural antidote to individualistic culture, it is capable of apprehending diversity, not as a threatening or destabilizing factor, but as a single one. blessing for his own identity¹⁸. In this way, the culture of dialogue, meeting, fraternity and inclusion can germinate.

In the message to Jesuit schools in Latin America, Pope Francis suggests that they be schools with truly open doors and not just in

¹⁷ Video-message at the *Global Compact on Education Meeting*, 15/10/20.

¹⁸ *Instrumentum Laboris*, The vision. 1. Unity in difference: a new way of thinking.

speech, where the poor can enter and where they can go out to meet the poor. Schools that don't get caught up in selfish elitism, but rather learn to live with everyone¹⁹.

The Pope recognizes universities as a privileged environment for thinking about and developing this commitment to evangelization in an interdisciplinary and inclusive manner (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n.134).

ECOLOGICAL CITIZENSHIP

Taking into account the interdependence between the human environment and nature, Francisco insists on the need for a global ecological education, which promotes an alliance between humanity and the environment, at different levels of ecological balance: internal to oneself, united with others, natural with all living beings and spiritual with God (*Laudato Si'*, n.210). The dynamics of this educational approach do not favour content, but rather a way of life based on contemplation and concern for nature.

This conception of education must lead to an ecological citizenship, capable of influencing the conversion of an egoistic and bellicose society into a new harmonious society united with its members and the environment. For this, Francisco proposes to offer young people a wide range of life experiences and learning processes²⁰.

¹⁹ Message for the 20th anniversary of FLACSI, 10/06/21.

²⁰ Address to the Diplomatic Corps on the occasion of the New Year, 09/01/20.

OPENNESS TO CONTEXT

The Pope proposes that integral formation be attentive to the environment, to the context, to the surrounding reality in order to grasp the challenges that present themselves to humanity. For this reason, he asks educators if they are able to warn students not to disconnect from the reality around them, not to neglect what is happening around them, because they must be removed from the class, their mind must leave the class, your heart must leave the class²¹.

In the *Christus Vivit* exhortation, Francis calls schools and universities “at the outset” those which assume the task of proclamation, of culture of encounter, of option for the excluded (n.222).

INCLUDE THE PERIPHERY

By considering the context, signified education discovers the peripheries, social and existential, to which it must serve and promote broad inclusion ²². To encourage educators who are sceptical or resistant to this orientation towards the peripheries, the Pope asks: What is the greatest temptation of wars at this time? The walls. Defend yourself, the walls. The greatest failure an educator can have is educating within the walls. Educate within the walls of a

²¹ Speech at the Encounter with the World of Teaching. Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador, Quito, 07/07/15.

²² Video-message to the OIEC Congress, 08/06/19

selective culture, the walls of a culture of safety, the walls of a wealthy social sector that is not moving forward²³.

INSIST ON BROTHERHOOD

The Pope proposes to include education for fraternity in educational processes because it is precisely his contempt that has given birth to the culture of rejection, of selfishness, of seeing others as rivals or enemies. Fraternity, before being a moral duty, is an identity trait, it is constitutive of humanity. An event that brought great consolation to Pope Francis was the dialogue, in early February 2019, with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad al-Tayyib, and the joint signing of the Declaration on Human Fraternity for World Peace. and ordinary coexistence.

CURRICULAR REORGANIZATION

In order for the dream of the new education to become a reality, Francisco urges educators not to be closed to new proposals, to bold educational proposals²⁴. It proposes various elements to reorganize the program of a new type of education, in order to produce the fruits which humanity and the world need.

Integral or multidimensional formation appears frequently in the writings and declarations of the Pope: We must seek to integrate the language of the head with the language of the heart and the language of the hands. Let a pupil think about what he feels and what

²³ Discurso en la clausura del Congreso Mundial Educativo de Scholas Occurrentes, 05/02/15).

²⁴ 24 Congreso Interamericano de Educación Católica, 13-15/01/16.

he does, feels what he thinks and what he does, does what he feels and what he thinks. Full integration²⁵.

The most important questions that educational processes - formal and informal - should consider are:

- a) Education in interiority and transcendence.
- b) Complete or multidimensional training.
- c) Interfaith dialogue.
- d) Education in integral ecology and a sober way of life.
- e) Interdisciplinarity.
- f) Culture of dialogue, encounter, fraternity..

The dynamics of the educational process must open up a space for the life experiences and learning processes of the students ²⁶, to listen to them and to dialogue with them because it is they who question us about the urgency of this intergenerational solidarity, which has unfortunately disappeared these last years ²⁷.

