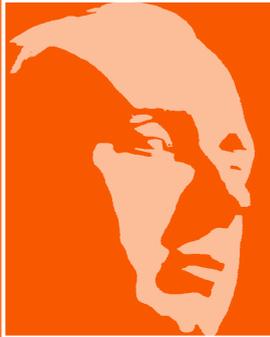


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I.

WHY WE NEED TO REFLECT ON THIS TODAY

I. WHY WE NEED TO REFLECT ON THIS TODAY

“There should be a common, solid element in the training of everyone in our centres. It needs to be clearly defined, so that all can know it, teach it and put it into action”
(St. Pedro Poveda).

“Is there anything distinctive about the nature of our educational centres?” asked St. Pedro Poveda in 1914. This question is one the Teresian Association (TA) continues to ask today at the beginning of the 21st century. It has been the starting point for our centres in setting out to define their own character, key educational principles, and how they understand and carry out the task of education.

The purpose of these centres is to fulfil the Teresian Association’s mission in the area of education, to educate pupils, to bring faith, knowledge and culture together in the process, and to show through education the humanising influence of Gospel values.

This document aims to express in a modest way the focus and context for the **identity and mission of TA educational centres** today in pluralist contemporary society. As an Association mindful of its roots and history, the TA is keenly attentive to the challenge and opportunity of present times, and sensitive to signs of the future.

Along with innovative teaching methods, an essential task in our Centres today is to make the Christian and evangelising nature of our education visible and meaningful, following the style of Pedro Poveda.

Given the variety of sensibilities and world views found today, we need to define as an Association the identity-mission of our educational centres. This will draw together the following three elements:

- today’s pluralist society
- the reference points which guide our educational practice
- the Teresian Association’s commitment to promote an education of Christian inspiration which critically challenges the dominant culture and prepares people to opt responsibly for justice, peace and solidarity.

Each and every one of the educational centres in our network need to keep this vision alive, this founding idea which inspires and motivates T A educational projects in each time and place, creatively deriving the specific forms they take

today from the initial inspiration. We must equally affirm that the TA mission is the *raison d'être* of our educational centres, faithful to its foundational commitment to developing persons, promoting human values and its transforming society, taking the Incarnation of Christ as its inspiring vision.

The identity and specific ethos of TA Centres should be known and respected by everyone in these educational communities, and supported through all forms of involvement, responsibilities and activities: management of the centre, financial administration, departments and teaching teams, each teacher in his/her area, workshop instructors and extra-curricular activities, and those providing reception, administrative and secretarial services.

To achieve this as part of their training, all these professional people should receive in-service formation and experience to enable them to get to know and identify with the educational style and spiritual legacy of Poveda.

The Association depends on the essential help of teams of professionals in its centres who offer their training, teaching experience, personal qualities and deep convictions which should be shared. The centres also rely on the confidence shown by so many parents/guardians who choose Teresian education for their children and are prepared to support it. All of us have our part to play in this dynamic enterprise, which is continuously being updated and enriched.



II.

**CHANGING CULTURAL
CONTEXTS AND NEW
CHALLENGES**

II. CHANGING CULTURAL CONTEXTS AND NEW CHALLENGES

*"I keep my mind and heart
in the present moment"*
(St. Pedro Poveda).

These words sum up Pedro Poveda's on-going attitude towards the challenging events of his own times. This phrase is like a motto reminding us of how to approach the reality we experience: with intelligence and critical awareness, empathy, concern and eyes of faith, open to the opportunities offered by each time and place. Let us highlight some features of our times which are especially relevant to education.

A. Some features of our times:

A post-modern culture

People in general, and especially teenagers and young adults, live immersed in post-modern culture, seen in clear signs: multiculturalism, the loss of historical memory and the urge to live the present moment to the full, compulsive consumerism and pursuit of wealth, a tendency to individualism and a distrust of institutions.

Another feature of our society is a form of nihilism, seen in three major rifts: between western culture and God, between humankind and nature, and between people at individual level. The consequences are all around us: more and more people live only for the present moment and at a superficial level, in a society without meaningful values or a moral compass that would give direction to its life and history.

