

# Global educational pact: the role of the university (Part 1/2)

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*(from the Alphonsian Academy blog)*

The event “in the presence” of the *Global Compact on Education*, wanted by Pope Francis, was scheduled for May 14, 2020, but was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Since then, a series of thematic seminars continue to take place in various academic institutions. Recently, **on October 15, 2020, the Pope gave new impetus to the initiative with a video message on the theme that was handed down during an event organized at the Pontifical Lateran University.**

On October 4, 2020, the publication of the encyclical *Fratelli tutti* [FT] restarted the need to unite efforts to advance together towards fraternity and social friendship at all levels. This will not be possible without “an education to fraternity and dialogue” (FT 103) that also allows us to perceive both the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth because “we are all connected” (*Brothers all*) and “everything is connected” (*Laudato si*) in the common house.

## University and integral training

The university can play an important role in this educational journey if it can **harmoniously integrate learning and social service to the community (service-learning)**. Ideas and knowledge alone are not enough. Instead of merely exercising a

merely instrumental and transmitting function, the university must enhance the holistic view of reality and family relationships in the common home. Even internally, the quality of the relationship between teachers and students determines the level of success of training initiatives. In fact, **“A fruitful education depends primarily not on the teacher’s preparation or the skills of the students, but on the quality of the relationship that is established between them.”** (Congregation for Catholic Education, “Global Educational Pact. Instrumentum laboris”, [PEG], n. 3.2).

Education is essential to change the individualistic mentality that underlies the prevailing technocratic paradigm. To this end, the university will have to collaborate with other areas of education. Among them, the encyclical *Laudato yes* [LS] mentions “school, family, media and catechesis” (LS 213). “A good school education in childhood and adolescence lays seeds that can produce effects throughout life” (LS 213).

By continuing this training, the university must promote research to improve knowledge of environmental problems and how to deal with them. Doing so will advance relations between people and strengthen the decisive role of the community in human formation. **It cannot limit itself to transmit technical and scientific information. It must promote and guarantee an integral formation, oriented to transform the heart and mind to create ecological and solidarity-based citizenship.**

### **A multifaceted education because “everything is connected.”**

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The search for unity in diversity, typical of authentic family life, must continue in university education. **“The model is the polyhedron, which reflects the confluence of all the partialities that maintain their originality in it”** (*Evangelii Gaudium* [EG] 236). This multidimensional approach, says Pope Francis, aims to **“build a “village of education” where, in diversity, we share the commitment to generate a network of human and open relationships.”** Unfortunately, more than 230 million children still do not have access to education.

“The true service of education is education for service” or, better still, “education as service” (PEG 4.3). Students, professors, and researchers must make the best use of their talents not so much to promote themselves but rather to give back to their community what they have gratuitously received from God and society. Therefore, the university should not be reduced to a mere transmission function, but rather should train people willing to serve the community. Furthermore, it must strengthen the cognitive society and planetary citizenship, pursuing “a common good that truly incorporates everyone.” (EG 236).

**This inclusive and interdisciplinary education fosters a holistic view of reality that is not reduced to the sum of the individual parts. Indeed, “the whole is superior to the part” (LS 141), “unity is superior to the conflict” (LS 198), and “time is superior to space” (LS 178).**

Pope Francis recognizes “that we do not yet have the necessary culture to deal with” the current socio-environmental crisis (LS 53). We are in “a culture obsessively centered on the sovereignty of man – as a species and as an individual – concerning reality.”

Trying to fill this void, the apostolic constitution *Veritatis Gaudium* [VG] asks ecclesiastical universities to be “cultural laboratories” which, “on the cultural level of academic training and scientific investigation,” commit themselves in a “generous and convergent way towards a radical paradigm shift” and towards “a courageous cultural revolution,” especially concerning the method used. In fact, it **invites to assume “the inter- and trans-disciplinarity exercised with wisdom and creativity” (VG pr. 4c) so that new models of progress and development can be born (LS 194).**

*(The second part will follow shortly)*

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*(the original is in Italian)*