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## **The Catholic School in the Context of Growing Migration into Europe**

### **Abstract**

In the last years, the intensified migration mostly of people from Africa and Asia altered the situation in Europe. The growing awareness of the importance of respect for human rights and the recognition of the equal value of all people of whatever ethnic origin, cultural or religious tradition, forced the European governments to adjust the institutional services to a new kind of cultural and religious diversity, but Europeans do not want to give up the economic, political, social, ethnic, cultural and religious harmony. Due to the impact of migration, many national curricula are being changed and transformed. But it is also necessary to examine how cultural and religious diversity in Europe is intertwined in school pedagogy. What are the relationships between European and multicultural values and/or between multicultural and Christian values? What is the response of educational institutions to the new political, social, cultural and religious situation in Europe especially based on huge migration influx? What are the possible conflicts between the dynamics of a changing culture on the one hand and the ambitions of the Catholic schools in 21-st century? The author of this text raises a few important questions connected with migration and education in Europe for further reflection.

### **Keywords**

Europe, migration, cultural and religious diversity, pedagogy.

The socio-cultural diversity of Europe is not a new issue. People are interacting with each other and sharing their ethnic, regional, cultural and religious traditions, their social, political, economic interests and ambitions. For a long time in Europe, Christianity played a key role in establishing this homogeneity and providing a common culture – the Christian one; a common language – Latin, and a common source of values: the Bible<sup>1</sup>. But presently, the

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<sup>1</sup> L. Halman, R. Luijckx, M. van Zundert, *Atlas of European Values*, Tilburg 2005, p. 10–11.

issue of a multicultural diversity and religious pluralism gets so much attention in contemporary world, because of the worldwide communication. For many years, Europeans learned how to live with diversity and conflictive sensitivities and cultures. It has been a long and complex learning process to find out how to deal with it in a peaceful and constructive way.

In the last years, the intensified migration of people from Africa and Asia altered the situation. The growing awareness of the importance of respect for human rights, of the recognition of the equal value of all human beings of whatever ethnic origin, cultural or religious tradition, forced the European governments to adjust the institutional services to a new kind of cultural and religious diversity. Not only does the European Union intend to abolish the distance between the different “European cultures” but aims to bring them together in one open multi-cultural European space<sup>2</sup>. This is a real challenge, as Europeans do not want to give up the economic, political, social, cultural and religious harmony. But, due to the demographic problems and international immigration Europe is quickly shifting to a new diversified reality<sup>3</sup>.

Due to the impact of migration, many national curricula are being changed and transformed. But it is also necessary to examine how cultural diversity in Europe is intertwined in school pedagogy. What are the relationships between European and multicultural values and/or between multicultural and Christian values? What is the response of Catholic institutions to the new political, social, cultural and religious situation in Europe especially based on huge migration influx? What are the possible conflicts between the dynamics of a changing culture on the one hand and the ambitions of Catholic schools in 21-st century? These and many more questions in this article are addressed to all who want to be faithful to the Church and the Christian mission, but at the same time dare to see the reality and be faithful to the people living in Europe and facing the challenges. The author of this text has an ambition to raise a few questions for further reflection.

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<sup>2</sup> European Commission, *Supporting Cultural Heritage*, [http://ec.europa.eu/culture/policy/culture-policies/cultural-heritage\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/culture/policy/culture-policies/cultural-heritage_en.htm) (25.08.2015); E. Osewska, *To Educate in a Diversified Europe*, “The Person and the Challenges” 1 (2011), p. 72–73. See H. Lombaerts & E. Osewska, *Historical and Geo-Political Reality of a United Europe*, in: S. Gatt, H. Lombaerts, E. Osewska, A. Scerri, *Catholic Education, European and Maltese Perspectives. Church School’s response to future challenges*, Floriana 2004, Secretariat for Catholic Education, p. 27–43.

<sup>3</sup> See H. Lombaerts, *The Impact of the Status of Religion in Contemporary Society upon Interreligious Learning*, in: *Interreligious Learning*, ed. D. Pollefeyet, Leuven 2007, Leuven University Press, p. 57–70; H. Lombaerts, *Lasallian Education grappling with the European Union*, Rome 2007, Brothers of the Christian Schools, p. 25–28.

