

# MARIST EDUCATION NETWORK OF SCHOOLS IN EUROPE

ANNUAL MEET 2026  
(190 Years of the Marist Legacy)

*Inclusive and Distinctive - Multi denominational Education in the Catholic Context*

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It gives me immense joy dear friends to share this moment with you. You have a legacy of two centuries short of just a decade, and the Church's mission of Education as it stands today, owes much to it. In fact, Pope Leo acknowledges the family of the Society of Mary, citing the founder of your brother congregation - Marcellin Champagnat, an ordination-companion of your own founder Jean-Claude Colin - in two of his official magisterium - *Dilexi te*<sup>1</sup> (Dt) and *Drawing new Maps of Hope*<sup>2</sup> (DMH).

I wish to begin my sharing with my humble affirmation of the great charism that you have and how it augurs tremendously well with the educational challenge that we are living today. A limited study of your charismatic identity, the missionary passion of the family and the lived experience of these years, assist me to interpret the vision you have, in having chosen this theme for your reflection: Multi denominational Education in the Catholic Context! You have a great potency to take on that challenge, in your very heritage - the Marist heritage in the mission of education. I see a paradigm there in that heritage that you have, a paradigm that can serve this vision that you propose to yourself, a paradigm that actually invites you to emerge further in those very same lines of your treasured charism. I call that the EMERGE paradigm - Education, Marian, Evangelisation, Relationality, Globality and Educators as the extended charism.

- **Education**, the very first key to unravel that paradigm is the central element of your identity as you dedicate yourself to the mission of education of this great congregation. We would return to this discussion in detail, but here let us underscore just one beautiful assertion from Pope Francis, that Pope Leo has already more than once reiterated - that Education is "one of the highest expressions of Christian charity."<sup>3</sup> The current ramifications of an educational enterprise present to us newer challenges, of course, and of that we certainly continue to reflect and deliberate.

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<sup>1</sup> LEO XIV, Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi te*, on love for the Poor (04.10.2025), LEV, Rome 2025. Henceforth referred to as Dt.

<sup>2</sup> LEO XIV, Apostolic Letter *Drawing new Maps of Hope*, on the occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Conciliar Declaration *Gravissimum Educationis* (27.10.2025), LEV, Rome 2025. Henceforth referred to as DMH.

<sup>3</sup> Dt, n. 68.

- **Marian**, the identity that sets you apart, and the initial spirit that moved the beginnings of your heritage in and through the lives of your founders. To that beautiful reflection of Venerable Fr. Colin,<sup>4</sup> on Mary at Nazareth and Mary at Pentecost, I wish to add another image of Mary at Cana! If Mary at Nazareth recalls the meditative element of our call today, and Mary at Pentecost stands for the courage and determination to set out, Mary at Cana gently invites us to “do whatever he tells us!” From a meditation on the Word to a setting out to carry out the commission, lies the discernment, the decision and the choice to do what the Lord wants. We might have great projects and profound visions, but what matters truly is what the Lord wants – if not there would be no difference between us and the entrepreneurs of the world today. Mary is an invitation to remain ever the humble servants in whom the Almighty can do mighty things.
- **Evangelisation**, which was Mary’s very essence, defines the purpose of our lives – each of us, called in the name of the Trinitarian God, to be sons and daughters of that Eternal Love revealed to us. As Mary we are called, in our mission of education, to present the world with its Saviour, born, died and risen for us. As Pope Leo underlines in his recent Apostolic Letter, *Drawing new Maps of Hope* – “education is not an ancillary activity, but forms the very fabric of evangelization: it is the concrete way in which the Gospel becomes an educational gesture, a relationship, a culture.” (DMH, n. 1.1)
- **Relationality**, marks the salient educational option that you have provided yourself with, in the Charter of your Association of the French chapter<sup>5</sup> – the respect for every young person, creating a climate of freedom for the young person, humble attitude vis-à-vis the young person: what are these if not explicative features of a paradigm that is relational. Primacy to the person, by way of respect, openness and freedom, is the very essence of relationality which has to be defined “not merely as a matter of fact of a matter of social expectation, but as a genuine acceptance of the other and an openness with which the other is encountered and endeared.”<sup>6</sup>
- **Globality**, could be thought of from two standpoints – one, the fact that your mission is not restricted to your institution, but forms an integral part of a global mission, universal mission that extends even beyond the contours of your congregation – to the entire Church and to the entire world; the second, a globality of vision that you are striving towards: the inclusivity and the distinctiveness that you are reflecting on.

