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"THE EDUCATION WE NEED"

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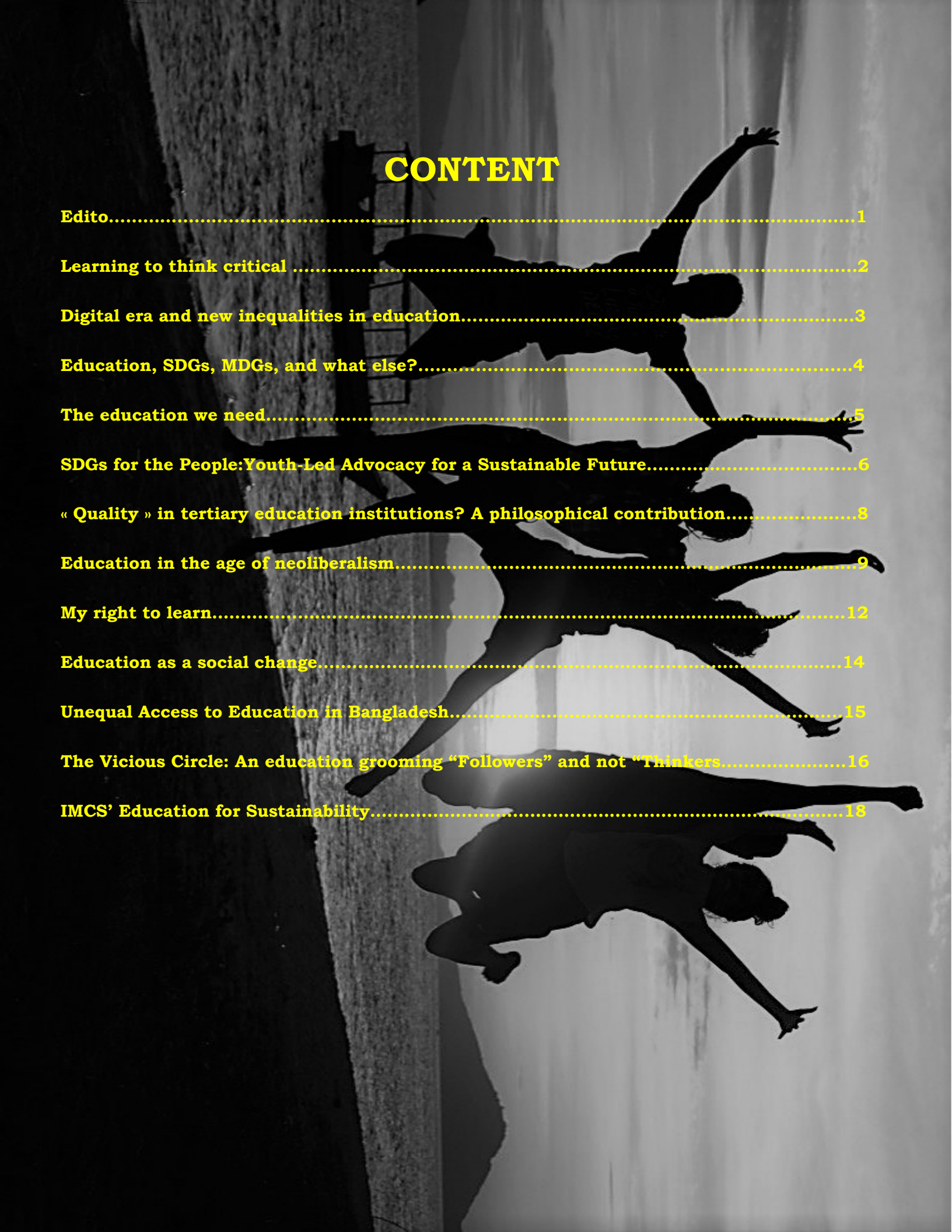


CONTENT

Edito.....1

Learning to think critical 2

Digital era and new inequalities in education.....3

Education, SDGs, MDGs, and what else?.....4

The education we need.....5

SDGs for the People:Youth-Led Advocacy for a Sustainable Future.....6

« Quality » in tertiary education institutions? A philosophical contribution.....8

Education in the age of neoliberalism.....9

My right to learn.....12

Education as a social change.....14

Unequal Access to Education in Bangladesh.....15

The Vicious Circle: An education grooming “Followers” and not “Thinkers.....16

IMCS’ Education for Sustainability.....18

Edito

Dear members of IMCS Pax Romana, our global family, and dear readers,

What kind of education does the youth of our era need?

This question is as old as mankind, but it is being asked again with increased intensity in the face of the crisis of leadership[1], the instability, the enormous violations of human rights, the religious and racial stigmatisation, the different forms of inequality etc. that are increasing by day. We have chosen to speak out on this matter to define the link between access to knowledge and development. This will definitely allow us to scrutinize education and training in the context of global teaching and learning conditions which are at the core of explaining what kind of leadership is practiced from generation to generation.

We cannot remain indifferent towards the nature, the conditions and the content of teaching at universities around the world. It is also an invitation to understand the deeper meaning of education and its role. Why do we go to school? Is knowledge an end in itself or a means to an end? If it is a means, what does it lead us to? What alternatives are there to the great fragmentation of knowledge at our universities?

The Magisterium of the Catholic Church has given an answer that has remained unchanged over time and that goes back to the overall development of man. According to this, God has made us the heirs and co-creators of today's world, and universities must help students "develop a free and critical spirit able to protect [this] world"[2]. If we agree that everything is connected[3] and that indifference is a great threat of our time[4], the mission of today's universities is worth being questioned insofar as it is called upon to constantly bring together the collective needs and the wisdom to reach to them.

Pope Francis argues that it is time to "stop regarding a university diploma as a symbol of higher status, money and social prestige, but to view it as a mark of increased responsibility in the face of current problems, needs of the poor, and environment"[5].

Constant different challenges faced in different parts of the world strip the great illusion of almightiness surrounding the new technological and consumerist order. This invites people to reinvent the mission of knowledge delivered by education. IMCS Pax Romana's most important task is to create leaders, intellectuals and young professionals who are not shut off at their jobs but open to their environment and the needs of people who are living at their mercy[6].

This edition of FORUM is pleased to present articles by our members from four corners of the world which explore different topics from the weakness of educational policies all the way to inequalities caused by the digital era, passing by philosophical aspects of education.

Good reading!