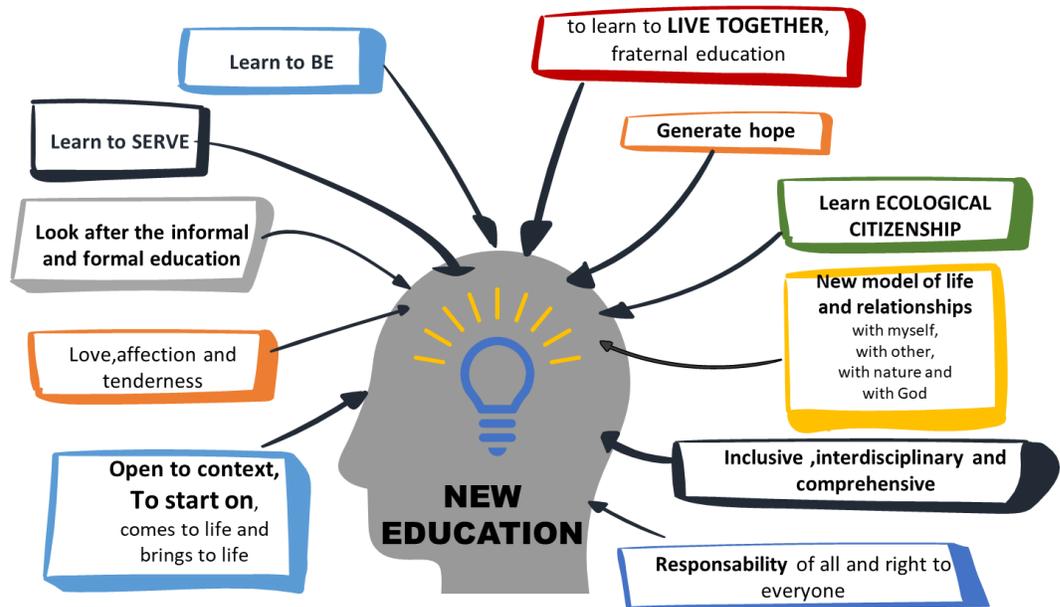
²⁵ Speech at the Education Seminar: The Global Compact, 07/02/20.

²⁶ Address to the Diplomatic Corps on the occasion of the New Year, 09/01/20.

²⁷ *Instrumentum Laboris*. O Contexto. 1. Rupture gives intergenerational solidarity.

OTHER ASPECTS

The new education, which is offered to a generation which changes, like the world, must also change, to listen to the voices and the questions of the young people, who have a lot to offer with their



enthusiasm, their commitment and their thirst for truth²⁸.

The Pope also emphasizes teamwork, because education is never the work of a person or an institution. Education ceases to be exclusive and becomes the responsibility of all and the centre of attention of the family, the Churches and social actors²⁹.

The educational work that Francisco proposes in front of a new model of humanity, is concerned with the quality of the work developed, in accordance with the Sustainable Development Objective n.4 of the United Nations.

²⁸ *Instrumentum Laboris*: The Vision: 2. The relationship at the center.

²⁹ Speech at the Education Seminar: The Global Compact, 07/02/20.

9

RADICAL CHANGE

Dissatisfied with the evils of humanity and the environment, the Pope confesses that our future cannot be division, the impoverishment of the faculties of thought and imagination, of listening, of dialogue and of mutual understanding³⁰.

Francisco is quite clear that people and the world can change, but for that to happen, they have to radically change their usual logic, and adopt a new way of thinking that knows how to keep together unity and diversity, equality and freedom, identity and otherness³¹. *The decisions of the present have consequences for future generations*³².

Considering the situation in the world, urgent education is needed today, focusing on informal education, since formal education has become impoverished due to the legacy of positivism. The Pope encourages opening up to new horizons, the creation of new models of human life, of progress, of economy³³.

For this reason, Pope Francis is launching an unprecedented initiative with the Global Education Compact. He solemnly justifies it by saying that there are times in history when fundamental decisions have to be taken, which not only give a new configuration to our way of life, but above all a certain position in relation to future scenarios. possible. In the current situation of health crisis, full of

³⁰ Video-message to the Meeting 'Global Compact on Education', 15/10/20.