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<sup>4</sup> Find the reflection at, [https://www.jeanclaudecolin.org/images/Marist\\_Way\\_EN\\_0922\\_LGE\\_PRINT.pdf](https://www.jeanclaudecolin.org/images/Marist_Way_EN_0922_LGE_PRINT.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Charte-status.pdf*, in <[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Slm57AOG1KNONd8\\_h4IFH4F6Jw\\_9HsA6/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Slm57AOG1KNONd8_h4IFH4F6Jw_9HsA6/view)>, p. 3-4.

<sup>6</sup> Antony Christy LOURDUNATHAN, *The Young, Relationality and Identity: A Catechetical Perspective in the era of New Evangelisation*, in M.O. LLANOS – C.P. COLLAZOS UGUARTE – I. CORDISCO – A.C. LOURDUNATHAN – C. TCHAWO (Eds.), *Relazioni e Identità Giovanili. Un’indagine transdisciplinare nelle Università Salesiane – Vol. I*, LAS, Rome 2024, 171-190: 182.

- **Educators, and the extended charism**, a vision that you have for your Society, expanding itself not merely geographically but even in its internal form, where the mission is being shared, sustained and taken forward by the lay collaborators in an extensive and intensive manner, offering a comprehensive overhaul to the image of a Marist-mission.

Already in this paradigm of EMERGE, we see the indications to the right track of reflection that you are on to... the inclusive and the distinctive, are both accounted for, not merely as two co-existing elements, but as being one integrated vision, for the times. We would make sense of these elements outlining three simple streaks of discussion – one on Education from a Catholic horizon, a second on the experience of Plurality and Diversity today and its implication on Educational perspectives, and finally on an Intercultural Pedagogy, that could inspire us towards a praxis and a roadmap. However, before we launch ourselves into this jaunt, permit me a brief excursus: I would just place three premises of caution arising from this title that we have proposed before us – Inclusive and Distinctive. Multi denominational Education in the Catholic Context.

First the term “inclusion”. While it sounds very good and necessary as a movement towards unison that we wish to promote, there is a subtle power-play to be aware of. Who includes, whom? Has someone the prerogative to include another? What grants the situation the power first of all to exclude, and what is the role of the one who is included in the very process of “inclusion”? Maybe it is time for us to think in terms of a process of “integration” instead of inclusion.

A second is the element of “multi denominational” approach. Can we anymore change the fact of plurality in reality? We shall reflect more on plurality in a short while, but here as a matter of fact, is not “multiplicity,” a given? On a larger plain too, multi-national, multi-cultural, are facts of the society that we find; but as an approach it has to be international, intercultural and so on... the difference is obvious, isn't it? Hence, we are called to stretch towards an inter-denominational approach – which in no way simplifies the process, but complicates it much – as it is well expressed in the bipartite: inclusive and distinctive.

A third simple vigilance called for is in the term “Catholic Context” – we would do well to beware of the tendency to identify our present thinking, present experience, present setting, as the catholic context, that we refer to. It would amount to an unconscious self-justification, or a relativistic point of view, if we do not carefully tread these lines. What we would like to picture for ourselves here would be the ideal Catholic outlook, the vision of the One Lord, One baptism and One faith.

With these passing considerations, let us now venture into our three-point journey!