## 1. Migration alert

According to the Eurostat, about 3.4 million people immigrated to one of the European Union countries in 2013, when, at the same time, about 2.8 million emigrated from EU. But these figures do not represent the migration flows to/from the EU Member States as a whole, since they also include flows between different EU countries. Among these 3.4 million immigrants during 2013 there were 1.4 million citizens of non-member countries, 1.2 million people with citizenship of a different EU Member State from the one to which they immigrated, around 830 thousand people who migrated to an EU Member State of which they had the citizenship (for example returning nationals or nationals born abroad), and around 6.1 thousand stateless people. Germany reported the largest number of immigrants (692.7 thousand) in 2013, followed by the United Kingdom (526.0 thousand) and France (332.6 thousand). 16 of the EU Member States reported more immigration than emigration in 2013, but in Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Lithuania, Latvia, Spain, Poland, Portugal and Romania emigrants outnumbered immigrants. Due to differences in definitions and measurement methods, cross-country comparisons of international migration patterns are very confusing. Emigration numbers reported by sending countries tend to differ from the corresponding immigration numbers reported by receiving countries, so it is difficult to achieve harmonised estimation of migration flows. More specifically, migration is influenced by a combination of many economic, political, social, ethnic, cultural and religious factors in both settings: in a migrant's country of origin (so called 'push factors') and in the country of destination ('pull factors')<sup>4</sup>.

Especially during last years and months, the relative economic prosperity and socio-political stability of the European Union, and, at the same time, strong conflicts and wars in North Africa and the Middle East, have exerted a huge pull and push effects on immigrants<sup>5</sup>. The new phenomenon of the Islamic State in Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS) created a radically, new situation in the world, pulling down previous, international borders, recruiting to its army so many Europeans, and persuading its followers to carry out attacks in Europe

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<sup>4</sup> Eurostat, *Migration and migrant population statistics*, [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration\\_and\\_migrant\\_population\\_statistics](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics) (20.08.2015).

<sup>5</sup> H. Lombaerts, *Lasallian Education grappling with the European Union*, Rome 2007, Brothers of the Christian Schools, p. 28–32.

and North America. The ‘refugees’ from the ISIS phenomenon did not only create demographic, economy, political, social and cultural problems. The flow of migrants from the Middle East and Africa into Europe has generated up to \$323 million for the ISIS. Many of the migrants embark on boats that have foundered with thousands, some being rescued by Europeans whilst other thousands drowning<sup>6</sup>. European Union and African officials are trying to find ways to stop the migration. But the European strategy does not seem to work efficiently.

Europe is thus faced with a new demographic challenge, adding to those that already confront it (population ageing and population decline). When low fertility and increasing longevity cause populations to grow older and decline, the simultaneous recent migration flows towards European Union countries, and the expected changes in the size and composition of the European population cause a huge problem. International migration brings population, cultural and religious diversity across Europe. But from social, cultural, religious and educational perspectives the challenge of international migration from outside Europe is a very powerful one.

## **2. Multi-cultural and multi-religious setting**

In relation to this topic, it is important to notice that ‘culture’ and ‘European identity’ are important issues in the educational projects in Europe. But more specifically, when we talk about Catholic schools we refer to the ‘Catholic culture’ and the culture of the Catholic schools. The latter meaning of ‘culture’ refers to a particular mindset in relation to the overall cultural environment: a particular lifestyle, a particular strategic educational project, which intends to achieve well-defined outcomes. “Cultural pluralism, therefore, leads the Church to reaffirm her mission of education to insure strong character formation. Her children, then, will be capable both of resisting the debilitating influence of relativism and of living up to the demands made on them by their Baptism. It also stimulates her to foster truly Christian living and apostolic communities, equipped to make their own positive contribution, in a spirit of cooperation, to the building up of the secular society. For this reason the Church is prompted to

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<sup>6</sup> See V. Walt, *ISIS Makes a Fortune from Smuggling Migrants into Europe*, <http://time.com/3857121/isis-smuggling> (20.08.2015).

mobilise her educational resources in the face of the materialism, pragmatism and technocracy of contemporary society”<sup>7</sup>.