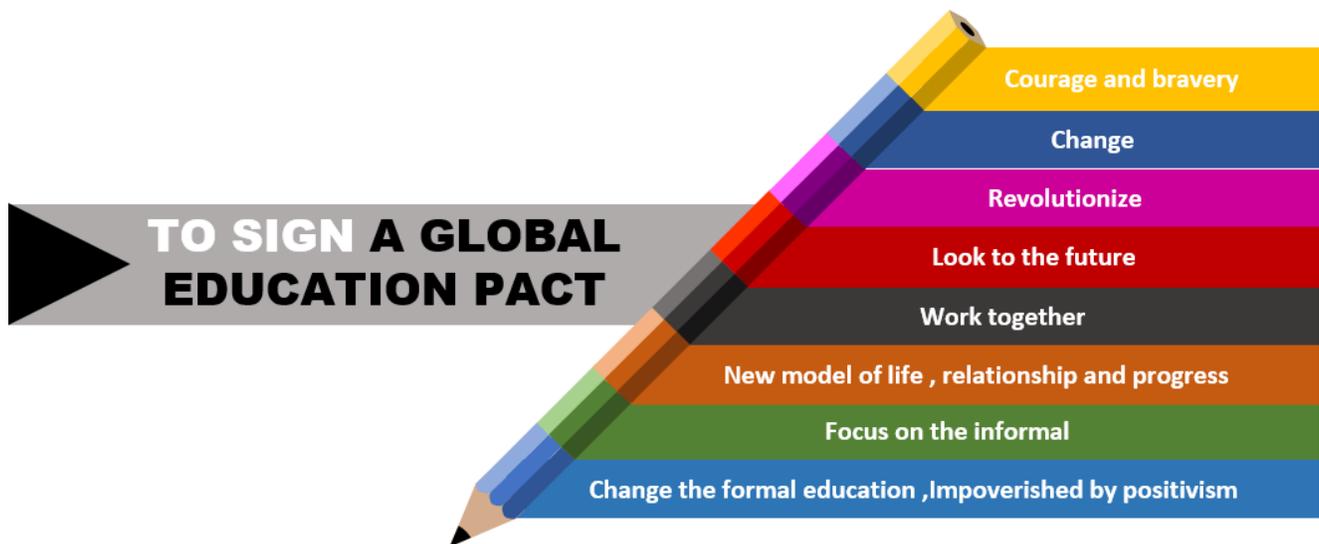
³¹ *Instrumentum Laboris*. The Vision: 1. Unity in Difference and a New Way of Thinking.

³² Address to the Gravissimum *Educationis* Foundation, 25/06/18.

³³ Speech at the World Congress 'Educate today and tomorrow. A passion that is renewed', 21/11/15).

discouragement and confusion, we believe it is time to sign a global educational pact ³⁴.

The call for an educational pact sounds like a "enough" of Francisco and a "war cry": we must break this pattern! It takes courage to make a real radical change of direction because the educational pact must not be a simple ordering, it must not be an annealing of the positivisms that we have received from an enlightened education. It must be revolutionary!³⁵



The new education requires educators able to organize educational scripts for ecological ethics that help, effectively, to grow in solidarity, responsibility and compassion.

³⁴ Video-message at the Meeting 'Global Compact on Education', 15/10/2020.

³⁵ Address to the Congregation for Catholic Education, 20/02/80.

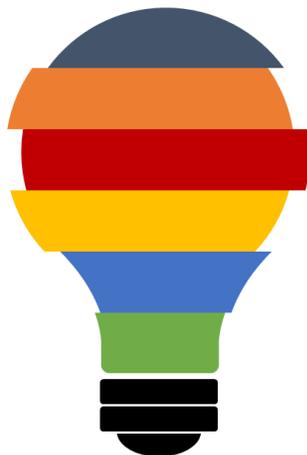
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CONCLUSION

Pope Francis' core belief in education is its transformative potential, both for individuals and for the world. The lack or deficiency of the educational offer has led humanity to lose the sense of fraternity and respect for the environment, to confine itself to selfishness and to practice a culture of rejection. It is an intolerable situation that must be reversed and, for that, education is a factor of liberation.

For this reason, the Pope vigorously denounces an outdated and innocuous educational model for the present, either in the hegemony granted to the fragmentary contents that he proposes, or in the pedagogy disconnected from reality which ignores the value of experiences, of diversity. and dialogue. , either in the curriculum design which rejects multidimensional training and interdisciplinary reflection, or in the exclusive defense of their interests, unaware of the needs of their environment.

