

EDUCATING LEADERS FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Edited by

Hans-Jürgen Dörrich, Biju Michael

Jean Paul Muller, Helmut Reifeld

Findings of the ISRE Survey and Extracts from the Seminars:

“Eradication of Poverty – the Responsibility of the Elites”

Bangalore, India • Nairobi, Kenya • San Salvador, El Salvador • Bonn, Germany

Don Bosco Verlag

1. Edition 2008

ISBN: 978-3-7698-1687-7

© 2008 Don Bosco Verlag, München

The Vision of the Church on Education, Development and Social Change

Oscar Andres Cardinal Rodriguez Maradiaga, SDB

For more than two thousand years, the Catholic Church, together with likeminded persons, following the principle of solidarity, has been involved in the task of guiding the human person towards the spirit of contributing to the common good of society. Living in epoch changing times we must consider that decisions to be taken in such times must correspond to the magnitude of the challenges presented. Solidarity is the only guarantee for the achievement of globalization and “sustainable development” that our world is striving for.

1. Biblical Perspectives

Development is, by no means an exclusively economic concept. It, especially human development is a concept that is rooted in theology and grounded on the Word of God.

The book of Genesis refers, seven times to the expression: “and God saw that it was good” thus stressing the importance of the human being and his surrounding reality. The same book

refers to Adam and Eve – to man and woman. It is a profound manifestation of the twofold nature of mankind that human beings cannot exist in isolation. The human being recognizes and finds himself or herself only in and through the eyes of other human beings. The baby identifies itself in relation to the mother.

Scripture has, at its centre, the human being, his or her growth and fullness, responsibility and development in the image and likeness of God. The person who is the image and likeness of God and the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is brother/sister, redeemed and resurrected by Jesus Christ, cannot be treated carelessly.

The Catholic Church took on the task of human development from the moment when the "first Peter" received from the Lord Jesus the assignment to announce salvation to all peoples.

2. Anthropological Perspectives

Human development contributes to man's growth into the image of God. The doctrine and tradition Of the Church offers us her own anthropology, which is characterised by a global vision of mankind. John Paul II underlined this vision in the encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* where he sought to delve deep into the truth about man.

This universal truth has its core in the idea that man was created “in the image of God”. This basic principle calls for a true liberation. Therefore the Church feels the strong need to defend the dignity of the human person. The human being in its completeness is the measure of development. Development should never be allowed to be the measure of the person.

2.1 Each Human Being has a Specific Mission

The human being is a person. As a person, he or she is the subject and goal of life. Man cannot be understood in an abstract way. Amidst the changes and transformations, which are happening around him, he must find the meaning of his life, shape his identity and enlighten the mystery of his existence. From the viewpoint of Christian anthropology, it is impossible to reduce man, God's image, to a mere cosmic particle and to an anonymous element of society, or a simple pinion of the engine of the world in which he accidentally lives.

2.2 Growth Must Become a Human Quest

We are living in a time frame where we are acutely conscious of man's freedom and dignity, and the inalienable rights of persons and peoples. At the same time, the marginalised section of human beings in parts of the world raises an urgent call for action from our society. The imperative to promote human development stems from this consciousness and vivid perception of all the obstacles, which hinder the development of freedom and offend human dignity at economic, political and socio- cultural levels.

2.3 Development Must Lead to Solidarity

The social dimension and the desire to succeed are fundamental to the individual. In the course of his personal history, he achieves fulfilment through the establishment of interpersonal relationships. Consequently, his rights must not be interpreted in an isolated context of individualism, but always within the framework of human existence based on solidarity. At the same time, solidarity determines the growth of the individual and the society.

At the beginning of the third millennium, the Church is convinced that man must be seen as a person acting in solidarity. The Church strongly believes in a God who is in communion with his people. Man created in his image cannot renounce this dimension. "God, who has fatherly concern for everyone, has willed that all men should constitute one family and treat one another in a spirit of brotherhood." (*Gaudium et Spes 24*)

3. The Complex Relationship between Education and Development

The classical economists knew about the relationship between economy and education. Adam Smith compared the performance of an educated man with the performance of a high priced engine. Stuart Mill underlined the connection between productivity and worker's skills, while Alfred Marshall spoke about the similarity between a man who invests in business - physical capital - and another one investing in the education of his children. However, most authors agree that the importance of education for any economic growth has only been studied systematically from the second half of the past century, from the fifties, when the theory on human capital came to be discussed.