Edouard Karoue
International President
IMCS Pax Romana

[1] Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, N°105; Huffington Post also talked about the confrontations between political leaders causing misery http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alon-benmeir/the-global-crisis-of-lead_b_9749620.html

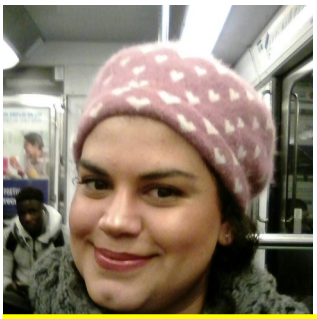
[2] Pope Francis, *address to schools and universities*, Pontifical Catholic University of Quito, Ecuador, 2015 (http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/fr/speeches/2015/july/documents/papa-francesco_20150707_ecuador-scuola-universita.html)

[3] Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, 2015

[4] Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 2013

[5] Pope Francis, *address to schools and universities*, Pontifical Catholic University of Quito, Ecuador, 2015 (http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/fr/speeches/2015/july/documents/papa-francesco_20150707_ecuador-scuola-universita.html)

[6] Pope Francis, *Amores Leatitia*, 2016



Learning to think critical

It has been said that "education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world" (Nelson Mandela). However, do we see that happening fairly enough? Are we happy with the kind of education we receive in our tertiary institutions? And what do we really refer to by using the term "education"?

When we talk about education we usually only think of the formal education someone receives at the schools, colleges or universities, whereas we forget the non-formal education, the one that you often get when you're a member of a youth organization. It is not being educated in schools or universities but it is the one which teaches us values of life, traditions, respect, dignity, self-confidence, how to be assertive and how to develop ourselves individually.

Formal education is certainly a key to development but it has to be one which teaches us how to build bridges with each other. Instead, what we usually encounter are educational systems in different countries that divide us because of religion, gender, race, etc. In our universities we learn so many things that we soon forget about and that's probably because we don't see the real meaning or the connection they have in our lives. On the other hand, things that we learn through the informal education we often pass them on to our friends, family or children because they make us think critically and that's an important competence in life. Integrating non formal education to the tertiary institutions could make a lot of sense and have a strong impact in someone's development. Less formal classes, more group works and a mix with non-formal activities can lead to a positive identity building and teach someone how to think and not what to think. It's also very important to invest in youth organizations and continue leading them and attracting new members inspiring them because that's a solid platform where a youngster can empower himself and develop his talents.

We need to learn how to cope in life, we need to learn how to face challenges in life, we need to learn who we are in this life. We need to learn that we can educate ourselves and become leaders who can make a difference and be critical. Only then we can truly use education as the weapon to achieve a change in this world.

Evelina Manola(Greece)

Secretary General

IMCS Pax Romana

Digital era and new inequalities in education

The boom of the digital era has led to great innovations in the world of knowledge and development. It has completely changed economic, social and even political

relationships in the world due to the number of possibilities and easy solutions that it has brought about. It marks a world that is open for everyone and where knowledge is easy to access for everyone, as long as they have the means for it. There is no doubt that developing countries, faced with an urgency to provide their people with basic rights, see it as a new burden, but one that it is important to carry.

In 1993, UNESCO held a congress with its NGO partners. At the time, "education and literacy for all" were at the centre of the discussions as goals to be achieved in order to guarantee the creation of "tomorrow's citizens" who would be able to guarantee the development of their country. These debates, just like many others that took place in the following years, focused on the content of education and the idea of treating it as a new concept that expands beyond the context of schools as concentrated centres of knowledge. All these discussions were marked by the crisis that affected school systems at the time, seeing as schools have always been on front pages in any era. Today, we are faced with a different issue: a digital illiterate is someone who has little knowledge of or no access to digital possibilities in the field of education, research and development.

The 4th goal of SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) is to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". It focuses on an ambition that is in proportion with the challenges, but also injustices regarding access to digital tools in the field of education. It refers to a great effort made to reduce inequalities of access to quality education which have increased alongside technological development.

Today, the quality of education is, indeed, most often measured based on the use of technological facilities in teaching. Even in primary education, some countries are already introducing tablets in their teaching. On the other hand, the 2015 UN report on SDGs identified 57 million children in the world who had no access to education at all, the figures being highest in Africa, regardless of the efforts that have been made.

The same realities can be observed at university level, given the fact that access to digital tools has a paramount importance for achieving international standards in education. Thus, what has the academic world become with the use digital tools, and what is behind the injustice that we are talking about?

Academic circles here and there: two realities that evoke inequality

Contrary to the conveyed idea, it is important to note that digital technology or internet are not ends for education in themselves. Some researchers have found that they do not have a significant impact on the quality of teaching (Russel, 2001). Nevertheless, their importance in the field of teaching today is a reality that must be accepted. Other researchers suggest that it is just to think about "optimal conditions of their successful integration" in the education system (Endrizzi, 2012). Their importance in teaching is defined by exclusive knowledge or facilities that they make possible to access. The latter are nowadays unquestionably important when talking about

access to knowledge. University-level teaching is characterized by scientific researches, publications and reflections in the domains where quality is ensured by easy access to online libraries, high quality internet connection, use of new research applications, access to MOOCs and online training, teaching through videoconferences, etc.

The fast evolution of digital technology, its use in every possible field, and its almost commonplace presence in the West increases the speed of innovation and the need for renewal of material resources, technical knowledge, as well as human resources. Most public universities in developing countries are at the other extreme of this dynamic, finding it difficult to keep up with the requirements of quality education that meets international standards. Granted, education inevitably has its goals oriented towards local needs, but current international requirements and the usefulness of digital tools bring more harm than advantages to the competitivity of developing countries.

[1] UNESCO, Tomorrow's Citizens, 1994, Paris, France.
[2] Already back in 1971, Alberto Silva, explored the failures of the school system in his book *School outside of school*, and proposed new alternatives to mass education.
[3] United Nations, *Sustainable Development Goals: Report 2015*, New York, 2015.

Therefore, universities, mostly public ones, in developing countries face the problem of not having the required equipment to offer high quality, thus competitive education. The monopoly of education quality is in the sole possession of private universities that remain only accessible to a small number of students who can cover the academic fees.

It is important to note that apart from the increasingly second-rate technical means and financial contributions to this field, the issue also expands to teachers who need to go through a technology transition in order to update their knowledge base.

Inequalities in access to knowledge, a multifaceted question

The blatant reality of social inequalities that directly affect people's quality of life, as well as sociopolitical crises, cover up the injustice related to access to knowledge. The latter is illustrated by the gap between the North where innovations and discoveries in the field of science are going through exponential growth, and the South where people are still fighting for the fundamental right to education.

Albeit late, developing countries are home to young people who are increasingly demanding, ambitious, and constantly compare themselves against the standards of developed countries. This leads to them looking for specialized training abroad, which in turn leads to the risk of this youth becoming decentralized and eventually not making profit for their country of origin. All this complicates the situation for developing countries which have ultimately got many fronts in which they need to ensure access to fundamental rights, not to mention fundamental freedoms. This leads to a paradox where we try to break the vicious circle of the causes of underdevelopment, whilst being ready for the urgent development, which we are tempted to regard as being more important.

