

Education in Multiculturality Education to Interculturality

In Ecclesiastical Institutions of Higher Education
and in Formation Communities
for Catholic Consecrated Life in Italy

Edited by
Enrica Ottone – Luca Pandolfi



Enrica Ottone, Luca Pandolfi (eds.)
**EDUCATION IN MULTICULTURALITY
EDUCATION TO INTERCULTURALITY**
**In Ecclesiastical Institutions of Higher Education
and in Formation Communities for Catholic Consecrated Life in Italy**

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Front cover

Pavel Égüez, *Grito de los Excluidos*, mural en cerámica.
Cotacachi, Ecuador 2001
(Photograph by Luca Pandolfi, 2007)

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“

Diversity always proves a bit frightening, for it challenges our securities and the status quo. [...] In the face of cultural, ethnic, political and religious diversity, we can either retreat into a rigid defense of our supposed identity, or become open to encountering others and cultivating together the dream of a fraternal society.

”

POPE FRANCIS

*Speech to the Hungarian Episcopal Conference
Apostolic visit to Budapest, September 12, 2021*

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Introduction

Education in Multiculturality Education to Interculturality*

❖ Enrica Ottone – Luca Pandolfi

Education in multicultural contexts is nowadays a widespread practice. In Italy, both in ecclesiastical Institutions of higher education as well as in male and female Institutes of consecrated life and of Societies of apostolic life, education and formation¹ communities have been represented by highly international groups for a while. Students, as well as many of their teachers and educators, especially (but not limited to) the Catholic world in Italy, come from all continents. Formation, teaching and education in wide multiculturality is a reality; instead, the education *to* interculturality is a choice, it is certainly a complex task and a challenge, often poorly understood and disregarded.

To the presence and management of the first dimension (education in multicultural contexts) and to the dissemination as well as to the fate of the second (formation of and education *to* interculturality), the Higher Institute of Catechesis and Missionary Spirituality of the *Pontifical Urbaniana University* (PUU) in Rome has dedicated four years of *Action Research* on the field (2018/2021). It involved, in various ways, more than ten ecclesiastical institutions of higher education and more than twelve male and female communities of formation to consecrated life in Italy. Directed first by the theologian Tiziana Longhitano, the project was subsequently guided by Luca Pandolfi, full professor of Cultural Anthropology, who designed, directed, and coordinated the experience of these four years of research, a related international congress, and the publication of the results.

From the very beginning, the International Union of Superiors General (UISG), coordinating body of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life, was involved as a partner in the research. In addition, the research has seen the immediate involvement of the *Pontificia Facoltà di Scienze dell'Educazione Auxilium* (PFSEA)² of Rome, particularly with the figure of Enrica Ottone, professor of Intercultural Pedagogy, who collaborated on the conduction and direction of the Research. The whole experience was made possible thanks to the support and the generous contribution of the GHR (Gerald and Henrietta Rauenhors) Foundation of Minneapolis (USA) which assessed and appreciated the Project entitled *Multiculturality and intercultural competences in ecclesiastical institution of higher education and in formation communities of consecrated life*. Before this synthetic introduction, you may have read the brief but significant greeting of Kathleen Mahoney, GHR Foundation senior program officer: she illustrated why they willed to support the research and how our relationship is not just a mere relationship between a funding body and a beneficiary, but also a collaboration between people that work for a common project in view of a more sensitive and welcoming world for everyone.

The four years of *Action-Research-Training* – afflicted by about two years of several lockdowns due to the Covid19 pandemic, among others – involved Italian academic institutions and formation communities with short experiences (repeated focus groups and other activities conducted with qualitative tools), hence the use of the name *action-research-training*, in which every step and shared content was recorded, collected and stored in an extensive database of textual data and ethnographic notes. The dis-

* Translated from the original Italian by Nina Deliu

semination of a structured questionnaire during the first half of 2021, translated into nine languages and involving around six hundred participants, has then specified the recognition of the actual reality, thanks to its sociometric and quantitative nature. It was important to “listen” to reality, dialogue with the different involved environments, collect and “sediment” words, opinions, ways of living multiculturalism, and experience or imagine intercultural processes. It was important to conjugate these reflections with the education dynamics, “measuring” somehow their convergences and divergences. And it was extremely interesting to try to read and interpret the great amount of information received. This work, which still has to be completed considering the quantity of collected data, has borne two first important fruits: a) a *Report*, with a wide interpretation dictated by multiple voices, on this *action-research-training* project, and b) a three-day international Congress, held at the end of 2021, in which it was presented the *Report* and, even more, where teachers, researchers, scholars, students, people operating in this area, and members of communities of male and female Institutes of Consecrated Life, have gathered to listen and confront to each other.