Nevertheless, the European population at large continues to identify with a variety of meaning systems, with a particular hierarchy of values, with symbolic reference frames. They help them to give meaning to their lives and to maintain a common human and ideological environment. And, as the European Values Studies point out, despite the so-called secularisation, for many European citizens, the Christian life orientation and related values still represent a basic characteristic of the European ‘identity’<sup>8</sup>. Did the ‘Catholic’ culture become more of a symbolic reference system, a heritage from the past, rather than being an efficient instrument of a concrete Europe-oriented educational plan?

For centuries the Catholic schools have contributed to the development of didactics and pedagogy. The educational ‘culture’ of the Catholic tradition functions as an inspiration to find a different place and to cooperate in different networks to the well-being of the new generation, especially those who’s life is at risk due to economic, social, cultural, spiritual deprivation. The changing European cultures challenge the Christian and Catholic culture in the first place. A transformed Catholic culture may challenge aspects of today’s cultural orientation, given that the educational contribution is qualitatively relevant in relation to today’s situation.

### 3. The Catholic school in the new European situation

The school, through its mission and other documents, clearly identifies itself as an educational institution. If the mission of the school is to contribute to the development of society and the Church by developing education, formation and other aims defined by the specific characteristics of an education institutions and its position in the society, the school needs also to dedicate to developing quality cultural and social responsibility.

In line with its mission, the school should developed a strategic plan, and include all the stakeholders in its development and implementation. A strategic

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<sup>7</sup> The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School, Vatican 1977*, 12.

<sup>8</sup> L. J. Francis, *Empirical Theology ad Hermeneutical Religious Education: A Case Study concerning Adolescent Attitudes toward Abortion*, in: eds. H. Lombaerts & D. Pollefeyt, *Hermeneutics and Religious Education*, Leuven 2004, Leuven University Press, p. 355–373.

plan includes strategic goals, operational plans and monitoring mechanisms. Most Catholic schools in Europe do have a documented strategic plan, however, sometimes, they concentrate rather on direct objectives and forget it needs to have very clear and stated, long-term strategic objectives. In this sense, the Catholic school must acknowledge that it needs to formulate both the vision and the mission of the Catholic school, and a plan in which all aims are also formulated as strategic objectives, which are progressed and developed upon.

Another key issue is the educational programme, the quality of which has to be based on a good interaction between the Church, government or local governments, society, parents, teachers and pupils' expectations. It seems that, too often, in Europe the political expectations, that have been imposed on schools play the most important role in building the new educational programme. The voices of parents, youngsters and children are less taken into consideration. In the case of the Catholic School, the educational programmes, that are undertaken in the school needs also to be in line with the institutional and Catholic mission. A school also requires functional mechanisms for the monitoring and improvement, not only of teaching, but also of the upbringing/formation quality.

The school needs to be conscious of its responsibility to teach new and young teachers on how to use new teaching technologies, methods and techniques. Teachers' self reports, usually contribute to the monitoring and improvement of the teaching quality in the field of didactics. From these perspectives, each programme is usually defined in line with the clearly defined student learning outcomes, and is based on scientific potentials. In the direct connection with external and internal exams, schools created many mechanisms for the approval, monitoring and development of pupils' intellectual growth.

But knowledge is only one element connected with schooling. Every educational institution needs to be pedagogical. According to B. Bernstein, it is possible to observe many changes in the classification and framing knowledge, but also in the forms of school identity. His text may give a theoretical frame for many issues: classification of knowledge, visible and invisible pedagogy, control over the pedagogical formation, the secular market curriculum and his pedagogy. All these issues have been undertaken in G. Grace's book: *Catholic Schools. Mission, Market and Morality*<sup>9</sup>. We can learn much from both authors,

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<sup>9</sup> See G. Grace, *Catholic Schools. Mission, Market and Morality*, London 2002.

but in this short article we need to go back to the connection between pedagogy and culture building.

Even the most effective procedures for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning are not enough in the process of culture-building, which should include all actors of school: pupils, teachers, administrative staff, but also parents and stakeholders from private and public sectors, and civil society organizations.

The institution needs to use various methods for monitoring development, innovation and improvements to the existing pedagogical programmes (such as parents', teachers' and pupils' surveys and questionnaires, meetings of School Council, self-evaluation reports) and primarily the dialogue between all the above mentioned actors and users. As a result of this process, the school may develop a new programme which complies with the requirements of pedagogical aims and outcomes.