Inequalities related to the digital era are obvious and they encompass the big questions about the development of poor countries. It is important to pay more attention to this question that keeps increasing the gap between the worlds, so that we would not have to see one side attract the brightest minds of the universe, all to the detriment of the countries that need them the most.

Far from being an in-depth analysis, this article aims to provoke more precise reflections on these questions that we need to continue exploring.

Edouard Karoue (Togo)

Education, ODD, OMD, et quoi d'autre?

Ever since the existence of man, learning has been a crucial factor for survival and development. Education began to arise in the 16th century as a method to ensure children of the public were learning essential universal knowledge. Governments have molded education systems to acquire certain standards that help in the development of civilizations, maintain peace and stability and enforce equality. However, education is still not available to everybody. Over 121 million uneducated children and more than 770 million illiterate individuals worldwide according to The World Bank. These children either cannot afford education or they have absolutely no accessibility to it. Additionally, many of those getting educated are not being prepared for the 21st century due to the outdatedness of many current education systems. There is no space today for such high rates of illiteracy and lack of education, therefore the challenges the human race must face today are increasing accessibility, decreasing the expenses and increasing the quality of education. Several reasons contribute to the lack of educational accessibility to millions of children worldwide. These include but are not limited to the lack of schools and classrooms in various areas, the lack of adequate teachers, the lack of a proper curriculum, racism, sexism and civil conflict.

Furthermore, many governments do not fund enough to maintain the stability and sustainability of education. As the world's population grow, the margin of uneducated children grows. Dismissal of bringing education to these children is as damaging as demolishing these generations purposefully. A lot of governments and nonprofit organizations are helping but there must be more effort to ensure we are globally bringing children to high level of learning. Increasing accessibility is not enough, though, for it must be affordable as well.

Poverty plays a key factor in the lack of education. The costs of education are too high for some families. Other families encourage child labor for the sake of sustaining food supplies. But even in first world countries, higher education is considered a privilege as opposed to a right. Both public and private education are putting millions of students in detrimental amounts of debt. These educational fees are increasing, encouraging future generations to not get a higher degree. To prevent future generations from abandoning a proper education due to financial reasons, governments must take action in providing a more affordable solution much like how France, Turkey, Sweden and Germany have done.

First world countries should take an initiative to helping students from all over the world to get a better, more affordable education. The United Kingdom, for example, has provided scholarships and grants to international pioneers to continue studying at English universities for free!

As much as affordability is important, the quality of that affordable education is essential, a hard equation yet not impossible to balance. Many governments today are still using education systems that don't help students thrive in today's world. Systems such as Common Core are enforced, confining the space for the knowledge and skills needed to thrive in current societies. Education must encompass a more socially involving curriculum by promoting critical thinking, problem solving, sociological and psychological studies, and practical and open source learning.

In a rapidly developing globe, we must be competent to take more responsibility in educating more people and elevating the quality of their education. It is a right for each human being to educated and each human that is unable to obtain that right is in harm. It is crucial these changes are to be implemented in the most rapid method possible in order to ensure our future generations to prosper. This world needs a change, and as Nelson Mandela said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

Sameh Kamel (Egypt)

Member of IMCS Advocacy Team (IMCS-UNTT)

"... And why do we need poets in times of shortage?" The word "times" here refers to the era that we are still living in today. Hölderlin argues that historically, the arrival and the sacrifice of Jesus signify the end of the era of Gods. The night is coming...".

The education we need

Our era, marked by distance, by "the lack of God", is characterized by the idea that we are living, in Heidegger's words, in the night of the world. No longer even able to feel the lack of God as such, we are left suspended in the abyss. Which reflections even touch us anymore? Are our education systems turning us into "followers" instead of "thinkers"?

In the technological era, capitalist man has forgotten his very being, Heidegger reminds us. Descartes introduced the certainty of the subject, and capitalism assumed that the given subject was the being itself that everything else had to be subjected to. Are we living in a world? Yes, in one where production values are viewed as the ideal, and where truth remains hidden. The discourse of science takes over truth, especially when we do not pay attention.

Could mankind not be given another land... one where man and everything he constructs are able to prosper in a new way, even amidst the atomic age? (Heidegger, 1955, p.1)

Preparing a new abode for Gods, and being the abode for the self implies paying attention to the collective effort that is made all around the world to support education as a means. To do this, one has to question themselves and understand that universal history has taken us to an era where the splendour of reflection is over, because we only nurture calculative thinking. Our foundations have been deprived of the founding element. The dimensions of what is sacred have been put on hold. An era that lacks a foundation is suspended above the abyss.

Calculative thinking never stops, nor comes to a standstill to reflect. It is not a thought that meditates on the meaning that prevails in everything that exists. Reflective thinking sometimes requires more strength. It requires longer training. It demands even better care...

We are historical subjects living defined by our communication system, one administered by education that scores our entire life and determines who we are. As per its social mission, education aims to help us think and differentiate between these two ways of thinking in order to choose the one that offers us a foundation. As such, it needs to offer youngsters and new generations what we must pass on, i.e. the true values that give life a foundation (Benedict XVI, 2007).

If education takes us along paths that remind us that our destination, without any chance of geographical, ethnical or religious exclusion, is hanging from a physical thread, it will allow us to peacefully stop when we are faced with things, or mysteries, so as to open up a perspective of new

autochthony. This is an attitude by virtue of which we remain open to the meaning that is hidden in the technical world, along with attitudes that go together with it, granting us the possibility to stay in this world in a completely different way. They promise a new land where we could live and prevail amidst the technical world.

Such education will remind us that our first pressing need is to define a turn within ourselves, us that have taken on such social mission which, in the words of Benedict XVI (2007), consists of "putting forward among younger ones and passing on from generation to generation something valid and true, rules of life, an authentic meaning, and convincing goals for human existence, both as individuals and communities" (p.3).

Luz Marina Monroy Flórez

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Psychologist, psychoanalyst, teacher of the history of music history. Medellín, Colombia, January 2017

SDGs for the People: Youth-Led Advocacy for a Sustainable Future

First Things First

There is a great deal of talk at the United Nations (UN) about the need to translate global development agendas into language regular people can understand, into language that makes sense to the average human being, not just the average policy wonk. Now that the era of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has wrapped up, and we have entered the age of sustainable development, it is more critical than ever to empower humanity with the tools to implement international development policy in order to transform societies for the sake of people and planet. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which contains within it the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is the vehicle through which humanity can save the world for future generations. It has been proclaimed a "transformative" agenda, as it is meant to stop bad behavior and effect a "paradigm shift" in how human beings see themselves in relation to one another and to the Earth. The 2030 Agenda is also a "universal" agenda, a plan for all countries everywhere to adopt and implement, not just the "developing" states of the "Global South."

Still, for all the whimsy that comes with terms like "transformative" and "universal," and all the righteousness associated with the aforementioned "paradigm shift," the work of actually making the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development a people's agenda will fail if the technical and political nature of it all overshadows its true purpose. To be a people's agenda, the 2030 Agenda must be taken to the masses. It must be owned by people. Certainly, this is something in which young people can make a huge difference.