The publication you are reading, entirely in English, was conceived as a wide extract of the Congress Proceedings, offered online in open access to the scientific community and to the people operating in this area, as well as to all those that may be interested in the dynamics of the intercultural education. It collects principally the research *Report*, but it is enriched with the main contributions shared during the International Congress of the PUU, held in a hybrid format (online and in person) from 17th to 19th of November 2021 and entitled “*Multicultural communities, for what Formation?*”. The congress, which took place while the pandemic was not yet concluded and respected all the health safety rules and social distancing, has seen a daily average of around 450 in-person participants, all spread across the different rooms of the University, with simultaneous translations in Italian, English, French and Spanish. With peaks of 700 online connections and an average of 500 people attending online, the Congress resulted to be an interesting experience transmitted online in real time in four languages on the Zoom platform and differed 6 hours later, on the Institutional YouTube channel of PUU³. Some teachers and speakers were also able to give their contribution with a remote connection from Italian cities or different distant Countries such as Belgium, Chile, India or the United States of America, and the question of interculturality has been intertwined with the cultural processes of global connection and the *digital divide*. Each day, around 1.000 people from different continents and from different time zones were able to listen and share reflections and experiences on multicultural life and intercultural practices, with particular attention to religious formation contexts. In this wide volume, we have collected eighteen contributions distributed across four Parts, in addition to an appendix (Part V), which illustrates both the qualitative and quantitative instruments used during the survey.

We honor the Preface of Darla Deardorff, from Duke University (Durham, NC), collaborator of UNESCO, and internationally known especially for her manuscript on intercultural competence⁴. In a short interview, she illustrates the current challenges on young and adult education, nowadays characterized by a multicultural nature and increasingly calling for a conscious and participative interculturality.

* * *

Parts I and II of this Volume are entirely dedicated to the presentation of our *action-research-training* project. In Part I, the first contribution, authored by the sociologist Mary Gautier from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate of Georgetown University (Washington, DC), shows the historical roots of the research we conducted in Italy: a study on the life of female communities of consecrated life in the USA characterized by strong multiculturalism. It was this study, concluded in 2016 and presented in Italy in 2017, that inspired our research, which we conducted however with

different and specific attention to multicultural “formation”⁵ communities (University institutions or Formation Institutes of Consecrated Life). In the second contribution, you will find the history, the context, the motivations, and the objectives of the *action-research-training* presented by the curators of this Volume (Enrica Ottone and Luca Pandolfi): in an extensive introduction, you will also find details on the adopted theoretical approaches, the methodology, the study sample, and the instruments of the survey. Part II will be then focused on the results obtained so far from the entire research work. A pool of experts (sociologists from qualitative and quantitative areas) collaborated with us and contributed with discussion and supervision roles. In addition, they were specifically responsible for the analysis and interpretation of part of the qualitative and quantitative data we collected: they are Fiorenza Deriu, professor at Sapienza University of Rome, Nina Deliu, researcher at Sapienza University of Rome with a joint appointment at Cambridge University (UK), and Luca Di Censi, from Sapienza University as well. Their contributions to the analysis and reflections on the results are followed by two additional essays. The first one is authored by Enrica Ottone, who analyses the results of a qualitative survey carried out during this research, in light of additional extensive resources at hand, combining in this way two research lines that highlight the intercultural competences put in place. We then have a conclusive essay by Luca Pandolfi, who reinterprets the entire experience and tries to trace a synthesis of the main cultural processes in place in the different educational ecclesiastical structures (universities and formation communities).

* * *

Parts III illustrates experiences of formation in multicultural religious contexts that seek to look at interculturality as a potential way, which however requires a certain awareness and specific competences. They are all short contributions, simple, but able to offer a glimpse of the current dynamics in the Catholic university context as well as in the wide world devoted to Consecrated Life. Robin Seelan, an Indian Jesuit with education partially conducted in the United States of America, briefly presents the fundamental questions related to formation in strongly multiethnic and multireligious contexts in India. The Irish Sister Patricia Murray, executive secretary of the UISG in Italy, illustrates the international work of training for leaders in multicultural communities; Peter Nahr, Ghanaian Verbitte Father, who coordinates the formation of his congregation in Germany and central Europe, indicates the necessary transformations to adopt for promoting intercultural competences among members of different international congregations of consecrated life. Cristina Montoya, a Colombian citizen that teaches in Italy, presents the project and the intercultural experience of an international university (involving teachers and students) created within a global lay movement such as the Focolare Movement. Lorena Zuchel, an academic researcher from Universidad Técnica Federico Santa María of Santiago de Chile, intersects her experience of Chilean higher university education with the challenges posed by intercultural thinking and the local ethnic and linguistic plurality. This section is then closed with the experience of a German Protestant Pastor that works in Italy with communities mainly of African origins.