New education



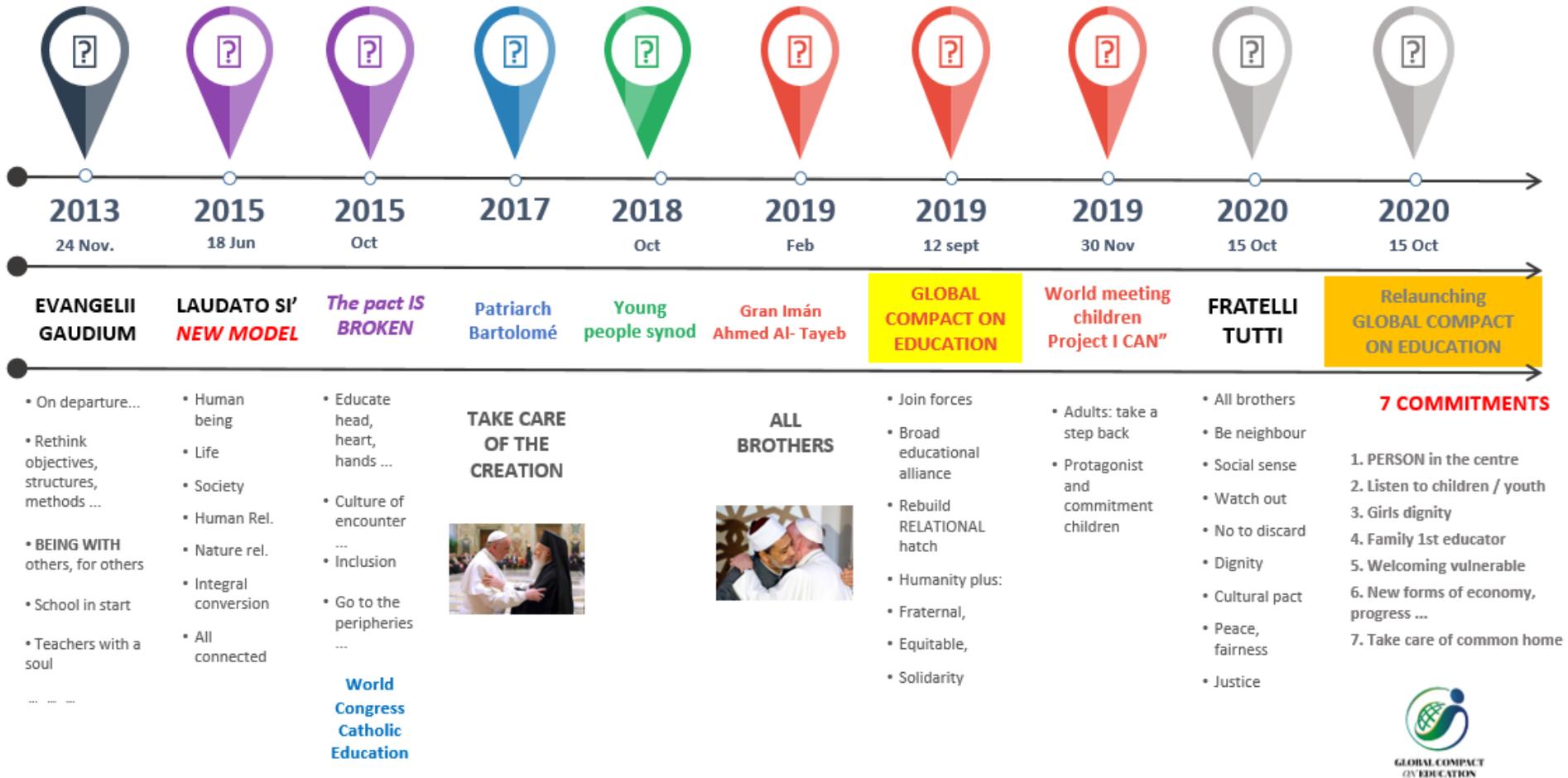
- 1** Current education: out of date, fragmented, disconnected
- 2** It is urgent to reverse it ... emergency, catastrophe
- 3** It must respond to the challenges of today and tomorrow.
- 4** Transforming
- 5** Everyone's thing, work together
- 6** Attend formal and informal
- 7** Create a new humanity, fraternal, supportive, sustainable



Education, formal or informal - because Francisco is not limited to educational institutions - will contribute to the development of a model of progress and human life that respects people and the planet.

The restoration of humanity reconciled with itself and with the planet will only be possible thanks to the educational service rendered by many actors: family, government, social authorities. And it is possible!

The EDUCATION according to el PAPA FRANCISCO



TO LOVE - HUMANIZE - INCLUDE - PERSON to the CENTER - LISTEN TO CHILDREN - ED. INTEGRAL - SOLIDARITY - LAST - HOPE - SERVE - TRANSFORM

11

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