Globalisation: both risk and opportunity

One of the most striking phenomenon of our times is globalisation, affecting economic and market forces, and human mobility. It creates virtual spaces and global networks offering services and entertainment, thanks to huge advances in information and communication technology. Globalisation narrows the distance between citizens everywhere and highlights the diversity of peoples, cultures and religions in our world. It also shows up dramatic inequality in the sharing of resources. This increases zones of exclusion and widens the gap between human persons, the rich becoming ever richer, the poor ever poorer.

Nonetheless our world is also witnessing a growth in solidarity, with many citizens committing themselves to human development and social transformation.

Profound and rapid change in society and culture

Advances in economics, science and technology, which have increased our knowledge in all areas, are also bringing about profound and rapid change in society and culture. This can be seen in daily life, professional and working lifestyles and even family relationships.

All these developments need to be critically assessed, with ethical criteria, so that they truly contribute to the human and social development of all, and are sustainable.

Pluralism and diversity

Pluralism in a variety of forms, ideological, political, cultural, ethnic and religious, is another aspect of our times. It demands that we recognise and respect diversity, reaching out from our own identity to dialogue with those of other cultures and religions. Our society is increasingly multicultural, multiethnic and of mixed races; this trend has grown stronger with the ever increasing movement of immigrants into our countries.

Growing secularisation

In the new contexts we are living in, secularisation has become and remains the order of the day in civil society, culture and possibly also in our educational praxis. This trend has profoundly altered our value system, which tends to ignore issues to do with life's ultimate meaning, and gradually relegates faith experience to the margins. We ourselves as believers may be partly to blame for this phenomenon, sending our contemporaries only the weak message of a faith that does not mean too much to us; we have remained silent, or adopted a language that emphasised accepted social values, omitting any reference and witness to Christian faith. Perhaps this came from the view that faith should not have a relevant and visible place of its own in the area of education.

B. New challenges in this socio-cultural context

Redefining the teaching role in the “knowledge society”

Information technology today offers sources of information as important as, or even more important, than books. The influence of ICT on students makes us realise that teachers are not the only or even the main transmitters of

knowledge. We must therefore redefine the teaching role in the scenario opened up by the new technologies, the starting point being that the teacher's role in education remains vital. Information increases but the students' capacity to process it does not, and the lack of reading, thinking and appropriation doesn't help them to make knowledge their own.

Learning to learn, and learning to live with others

In a society of whirlwind change it is essential to prioritise in our centres the goal of "learning to learn". This will give rise to the lifelong learning and constant updating demanded by professional life today.

Globalisation, the growing movement of immigrants and the cultural diversity in our society demand that our educational centres also form people with wide horizons, able to go beyond differences, able to live with others and carry out shared tasks. It is urgent to put into action the criteria of "learning to live with others". The new multicultural situation must lead us to adopt those learning methods that promote care for others, respect for difference and co-operative learning in the students. At this time in history the social dimension of education is an urgent concern. With this in mind it is necessary to form persons who are active and participative members of society, committed to justice, solidarity, human rights and peace.

Diversity in a multicultural society

Attending to the diversity of students requires increased human and economic resources in our centres, which should be provided by the Department of Education. Attention to diversity also requires support from parents, coordination with other local bodies, and above all motivation, dedication and preparation on the part of teachers who are to take responsibility in this new situation. Because of their Christian inspiration our centres must show special sensitivity in the way we welcome and care for the diversity of students, opening our doors to the local community and using inclusive educational models.

In this new context we are called to live and share the Gospel that urges us to welcome and dialogue with people different from ourselves, to hold on to certainties and bear with uncertainty, to opt preferentially for the poor as Jesus did; to collaborate with others in building an inclusive and caring society, open to the transcendent. In this pluralist context we highlight the on-going challenge to project **our identity as TA centres**, making this identity more visible, meaningful and capable of attracting others.



III.

