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# HUMANIZING FROM UNIVERSITY: AN EXAMPLE BASED ON THE TRAINING ITINERARY FOR CATHOLIC RELIGION TEACHERS

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**Abstract:** Although the presence of the discourse about the teleology of education has remarkably decreased, we can never forget that this has to describe its horizon. At present, the concept “humanization” is usually included in the final goals, but not always under the same concept. The statement “the university has to humanize” is explicitly or implicitly present in many university rationales, but this statement is not enough if it does not imply a precise description of its meaning and, furthermore, if we do not have indicators that offer us an approximation to results achieved. One of the training itineraries in Blanquerna-Ramon Llull University has allowed us to develop a list of humanization indicators that, rather than intending to be a standard model, aims at suggesting the need and appropriateness of building a certain taxonomy linked to the university rationale and to the work carried out from the areas of knowledge. Only in this way will we be able to assess the level of achievement of great goals, in this case humanization. All in all, in this itinerary and other possible ones, we should highlight the experience of applied ethics in a training field and in their professional impact that affect the life of trainees and university undergraduates.

**Keywords:** *Education, bildung, humanization, religion teacher, dialogue, indicator*

## INTRODUCTION

In the current and generalized educational debate –both for compulsory education and higher education–, teleological issues are not always considered. This is due to different reasons. Firstly, the emergence in this scenario of “contemporary interests” with higher priority (innovation, technology, digitalization, methodology, management, training, etc.). Secondly, broadmindedness and the not always coinciding concept of teleological terms. It is obvious, for instance, in the case of the notions of integral education and humanism, just to cite some examples. Finally, the ambiguity that following up or assessing achievements of these horizons involves, as on few occasions have references or indicators been developed explicitly enough for their assessment.

This article presents the proposal of some humanization indicators based on the experience of the training itinerary for religion teachers in Blanquerna-Ramon Llull University. This is an example that, besides being valuable in itself for its repercussion on a certain setting and on certain people, aims at enriching the pedagogical and ethical tissue of the university (Meirieu, 1991) and, at the same time, intends to be a motivation for the development of other similar itineraries in the broader university sphere.

We can agree that, at first sight, the title of the article may be surprising or seem daring, but humanization cannot be only a bit of good will –or a slogan–, and this is why we need instruments that help us move from the world of teleology and values –an itinerary– to later verify certain achievements –indicators–. The experience that we will share here makes it explicit that this is necessary, feasible, and interesting. In short, a valid model that has a set of positive qualities that are summarized in the final section. In any case, the indicators do not spring from an a priori or merely conceptual reflection, but they are the result of a process of development and experience on the basis of a certain university environment and a certain training itinerary.

The first sections present briefly the university environment and the itinerary, and then we explain our stance regarding the teleological concept of “humanization” that will be described in a basic way.

The originality of this study lies not only in stating what is essential in this humanization process but in proposing some indicators resulting from the training experience of those students that carried out the process and from the reflection resulting from the teachers’ follow-up. These

could be interpreted as exercises of reference that make a process of humanization apparent.

## 1. THE GENERAL SETTING: RAMON LLULL UNIVERSITY AND THE BLANQUERNA TRAINING MODEL FOR RELIGION TEACHERS

Blanquerna (1948, <http://www.blanquerna.edu>) is a diocesan institution from Barcelona, co-founder of Ramon Llull University (<http://www.url.edu>) created on 1 March 1990, currently consisting of eleven higher education and research institutions with a long tradition and prestige in Catalonia. At present, Blanquerna has a community of more than 6,500 students (degree and postgraduate courses). Undoubtedly, the degree courses with more support and tradition are those linked to teacher training, that is, the degree courses on Early Childhood Education and Primary Education. A remarkable number of students<sup>1</sup> carries out the itinerary to achieve the Ecclesiastical Declaration of Academic Competence (DECA in Spanish), which gives them the option to become Catholic religion teachers. Thus, this is a Christian-inspired university, and our specific context is that of the training itinerary for religion teachers.

The DECA, that is, the initial training of Catholic religion teachers in Spain and in the framework of the European Higher Education Area, is regulated by the directive<sup>2</sup> issued by the Spanish Episcopal Conference on 29 February 2012. Obviously, the implementation of this directive is not totally homogeneous, and we can find different situations and itineraries in the university system that could be summarized in four broad training models or types. The model of posterior development –the training itinerary takes place after the student has obtained the teaching degree–; the model of optionality –all the itinerary takes place during the development of the degree course through optional subjects–; the model of specialization or mention –the itinerary involves a set of credits and

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<sup>1</sup> Every year, between 65% and 80% of students in the Early Childhood and Primary Education degree courses choose the DECA itinerary, according to data corresponding to the academic year 2017/2018.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.conferenciaepiscopal.es/documentacion-necesaria-para-la-obtencion-de-la-deca/>

implies a certain specialization or mention with the consequent advantages and limitations–; and, finally, the integrating model.