3.1 The Theory on Human Capital

Various studies on human capital pointed to its importance in propelling economic growth. In 1957 Solow pointed to human capital as a factor contributing to the economic growth of the United States between 1900 and 1949. The Norwegian economist Odd Aukrust in 1959 pointed to "organization" as an important element of economic growth in Norway between 1900 and 1955, thus stressing the quality increase brought about by the human factor. Studies by Theodore W. Schultz in 1961 pointed to education as one of the means (not the only) that led to a rise in productive capacity of the human capital. Bowman and Anderson in 1963 published a study which considered the relation between literacy and income rates in various developing countries. They came to the conclusion that in order to achieve a sustainable economic growth there had to be first a "literacy threshold" covering 30% to 40 % of the total population. However, we must point out that Bowman and Anderson never argued that literacy as such could bring about economic growth. In 1980 Hicks made a comparative study with a sample of 75 developing countries in the period 1960 - 1970, where he found out that there existed a relationship between higher growth measured according to the respective per capita income and the literacy rates, the levels of nutrition and life expectancy.

Studies on the influence of the educational system on the behaviour of future workers clearly showed that primary education instilled in students a series of attitudes which were necessary for the labour force, such as punctuality, a sense of discipline, submissiveness, the capacity for team work, acceptance of routine, etc. Higher education on the other hand was found to have instilled attitudes needed for decision makers, such as leadership, a sense of responsibility, self-esteem, versatility, etc.

It should be noted that despite these studies, there was no scientific consensus in academic circles on the relationship between education and development.

Independent of the academic discussion on the relationship between education and development, political thinkers and international organizations played their part in creating public mysticism about the beneficial influence of education on development. Governments all too easily accepted the idea that a qualified labour force conditioned economic growth and that the educational system had to provide it continuously as a prerequisite for such growth. During this period, developing countries invested massive!), in education and were convinced that the lack of educational resources was the bottleneck of economic growth. In terms of public expenditure, the educational sector became the most important activity of the State in many countries.

In spite of the massive investments in the educational systems of those countries, the achieved results certainly did not meet the expectations. The reason for this failure could have been exogenous factors like malnutrition that affect intellectual capacity, poverty that impedes regular attendance and poor housing facilities that make study and skills' training practically impossible. Reasons for failure could also be the failure to pay attention to the qualitative factors. Often the attention was on the percentage of the budget allocated to education or to

the teacher student ratios. Money allocated is only a means. While large allocations for education are important, it alone cannot produce the results hoped for. Attention should be paid to many of the other qualitative factors.

Some of the other factors that hinder the efficiency of education and thus need attention include: obsolete syllabuses and methods of education, inadequate evaluations and unqualified and low-paid teachers with little motivation. Many of the third world countries have ivory-tower universities where the social development of the country is not taken into account. There is disparity between the educational system and the productive system, especially concerning rural development. National curriculum that is totally urban-oriented paying no attention to training in rural development is another factor.

Other problems hindering the efficiency of education include: the imbalance between education and employment and emigration to the cities, which weaken the link between education and work bringing about the phenomena of jobless graduates and displacement of graduates. It creates the strange situation where persons with college education get the jobs of high school graduates, while the latter get the jobs of persons with primary education.

4. The Catholic Church's Involvement

By the end of the twentieth century, the Catholic Church can be said to have strongly intervened in two main areas of her social teachings: the workers' situation and the development issue. The second half of the past century was almost completely dedicated to development issues, beginning with the speeches of Pope Pius XII in the fifties: The Encyclical *Mater et Magistra* by John XXIII (1961), the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), the Encyclicals *Populorum Progressio* by Paul VI (1967), *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* by John Paul II (1988), and *Centesimus Annus* (1991) are important documents that witness to the concern of the Church for human development.

Despite many efforts, the great hopes for development have not all been fulfilled and we still have large sections of the poor who are marginalized and exploited. For this reason the Church continues to commit herself to the active promotion of social rights, which include the right to education, the freedom of assembly, the right to work, housing, health, leisure and development.

The people of God must feel that God is taking steps for our salvation, in bringing about a development that is for each and everyone, a growth that looks to a transition from less human conditions, to a life of dignity which is the right of every one. *Populorum Progressio* 21 defines these: "What are less than human conditions? The material poverty of those who lack the bare necessities of life, and the moral poverty of those who are crushed under the weight of their own self-love; oppressive political structures resulting from the abuse of ownership or the improper exercise of power, from the exploitation of the worker or unjust transactions. What are truly human conditions? The rise from poverty to the acquisition of life's necessities; the elimination of social ills; broadening the horizons of knowledge; acquiring refinement and culture..."

The Church has not only been accompanying international initiatives in the course of the last decades, but was also fully present with her own contributions in the field of human promotion through education.

The Church's contribution to education is reflected in the more than 170,000 Catholic Schools and 900 Catholic Universities around the world that provide quality education to millions of students. The pedagogy based on the gospels and the self sacrificing work of lay Catholics, priests and religious, men and women have earned Catholic education the mark of quality in the third world and in the developed world.