## EDUCATION – FROM A CATHOLIC HORIZON

We begin with postulating the notion of Education and interpreting it from a Catholic horizon. In a world today dominated by the influence of technoscience what would education mean? Especially in a context such as Europe, as the OECD report<sup>7</sup> observes, where free thinking, critical approach and outcome-oriented processes are characteristic marks, education could be instrumentalised and reduced to skilling. It remains essential to keep alive the warning against a *banking model of education*, as Paulo Freire called it, a notion that minimises or annuls the students' creative power to criticality and concentrates on transfer of and storing up of information. An ever-alive challenge is to promote a *Critical Pedagogy* which assumes that "through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-students with student-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the one-who-teaches."<sup>8</sup> Especially today with the Artificial Intelligence so actively into play, the whole exercise of teaching and learning is being redefined and revolutionised.

Almost a contemporary, Mikhail Bakhtin proposes a look-alike pedagogy but with its own nuance – the *Dialogic Pedagogy*, which places emphasis on education liberating the mind and the spirit of the learners, and not merely feeding them with information and testing for how much of it remains in their memories, making them merely "rememberers".<sup>9</sup> This would also sustain what Paulo Freire would term, the *Problem posing model* of Education, which is not so much fixated on providing with solutions to all problems of life. One more Pedagogical model worth revisiting is that proposed by a Pedagogue of our current times, Gert J.J. Biesta – a philosopher of education from Netherlands who teaches in numerous universities in Europe, US and UK. In his masterpiece, *The Beautiful Risk of Education*, he would speak of the Pedagogy of Interruption,<sup>10</sup> delving deep into the question of democratic education... "an ongoing dialogue between 'self' and 'other' (in the widest sense of the word 'other') in which both are formed and transformed – a process through which we come 'into the world' [...] and the world comes into us."<sup>11</sup> These perspectives better be taken serious today, as the process of teaching is being reduced to nothing, with the arrival of the AI, the AGI and the ASI...and we do not yet know what more.

The question here therefore is from a Catholic perspective how would we look at this all-important process of education? Interpreting the heritage from *Gravissimum educationis* and beyond, in *Dilexi te*, the present Holy Father emphasises the Church's

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<sup>7</sup> OECD, *OECD Skills Outlook 2021: Learning for Life*, OECD Publishing, Paris 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1787/0ae365b4-en>.

<sup>8</sup> Paulo FREIRE, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman RAMOS, 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition, Continuum, New York 2005, 80.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Trevor Thomas STEWART, "A Dialogic Pedagogy: Looking to Mikhail Bakhtin for Alternatives to Standard Period Teaching Practices," in *Critical Education* 1 (2010) 6, 13.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Gert J.J. BIESTA, *The Beautiful Risk of Education*, Routledge, New York 2016, x.

<sup>11</sup> Gert J.J. BIESTA, "Giving Teaching back to Education: Responding to the Disappearance of the Teacher," in *Phenomenology & Practice* 6 (2012) 2, 43.

historical commitment to a particular kind of education and the predilective attention to be given to the marginalised. The document presents to us Education as a mission of love, with an exorbitant power for transformation.<sup>12</sup> Continuing the discussion in *Drawing new Maps of Hope*, he observes that we live in “a complex, fragmented, digitized educational environment” (n. 1.2) and declares, “where educational communities allow themselves to be guided by the word of Christ, they do not retreat, but are revitalized; they do not build walls, but bridges” (n. 1.1).

We have the answer – Catholic Education can be offered only by Catholic Educators! Get me right! An education that is Catholic in its nature, cannot be offered by someone who does not consider that a mission of love, a transformation in the Spirit, a building up of the family of God, with children of God.

#### DIVERSITY AND PLURALITY - THE GLOBAL EXPERIENCE

Having reflected on the task – that of education, we also have to look at the field where that task has to be carried out. A field so complex, multifaceted, bewildering and at times also frightening. The experience of diversity and plurality today is everywhere. There was a time when people would say for socio-culturally and religiously plural contexts, we need to look at a reality such as in the global east. Not anymore. Positively speaking globalisation, the profuse spread and prevalence of the social network and the highly advanced means of transportation, among so many other developments, have brought societies in the world today much closer than ever imagined.<sup>13</sup> Migrations due to varied causes, desirable and most of the times undesirable, has brought in a diversity too, with its own problems and possibilities. This phenomenon of difference and specific experiences is true in all realms of human living – personal, interpersonal, social, inter-communitarian and global. We see it and experience it, increasing by the day. Rightly, the Magisterium raises a pertinent question: “confronted with the dramatic educational emergencies caused by wars, migration, inequalities and various forms of poverty, how can we not feel the urgency to renew our commitment”<sup>14</sup> to education, especially education of the affected and the marginalised?