The arrangement of the DECA syllabus in Blanquerna-URL –following the integrating model– has an important structural characteristic that makes it particularly peculiar: the official content to achieve the DECA is reorganized in subjects over the four academic years; these subjects are obligatory in the first and second years and optional in the third and fourth years. In the obligatory part, the anthropological, phenomenological, and cultural bases of the religious phenomenon in general and Christianity in particular are developed. Thus, besides the continuity in the DECA itinerary, we guarantee that every Education degree student has some basic and fundamental knowledge of religion and Christianity. In the optional subjects, the competences and content linked to theological knowledge and religion teaching in the school context are developed. In total, this itinerary represents 28 ECTS credits. This method is to make students able to develop reflective (Shön, 1987, 1991; Perrenoud 2010), integrating and innovating practice when they teach Catholic religion at school.

The curricular structure is as follows:

- *Person, Culture, Religion, and Values*. Compulsory subject in the 1<sup>st</sup> year (6 ECTS).  
Content on Philosophical Anthropology, Phenomenology of Religion, and Ethics.
- *Christianity and Culture*. Compulsory subject in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year (6 ECTS).  
Content on Abrahamic religions, the Bible, Jesus of Nazareth, and Christianity and history.
- *Theology and Catholic Religion Teaching I*. Optional subject in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year (6 ECTS).  
Content on Religion and school, the Bible, Christology, Ecclesiology, and Fundamental Theology.
- *Theology and Catholic Religion Teaching II*. Optional subject in the 4<sup>th</sup> year (6 ECTS).  
Content on Pedagogy and Catholic religion teaching.
- *Ethical Profile*. Compulsory subject in the 4<sup>th</sup> year included in *Practicum* (4 ECTS).  
A reflexion about the ethical dimension and the ethical commitment, as well as about professional responsibility.

## 2. ESSENTIAL DIMENSIONS OF THE TRAINING MODEL IMPLEMENTED IN BLANQUERNA FOR THE DECA ITINERARY

The Blanquerna training model for religion teachers has a set of other characteristics that make it original. We have mentioned one of them in the previous section, its structure, but this is just one of them. Another one is the fact of proposing an itinerary not with a “specialist” or “speciality” tone, but mainly focused on “being” a teacher. The methodology and good didactic practices are indeed a third fundamental element. In short, this integrating model implies constant dialogue and growth in the heart of the teacher training experience. Finally, we could refer to some dimensions that, in a cross-sectional way, give shape to this Blanquerna model for training prospective religion teachers. These dimensions describe the essential, and can be summarized as follows:

a) **Holistic and vocational dimension, an integrating educationally-developed process.**

Indeed, this first dimension refers to the centrality of the human person and their identity<sup>3</sup> as a fundamental point of training. It addresses their complex and plural vision, their global perspective. Nevertheless, the training process has a rationale that aims at progressive development: a call to be a person; the vocation of educator; the profession of religion teacher. This is a process of progressive consolidation of these three inseparable realities that are linked to the construction of one’s own identity as a merging and particular element, and that progressively give shape to a broader and better vision of the totality.

b) **Revealing –arousing– and exploratory dimension.**

Education degree students usually arrive with interests mainly focused on the knowledge of children, the classroom methods, or the reality of schools. The training process of all prospective teachers, and of course also religion teachers, is based on a remarkably differ-

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<sup>3</sup> From the following authors: Torralba (1997); Ferry (1997); Habermas (1989); Dubar (2001, 2002, 2007), promoter of the relational perspective on professional identity; Morin (2002); Knowles (2004), who shows how teacher identity is closely linked to personal biography; Bauman (2005); Day (2006), professor at the University of Nottingham, who has thoroughly studied the topic of teacher identity; Bolívar (2006, 2007), main scholar on the construction of teacher identity in Spain.

ent initial perspective: And you, who are you? That is, the itinerary has an anthropological and self-reflective start that implies an exploration and discovery of human reality and the person, of the question for the sense, the elements of personal and cultural identity, spirituality, what is peculiar of the religious fact, and the specificity of faith, as well as the rationality of faith. In short, students are immersed in an initially neither foreseen nor imagined itinerary that leads them to a series of revelations and findings. In this field, the pedagogy of questioning is key<sup>4</sup> (Freire, 2018).