Youth: Torchbearers of Sustainable Development

Former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon once called young people the "torchbearers" of the sustainable development agenda. He said this because he understood that young people have the skills, competence, and passion to ensure that the SDGs and related global policy frameworks become an implementable reality.

Without having to discuss truisms associated with youth and their ability to educate and inform their peers and others around them in creative ways, it is quite clear that in this day and age, young people can lead the charge in ensuring greater understanding of sustainable development. This is especially true of youth-led and youth-serving organizations, which are critical changemakers in society at all levels. These organizations were especially central in the formulation and adoption of the SDGs, since they were key a key stakeholder group in on the ground advocacy during negotiations through the UN Major Group for Children and Youth (UN MGCY), the official UN mandated space for youth participation in certain intergovernmental policy processes.

The UN MGCY and its member youth movements have been able to bring the priorities of young people from all over the world into negotiations.

The UN MGCY can now also be the springboard by which the outcomes of sustainable development frameworks can become more generally understood at the grassroots. It is an opportune moment for organizations like IMCS, and its fellow youth-led movements, to pool their efforts at all levels to expand the influence of the UN MGCY, as well as expose ever more young people to the importance of sustainable development policy and the change needed to protect the planet for future generations. Where possible, local and national IMCS leaders should work with their regional coordinators and the International Team to ensure that everything is done to further spread awareness of the SDGs and the outcomes of other important UN sustainable development policy processes. Once individual members of our and other youth movements are better educated on the SDGs and general sustainable development policy, each one can serve as a catalyst for the further dissemination of knowledge and understanding.

Below are suggestions of actions that can be done to build the capacity of members, other young people, and people in your community:

1. At every gathering of IMCS or other youth organizations with which you engage, hold a session or discussion on the SDGs and other sustainable development frameworks like the New Urban Agenda (the outcome of the Habitat III process on sustainable urban development).
2. Participate in the work of the UN MGCY and encourage members to do the same, preferably in coordination with IMCS national movements, regional coordinators, and the International Team.
3. Liaise with the IMCS International Team and the UN Advocacy Team to learn more about sustainable development policy frameworks, namely the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the New Urban Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the others.
4. Use social media, everyday interactions, and your professional life as opportunities to spread knowledge and awareness of the SDGs.
5. Learn about the efforts of your country, city, and community around the implementation of the SDGs and other frameworks and engage in advocacy around this important endeavor. The IMCS International Team, the IMCS UN Advocacy Team, and the UN MGCY can be helpful in providing tips for engaging with government and other stakeholders.
6. Make lifestyle changes that reflect your commitment to being a sustainable development practitioner. Consult the IMCS International Team on this matter as it has organized a campaign around this.

Each day, each encounter, each post on social media presents an opportunity for a young person eager to promote sustainable development, with an opportunity to act as a torchbearer for a better future. For IMCS, a youth movement older than even the UN itself, it is critical for members to be agents of social and environmental justice. It is no coincidence that Pope Francis released his encyclical Laudato Si in 2015 as the negotiations of the SDGs were reaching their climax. Human development and justice for all depends on a strong, healthy, and resilient planet. The burden is on members of IMCS not only understand the linkages between people and planet, but to act in line with that understanding and to live their lives in accordance with their values. It is up to all of us to take the SDGs to the people.

Christopher Dekki

Leader of the the IMCS UN Advocacy Team

"Quality" in tertiary education institutions?

a philosophical contribution

Thinking about quality in the context of tertiary education usually means thinking about enhanced competition amongst countries and their respective universities. This enhancement is visible in rankings, multilateral frameworks such as the European Higher Education Area (often referred to as the Bologna-Process), excellence initiatives (being the case for German universities), struggles for third-party-funds etc. The indicator for a university to be competitive is first and foremost the services it offers. Consequently, quality of tertiary education is to a significant extent considered as something competitive, too. Therefore, it is considered as something measurable or quantifiable or at least as something visible or observable. Given these observations, all actors involved in the tertiary sector tend to forget about what "quality" *actually* means. The following reflections want to offer some orientation regarding (miss-)concepts of quality yet too often neglected in the day-to-day-management of tertiary education or the discourse about it.

Quality (from Latin qualis) primarily means "how" something is. Interestingly enough, taken in this strict sense, "quality" does not imply any judgement about how "good" or "competitive" something is or not.

Referring to this strict sense of "quality", it remains rather questionable, whether and how one can at all measure, how something is. So how come that not only our everyday concepts, but especially those relating to tertiary education consider quality as something measurable or quantifiable? Most likely this is due to the traditionally strongly formalized and standardized frameworks of quantification our education practically relies on: educational systems around the globe (ranging from primary to tertiary) are significantly shaped by measures of control and selection, such as tests, examinations, grades or even (as French philosopher Michel Foucault puts it) structures of

reward and punishment. Nowadays, entering an educational system no longer means the self-management of one's own personal development, but rather being managed by the system pre-existent to oneself. Being the subject of one's own education no longer means subjecting or mastering a field of interest or competence (as nicely described by the German term "Bildung"), but being subjected, being overwhelmed by an apparatus claimed to be indispensable.

The concrete means of being subjected are in return the familiar forms of *quantification* and *objectification* mentioned: standardized tests, exams, grades etc. Consequently, a person interested in being educated will not only be subjected to a system, but will even be degraded to a mere *object* thanks to the systemic measures. Since Christians believe in the human person as created in the *image of God* (cf. Gen 1:26f.; 5:1; 9:6), being subjected and treated as a mere object becomes a condition strongly contradicting Christian faith.

What could be concrete means to overcome these more than unsatisfying conditions? Due to the historically fundamental structures our educational systems developed from (yet including even the Churches' contributions), it seems improbable to bring about change regarding the unsatisfying structure of the tertiary sector as such. Rather, the improvement to bring about has to start with the individual actors involved in the tertiary sector. Yet sounding like a superficial suggestion or commonplace, the educational systems in themselves already bear the ideal preconditions for such an individual approach. Drawing our conclusions from what quality of education in the tertiary sector is regularly considered to be, it becomes clear that not only all actors involved in the tertiary sector (from student to professor) are exposed to the conditions any educational system usually brings about, but that nowadays rather the whole tertiary sector itself is objectified, thus subjected to quantification.

There is a logical consequence while at the same time a major advantage of this increasing quantification: It makes this type education to a significant extent calculable, predictable and therefore rather simple. In other words, the quantification of the tertiary sector education grants the opportunity to easily follow other tracks of education alongside, rather than within the system. Amongst these other, ideally more complex or more challenging tracks of education, we can count different forms of self-managed education aiming at sincere personality development. Operating alongside the formal educational systems however means entering the unpredictable field of non-formal education. This implies a lot of effort and initiative. Sharing this burden can make it easier to follow such non-formal tracks. That is why joint, student-led initiatives such as IMCS/MIEC become so important nowadays: Understanding one's own non-formal educational aspirations as a supplement to formal education and as a Christian answer to the developments in the educational sector, joint initiatives help to facilitate this Christian answer.