**THE EDUCATIONAL MISSION
OF TA CENTRES:
EDUCATIONAL CENTRES**

III. THE EDUCATIONAL MISSION OF TA CENTRES: EDUCATIONAL CENTRES

*"I ask of you a new system, a new method...
inspired in love"
(St. Pedro Poveda).*

A. Povedan Roots

To look back to our roots evokes the figure of Pedro Poveda and the educational principles and projects of this thinker and priest who discovered in the Christian faith the secret of "true humanism", the key to his philosophy of education. Over a hundred years ago Poveda began his educational task, a task which was **updated day by day** because, as it took shape, his thinking and projects were enriched by the contributions of many followers and collaborators. They both received an educational heritage and were committed to renewing it on an on-going basis, responding to challenges as they emerged.

"Educational nearness"

Pedro Poveda was above all a person of faith and his commitment in the area of education sprang from his Christian experience. In the Gospel he discovered the value of "**educational nearness**", which demands that educators take on a variety of roles: knowing the context and daily lives of the students, giving warm personal attention to each one, discovering their social and educational needs, finding possibilities and opportunities to help in a warm friendly human atmosphere, listening to their expectations, hopes and fears.

An education inspired by love

Poveda's educational programme embodied a practical and effective commitment to respond to the socio-cultural challenges of the context, something he carefully analysed and worked to transform. For this he saw education as the best service to offer the individual and society.

He started from the conviction that each person carries within a treasure that education must uncover and bring to light. To bring this about an **educational atmosphere** was needed like that found within a family. Joy, simplicity and participation were also typical of these centres, making learning attractive to children and young people.

A close rapport between teachers and students enables students to be themselves, which is necessary for teachers to get to know them and be able to educate them.

Poveda proposed a form of education with methods and procedures **inspired in love**, one which allows students to develop and express their feelings, takes special care of disadvantaged students, brings out gifts often unknown to their possessor and seeks the right moment to intervene educationally.

He asked students to be fully involved in the process of their own education and to take it on responsibly and earnestly, as serious study requires.

The Gospel: an essential compass

The distinctive nature of our centres consists in their Catholic Christian inspiration with Poveda's emphases and characteristics. Their first reference and critical model are derived from the values of **the Gospel**.

Our option of choosing the Gospel as a reference for our way of living - as Poveda did and asks of us - leads us to recreate in our educational contexts the style of relationships Jesus showed with his contemporaries: respectful, patient, communicative, attentive to the individual, freely giving and compassionate.

This option gives a clear focus to our education: the option for the individual person, giving priority to the less successful, the disadvantaged, and the more vulnerable students, those in most need. In the Gospel we find hope-filled reasons for living a true humanism, and discover the face of God ever compassionate to the human person.

A person's growth towards human maturity as a relational being depends on an educational community where, along with many other formative activities, the story of Jesus is told: His way of relating to the men and women of His time, His preference for the last and least, His forgiveness of enemies. It is a story we must both live and tell.

Human life lived to the full

A fundamental conviction in Poveda's humanism and educational vision is that relationship with the God of Jesus Christ is vital to those who seek to live **human life to the full**, aware of their own dignity and personal autonomy, taking responsibility for themselves, others and nature. Far from diminishing the uniqueness of each one, this relationship motivates and encourages the human person from within, developing all the good in each one and all he/she can achieve in life.

Poveda insists on the urgency of "**witnessing to the faith**" and "**confessing Christ**" in all areas of life, including school and academic life, so that students come to know and experience what he considers human life to the full. He is not

only talking of coherence between words and deeds but also the urgent need for witnessing to the meaning which guides the whole life of the Christian, even though this may at times bring difficulty and misunderstanding.

Those who witness to faith must be aware of the socio-cultural context in which they act if their witness is to have meaning, and to be warmly and intellectually open to today's world, plural in its beliefs, values and ways of understanding existence and history.

Dialogue of faith with knowledge

Poveda was someone who loved **dialogue** and sought to build bridges between **faith and knowledge**, **faith and culture**, convinced as he was that they are not at all incompatible. For him faith experience is in no way opposed to the autonomous growth of persons and social groups. His writings, but above all the way he lived, are an example of this conviction which was very visible in his own life, and also in the association he founded, the Teresian Association.

He advised TA members and collaborators, in a way still relevant for our times, that this dialogue, which calls for serious preparation and reasoning, should not lead us to dilute or compromise our Christian identity to suit prevailing ideas: *"You cannot believe with all your heart and remain silent"*. For Poveda *"it is not only the person who openly abandons their faith who betrays it, but also the one who fears to confess it in public"*.