**c) Dialogical, relational, and intersubjective dimension.**

Dialogue (Freire, 1993; Flecha, 1997) becomes a fundamental element. The point is, firstly, to develop dialogue with oneself in order to promote dialogue in the classroom as the dynamics to build identity and knowledge. Dialogue also with different spheres of knowledge. And this dialogue is also taken outside the classroom through contact with the exterior world, by enhancing personal meetings with professionals or people of reference linked to the activities of the academic year, and also through virtual relationship with significant entities or organizations. This dimension also involves a systematic reflection on dialogue and its different connotations concerning the school and religion: intercultural, interreligious and ecumenical dialogue. In short, every subject's experience of growth has the fact of meeting other and diverse subjects, "summoned" and "moved" by common interests, as its fundamental reference.

**d) Organic and content systematization dimension.**

The students themselves frequently become aware of the huge broadness that knowing about the religious fact and specific content of Catholic theology and its pedagogy implies. Faced to this magnitude and possible dispersion, the training process is based on three options: (a) guaranteeing basic knowledge included in the school curriculum; (b) deploying good knowledge of the biblical story; and (c) empowering in a cognitive articulation (organization) to get to know how to locate and relate the big issues of every topic both in the present and in the future. The capacity to articulate is funda-

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<sup>4</sup> Working on questions means to be loyal to what man is. That is, observing man from his nature and totality. According to Sesboué (2000, p. 8): "An answer that does not correspond to any question is not an answer, it is a futile purpose".

mental both to manage the huge amount of information and knowledge, and for the necessary continuous training. (Dewey, 1938, 1944; van Manen, 1991, 2002, 2016; Perrenoud, 1999).

e) **Experiential dimension.**

This training process tends to promote some reflection on anthropological, educational, ethical, spiritual, or religious experiences. To do so, some initial learning through stories of people of reference is recommended. The link between this itinerary and the seminar<sup>5</sup> – dynamics with 12-15 students throughout the entire course-, the development of an educational autobiography, the practicum, as well as some specific activities that include a critical vision of reality and personal attitudes are fundamental elements that promote the shift from life to experience (Dewey, 1938, 1944; van Manen, 1991, 2002, 2016; Perrenoud, 1999).

f) **Utopian dimension.**

The analytical praxis through the different subjects does not erase the past but highlights a look on the present and the future from a vision that integrates and values positive aspects and opportunities. A progressive utopian<sup>6</sup> vision emerges from here (about education, school, the profession, etc.) that encourages personal and institutional commitment and involvement. Only through this utopian perspective (Gadotti & Torres, 2001, 62) do transformations have horizons.

### **3. CAN WE TALK ABOUT HUMANIZATION OR SOME BACKGROUND IN HUMANIZATION IN THE FRAMEWORK OF HIGHER EDUCATION?**

Due to the perspective and magnitude of this work, we will focus the review and answer on the reality of Higher Education linked to Catholic

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<sup>5</sup> The Seminar is a distinctive feature of the Blanquerna method. It works with small groups, from twelve to fifteen students, who under the tutorial of a teacher put the knowledge that they acquire into practice, reproduce situations of their professional world, reflect, work as a team, etc. These sessions take place every year during the degree course, for four hours per week.

<sup>6</sup> *Irrenunciabes utópicos en educación. Propuestas e interrogantes* (1989) by Jesús Renau published in *Cristianisme i Justícia* is an interesting contribution in this respect.

and Christian-inspired universities. To do so, we carried out an analysis from three complementary perspectives: information and rationale of the universities,<sup>7</sup> usually presented in identity and mission sections; information and rationale of national or international university alliances,<sup>8</sup> and the legacy from the magisterium of the Catholic Church.

A series of statements can be reached from these complementary visions:

- 1) The tradition of the Church does not recurrently, systematically or explicitly present the concept of humanization. This statement needs some explaining, though. Indeed, nothing human is alien to the Church:

«The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts.» *Gaudium et spes*, n.1.

On the other hand, the mystery of man and his full development is cleared up in the mystery of Christ. This means that there is a close relationship between the Incarnation and the project of mankind.

«The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a figure of Him Who was to come (20), namely Christ the Lord. Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear. It is not surprising, then, that in Him all the aforementioned truths find their root and attain their crown.