Johannes Maximilian Nießen (Germany)

Former coordinator of JECI-MIEC (Europe)

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Education in the Age of Neoliberalism

As the American academic William Deresiewicz explains "The true purpose of education is to make minds, not careers". But considering the contemporary realities, this quote does not sound like one which explains the modern education we are witnessing today. The modern education is more in line with its reverse, "The entire purpose of education is to make careers, not minds". Is William Deresiewicz an utopian philosopher who is dreaming of an extremely idealist, impractical education system which has never existed and no use to anyone? I propose it is the other way around. He is talking about the practical education system which built the lives of humans in a way which is healthy for the entire life of earth before something changed it. That something is called Neoliberalism, the ideology that dominates all the aspects our lives including education, but most of us are not aware of at all. It has played a major role in all the catastrophes in the world such as, the financial meltdown of 2008, the off shoring of wealth which we could have a glimpse through Panama Papers, climate change, the degeneration of public health schemes....etc.

What is this mighty and invisible concept of Neoliberalism? It primarily refers to the 20th century regeneration of 19th century ideas connected with laissez-faire concepts. These include extensive economic liberalization policies such as privatization, fiscal austerity, deregulation, free trade, and reductions in government spending in order to increase the role of the private sector in the economy. As the authors of the "For Business Ethics" explains "Neoliberalism represents a set of ideas that caught on from the mid to late 1970s, and are famously associated with the economic policies introduced by Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom and Ronald Reagan in the United States following their elections in 1979 and 1981. The 'neo' part of neoliberalism indicates that there is something new about it, suggesting that it is an updated version of older ideas about 'liberal economics' which has long argued that markets should be free from intervention by the state. In its simplest version, it reads: markets good, government bad."

While neoliberal philosophers are hailing the theory as the best concept which optimized the liberties of the individuals as the natural law permits to grow up by their own, in practice it has been functioning as a social Darwinism, where the fittest dictates all and takes all. As Margret Thatcher, the former Prime Minister of United Kingdom famously stated "There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look to themselves first". Seeing the competition as the defining characteristic of human relations, neoliberalism has redefined citizens as consumers.

In relation to education, redefining the students as consumers and education institutes as booming markets have already created countless issues in many countries. These redefining processes have been extremely horrendous like in all the other fields. There are countless examples of the heinous crimes done by the neoliberals to secure these "Booming Markets". After Hurricane Katrina in 2005, how they changed the entire education system of New Orleans, USA is one of such horrendous examples. Naomi Klein in her book "Shock Doctrine" explains about the replacement of the entire public education system of New Orleans with the Charter Schools which are publicly funded but run by private entities according to their own rules. Klein Calls this phenomenon, Disaster capitalism. Three months after the hurricane Katrina hit, neoliberal philosopher Milton Friedman wrote in the Wall Street Journal, "Most New Orleans schools are in ruins, as are the homes of the children who have attended them. The children are now scattered all over the country. This is a tragedy. It is also an opportunity to radically reform the educational system." Reform was extremely fast. In fact one of the first state actions, taken only three weeks after the storm, was to fire all the unionized teachers, disband the school board and turn the schools over to a state receiver in Baton Rouge, removing community accountability and effectively breaking the United Teachers of New Orleans. Margaret Spelling, Bush's secretary of education, poured $24 million into New Orleans, all of which went to privately controlled charter schools. "Within 19 months, with most of the city's poor residents still in exile,

[1] Campbell Jones, Martin Parker, Rene Ten Bos (2005). For Business Ethics. Routledge. ISBN 0415311357. p. 100:
[2] "Women's Own magazine", October 31 1987

New Orleans' public school system had been almost completely replaced by privately run charter schools. Before Hurricane Katrina, the school board had run 123 public schools; now it ran just 4. Before the storm, there had been 7 charter schools in the city; now there were 31. New Orleans teachers used to be represented by a strong union; now the union's contract had been shredded and its forty-seven hundred members had all been fired. Some of the younger teachers were rehired by the charters, at reduced salaries; most were not." Today, more than 90% of New Orleans public school students attend a charter school, far more than in any other city in America.

This is happening not only in USA. The small Island nation, Sri Lanka which has had a public education system since 1947 (since the independence from British colonials) is also going through various attempts to privatize the education since 1980s after the open economy and the US backed governments. As the education is only focused on fields with a market value, most of the humanities subjects in the public universities were cut off and the funds were reduced. While the arts and humanities classes were empty, the demand for engineering, medicine, finance and other "marketable" subjects went extremely high, booming a new industry of private tuition. This under estimation of philosophical subjects which are encouraging critical thinking and emotions was nicely reflected in an 80's stage drama called GURU THARUWA (Teacher (the guiding) Star). In the below dialogue from the drama, The Mathematics Teacher of the school humiliatingly asks a question from the literature teacher, "If you learn pottery you can make at least a pot. If you learn something like physical education at least you can keep your spine straight. But what is the use of learning literature?" Literature teacher replies, "The use of literature? Literature is teaching whether you should fill that pot on that straightened spine with gold or feces". While successfully sacking the humanities subjects, there have been several attempts to establish private medical colleges which have failed due to strong students' activism but sadly also at the cost of many students' lives.

But in 2008 illegally and amid ongoing students' protests, but with the full government support a one privately owned medical college named SAITM was established. While it has been repeatedly proven that the establishment of the private medical college has violated many rules and regulations and also standards, government is determined to win the battle anyhow so that it will open the flood gate for them to establish more colleges. Already there have been several murders of frontline student activists suspected to be done by government forces. Ironically while government has open handedly assisted the establishment of the privately owned medical college with the benevolent purpose of "Solving the issue of lack of doctors and lack of medical colleges" they have totally neglected facilitating the newly established government medical faculty of University of Rajarata disrespecting many supreme court orders. And undernourished public university salaries have encouraged many academics to join the private education institutes to have a decent living in the poverty stricken Island nation.

Government and its capitalist masters have long been waiting to see the natural death of the free education system reducing public funds while at the same time encouraging the private institutes. All over the world there are countless examples of weakening the existing citizen friendly public education systems targeting to privatize them for profits of individuals. As Professor Noam Chomsky says "Defund, make sure things don't work, people get angry, you hand it over to private capital. That's the standard technique of privatization".