Our reference today goes to a diversity that is internal – the diversity of not only religions, but also denominations. There is an invitation that we need to heed to: an invitation to move from multicultural outlook to an intercultural approach! Intercultural approach, here interdenominational approach, comes from an attitude of recognising the difference, the diversity is not feared but celebrated. Defining the concept of Interculturality, after a study carried out, I had presented it as *critical integration*.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Dt, nn. 68-72.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Antony Christy LOURDUNATHAN, *Intercultural Catechetical Pedagogy: Theoretical Scaffolding for an Emergent Discipline*, ISPCK, New Delhi 2022, 1.

<sup>14</sup> DMH, n. 1.3.

<sup>15</sup> LOURDUNATHAN, *Intercultural Catechetical Pedagogy*, 13.

What is to be gathered here is the fact that when one speaks of interculturality, there is not only the difference in the other that comes into play but above all, the question of the possibility of establishing an interaction among these differences. Elements like alterity, identity, recognition, difference, relationship, rights, norms, dialogue, freedom, autonomy, understanding, contribution, enrichment, are those which takes one or a society from the state of multiculturalism to interculturality.<sup>16</sup> The element of decisive transition from multiculturalism to interculturality, can be identified as the capacity for *Critical Integration*. Critical integration comes out of a dialectic between the varied cultures, varied worldviews that come in contact with each other, enter into a 'conflict' so to say, composed of tensions, resistance and recognition, and organise themselves into a thought pattern that is capable of analytically discerning and hermeneutically penetrating the cultural difference.<sup>17</sup>

Hence an educational process that promotes this dialectic within our setting of Christian faith, has to be guided by an Intercultural Theology. As Educators and Educational Boards we could inform ourselves about and form ourselves in Intercultural theologising, which would make our educational interventions in an intercultural/interdenominational setting, relevant and fruitful.

Here are seven criteria that we could propose for an intercultural theologising:<sup>18</sup>

- **Rootedness:** "One cannot really do *Christian* theology today without a sense of rootedness in one's own culture, dialogue with other cultures and dialogue with the world's religions"<sup>19</sup>; so would it be, when dealing with other denominational faiths too.
- **Hospitality:** Hospitality would extend itself to refer to the openness to other denominations and, eventually and necessarily, to other religions around,<sup>20</sup> in interaction with whom the theology is lived and evolved. It has to be further extended to the other agencies which are not specifically religious, in order that the theology that is evolved grows comprehensively intercultural. Pope Paul VI formulated this openness in terms of *concentric circles of dialogue*,<sup>21</sup> inviting

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. Giuseppe CACCIATORE - Giuseppe D'ANNA, "Introduzione. Dentro la differenza: riflessioni sull'etica interculturale," in Giuseppe CACCIATORE - Giuseppe D'ANNA (eds.), *Interculturalità. Tra etica e politica* (Roma: Carocci, 2010), 9.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. CACCIATORE and D'ANNA, *Interculturalità. Tra etica e politica*. 11; See also Egle BONAN, "Pensare Interculturalità," in Carmelo VIGNA and Egle BONAN (eds.), *Multiculturalismo e Interculturalità. L'etica in questione* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2011), 90.

<sup>18</sup> The seven criteria summarised from: LOURDUNATHAN, *Intercultural Catechetical Pedagogy*, 39-43.

<sup>19</sup> Stephen BEVANS, "DB 4100: The God of Jesus Christ - A Case Study for a Missional Systematic Theology," *Theological Education* 43 (2008)2, 112.

<sup>20</sup> Werner Ustorf explains that while Hollenweger considered intercultural theology as an 'inner-Christian' approach, it was Richard Friedli who brought in the urgency of interreligious dialogue within this field. See, Werner USTORF, "The Cultural Origins of 'Intercultural Theology'," *Mission Studies* 25 (2008) 2, 229-251: 237-238. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/157338308x365387>.