He Who is “the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15), is Himself the perfect man. To the sons of Adam He restores the divine likeness which had been disfigured from the first sin onward. Since human nature as He assumed

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<sup>7</sup> Among them, for instance: Universidad Pontificia de Chile, Universidade Católica Portuguesa; KU Leuven; Fordham University; Université Catholique de Madagascar (UCM); Australian Catholic University (ACU); Assam Don Bosco University; Saint Louis University (Philippines), or Ramon Llull University.

<sup>8</sup> Among them, for instance: FIUC (Fédération Internationale des Universités Catholiques); Salesian Institutions of Higher Education; UNIJES (network of Jesuit universities and centres linked to the Society of Jesus in Spain).



it was not annulled, by that very fact it has been raised up to a divine dignity in our respect too. For by His incarnation the Son of God has united Himself in some fashion with every man. He worked with human hands, He thought with a human mind, acted by human choice and loved with a human heart. Born of the Virgin Mary, He has truly been made one of us, like us in all things except sin.» *Gaudium et spes*, n. 22.

Even the Second Vatican Council includes many references to the concept of man and mankind in this dynamic sense. Afterwards, particularly from Pope Paul VI's *Evangelii nuntiandi* (1975) and the important document *Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture* (1999) by the Pontifical Council for Culture, theological and/or pastoral concepts have been added that have needed an implicit background about the concept of humanization. This is the case, for instance, of the concepts of evangelization, evangelization of culture, inculturation of faith, etc.

The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* also includes the requirement to meet contemporary anthropological challenges:

«The fundamental questions accompanying the human journey from the very beginning take on even greater significance in our own day, because of the enormity of the challenges, the novelty of the situations and the importance of the decisions facing modern generations.

The first of the great challenges facing humanity today is that of *the truth itself of the being who is man*. The boundary and relation between nature, technology and morality are issues that decisively summon personal and collective responsibility with regard to the attitudes to adopt concerning what human beings are, what they are able to accomplish and what they should be. A second challenge is found in *the understanding and management of pluralism and differences* at every level: in ways of thinking, moral choices, culture, religious affiliation, philosophy of human and social development. The third challenge is *globalization*, the significance of which is much wider and more profound than simple economic globalization, since history has witnessed the opening of a new era that concerns humanity's destiny.» *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, n.16.

- 2) The tradition of the Church incorporates a deeply teleological vocabulary in such notions as education and culture, which on many occasions would lead to a deductive notion of humanization.

«All men of every race, condition and age, since they enjoy the dignity of a human being, have an inalienable right to an education that is in keeping with their ultimate goal,(6) their ability, their sex, and the culture and tradition of their country, and also in harmony with their fraternal association with other peoples in the fostering of true unity and peace on earth. For a true education aims at the formation of the human person in the pursuit of his ultimate end and of the good of the societies of which, as a man, he is a member, and in whose obligations, as an adult, he will share.» *Gravissimum educationis*, n.1.

«The word “culture” in its general sense indicates everything whereby man develops and perfects his many bodily and spiritual qualities; he strives by his knowledge and his labour, to bring the world itself under his control. He renders social life more human both in the family and the civic community, through improvement of customs and institutions. Throughout the course of time he expresses, communicates and conserves in his works, great spiritual experiences and desires that they might be of advantage to the progress of many, even of the whole human family.

Thence it follows that human culture has necessarily a historical and social aspect and the word “culture” also often assumes a sociological and ethnological sense. According to this sense we speak of a plurality of cultures. Different styles of life and multiple scales of values arise from the diverse manner of using things, of labouring, of expressing oneself, of practicing religion, of forming customs, of establishing laws and juridic institutions, of cultivating the sciences, the arts and beauty. Thus the customs handed down to it form the patrimony proper to each human community. It is also in this way that there is formed the definite, historical milieu which enfolds the man of every nation and age and from which he draws the values which permit him to promote civilization.» *Gaudium et spes* n. 53.

- 3) The tradition and ecclesiastic praxis in the educational field incorporate many expressions that constitute a wide and sound constellation around the concept of humanization: progress, civilization, maturity of the human person, integral education, integral training, human dignity, world citizenship, Christian humanism, etc. The quite recent documents *Educatio catholica*, *Forum UNESCO Éduquer aujourd’hui et demain* (Paris, June 2015) and «Educating Today and Tomorrow. A renewing passion», World Congress on Catholic Education (Rome, 18-21, November 2015) are excellent testimonies of the impressive coming into play of this constellation.

In his recent encyclical «Laudato si', On Care for Our Common Home» (2015), Pope Francis introduces a rich and novel set of expressions (universal communion, common destination of goods, ecological conversion, human beings that have to change, regeneration processes, etc.), which are also placed in the framework of a big educational challenge for all mankind and to be obviously assumed by higher education.

«Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone. This basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and forms of life. A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal.» *Laudato si'*, n. 202.

- 4) Besides the international Jesuit universities, a remarkable number of Catholic and Christian-inspired universities have the significant Jesuit tradition as a reference that shows this humanizing intention through the well-known Ledesma-Kolvenbach<sup>9</sup> pedagogical paradigm, which includes four dimensions for the integral education of the person:

**UTILITAS** – People who are competent to face technical, social and human problems that every professional has to deal with;  
**HUMANITAS** – Human people in all the sense of the word; aware of themselves and the world that they live in; sensitive to the expectations and concerns of our contemporaries;  
**IUSTITIA** – People committed to constructing a fairer world, and compassionate to feel the joy and pain of others as their own;  
**FIDES** – People able to open up to the question about the sense of existence and the question of God; sensitive to the Gospel and Christianity, its values and proposals.

- 5) In almost all Catholic universities we can find different referenced conceptualizations and descriptions, some of them with a generic description that recognizes Catholic tradition explicitly, as well as the action and activity from their Christian vision of the world and

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.unijes.net/identidad-y-mision/>

the human factor. The university is a setting open to all kind of questions (including anthropological questions) and is the centre of critical reflection and preparation to take on social responsibilities.<sup>10</sup> A fair number of universities resort to a joint expression that describes a horizon of goals that could be synthetized as follows: promoting from knowledge the construction of a more human, fairer and more solidary world.<sup>11</sup>

“We believe that students have to be invited to wrestle with the great ethical issues of their time. We want them to be bothered by the realization that they don’t know everything and to be bothered by injustice.”<sup>12</sup>

6) The university has a vocation at the service of the common good, search for truth, and the horizon of its mission as a way for society to move towards a life together in accordance with the final destiny of man.<sup>13</sup> An academic community contributes to developing the human person and their cultural inheritance and to increasing culture as a tool for the full development of man.<sup>14</sup>

“To mould young persons into intellectually competent, morally upright, socially committed and spiritually inspired citizens at the service of India and the world of today and tomorrow, by imparting holistic and personalized education.”<sup>15</sup>

Civilization of love and humanism are expressions used by the UCM:

<sup>10</sup> KU Leuven (Louvain) <https://www.kuleuven.be/about>

<sup>11</sup> Many FIUC universities, <http://fiuc.org/es>. Also Fordham University, [https://www.fordham.edu/info/20276/fordhams\\_catholic\\_and\\_jesuit\\_identity/647/catholic\\_and\\_jesuit\\_in\\_mission\\_and\\_vision](https://www.fordham.edu/info/20276/fordhams_catholic_and_jesuit_identity/647/catholic_and_jesuit_in_mission_and_vision)

<sup>12</sup> Joseph M. McShane, SJ, President, Fordham University,

[https://www.fordham.edu/info/20276/fordhams\\_catholic\\_and\\_jesuit\\_identity](https://www.fordham.edu/info/20276/fordhams_catholic_and_jesuit_identity)

<sup>13</sup> This is the case of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Declaration of Principles,

[http://secretariageneral.uc.cl/images/Declaracion\\_de\\_Principios\\_UC\\_actualizadoel28022018.pdf](http://secretariageneral.uc.cl/images/Declaracion_de_Principios_UC_actualizadoel28022018.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Presentation, mission and objectives, Universidade Católica Portuguesa, <http://www.ucp.pt/site/custom/template/ucptportalpag.asp?sspageID=5&lang=1>

<sup>15</sup> The vision of Don Bosco University, <http://www.dbuniversity.ac.in/about.php>

“The Université Catholique de Madagascar, with the motto «Fides et Lux», is an Institution ruled by the Apostolic Constitution (*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*) that the General Regulations of the University put into practice. The University’s mission is to educate students to actively participate in the search for Truth, following the method of excellence in all its formats, and to become responsible at the service of the Church and Society. An excellent method to take on responsibility, based on sound faith, to construct the civilization of Love characterized by global humanism (integral and solidary man) requires specification so that our motto shows through our achievement.”<sup>16</sup>

7) Finally, we would like to highlight two peculiarities. On the one hand, the fact that some universities present some descriptors to be achieved at the end of studies. Beyond the logical description of the sense of being «professionally competent» or developing a «creative and critical mind» some specify what «the Christian spirit» or being «socially involved» means.<sup>17</sup>

Secondly, there is also an explicit reference to humanization or the humanizing perspective. Some universities, as is the case of Ramon Llull University (Barcelona), incorporate this notion.