Well trained teachers with a vocation to educate

Aware of human frailty, Poveda conceived education as a task demanding 'nearness', affection, companionship and guidance. For this he relied on well qualified teachers who were aware of the students' social context, worked as a team, in a spirit of joy, fortitude and love and who were in constant contact with him in order to understand, and support his project, making it their own. To fulfil this responsibility Pedro Poveda asked the teachers working in his centres to put into action the best teaching methods and their best personal qualities, to be highly professional and have a sense of vocation for this service. He also encouraged them to come to know and love Jesus Christ, so as to discover in Him a model and guide for the education they were offering.

Our educational centres are born of this inspiration

Teresian Association educational centres are born of this inspiration and have an identity, a face and an educational style of their own. To remember our roots sheds light on the present. The TA, its educational centres and projects, came into being to **bring God into human culture** in a context even then driven by a secularising tendency which has grown far stronger today.

In both past and present TA education, importance is given to goals, processes, teaching methods, innovation and staff training, and to building relationships within the school environment with parents and the local area. Likewise, great importance is attached to the community dimension of education, shown in team work, since education has to be planned and carried out by the teaching body, committed to the educational ethos of the centre, and reliant always on the support and collaboration of parents.

B. The education offered in TA Centres

The education we offer links together the relationship between our conception of the person we seek to form, the teaching and experiences we promote, and the kind of society we strive to build with others.

This approach affects both the student's way of looking at reality and evaluating it and the goal of taking responsibility for his/her own life while becoming capable of commitment in society. It also affects the aims and methodology of specific educational strategies:

- to help the student to study, analyse critically and cooperate with others as he/she learns and gains knowledge;
- to help the student live with others and to welcome diversity in constructive living and working together;
- to help the student integrate the inter-cultural dimension as a positive value;
- to help the student respond to educational and social challenges coming from the latest ICT technologies.

We now highlight some defining features of this education as offered in our socio-cultural context.

1. A DISTINCTIVELY CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

*“Let us educate in a Christian way,
seriously, reasonably and solidly”
(St. Pedro Poveda).*

In line with Pedro Poveda's approach and guidelines, the education offered in TA Centres has an axis underlying everything: **to educate in a Christian way**, seriously, reasonably, solidly, and to achieve this by linking up the academic and teaching aspects, educational processes and the Christian evangelising dimension.

Open to their surrounding areas, our centres attend to the development of the whole person; they are up to date in

teaching methods and procedures, and care for the quality of education offered to all. They are places which promote intellectual development and value formation, in a climate of freedom, encouraging dialogue and participation by all; places where reference to Catholic Christian faith and living is nurtured.

Holistic education

We have a holistic understanding of a distinctively Christian education. It comprises a number of elements:

- an awareness that we are Church,
- an anthropology of Christian inspiration, which provides the basic reference points and values which give meaning to our education;
- a concept of education as the developing of all the capacities of each student, as he/she seeks and appropriates knowledge and skills, all of which demands motivation, participation and serious study.

Other elements of a Christian education are:

- The educational atmosphere of the centre, marked by an air of freedom, respect and warmth.
- The acceptance and integration of all pupils, particularly those with special educational needs or disadvantaged in any way;
- The importance given to high academic standards, creativity, serious study, work well done and a sense of responsibility and effort on the part of students in the learning process, through a methodology which enables them to develop their abilities.

Other indicators of this integral approach to the educative process are:

- the emphasis on developing human, social and civic values in the students, along with those which give meaning to life;
- the valued place of religion in the school curriculum, with explicit Christian reference at appropriate times;
- the programming of times and places for encounter with self and religious experience;
- the cultivation of a faith perspective on reality;
- encouraging students to take part in voluntary service and solidarity programmes.

In a plural society explicit faith

Our plural society, enriching by its nature, gives us the opportunity to review our educational ideas and praxis, and

to express with conviction that **the Gospel** is the primordial reference for our overall programme, and our response to the growing demand for a sense of meaning both in personal life and the events of human history.