According to H. Lombaerts: "Culture building provides meaning and values. It develops symbolic systems. It represents all that typically human, everything that enables people to create their own living space, their world and the civilisation in which they live. A living culture is constantly renewing itself"<sup>10</sup>. Schools are situated at the cross roads of many influences, but "a close examination of the various definitions of school and of new educational trends at every level, leads one to formulate the concept of school as a place of integral formation by means of a systematic and critical assimilation of culture. A school is, therefore, a privileged place in which, through a living encounter with a cultural inheritance, integral formation occurs"<sup>11</sup>.

When Europe is becoming more and more a complicated mosaic of many diversified, sometimes even contradictory political, historical, ethnical, social, linguistic, cultural and religious dividing lines that separate people<sup>12</sup>, the Catholic school must not just hide itself in the corner of society. The growing juxtaposition of different traditions, in Europe, is an educational challenge. People of different cultures, nationalities and religions meet and mix. The relationships among the different cultural and religious communities may be

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<sup>10</sup> H. Lombaerts, *The Management and Leadership of Christian Schools*, Rome 1998, Brothers of the Christian Schools, p. 34.

<sup>11</sup> *The Catholic School* 26.

<sup>12</sup> H. Lombaerts & E. Osewska, *Historical and Geo-Political Reality of a United Europe*, in: S. Gatt, H. Lombaerts, E. Osewska & A. Scerri, *Catholic Education. European and Maltese Perspectives. Church School's Response to Future Challenges*, Floriana 2004, p. 27–43.

friendly and tolerant, or intolerant and aggressive. Massive migration from Africa and Middle East, as a consequence of wars and conflicts, especially the Islamic dominance create a new context in European history. The European homogeneity is broken: a radically different culture and a different way of imagining a cultural and religious universe is becoming present. There is a conflict between the concern of protecting cultural and political boundaries on the one hand, and on the other hand, the uncontrollable, informal emergence of a universal network of communication and consumption, independent of the cultural, racial, political, religious origin.

#### **4. Challenges and areas of concern**

Having drawn the attention to the new context of the Catholic school in Europe, connected with the international migration, we must try to consider the challenges for the educational mission of Catholic schools. Cultural, ethnic and religious pluralism, therefore, leads the Church to reaffirm her mission of education and stimulates to support the communities, equipped to make their own positive contribution, in a spirit of cooperation. “This vital approach takes place in the school in the form of personal contacts and commitments which consider absolute values in a life-context and seek to insert them into a life-framework. Indeed, culture is only educational when young people can relate their study to real-life situations with which they are familiar. The school must stimulate the pupil to exercise his intelligence, through the dynamics of understanding, to attain clarity and inventiveness. It must help him spell out the meaning of his experiences and their truths”<sup>13</sup>. At the same time, in European societies, the dominant culture is consumerism, shaping many young people’s view point on life<sup>14</sup>. Confrontation with poverty and other social and political problems, connected with the presence of migrants in Europe, creates a challenge to all Christians – to be wise, responsible and socially committed in order to give an expression to Gospel values. The values of love, respect, wisdom and responsibility are necessary in order to tolerate the accommodation of Islam

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<sup>13</sup> *The Catholic School* 27.

<sup>14</sup> M. Ashley, *Secular spirituality and implicit religion: The realisation of human potential*, “Implicit religion” 3 (2000) 1, p. 31–49; J. Crossman, *Secular spiritual development in education from international and global perspectives*, “Oxford Review of Education” 29 (2003) 4, p. 503–520.



in Europe. The same time in many European countries is possible to see also aversion towards Christianity in general. Applying a justice and peace education model in Catholic schools the Church recognises that children and youngsters learn from experiences in the community. So, it is a very sensitive issue not to become Islamophobic, but also not to support fundamental Islamic trends. For these reasons, the Catholic educational task is not only to prepare pupils to live in a multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-racial society, but also to mobilise the educational resources<sup>15</sup> and deal with following challenges<sup>16</sup>:

- to support the integral formation of a person with the material, intellectual, psychical and spiritual needs;
- to help in the development of a person who is wise, responsible and inner-directed, capable of choosing freely in conformity with his/her conscience;
- to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and the assimilation of values, and, when this is undertaken for an apostolic purpose, it does not stop at an integration of faith and culture, but leads the pupil to a personal integration of faith and life;

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<sup>15</sup> *The Catholic School* 12.