“Article 2 Aim 1. In carrying out a mission of public interest, Ramon Llull University resolves to be at the service of the Christian spirit, at the service of Catalonia, at the service of a free, pluralistic and democratic society, which it belongs to, and intends to help from an open attitude towards other cultures, both in Spain and in Europe and the rest of the world. 2. Ramon Llull University is a university with a Christian inspiration. It is at the service of the person in all their dimensions, based on a Christian concept of the person, of life and of the world, promoting dialogue and the relationship between faith, culture and science. 3. To meet this institutional aim, the University intends to achieve and promote integral education and high-quality scientific and technical research, with a humanizing perspective that meets the complex needs of current society. For this reason, and to comply with its role as booster of society, the University intends to be particularly sensitive to new values, new challenges and aspirations of men and women of our times.”<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Le mot du Recteur: <http://www.ucm.mg/index.php/le-mot-du-recteur.html>

<sup>17</sup> Saint Louis University: <http://www.slu.edu.ph/index.php/vision-and-mission>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.url.edu/la-url/la-institucio/estatuts-de-la-url>

Modification of the Regulations for the organization and functioning of Ramon Llull University Published on 6 February 2014 at *Diari Oficial de la*

Therefore, this short itinerary shows the reasonability to assume a background in the notion of humanization in the framework of Catholic and Christian-inspired higher education. In reality, we can talk about the evolutionary result of a large part of the legacy started by Cardinal John Henry Newman (1801-1890), who was instrumental in the founding of the Catholic University of Ireland (at present, University College Dublin) and made a significant contribution in his book *The Idea of a University*. We should remember that Modern University had evolved towards professionalism and specialization, based on the dynamism of positive sciences. Newman considered that human knowledge and reason, particularly when applied, are not enough to fight against human pride and passion. There was a need, thus, to incorporate other sorts of knowledge and dynamism into the university, such as humanities, theology or the dialogue between faith and reason.

#### 4. THE NOTION AND PROCESS OF HUMANIZATION IN THE UNIVERSITY PROJECT OF BLANQUERNA-URL

If we want to arise some indicators of humanization, logically we have to describe what we mean by humanization. We will not do it from the theory but, in coherence with the entire work, we draw this notion from the setting that has contributed to develop the university experience that we are describing.

Blanquerna is a Christian-inspired university institution with an identity rationale (Torralba, 1996) that has been recently updated (Torralba, 2016). In it, it is possible to find the description –together with the opportunities that the current cultural and university context presents us with– of the main elements that give shape to the foundations of the notion of education and the most significant elements of its teleology or horizon. Among the former aspects, we can point at: Christian fidelity; the person's integral growth; Lullian roots; university spirit; bond with the country; social vocation, and personalized education. In this same document, the horizon of the university model is described as follows: Transcending resignation and building up hope; the culture of reasoning;

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*Generalitat de Catalunya* (no. 6556), GOV/18/2014 agreement, dated on 4 February 2014.

a meeting point and the culture of proximity; nurturing solidarity; wisdom at shaping a universe of meaning; going beyond oneself and serving our people efficiently.

Blanquerna's identity rationale clearly includes two cross-sectional elements: a concept of training, and an understanding of humanization. Regarding the former, we can state that the concept that we identify more clearly is that of *bildung*, a notion that comes from Germany and has a difficult translation (Gennari, 1995), which is in any case heir to the Greek *paideia*, the Latin *humanitas*, and *paideia Christi*. It is a notion of education and an idea of humanity that not only demands a natural and illustrated evolution under the compass of human dignity, but it also advocates a horizon of transcendence beyond the world's immanence (Freire, 1993). As a second consideration, we can point out that this is a comprehension of training that, without renouncing to integral education<sup>19</sup> and the centrality of the person, preferentially pays attention to the other (Freire, 2014) –with respect, listening, welcoming, taking care, accompanying, etc.–, thus discovering the horizon of intersubjectivity and, through this, the possibility of the face of that radically Other (Lévinas, 2003). What would the key elements of humanization be according to Blanquerna's identity rationale?

- The person's integral development.
- Growth and consolidation of identity.
- Autonomy of the individual and the communities.
- Freedom of the person and the peoples.
- Global and complex vision of the world.
- Giving sense to life and the world.
- Positive vision and initiative at the service of others.
- Professional competence and ethical commitment.
- Recovering the foundational past to build a new future.
- Encouraging attitudes, competences and transformation processes.
- Progressive articulation of wisdom as an art of living.
- Self-training as a call and answer to educational responsibility and commitment.