For our schools to evangelise, in line with the TA's identity and mission, it is essential that we use Gospel criteria and values in the way we observe and analyse social reality, in the school's organisation and structures, in interpersonal and work relationships, in both teaching and extra-curricular activities, in respect for diversity and in adapting educational and pastoral programmes to suit different pupils, prioritising the disadvantaged.

Faith education in the school environment

Christian education aims to promote faith education in the students, and for this it is essential to express our faith in language and actions that speak to today's children and teenagers, in terms of what they already know, communicating a faith able to meet their deepest needs and aspirations. It is our task to help them discover the signs of God's presence in our time and on our streets, calling out to us so clearly.

It is possible to communicate faith if we are convinced that we have something valuable and worth sharing to offer. Transmitting the faith means creating opportunities in our centres for dialogue and challenge on fundamental issues to be studied in depth and shared:

- The need to focus on the *victims of society* in order to build a culture of peace, justice and solidarity.
- With explicit *reference to Christian faith and values*, in keeping with our Povedan tradition.
- The need to acculturate faith through approaching the person in the context of his/her her own culture.
- A faith formation that creates in young people an awareness of being Church, of taking a responsible part in it, and in intercultural and inter-religious dialogue.

2. AN AUTHENTICALLY HUMAN EDUCATION

*“Yes, I wish to see deeply human lives,
and places where true humanism reigns”
(St. Pedro Poveda).*

Education is basic and essential to shaping the human person and transforming society. There is a link between the profile of the person we educate, the educative experience, the formative activities we promote and the social changes we seek to support through that education.

A socio-educative approach

Our education in its socio-educative approach highlights the fundamental values of the dignity of the person, his/her autonomy and social responsibility. This perspective is enriched by Pedro Poveda's conviction clearly and intentionally expressed: to bring human lives to full flowering there are two essential elements needed in the educational environment: reference to Gospel values as inspiration and yardstick, and the explicit goal of transmitting the Christian faith.

In Pedro Poveda's thinking, the educational task is to form deeply human, autonomous and responsible individuals who look caringly at society and commit themselves, along with others to transforming it. They take on the perspective of the impoverished in our society, with their various faces: people with socio-cultural and financial needs, the socially marginalised, those with disabilities and immigrants.

"Yes, I wish to see deeply human lives" and to achieve people of this calibre, aware of their own dignity, personal autonomy and who are socially involved, *"I propose to begin by filling with God, those who are to live a truly human life..."*¹

A Christian focus: true humanism

In Poveda's education reference to Jesus Christ is the key to its whole structure, bringing to education a depth of meaning for human living, along with moral criteria for how to relate to others.

*"For the person who grasps it deeply, the Incarnation, the person of Christ, His nature and His life, is the sure path to union with God in true holiness. This holiness is a human reality, an expression of authentic humanism"*²

It is our role as educators to show students the humanising power of the Christian faith: to let them see in practice that to believe in God is to accept the full dignity of each person and to strongly oppose all forms of exploitation, exclusion or manipulation of any human being, who, for the Christian, is a child of God. It is important for them to see how faith also affects the structures of social life and leads people to commit themselves to transforming these structures, making them more just and human.

Educational focus: the central value of the person

In Poveda's education the fundamental value of **the person** is made very explicit, and all educational action converges towards helping, motivating and guiding each student towards the integral development of his/her capacities, in a full flowering of the person.

1.- P. Poveda, *Amigos Fuertes de Dios, (Staunch Friends of God)*, p 100. Narcea.

2.- P. Poveda, *Amigos Fuertes de Dios, (Staunch Friends of God)*, p 100. Narcea.