Pope John Paul II intervened more directly in educational issues when in 1990 he urged the Catholic Universities to cooperate concretely with the progress of society in their respective countries. This valuable document with the title "Ex Corde Ecclesiae" invites the Catholic Universities to find ways and means so that the benefits of university education became accessible to everybody, especially the poor.

When the Church reflects upon the question of demographic growth and development, she considers the adoption of a demographic policy geared at birth control as being particularly detrimental, as it tends to remove, replace or simply forget about a development policy, which is certainly more demanding, but is the only acceptable one. "It is not a matter of reducing the companions at table but to multiply the bread" (Paul VI).

The Church proposes a kind of education which is in line with the integral development desired for all peoples and which transforms the students into subjects of their own development. The Risen Christ, "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1,15), is the goal for the development of the human being, so that all of us may reach the status of the perfect man.

5. A Future for All

The Third Millennium is full of promises. It is fascinating to witness the growth of globalization, the search for a meaningful life, the technological progress, the growing possibilities of communication and integration among persons and peoples. But just as any other human reality, this fascination is not free from fears. Amidst these hopeful megatendencies we are aware of the mega-absentees: the poor, the marginalized, the indigenous peoples, the disabled. Will we be able to create space for all human beings in a world as rich as ours? How will the third millennium embrace the marginalized peoples? Why is there a dawn for some and a sunset for others?

To split history between the good ones and the bad ones, the generous and the egocentric persons, the sensitive and the insensitive ones, would be too simplistic and does not get us anywhere. It is better to appeal to the sense of responsibility and solidarity of the individual. We need to reject any indifference and put our shoulders to the wheel.

We need to create a committed society advocating solidarity in words and deeds, which will multiply everything done in favour of the others. Political will is required in order to bring about the necessary changes and offer access to justice, education, housing and jobs for each and every human being.

6. Some Priorities for Action

In order to assume this task of building a future for all, we propose the following:

- **Promoting education and skills training with a humanizing orientation**, which will give us the appropriate tools for advancing in life, while at the same time denouncing the concept of education which is only geared at preparing cheap labour for production and services. In order to fulfil this task a high quality education is required. Equal opportunities should be open to all. Exclusion on the basis of race, colour, and status should not exist. The institution should have sufficient resources, appropriate autonomy and creativity, with regular classes and varied teaching methods. It should be open to families so that fathers, mothers and teachers share responsibility for the students, who should learn to live together, develop their own discernment and become active, enterprising and committed citizens of the global village.
- **Promoting the construction of an efficient, modern and democratic State** striving for equity, as one of its main targets. This goal requires, at the same time, a reciprocal

and complementary process of strengthening civil society and the development of public institutions open to participative citizenship. One of the priorities of such an institutional reform is the creation of a more robust rule of law as demanded by social reform, and the defence and protection of the rights of the most vulnerable, the poor and the marginalized. An accessible and efficient judiciary capable of rapid response is an indispensable tool in the struggle against corruption.

- **Promoting peace among nations and internal peace among peoples.** Peace does not only consist in overcoming war. It is a way of tackling conflicts through dialogue and consensus. As Jesus proclaimed in the Beatitudes, peace needs a peace-loving heart. It is thus absolutely necessary to lead people continuously towards the construction of peace.

7. Human Development - A Permanent Call of the Church

We should be grateful to Providence for having allowed us to live in a time of immense possibilities for transforming civilization. Never before has humanity faced such accumulation of opportunities and challenges as we do now. We should not run the risk of being narrow-minded in a period calling for grandeur.

The great challenge of the present world obliges us to change our way of looking at it. There are two prevalent attitudes. The first is of those who accept most reluctantly that we are living in times of change. They think that patching up here and there will be enough to tackle the new realities. This attitude does not get us anywhere. There is also another attitude that we would like to uphold and suggest as the way forward. In this attitude, we must not think that we are merely living in times of change but in a new period altogether. Such an attitude demands new and total commitment to development.

Globalization is the magic word that represents the new attitude of development in solidarity. If we might attempt a definition, it is the tendency to direct the development of the world, starting from the principle that all belong to the same species, and that therefore all our goals, aspirations, aims and dreams are alike; that we are unified in the utopia we are looking for and the final result will be the betterment of mankind, a higher quality of life and the happiness we all long for.

Globalization will either be based on solidarity - as its inventors conceived it - or it will not happen at all. Globalization without solidarity will degenerate into a totalitarian imperialism that will not allow any participation and require blind obedience from the less powerful. Therefore solidarity, as the weighing stone for globalization and development must play an important role and prove its value. It should not only be able to animate an ideological discourse, forge an economic gesture and a political action; it must forge a culture of solidarity and an ethics of solidarity.

Globalization requires a lot more than the overcoming of the east-west conflict. It demands two other important movements, namely integration and openness. Only the economic implications of these two have been publicized. Evidently, it is in bringing integration and openness into all aspects of development that we find difficulties that not only challenge our decisions but all of our imagination.