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<sup>19</sup> We are considering the following authors: Faure, Rousseau, Cossío, Manjón, Mounier and García Hoz.

## 5. PROCESSES AND CORRESPONDING INDICATORS OF HUMANIZATION

In this final section there is a description of the indicators that we collected from academic experience over the last few years. They are mainly qualitative, competence-based, and existential indicators, because they are presented in the framework of the completion of a university training itinerary. The indicators are introduced by a short story of the processes and contexts leading to them. We have to say again that these indicators' only role is to be useful to materialize the follow-up of the capacity of humanization, but they are neither the only possible ones nor do they imply the reflection of the totality of aspects to be considered in a humanization process (Freire, 1976). When university students get integrated in their training process and are able to achieve a significant number of such indicators, we will be able to state that, from the university, we have reliably contributed to the humanization process (Roberts, 2000).

### 5.1. RECOGNIZING THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL REALITY, PARTICULARLY THE PLURALITY AND COMPLEMENTARITY OF THE HUMAN BEING'S DIMENSIONS

Every university student has some cognitive and experiential background of the human person as an anthropological reality. The students approach the "anthropological problem" from a wide and multifocal perspective throughout the training process. This task is mainly carried out during their first year, although it is still present and referenced throughout their entire training period. Three vehicles are given priority: reflection and study of philosophical anthropology; search for personal exemplifications in the context of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries; self-exploration. One of the main emphases is the perception in the identification of the plurality and complementarity of the human being's dimensions (Nello, 2004; Torralba 1998), as this is fundamental for understanding later on the sense of integral education, the nature of agents involved in the training process, and also to understand the complexity of education in terms of relationship. The presentation and incardination of dimensions related to a specific training project such as the ethical dimension, the spiritual dimension or the religious dimension, require an open and enriching vision (Peters, 1968).



Indicators:<sup>20</sup>

- Identification and description of one's own personal reality by making the human being's dimensions explicit.
- Identification of words or metaphors that express the holistic and interrelated sense of human being and living.

#### 5.2. QUESTIONING ABOUT THE SENSE OF LIFE AND KNOWING SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF THE MANAGEMENT, DEVELOPMENT AND RESULT OF THIS QUESTIONING

The pedagogy of questioning is a constant in the training process that not only presents settings of the cognitive field in the different subjects, but also in those aspects that are more experiential related to the academic project, the professional project, and the vital project.

In this process, we have to promote and recommend a certain situation of life resulting from personal growth and the acquisition of new cognitive paradigms.

Offering and analysing a significant selection of references that have given significance and sense to their lives enhances both questioning and building an answer.

Indicators:

- Verification of the capacity to personally assess the academic project and the capacity to develop –in a first phase- a professional project and a vital project.
- Identification of the main moments of personal crisis, their contexts, and their reasons.
- Knowledge of a basic number of life projects (specific people, whether contemporary or not) that represent «significant lives» for every individual with a clear awareness of the reason why.

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<sup>20</sup> Please note that the indicators gather a cognitive dimension and dynamics of exploring the personal or immediate reality that involve self-knowledge and comprehension of a certain reality, attitude, or action.

### 5.3. RECOGNIZING ALTERITY

The question about the religious and transcendence does not necessarily imply the religious experience (Torralba, 2012; Otón, 2014, 2018), but it is obvious that, in this training process that includes the analysis of different religious traditions, the great inheritance of questions about the meaning of life developed by the religious fact is included. Nevertheless, the core of religious traditions can be found in the statement and description of an alterity (which is given different names – alterity, transcendence, mystery, deity, god, beginning, etc.) which the human being can establish a relationship with (Ricoeur, 1990). The different academic years offer the universalism of the concept and experience. And, particularly, its recognition from a humanistic perspective, that is, rather than some evidence in contrast to personal growth and development, as a founding reality, giving sense and plenitude in the personal and collective horizon.

Special emphasis is laid on placing the characterization of the divine reality of the five big contemporary religious traditions, showing their positive integration in relevant figures in current society.

On the other hand, understanding and interpreting the believer option requires, in the university context, to understand and interpret atheism, agnosticism, and religious indifference, and particularly the essence and criticism of humanistic atheism, but in this typology we can find a not small vindication and defence of the human condition.

This process has necessarily to conclude in a specific contribution in the educational and professional field, by adopting clear criteria about what the good practices of an educator are in front of the child's and the adolescent's religious development (Grom, 1994; Oser, 1996).