- Each person is ultimately *a mystery, holding a treasure* within, hidden from view. Identity is not confined to a person's face and outward appearance. It is the role of education to discover the *inner treasure* and bring it to light.
- Each person is *unique and different*, so that education must be personalised, attending to the individual and social characteristics of each one.
- The human person is *vulnerable* by nature, and through education he/she must learn how to deal with insecurity and face up to suffering, difficulties, sickness and death.
- Each person is a *social being able to communicate*, which is why the maturing process always takes place within human community. Through personal relationships the human person discovers him/herself and others, the equality of everyone, their differences and interdependence.
- Each person is a *rational being, a free being* whose freedom is limited by biological, cultural, social and economic circumstances. The educational programme must educate for freedom, for making fundamental options in life.
- Each person's life *unfolds in the natural environment*, and he/she has a right to share in all its richness along with the duty to respect it, care for it and opt for sustainable development. Education must attend to this important aspect.
- The human person is a *restless being, open to the transcendent*, and so Poveda education raises questions and offers answers which help students to find meaning in human experience and the ultimate meaning of life and death. The task of educating persons is closely linked to interpreting the ultimate purpose of human existence, which is none other than God's plan for each and every human being.

3. EDUCATION FOR CITIZENSHIP

*"We must all co-operate... each one has a place,
a duty, a responsibility"*
(St. Pedro Poveda).

Forming active citizens, peacemakers

As educators we respond to Pedro Poveda's invitation to become peacemakers through educating our students to overcome prejudice, and to meet conflict with dialogue with consensus-seeking. The values of peace and justice, along with commitment to solidarity, should offer illuminating moral criteria.

They should generate activities and formative processes to help students move beyond individualism towards seeking the common good and showing mutual support, cooperation and solidarity in many directions.

In the context of growing tensions and social violence in plural societies like our own, we consider it essential to form persons who will become active citizens: committed to taking a stance in favour of human rights for everyone, able to analyse situations and express opinions. They should know how to argue their case, listen, debate issues and reach consensus.

Education for citizenship

Education for citizenship means not only learning to live as members of a given society and nation, but also learning to move beyond prejudice, stereotypes and barriers. While appreciating their own roots and cultural traditions, students must be encouraged to discover and relate to other cultures, sensibilities and perspectives on life, and to live out real experiences of citizenship.

This is all to do with recognising our common humanity, to which the Gospel, inspiration of our Centres, invites the educational community.

The educational task becomes an instrument of peace when we introduce to our students the concepts of social justice, reconciliation, solidarity, the common good, the stewardship of wealth, care for the environment and other concepts clearly stated in the Church's Social Teaching.

Acceptance of difference

A guiding principle for the role of Christian education in citizenship is that of helping students progress from focusing on a single dominant culture to accepting cultural diversity, and the need for integrating difference.

Achieving this brings challenges:

- To help students seek truth in all academic areas and cultures, and to resist the self-sufficient attitude of scientific rationalism, or the tendency to value only one's own culture.
- To support dialogue between individuals and cultures in which people give of their best, cultivating the art of listening and allowing themselves to be enriched by the other.
- To emphasise the social and communal nature of every individual, recognising the importance of having one's own roots and cultural tradition.

Education in ethics

There is an ever increasing need in our centres to tackle *education in morality along with human and social values* in a serious way.

Given the prevailing relativism it is essential for educators to promote ethical criteria and a minimal code of moral conduct that can be demanded of all citizens. Alongside this there are the references, ethical principles and commitments of Catholic Christian morality which apply to those who share this religious belief. As our centres are Christian, they will *clearly and explicitly offer certain values based on faith in Jesus Christ* which guide and give meaning to our educational task.

Love, in its different guises, is the key to Christian morality. Starting from this foundation stone of our educational philosophy, we highlight:

- The absolute value of the person, capable of loving and being loved, and the respect due to him/her;
- The power of love to help people to change;
- The duty to serve and help anyone in need;
- Priority for those who are weaker;
- Defence of each one's rights;
- Working for social transformation.

The aim of moral education is to help people become free individuals with criteria for upright living; people who choose to be rather than to have, to be concerned for the good of all rather than merely for their own interests, to cooperate more than compete. They take a critical stance towards issues in society rather than remaining passive. They are respectful and tolerant of others.

4. EDUCATION IN CONTEXT

"Actions are more effective than words.

Begin by doing!"

(St. Pedro Poveda).

Looking at life and the world through eyes of faith will help us to answer the question "Where are we?", to follow it up with actions and to "begin by doing", as Poveda asked.