* * *

Parts IV offers a few scientific and academic thematic insights. The intercultural dimension challenges the disciplinary pathways and the different scientific approaches, asking for an openness to look with continuously new perspectives on a social, cultural, and pedagogical reality that is characterized by a plurality of subjects, perceptions, comprehensions, and interpretations. Here, we have the contributions of Milena Santerini, from the Catholic University of Sacro Cuore of Milano, a known pedagogue

and an expert in intercultural education, involved also as a parliament member in Italy at the level of social policies for inclusion and cultural pluralism; Raul Fornet-Betancourt, one of the founders of the intercultural philosophy in Europe, invites at the dialogue between the European thinking, spread worldwide particularly during the XIX and the XX century also thanks to the colonial experience, and the alternative thinking of the global Asian, African or Latin-American body. He urges to re-think university education as a place of critical and alternative thinking, dialogic and pluralistic, not just as a place of homologating education for the reproduction of a consumer society, inequalitarian and inattentive to diversity. Part IV is closed with the contributions of Davide Zoletto, professor of Pedagogy at the University of Udine, and Ilenya Camozzi, sociologist at the University Milano-Bicocca. Education and human sciences (originated, as we know them in Europe, between the end of the XVIII century and the entire XIX century) are nowadays challenged by a scientific pluralist thinking, international and postcolonial: contents, disciplinary forms, interpretative paradigms, methodological processes are questioned by the different epistemological approaches and by alternative cosmovision of knowledge and its role. An increasing number of students and teachers come from different worlds, bring with them their different approaches, and “filter” the contents they receive, as well as the proposed forms of learning, with different cognitive and experience backgrounds. Education in multiculturalism is already a more or less conscious and slow experience of cultural hybridization. However, when not handled in a conscious and competent way, it is marked by asymmetries, dominations, and different forms of cultural resistance. On the other side, this is also what we perceived during the different phases of this research.

* * *

Ultimately, **Part V** is an appendix of the instruments used during the research. It is intended as a conclusive space, yet *not to conclude*: these instruments can be employed again, improved, implemented, and can represent other experiences of research, action, education, dialogue, and critical awareness for groups and communities.

* * *

We close this introduction by saying that the perception of multiculturalism is certainly a widespread and shared experience, yet not always taken in a deep and conscious way and with sufficient communicative, social, and formative competence. On the other side, interculturality, despite being present in the background of many people and in the formal statements of many communities and education institutions, is not actually subject to a serious and systematic analysis nor to awareness or education: poorly considered are both the careful, in-depth and competent planning as well as the systematic and non-episodic action. We detected how an education that should promote, enable, and support the necessary intercultural competences is nowadays increasingly timely. However, there is still a long path ahead.



Endnotes

1. In this Volume, the word “formation” reflects the Italian concept of “formazione”, and “formative” (the original language of this research), and it is used to refer to a kind of non-physical shaping, related to the development of education and personality in a broad sense. To avoid potential confusion, we will adopt the term “education” when referring to universities and other general contexts, but we will maintain the Italian or Latin similarity when referring to religious institutes; see e.g., the use of the expression “formation in religious institutes” in official Vatican’s documentation: https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccsclife/documents/rc_con_ccsclife_doc_02021990_directives-on-formation_en.html; <https://archive.is/FAX53>.
2. The PFSEA [Pontifical Faculty of Educational Sciences Auxilium] is an ecclesiastical Faculty which was founded canonically at the *Istituto delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice* (Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians or Salesian Sisters of Don Bosco) in 1970.
3. Recordings are accessible in other three languages (English, French, Spanish), in addition to Italian, at the following web address: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUPG_Ymjo4MST-PAV4uz4sRA.
4. In English, the terms “competence” and “competency”, as well as their respective plural forms (“competences” and “competencies”) are both used as synonyms. In this volume, by choosing to use the term “competence” in the singular, for consistency, we have chosen to use the plural “intercultural competences” to indicate “more intercultural competences”. We have used the term “competences” in articles translated from Italian or Spanish, but we decided to keep the expression “intercultural competencies” (more frequent in international literature) in some contributions that were written in English, including the interview with Darla K. Deardorff. In the volume she authored for UNESCO in 2020, a passage reads: “Intercultural competencies are broadly defined as the competences (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) needed to improve human interactions across differences, whether within a society (differences due to age, gender, religion, socio-economic status, political affiliation, ethnicity, and so on) or across borders”, (D.K. DEARDORFF, *Manual for Developing Intercultural Competencies: Story Circles*, UNESCO and Routledge, Paris 2020, 70).
5. Cf. note 2 above.