<sup>21</sup> PAUL VI, *Encyclical on the Church Ecclesiam Suam, August 6, 1964*, [http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_enc\\_06081964\\_ecclesiam.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_06081964_ecclesiam.html), nn.96-115. (Henceforth referred to as *Ecclesiam Suam*).

the Catholic community to be united in its identity and mission as the mystical body of Christ, as a community placed in the 'midst'<sup>22</sup> of the world and reaching out in dialogue, to the others who accept Christ being the closest circle, extending that hospitality to those who are believers in One God and other believers in the wider circle and finally to the circle whose "limits stretch beyond our view into the distant horizon," comprising of "the entire human race, the world."<sup>23</sup> The hospitality that is expected of a Christian community here is the common space to be created between themselves and those occupying these other concentric circles that the encyclical, *Ecclesiam Suam* refers to.

- **Translatability:** This is a corollary to the criterion just mentioned, hospitality. While hospitality could be understood as the capacity to be open to the encountering thought or theology, translatability is the radical willingness of a theology to translate itself in terms of categories relevant to the encountering culture; while one is receiving, the other is entering or reaching out. Translatability, all its critical side effects notwithstanding, remains an important criterion towards intercultural theology, because being hospitable and not translatable would manifest an undesirable arrogance that would go against any theologising that is wholesome.
- **Cohesiveness:** This comes after a conscious integration of solid identity (rootedness), authentic openness (hospitality) and dynamic adaptability (translatability). It is a bonding that makes the entire process integral, not giving into piece-meal approach and arbitrariness. Willingly taking over elements that suit us, discarding the organic nature of any culture or religion in interaction, would be a serious disservice done to the integrity of the process of interculturalisation in theology.<sup>24</sup> The key element within this criterion is the principle of cohesion, which "manifests a consistency, although not always consistency of a linear kind. The consistency is often one of balancing the great antinomies of life and death, good and evil, which mark human existence."<sup>25</sup>
- **Praxis:** What stands out here is a practical living of what is considered a value, an absolute and a conviction to live by. This could also be seen in close relation with the preceding criterion, in as much as praxis is a demand for cohesiveness between what one believes and what one does. At the front of this perspective within theology, the liberation theologies had made an indelible fact clear – "what Christians do is central to who Christians are."<sup>26</sup> Worship, life,

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<sup>22</sup> Note that the Holy Father himself explains this concept of the Church being in the midst, or middle, or the centre – as not being a presumptuous or over-zealous self-assigned position but a recognition of the bounden duty which God has given to the baptised within the Catholic Church. See *Ecclesiam Suam*, 96.

<sup>23</sup> *Ecclesiam Suam*, 97.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Francis-Vincent ANTHONY, *Ecclesial Praxis of Inculturation. Toward an Empirical-theological Theory of Inculturizing Praxis*, LAS, Rome 1997, 89-90.

<sup>25</sup> Robert SCHREITER, *Constructing Local Theologies*, Orbis Books, New York 1999, 118.

<sup>26</sup> SCHREITER, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 119.

relationships and commitments, should be streamlined into a single praxis, coherent and integral.

- **Critique:** A mature outlook and balanced judgement of one's own culture and faith vis-à-vis the others' is a sine qua non for an intercultural theology. The attachment to identity, that forms part of the first criterion, rootedness, presupposes a deeper understanding than a mere blind holding-on to an opinion. Deeper understandings come with and lead to deeper questions. A critical theological outlook would raise no alarms in the face of questions, to begin with, about one's own views and vision of faith and life.
- **Tertiaterranity:** This criterion is a call, not merely towards a contextual theology or a local theology, but towards a contextual local theology that leads a Christian and the community towards a new catholicity.<sup>27</sup> The 'space in between' or *the third space* is the key to tertiaterranity – the interstice that is spoken of in the current post-colonial, post-structural world.<sup>28</sup> It stands for that vulnerability to which the person or the community is exposed when truly seeking an intercultural encounter, in spite of the rootedness and due to the openness, towards a critical cohesiveness and the praxis leading to it.