Given the nature of today's society, some of whose features were outlined above, we propose **some guidelines for action in our centres:**

- To help the students to see that the world does not have one single centre, and to discover the relevance of every culture and every people.
- To encourage radical change in them, helping them to move from indifference to genuine caring for others, as individuals, human groups, countries or continents.
- To develop an “education for meaning” in order to sensitise the conscience of teenagers and young adults.
- To work from the following perspectives in our educational philosophy:
 - Accepting pluralism and diversity in our society, which demand that people develop a clear sense of their own identity along with the ability to respect and dialogue with others.
 - Valuing the interdependence of all human groups as a positive characteristic.
 - Being aware of the complexity of social and educational processes leading us to question, explore and treat our mistakes as opportunities for learning.



IV.
**THE EDUCATOR
IN OUR CENTRES**

IV. THE EDUCATOR IN OUR CENTRES

*“Show me someone with a vocation to educate and I will give you a school”
(St. Pedro Poveda).*

Today’s society is so complex and the challenges to the education system so demanding, that teachers who propose to educate cannot but ask what its aims should be, and through reflecting together, seek answers to guide the whole process.

The overall aim of education in our centres is to develop the personal identity of the student. This includes three dimensions:

- His/her **roots**, which spring from culture, religious convictions and history.
- His/her **personal autonomy**, with a pedagogical approach that recognises the unique worth of each person, and his/her need for criteria in personal decision-making.
- His/her sense of **social responsibility**, encouraging the person in all educational areas to become aware of and take on civic and ecological responsibility along with others.

Given the range of choices today in religious and political matters, sexual behaviour, consumer habits, and in view of increasing signs of violence and racism, teachers need to educate students in ethical values, with a moral formation inspired ultimately in a meaningful Christian vision of life. This should be carried out in an explicit, visible and meaningful way through various school activities.

One objective of our education, involving the whole staff, is to help students to be critical and creative, able to look at the world with the conviction that it can and must change. The students must be made aware of the radical inequality in our world, and, with conscience awakened, enabled to think for themselves.

Teachers should point out the stark contrasts in the world, adopting a personal stance out of their own ethical criteria, and provoke discussion through open and sincere dialogue, leading the students to genuine concern.

An educator who humanises

Given the concept of the human person expressed in our educational philosophy above, certain **basic attitudes**, formulated in one way or another in our mission statements, are needed in educators.

Such an educator:

- Accepts each student as he/she is, approaching each one in a friendly, attentive and respectful way.
- Trusts in the students' capacities, their ability to respond and become educated.
- Respects their freedom and promotes their development as truly free individuals.
- Encourages their creativity and capacity to take initiatives.
- Develops their social skills in both childhood and the teenage years with a variety of techniques, co-operative games, team work and suitable projects.
- Encourages them to be actively involved in all that affects them.
- In brief, helps all the students to grow in personal autonomy, and to see it in terms of their own dignity and sense of social responsibility.

The educator's commitment to humanise, as understood by Pedro Poveda, also includes helping each student to see him/herself in relation to God, a process which begins in the early years and continues to need support throughout the later stages.

This commitment to help students develop their fullest humanity also means encouraging them to opt for a *valued way of living*, which leads them to ask, "What do I want to do with my life?"

An educator who continues to learn

We envisage our schools as places of research and learning where development is not only for students but also for teachers who continue to learn through study and reflection on their own praxis, continually improving it.

For educators following Poveda's educational philosophy, continuous updating is essential. This includes being willing to learn, evaluating one's own teaching methods, on-going training for innovation and turning information into one's own professional knowledge

Also essential are experiences, projects, teamwork and the exchange of ideas among colleagues, which bring about mutual enrichment and cooperation. "*For you acquiring knowledge is not just good, useful and beneficial; it is totally essential*" (St. Pedro Poveda).

A warm and helpful educator

Pedro Poveda asks further commitments of his collaborators, teachers, administrative and service personnel: to cultivate warm, friendly and collaborative relations among themselves.

In our complex world we need to encourage cohesion among academic staff, meeting together to discover the challenges to education and the enrichment to be gained from teamwork. We need to share experience, to acknowledge together the human richness of Gospel values, to give a hand when a colleague is in need, and in brief, to live in fellowship.