Structures of Sin

Pope John Paul II explained the idea of structural sin this way. "Whenever the Church speaks of situations of sin, or when she condemns as social sins certain situations or the collective behaviour of certain social groups, big or small, or even of whole nations and blocs of nations, she knows and she proclaims that such cases of social sin are the result of the accumulation and concentration of many personal sins. It is a case of the very personal sins of those who cause or support evil or who exploit it; of those who are in a position to avoid, eliminate or at least limit certain social evils but who fail to do so out of laziness, fear or the conspiracy of silence, through secret complicity or indifference; of those who take refuge in the supposed impossibility of changing the world, and also of those who side step the effort and sacrifice required, producing specious reasons of a higher order. The real responsibility, then lies with individuals."

Especially Pope John Paul II condemned neoliberalism as the social sin that cries to heaven. "More and more, in many countries of America, a system known as "neoliberalism" prevails; based on a purely economic conception of the human person, this system considers profit and the law of the market as its only parameters, to the detriment of the dignity of and the respect due to individuals and peoples. At times this system has become the ideological justification for certain attitudes and behavior in the social and political spheres leading to

[3] Interview with Michael Molina, "Privatization and the Katrina solution," *Socialist Worker*, May 28, 2008.
[4] Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007), 5.
[5] http://www.forbes.com/sites/realspin/2015/09/09/hurricane-katrina-washed-away-the-public-school-system-and-new-orleans-built-it-back-up-with-charter-schools/#147463aa4680
[6] The South Asian Institute of Technology and Medicine

the neglect of the weaker members of society. Indeed, the poor are becoming ever more numerous, victims of specific policies and structures which are often unjust."

While only people can sin, social structures, processes and institutions can influence and condition people to the sin. As Catholics we are expected to stand against the sin and the sinful structures which are leaving no path other than exploiting fellow human beings. In that way, if someone thinks, recognizing and standing against entire Neoliberal ideology and its acts should be one of our major practices of faith, I believe that we are in the right path for the greater good.

To finish this writing I would like to quote the one last writing from another person. This poem first appeared in the joint UNESCO / UNICEF report "A Human Rights-Based Approach to Education For All".

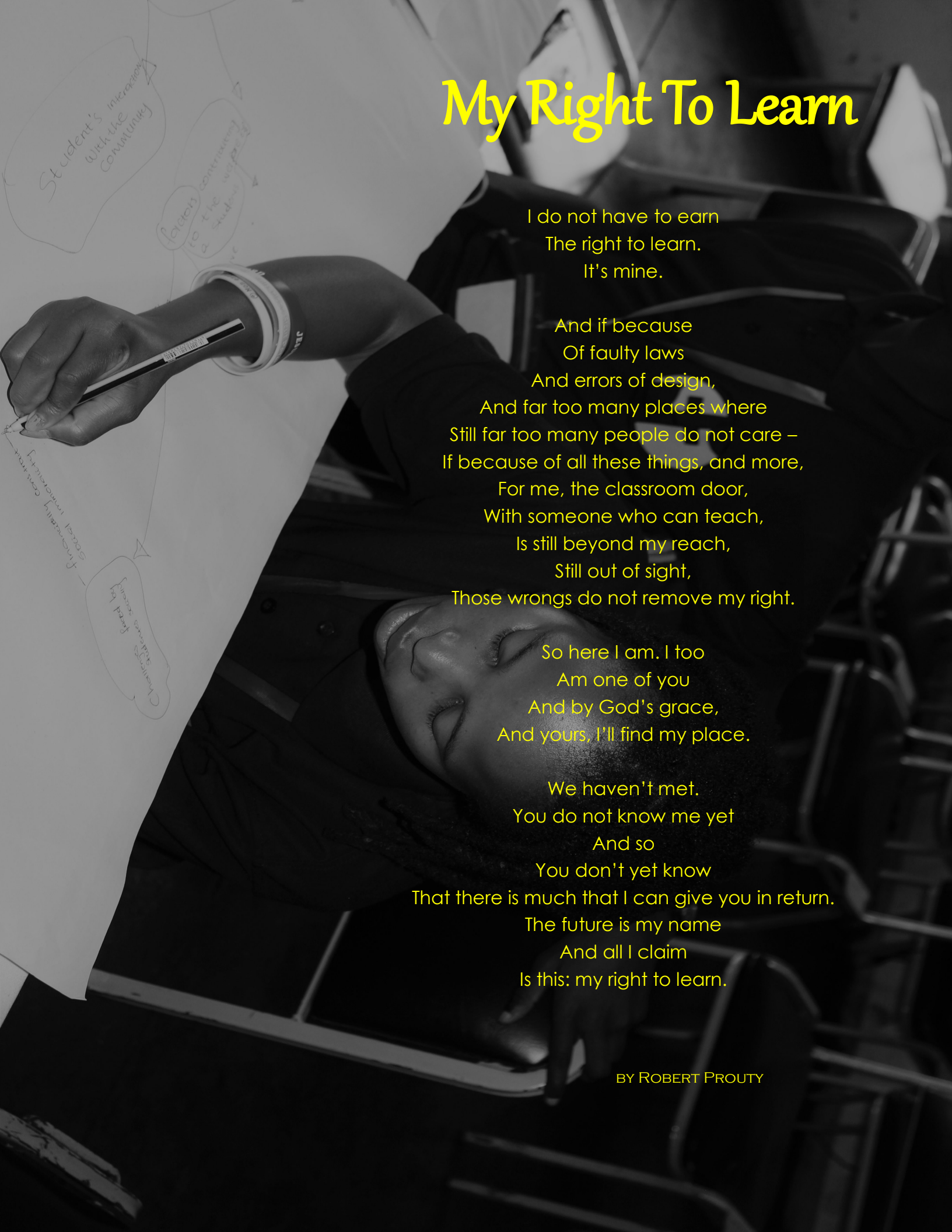
Ravi Tissera (Sri Lanka)

Asia Pacific IMCS Pax Romana Regional Coordinator

[7] http://www.sundaytimes.lk/140921/news/undernourished-state-unis-no-match-for-private-unis-in-attracting-academics-119038.html

[8] Apostolic Exhortation Reconciliatio et Paenitentia, Saint John Paul II

[9] Ecclesia in America (No. 56), Report of the Synod of America



My Right To Learn

I do not have to earn
The right to learn.
It's mine.

And if because
Of faulty laws
And errors of design,
And far too many places where
Still far too many people do not care –
If because of all these things, and more,
For me, the classroom door,
With someone who can teach,
Is still beyond my reach,
Still out of sight,
Those wrongs do not remove my right.

So here I am. I too
Am one of you
And by God's grace,
And yours, I'll find my place.

We haven't met.
You do not know me yet
And so
You don't yet know
That there is much that I can give you in return.
The future is my name
And all I claim
Is this: my right to learn.

BY ROBERT PROUTY

Are tertiary students growing indifferent?

I have for a long time wanted to share my experience as a young catholic intellectual. I would like to focus my thoughts on what is happening to the catholic tertiary student. Is the catholic student growing indifferent to the current affairs?