Dealing with persons from other denominations, would first and foremost require a preparation within the educational équipe, creating the necessary space for an encounter between persons of varied faith expressions.

## INTERCULTURAL PEDAGOGY – PRINCIPLES AND PRAXIS

We are led to understand therefore, the significance and the importance of an Intercultural pedagogy today, as the situation of diversity and plurality intensifies, calling our attention to set in motion a process and experience of interculturality at all levels. A pedagogy with interculturality as the underlying approach would be dialogic, critical, emancipatory, interruptive and effective, promoting values and purposes of promoting solidarity, respecting the experiences of the past and building on them, proposing the crucial knowledge to be acquired in the right context of one's existence, continually self-evaluative, never denying the dignity of individual persons involved in the process and at the same time upholding the importance of co-existence and solidarity, recognising the inevitable role of the teachers and preparing them for the same, and framing policies that would convert individual interventions into a holistic part of the comprehensive educative process of a community.

The aim of intercultural pedagogy is to assist a person or a setting to move from **indifference to solidarity**. With its insistence on identity and culture as dynamic dimensions of a person or a community of persons, accords 'difference' a pride of place as a source or enrichment and complementarity. The concepts of 'the other', 'encounter', 'learning from the other', 'complementing' and similar others dominate

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<sup>27</sup> The concept is inspired by the experience of Schreier who develops his insight in his two publications spaced out over a decade – *Constructing Local Theologies* (1985) and *New Catholicity* (1997).

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Homi K. BHABHA, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London 1994, 2.

intercultural pedagogy, which perches itself safe between the two extremes of universalism and relativism.<sup>29</sup> Hence, a close observation of the aims that an intercultural pedagogy could propose to itself can be presented, though not exhaustively, in four broad categories – the creation of common space or the space in between, the development of intercultural competence, the enhancement of interaction (interpersonal and intercultural) and a challenge towards transformation – all of them leading individuals and the community from an indifference of the other to a mutual recognition, respect and solidarity.

As a starting point, Intercultural pedagogy begins with a convinced recognition of diversity, against the background of which, differences between persons and their faith convictions have to be primarily understood than judged or evaluated. This can be enabled through intercultural education and intercultural pedagogy: the former is an education towards interculturality and the latter a pedagogy that is influenced by an intercultural perspective. Hence, interdenominational knowledge, interdenominational teaching-and-learning, as a praxis of intercultural pedagogy has to build itself on a respectful acknowledgement of diversity that leads to an increased appreciation of identity of oneself and the other, resulting in solidarity.

Setting the process of Intercultural pedagogy in motion would require certain initiatives that evidently emphasise personal openness, be it on the part of the educator or on the part of the student within the process. The insistence is on self-reflection, internal critical analysis, validation and affirmation of the learning environments and founding the knowledge created and shared on the background, history and culture of the learner.<sup>30</sup> Without doubt, this requires an extraordinary openness on the part of the entire system. There could be levels of openness to which a person could be educated and a pedagogy has to make the right choice in order to make itself relevant and truly responsive: *Elimination* - one of those most detrimental attitudes to the different 'other'; *Assimilation* - another prominent attitude where one, mostly the majority, assumes into itself the varying others, with an air of paternalism and a curative measure towards what is seen as 'primitive,' 'archaic,' 'ignorant' or 'savage', making them part of the mainstream with an assumed magnanimity; *Segregation* or ghettoization - an attitude that tolerates the different other, as long as they do not cross their boundaries or attempt to affect the mainstream (or the majority); *Fusion* - a mentality of combining everything into one, which could take two forms: the first called, *melting pot* which adapts everything different into one unique mode, creating a single undifferentiated reality; and the other called, *salad bowl* where the different realities come together without losing their specificity or difference and

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Agostino PORTERA, "Intercultural education in Europe: epistemological and semantic aspects," *Intercultural Education*, 19 (2008) 6, 481-491: 485. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1080/1467598\\_0802\\_568277](https://doi.org/10.1080/1467598_0802_568277)