Students need to see us witness to our values in the way we relate to each other. We know from experience that coherent living speaks louder than words. We transmit, we communicate what we are. This is what convinces. *“Our deeds are our witnesses. What we do tells most eloquently what we are.” (Poveda).*

Responsible work is another feature of those working in TA educational centres; this also has an influence on the students. *“Our distinctive style includes love for work, constant willingness to work, and fruitful use of time.” (Poveda).*

An educator who lives what he/she professes

“I ask of you a new system, a new method, procedures as new as they are old, inspired by love.” (Poveda).

The way to love, according to Poveda, is to be endlessly kind and to give concrete support, recognising what each student needs, even if they do not know how to ask. We should earn their trust and commit ourselves to them, without seeking a return. To give like this we do not need to be rich, only to be good-hearted.

The mediating role of the teacher is seen in a variety of ways:

- Accepting the student unconditionally
- Accompanying his/her development process
- Presenting goals
- Working as a team member
- Recognising the student's responsibility for his/her own formation
- Respecting the different rhythms of each student
- Knowing that example, self-giving, patience and love influence more than words
- Noticing and tackling complex situations as a team and with professional understanding.



V.
**PARENTS
AND THE SCHOOL**

V. PARENTS AND THE SCHOOL

"It is vital to insist on parental support."

(St. Pedro Poveda).

We are all aware that the family has undergone immense change in our socio-cultural context. The model of the traditional family is giving way to a new model of family, egalitarian, secularised and democratic, based fundamentally on affective relationships, and also less stable than in the past. Changes in the role of women have encouraged this. While formerly women gave themselves exclusively to bringing up their children and caring for the home, they are now often fully incorporated into the workforce through their academic qualifications. This brings financial autonomy and a new equality with their partner.

In many present-day families, as in society, religious beliefs have been relegated to the background. Some values have been eroded while others are emerging, e.g. the recognition of human rights for all, freedom, equality, respect for difference, efficiency, tolerance and solidarity. All these make up a civil code of values shared by the majority.

School-home links

The family is the place *par excellence* for transmitting values and criteria to the younger generation, for affective learning and training in interpersonal relationships. So if the family fails the young person, he/she may be less socially developed and affectively vulnerable.

There are certain areas where the family must play a special role, such as education in values, affective and emotional development, sex education, and religious and spiritual values which offer overall meaning for life. This demands example and a coherent lifestyle on the part of parents/guardians, along with communication and dialogue between the generations.

In formal education the role of parents in educating their children must be taken into account. Taken singly neither the family nor the school can face all the challenges of education. Each should complement, help and support the other.

Parents have the right to choose the education they want for their children, to opt for what is most in keeping with their own convictions, beliefs and values. The choice of a school is the beginning of a mutual relationship which should last throughout the school years, since the educational programme relies on parents to responsibly play their part.

"It is vital to insist on parental support... our educational task would be incomplete if we did not have the moral support of our students' families. With this in mind we will encourage parents to visit the school often, and discuss everything pertaining to the good of the students." (Poveda, 1914)

A common goal

The common goal of home and school is to educate the children, caring for them as persons and helping them to develop holistically. This cannot happen without mutual collaboration. As regards academics, parents should encourage study, demand responsibility and provide a work-friendly atmosphere at home. It may however be hard to motivate some children and teenagers, immersed in a socio-cultural context of amusement, consumerism, self-indulgence, television and city life. As with education for values and faith, the school can assist through training courses for parents, giving much needed and valuable help. Likewise, support can be given at one-to-one parent-teacher meetings, where teachers discuss with parents different aspects of the student as regards goals, personal and social development and skills.

The participation of parents is part and parcel of the very idea of education: complex processes in which different people intervene in a supportive role, including parents themselves and the school.

Experience shows that education is more effective when it involves the active collaboration of parents and their committees. Clear information communicating the aims, programmes, activities and needs of the centre is a good starting point.

Suggestions and co-operation may then be sought from parents to achieve quality education for everyone.

Other less formal meetings should also take place, since they help all involved to get to know one another. These informal gatherings could include celebrations, festivities, and cultural events, sporting activities and voluntary social work in groups. Harmony between family and school depends on the trust built up between people working together.

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