It should be understood however that, I am writing primarily on my own experience of post-secondary intellectuals. I don't want to give the impression that simply because we are talking about the catholic student, that catholic student would describe the major thrust of what people on college campuses are. That would be misleading.

Having served as a pan African coordinator of IMCS Africa for two years now, I have interacted adequately with catholic students from virtually across the African continent and slightly beyond Africa.

My experience has been, that we appear to have been so tightly locked up into traditional ways of structuring our knowledge of the world, so deeply committed to existing paradigms, and recently, so pre-occupied with techniques and methodology, that we have overlooked the growing disparity between the subject matter of one's own geographical region and the changing concerns of society.

I wouldn't blame it all on the student for not showing interest in current affairs; the systems of education in Africa are exam-centered. There central objective is to produce a servile work force; get the raw skills needed for the job at the expense of the development of a conscious human person.

I was talking to university students (IMCS students) about Sustainable development Goals (SDGs) and then I realized that I had been talking to myself all the while. I got disturbed after that. Looking at them, all had smartphones. Surely, in this era of advanced information technology, for a university student information on such a subject as SDGs is easily accessible. The cause of such indifference is still not clear to me. We come from different geographical and political territories. Some have experienced perennial wars and civil unrest some have known tranquility all through. The least one can do is to show solidarity with victims of war and other injustices.

On the contrary, in the recent times, catholic students in Africa have been shying away from this with the excuse that such action will be deemed to have political inclination. Moreover, since it is happening in another country, to avoid attracting attention to a solidarity action; peace walk or statement, the best thing to do is to pray for the victims. Fine! But is this the best we can do? Pray? For a moment I thought, there needs to be a re-introduction of the IMCS Pax Romana movement to all its existing membership.

IMCS affirms that it is a movement of students, participating through its members in a task which is common to all students; conscientisation of the student milieu and from the university participating in the global struggle for social transformation, in relationship with other social forces which are involved in that struggle. IMCS defines itself by an evangelizing mission accomplished starting with the student experience in the world. To evangelize is not to recruit members for the movement but to aid the milieu to become aware of its responsibility in the transformation of the world.

This is what I think IMCS students should be doing guided by the methodology Reflection-action-Reflection.

PATRICK OCHIBA (Kenya)

IMCS AFRICA coordinator

Education as a social change

Education is a powerful tool to use for transformation, transformation in every person, transformation in the society. No wonder why a great early modern philosopher Francis Beacon says 'knowledge is power'. It is the process of imparting knowledge that must lead to improve the conditions of human life. But why is our world suffering! – Just as prophet Hosea lamented: 'my people perish for lack of knowledge...' (Hosea 4:5). That the Godly morals are being rejected in order to accomplish selfish desires to the detriment of the lives and aspirations of the less privileged.

This suffering of the world is due to the lack of commitment and devaluation of education. Corruption, injustice, wars, violence, immorality, destruction of our planet are many facts that cause education in losing its value. With this, how can education influence our society, Families and their practices?

In the development of our work we shall see if we can consider education as social change.

Social change is a contested phenomenon as such that no single accepted definition stated by social scientist. Yet in the context of this article, it is the transformation of systems, structures, behaviours and norms of society that syncs with customs of the Holy Scriptures enshrined in the holy Bible inspired by the creator of the universe-God.

Education as said in the introduction is a powerful tool which affects many aspects of our lives thus socially, economically, politically, scientifically, technologically and our religious lives. Those aspects are also aspect of social change. Education has fundamentally five roles to sustain unceasing worth:

- To promote capacity of welcoming social change,
- To transmit and transform culture,
- To increase the levels of knowledge in a practical and productive way
- To give a good understanding and suggestion of leadership etc.
- Personal creativity , discernment and empowerment.

In this angle we can boldly say, education is very important for our society if we really want to improve our ways of living. What are the factors affecting social change?

They are many factors affecting social change:

- Cultural factors,
- Environmental factors,
- Factors of migration,
- Diffusion of cultures etc.

There are also many obstacles in social change: superstitious beliefs, religion, fear, isolation, cultural fanaticism, etc. Education influences all these factors. It is then an important instrument for social change.

Nowadays our world is facing a crisis of education. The quality has been decreased and most of the students are followers of marks and not seekers of knowledge. Even the teachers are in the same line. Most of them no longer teach with passion and for the well-being of the society but they rather do it for survival. We can see the results of this crisis in the way of living of the youth and even the elderly in the society. All the values that education incarnates are collapsing and it that is really affecting our society. If education is in crisis our society also is in crisis. To face these challenges, each country with the support of the Church and some other organisations (like governmental and non-governmental) must play active roles to help strengthen the educational system .In Ghana, many churches of which the Catholic Church is inclusive, play an important role by promoting Catholics schools and universities.

> The role of education as an instrument for social change is widely recognised with regards to the part it plays in our society. But we must know that our educational system is in crisis and need to be reformed.

IMCS Pax-Romana Ghana by its aims and objectives promotes the student apostolate among students of tertiary institutions in the country, emphasizing their responsibility within the life and mission of the church and in the world; to deepen our experience of the Christian faith lived through commitment and to communicate this faith to the students milieu by practically witnessing Jesus Christ's crucifixion, resurrection and ascension to other unbelievers; to promote justice significant for the transformation of our society. The federation contributes a significantly to the education system by organizing formation sessions for students in view of giving them good tools for life. It as well organizes weekend classes for senior high schools in lecturing subjects such as Core Mathematics, English language, Information Communication and Technology(ICT) and Integrated Science. The federation must continue in that line thereby institutionalizing a four years action plan towards massive visitation to our brothers and sisters in the Senior High Schools especially in the rural areas in order to add up to the mainstream social change positively. With these efforts put in place, we will ourselves one day hope to manage and to reform our educative system.

We conclude by indicating that, the impact of an education cut across every social aspect of human lives. And with the availability of employment opportunities for students after their studies in school will make students and the youth realize hard work pays off. Having in mind that these youth and students are future parents and entrepreneurs who will continue inculcating these educative values they have learnt and imbibed in the society. IMCS-Pax Romana Ghana promise to work hand in hand with all stakeholders to achieve social justice, most especially towards an education for positive social change.

VINCENT DELA GOKA (Ghana)
IMCS-PAX ROMANA GHANA FEDERATION

NATIONAL PRESIDENT,

Unequal Access to Education in Bangladesh

Education is one of the basic rights as a human being. A person should get full access to education from his birth. But it is a matter of great regret that it's not the reality of the world. The reality is there is so much inequality when it comes to the question of education. There is a group of people who enjoy the advantage of getting educated and leading a prosperous life. But on the other hand there is an unprivileged group who suffer from illiteracy and poverty. It is a matter of great sorrow that we are facing this situation in 21st century when world is developing day by day.