<sup>16</sup> See G. Rossiter, *Understanding the changing landscape of contemporary spirituality: A useful starting point for reviewing Catholic school religious education*, "The Person and the Challenges" 3 (2013) 1, p. 157–179; M. Crawford, G. Rossiter, *Reasons for living: Education and young people's search for meaning, identity and spirituality. A Handbook*, Melbourne 2006, Australian Council for Educational Research; M. H. Grimmitt, *Religious education and human development: The Relationship between studying religions and personal social and moral education*, Great Wakering 1987, McCrimmons; G. Grace, *Catholic Schools. Mission, Market and Morality*, London 2002, RoutledgeFalmer, p. 80–110; J. Stala, *Den Jungen Menschen auf den Etappen Seines Lebenswegs Begleiten. Wesentliche Elemente der Jugendkatechese Johannes Pauls II.*, "Angelicum" 90 (2013), p. 945–960; J. Stala, *Die Freiheit – das besondere Kennzeichen einer modernen Jugenderziehung*, "The Person and the Challenges" 3 (2013) nr 2, p. 193–207; J. Stala, *Der Mensch als Person: Die bestimmende Grundlage für Johannes Paul II. in seinem Bild von der Familie*, "The Person and the Challenges" 2 (2012) nr 2, p. 41–59; J. Stala, *Die Transzendenz als bestimmendes Merkmal der Person in der Anthropologie und der Pädagogik Johannes Pauls II.*, "The Person and the Challenges" 2 (2012) nr 1, p. 61–75; E. Osewska, *Education and Internet Challenges*, in: *Education and Creativity*, ed. E. Osewska, Warszawa 2014, UKSW, p. 49–66; J. Stala, *RE Books as a Support for Creative Teaching and Learning in a Polish Context*, in: *Education and Creativity*, ed. E. Osewska, Warszawa 2014, UKSW, p. 141–157; G. Rossiter, *Decoding the iconography of contemporary lifestyle: Uncovering and evaluating the spirituality in consumerist culture Part 1. Context, approach and relevant literature*, in: *Education and Creativity*, ed. E. Osewska, Warszawa 2014, UKSW, p. 161–183; G. Rossiter, *Decoding the iconography of contemporary lifestyle: Uncovering and evaluating the spirituality in consumerist culture Part 2. Contrasting the mise-en-scène of medieval Christian spirituality with that of contemporary consumerist lifestyle: Sociological and educational implications*, in: *Education and Creativity*, ed. E. Osewska, Warszawa 2014, UKSW, p. 185–231.

- to support the vital relationship of the pupil with Jesus Christ, in the awareness that all human values find their fulfilment and unity in Christ;
- to foster mutual understanding among populations of Europe, which include both aspects ‘self’-understanding: that of every nation with its history and tradition, and mutual understanding. These two approaches are complementary and interdependent;
- to review the formation programme, both in its content and the methods used, in the light of the reality in which the pupils are living, and the Catholic inspiration;
- to harmonize the rights and duties of pupils, teachers and parents in accordance with a Christian conscience;
- to educate the ethical sense of democracy, mainly through schooling and various processes of socialisation;
- to introduce intercultural relationships and help to deal with psychological boundaries;
- to prepare a ‘culturally responsive’ education, which bases learning experiences on the cultural realities of the pupil (e.g. community experiences, language background, value systems, religious beliefs);
- to form a critical responsibility within the pupils: a multitude of ideas call for an ongoing critical discernment;
- to integrate the life visions and religions in a multicultural and multi-religious context;
- to create a Code of Ethics which outlines mechanisms and procedures to deal with various conflicts based on different cultural and religious presuppositions;
- to create opportunities for pupils to reinforce and apply their learning in the context of practical, everyday situations.

The massive migration from Africa and Middle East into Europe creates a new setting among people coming from different ethnic backgrounds, cultures, religious, beliefs. Keeping all this in mind, what is the duty of the ‘Catholic school’? The role of Catholic schools must not be reduced to offering the basic information about World Religions, but to awaken the initial sensitivity for the love of one’s neighbour, responsibility and religious sensitivity. Besides ‘teaching’ about religion, the initiation into the living Christian faith may well be the best response to the growing migration.

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