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Abdul JABBAR - Mohammad MIRZA, "Identification of Cultural Heuristics for the Creation of Consistent and Fair Pedagogy for Ethnically Diverse Students," in PIRBHAI-ILLICH F. - PETE S. - MARTIN F. (eds.), *Culturally Responsive Pedagogy*, Palmgrave Macmillan, London 2017, 35-37.

remain clustered together; *Universalism* - an attitude that stresses on the common elements to the extent that differences are sidelined, if possible, even removed in favour of values, ideals and common goals that are proposed; *Peaceful Coexistence* (or Multiculturalism) - an attitude that requires that persons and denominations live in equality and mutual respect with common norms and shared practices; *Integration* - an attitude that could immediately inspire approval, but not without a caution - as to whether it is a monistic integration or an interactionist integration. While the former is more an assimilation, the latter is open to interaction, sharing, mutual critique and enrichment, constant exchange of ideas, values and meaning, among the different realities present within a context. Intercultural pedagogy involves a crucial decision to make concerning the values to be promoted, principles to be upheld and the objectives to be striven after, with the diversity in the religious and moral realities present.<sup>31</sup>

The Specific agents or operators of Intercultural pedagogy could be outlined in following categories:

- *Educators and the Institutions* are of primary consideration in this regard, because what is referred to is a process of education, a specific task that is entrusted to a particular component of a human society, to form a person's way of thinking, acting, socializing, decision making and growing up, in a particular context. Along with the person who grows up, the educator too constantly grows and keeps maturing, thus making the process mutual and interdependent.<sup>32</sup>
- *Parents, Adults and Family*, are the immediate factors that affect a child in its growth within a larger society. Even for an intercultural mentality, the fundamental experiences of trust, security, openness or those contrary, with which a child is socialized matters much.
- *Friends and the Personal Network*, affect the values and priorities of a person to great extent. The companionship shared and experienced could become the very locus where a person grows in intercultural openness or apathy. The type of persons with whom a person is connected to and the kind of rapport shared among them, can affect the way a person connects to the society in general. A healthy mode and level of interdependence with one's close circle of friends can inspire in a person more trust and openness towards a wider setting. An intercultural formation of a person or a group of persons can happen spontaneously in a circle of friends.
- *Collaborators and the Wider Network*, refers to the groups or associations or movements of which a person could be part of. It could open the person's circle of relationship a little more and connect him or her to a wider group. An experience with like-minded individuals who could share similar motivations,

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. Agostino PORTERA, *Manuale di pedagogia interculturale*, Laterza, Bari 2020, 24-26.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Carlo NANNI, "Crescere insieme, nella diversità," in Carlo NANNI (ed.), *Intolleranza, pregiudizio ed educazione alla solidarietà*, LAS, Roma 1991, 125.

can be an educative experience that prepares a person and enables him or her to have meaningful interpersonal experiences.<sup>33</sup>

- *Society and the Social Network*, is no strange category considering the experience of the present generation. Social Network seems to be an important part of a young person's personal life and network of relationships. Young persons connect with others over the social network, some known to them and many unknown to them, creating spaces where they share views of varied natures. There is a social life on the virtual world and it is organised by its own rules and norms. Not very rarely, this virtual network has found its manifestation in the real society – mobilising protests, appealing for social aid, reaching out during calamities, humanitarian initiatives like blood donation or organ donations, and varied other instances. In all these there is an educative element that prepares and impels a person or a group of persons to interact on an intercultural front.

We could think of these three premises as a form of conclusion of the entire discourse:

- Education has to be personal, critical and holistic, leading one to a deeper understanding and appreciation of oneself;
- In an interdenominational setting, the process of education considers every person in his or her entire context, thus valuing their own “culture”;
- Hence, the education we offer, needs to locate itself within the framework of Intercultural pedagogy, to make a concrete difference for persons and communities with which we share our mission.

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Maria Grazia CAPUTO, “L’Esperienze della Solidarietà nei gruppi, associazione, movimenti,” in Carlo NANNI (ed.), *Intolleranza, Pregiudizio e Educazione alla Solidarietà – Atti del Convegno*, LAS, Roma 1991, 172.