Education is much needed in present world. It is very much essential to communicate with people, to get a good job, a suitable lifestyle and most importantly a satisfying life. Suffering is must for the people who don't have access to education. Because in the modern world education very essential to lead a decent life. No education means no suitable job and no suitable job means no money. It is the current situation of the whole world. In 2016, 15 million girls went out of school and have no chance to enroll worldwide. From 1999 to 2012, 25-95% poor boys and girls dropped out from school in Tanzania, Nigeria, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Mali and Niger.

Only 3% poor rural women and 17% poor rural men completed lower secondary education in Nigeria. By the 2030, it is estimated only 33% of boys and 25% of girls will complete upper secondary education worldwide. So, it can be understood the situation regarding education is in a difficult spot. In Bangladesh, we see the same picture. The people in upper and middle class families have full access to education. They can have primary and secondary education and later they can achieve university degree in preferred field. But the lower class families can only continue till primary or secondary education. They can't achieve university degree unless they are very talented and bright as a student. From 2008 to 2012 only 42.9% male and 47% female students received secondary school education and 81.2% male and 77.2% female students received primary school education. There are mainly two factors that work behind this unequal access to education. The first factor is financial condition. The group who are financially strong, can continue their studies without any disturbance. They can study in non-government institutions with high expenses because they don't have to worry about their livelihood all the time.

But the other group who constantly suffer from poverty, can't have the privilege to study in non-government institutions because they will never be able to carry such high expenses. There are some very poor people in Bangladesh who feed hand to mouth. 13% of our population is below national poverty line of US $2 per day. Poverty level dropped to 12.9% in 2016. Earlier it dropped from 44.2% in 1991 to 18.5% in 2010. So those 13% very poor people always have to think about their daily basic necessities. Education is luxury for them sometimes. They can only get access to education through government institutions.

So we can see financial condition plays a very important role in unequal access to education. The second factor which is responsible for unequal access to education is insufficient number of schools, colleges and universities in Bangladesh. Day by day the number of students is increasing rapidly because people are getting concerned about education. But education institutions are not increasing is such rate. There are approximately 80,397 primary schools; 18,500 secondary schools; 3,150 colleges (11 & 12 class) and 120 universities. Among 120 universities only 37 are run by the government. Other 80 are private and 3 are international. There are also 13,406 Madrasahs where students learn and get higher education in Arabic. There are also 12 polytechnic institutes for diplomas and other courses. But the number of students is so much more than the capacity of the institutions. According to latest data, the population of Bangladesh is 157.9 million. So it can be imagined that all students are not getting enough chance to receive quality education. Number of educational institutions must be increased to ensure equal and better education.

We all are very lucky that we have the privilege of achieving higher education. But we should try to do something for those unprivileged people who are missing the opportunity to enlighten their lives. IMCS as an international movement can raise awareness to make people understand the value of education. We can try to manage scholarship for bright students who are financially weak. We can teach little children in our locality. We can't do much because we can only do what we can afford. But we should at least try. Education is each and every person's fundamental right. The situation might not be perfect but if we can take a step ahead towards perfection, that's our true achievement.

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Disha Gomez (Bangladesh)
Bangladesh Catholic Students' Movement

The Vicious Circle: An education grooming "Followers" and not "Thinkers

When I finished High School and was admitted at the University Of Zimbabwe Law School I had high hopes of continuing, improving and excelling with the critical thinking and analysis that my History and Literature teachers had encouraged in high school. What I met and experienced in the four years at the law school has left me disillusioned some days and some days I contemplate to myself that those high school dreams of philosophical thinking at University were just musings of a young and impressionable teenager.

Having completed four years at the Law School I graduated and found myself on the street looking for a job in a non-existent job market. With me was a degree certificate and the belief that it was enough. Reality struck after six months of continuous walking in the business district, knowing most of the legal secretaries in town and still unemployed. The world was surely a cold place, it had no place for a degree holder with no other skill. I had been misled by my professors, parents and community. They had encouraged me to parrot the law as it appears in the texts and to get good grades so as to guarantee my job in the world; it was a lie the world had long evolved past the era of considering good grades as the only bar for intelligence and knowledge.

As I was manoeuvring the business district and realising that I needed another plan, I would constantly meet my peers with their CVs doing the exact same thing that I was doing; getting the same results and still hoping fate will smile in their favour one of these good days.

It later dawned on me; this strategy was not going to work I had to think on my feet and very fast if I was to earn a living for myself in the harsh capital City of Harare. It was time to deprogram all that I had been taught in university that a lawyers job is to go to court and defend the guilty and the innocent alike.

In the end my breakthrough came through volunteering for a Non-profit Organisation as a Programmes Officer. I had no clue what so ever about programming and my newly found job. But the days spend roaming the business district had taught me to think outside the small box called legal training; I had to acquire new skills through the effective use of the internet and the people around me. I was able to run a project from zero experience after realising that there was life before law school and that there is life after law school.

My experience made me appreciate that the university system in my country does not promote thinking outside the faculty in which one is enrolled. It is a system that rewards parroting and not critical thinking, the line between High School education and University enlightenment has been blurred it is virtually non-existent. The sad thing is the University professors are not even aware what harm they are inflicting on the impressionable undergraduate student. A complete overhaul of the education system is the only recourse to this sad status qou. Entrepreneurship and vocational training should be central so that students are equipped to fend for themselves without total reliance on a piece of paper; a university degree certificate.

Achievement Dhlakama (Zimbabwe)

Member of IMCS UN Task Team

IMCS' Education for Sustainability

The holistic training promoted by the movement leads its actions towards many challenging matters. The sustainability is one of these key topics on which the movement focuses its campaigns even before the launch of the SDGs at United Nations level.

The publication of Laudato Si and the commitment of UN institutions to achieve crucial Sustainable Goals offered once again a good frame for IMCS Pax Romana to campaign for sustainability.

It is in this context the movement runs since last year a campaign on sustainable lifestyles that reached already more than 5,000 young people in more than 10 countries.

IMCS believes that, institutional solutions should not be the only focus when looking for the best way to fight climate change. The personal "ecological conversion" as pointed out in Laudato Si should interrogate each one of us in the way to have a global dynamic towards a sustainable planet.

The campaign of IMCS Pax Romana mobilizes young people around simple and sustainable ways of leaving that can contribute to a healthier world. It meanwhile proceeds by creating awareness on the human dangerous attitudes humanity that constitute a threat for our planet.

In the same dynamic, IMCS Pax Romana launched this year a "short film festival" on sustainable lifestyles in order to sensibilise young generations on ecology. The three best films will receive awards during our International Council in Italy (sept 2017).

If you wish, It is possible to request materials to run the campaign in your country or apply for ECO Week-Ends. To do so, Visit www.imcs-miec.org.

Nigeria

Benin

Portugal

India

Intercultural exchanges are part of our pedagogy

Reflection! A fundamental
step before any action

Contact us!

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