# Cultivating the inner life: Young people call for meaningful education

Against a backdrop of profound social change and educational challenges, *Vatican News* spoke with representatives of the International Office of Catholic Education (OIEC) and experts associated with the Global Compact on Education, who highlighted the urgent need to **build a more humane, inclusive education system that is committed to the realities of young people**.

They are: Carina Rossa of the Libera Universidad María Assunta, who is a researcher and member of the Global Compact on Education; **Brother Juan Antonio Ojeda, a De La Salle Brother, project director at the International Office of Catholic Education (OIEC), and consultant to the Dicastery for Culture and Education**; and Åsa Jarskog, Director of the Inner Development Goals. The interviewees explained that the Global Compact on Education seeks to place the person back at the centre of education, promoting a holistic education based on values, social awareness and community engagement.

**Young people more aware of social reality**

They spoke about the project 'Cultivating the Inner Life', implementing the Objectives of Inner Development (OID) in Catholic education. This project emerged after five years during which members of the Global Compact on Education initiative listened to young people from different cultural backgrounds, concluding, through serious research, that young people are calling for an education that can offer purpose and meaning. **Young people need spaces for spirituality and silence in which to find themselves**.

Young people are also deeply concerned about the current state of the world. They are worried about inequality, achieving peace, the climate crisis… but unlike young people from previous generations who found a sense of inner purpose, today's youth **feel more vulnerable**.

As the experts pointed out, many young people are no longer satisfied with an education focused solely on the transmission of knowledge. On the contrary, **they**

**seek educational spaces that allow them to understand the world**, develop critical thinking and actively participate in building solutions.

"Young people are calling for an education that can offer a purpose and **a way of approaching life from a more human perspective**", they explained.

## Education must go beyond the classroom

Another key point of the interview was the need to transform the traditional view of education. For the OIEC representatives, education is not merely about teaching academic content, but also **about shaping citizens who are committed to their communities**.

In this regard, they emphasised that **education must involve the whole of society**: families, teachers, communities and institutions. "It takes a whole village to raise a child". Issues such as mental health, uncertainty about the future and the impact of social media are among the concerns facing today's younger generations.

## On the Innner Development Goals

As part of a reflection on the Inner Development Goals (IDGs) and their relationship with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Åsa Jarskog shared an in-depth perspective on the role of education, human consciousness and social commitment in building a fairer and more sustainable world. These goals, she said, serve as **a global guide for tackling the planet's challenges**. However, she emphasises that the true driving force for change lies within the individual. Beyond public policies or international agreements, every person has the capacity and responsibility to contribute to the collective well-being through their own talents and skills.

For this change to be effective, Jarskog emphasises the need to cultivate the inner dimension of the human being. This involves going beyond technical and intellectual training to develop capacities such as empathy, creativity, intuition and communication. She also highlights the importance of **reviving human and spiritual values – such as patience and respect – to achieve a balance between personal growth and the benefit of the community**.

Finally, the expert emphasises the transformative power of values-based education. She argues that an education focused on solidarity and service not only impacts the lives of individuals, but also has the power to reshape organisations

and governments. In this way, **a society educated according to these principles is better equipped to combat poverty**, strengthen social justice and ensure equality.

## A call to build hope

The OIEC representatives agreed that the greatest challenge today is **to restore hope through transformative education centred on human dignity**. The Global Compact on Education, they stated, proposes precisely this path: to forge alliances between different sectors to build a culture of encounter, strengthen human values and prepare new generations to face the challenges of the 21st century.

Finally, they called for the promotion of more inclusive educational models, capable of bringing about real change and responding to current social needs. For them, **education remains the most powerful tool for transforming the world**.

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