#### Indicators:

- Characterization of deity in the main contemporary religious traditions.
- Identification of characters with a vital project that includes religious integration from a humanizing perspective and ethics of maximums.
- Knowledge and argumentation of good educational practices when facing questions and reactions concerning the pupils' psycho-religious development in the framework of integral education.
- Recognition and educational management of the child's and the adolescent's moral and religious evolutionary development.

- Identification and interpretation of contributions and criticism from humanistic atheism.

#### 5.4. ACCEPTING THE CHARACTERIZATION OF CULTURE AS THE PROPER MEANS OF HUMANIZATION IN THE FRAMEWORK OF ALSO CULTURAL PRODUCTIONS THAT PRODUCE DEHUMANIZATION

Culture is «the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs. Culture gives man the ability to reflect upon himself. It is culture that makes us specifically human, rational beings, endowed with critical judgement and a sense of moral commitment. It is through culture that we discern values and make choices. It is through culture that man expresses himself, becomes aware of himself, recognizes his incompleteness, questions his own achievements, seeks untiringly for new meanings and creates works through which he transcends his limitations» (UNESCO, 1982).

The relationship between man and culture is complex and dynamic. Indeed, we are «result», «producers», «integrators», «transformers» and «transmitters» of the cultural reality (Busquet, 2006). In this respect, education plays a fundamental role when promoting the development of human beings' identity and growth in their «natural habitat». When deepening into the cultural reality, this is a privileged occasion to highlight the community-collective dimension of human beings, as well as their particular aspirations, mainly the common good. Human dignity, human rights, sustainability, world sustainable development goals (UN) and integral ecology are five scenarios that have to be a reference and analysed.

Indicators:

- Enumeration and identification of the main features of the contemporary culture we are immersed in.
- Enumeration and identification of the main challenges of contemporary culture that we will have to manage.
- Identification of values and basic elements of the personal anthropological comprehension inherited from previous cultural paradigms.

- Identification of cultural productions that produce dehumanization, that is, detection of causes and effects against human dignity.
- Identification and assessment of everyday situations and others of an international character concerning cultural pluralism and interculturalism.
- Assimilation and capacity to apply notions to specific cases: common good; sustainability; sustainable development goals; integral ecology.

#### 5.5. AWARENESS OF COMMITMENT AS IMPLIED BY VALUES AND CONSTRUCTION OF A SCALE OF VALUES

The analysis carried out on what our cultural inheritance is and what kind of society we are building up, as well as the axiological contribution from different religious traditions, undoubtedly leads us to the reflection about values, locating them in the context of personal life, citizenship, and professional practice (Halstead & Taylor, 1996). But any discussion about them is totally useless if perceived and specified in settings: (a) their guiding or referential dimension linked to the personal project; (b) the efficiency that their everyday practice connotes; (c) the capacity to create community and interest.

#### Indicators:

- Verification of inner life as a space of pacification, contemplation, admiration, assessment, and in general, management of emotions and feelings.
- Perception of spirituality as an enriching practice for a more humane and humanizing citizenship.
- Comprehension of the pedagogy of sense as a tool to promote anthropological growth.
- Construction of a personal scale of values.
- Verification of the importance and need of commitment and fidelity to those values chosen that is translated into virtues.
- Recognition and selection of values for ethics of minimums and selection of personal values of maximums.

## 5.6. INTEGRATION OF DIVERSITY AND PLURALISM OF LANGUAGES

In front of some of the underlying contemporary issues of the relationship between language and identity, and also between language and culture –for instance, “unwordening” (Duch, 2007, 2017), identification of the concept information with language and knowledge, the significant impact of scientific language and, particularly, the prevailing vision of the technological-, the humanities represent a real enrichment to contribute with a capacity for contemplation, comprehension, interpretation, and expression. And very specially, for their contrast for the ethical view and search for sense.

Contemporary anthropology highlights the construction of personal and cultural identity through symbols and their expressions, as well as the versatility of the word (Duch, 1998). In a context of openness to language pluralism, some of the characteristics or peculiarities of the religious language are perceived: the symbolic, the narrative, the poetic, the sapient, the metaphorical, the interpellating dimension, the hermeneutic dimension, etc., through which the great traditions develop their main stories and argue their main convictions (Koppelman, 2011).

### Indicators:

- Development of presentations of different works –personal, cooperative, etc.–, by using artistic resources and languages.
- Reading and identification of different literary genres in the context of the different stories or holy books.
- Identification and introduction to theological language.

## 5.7. CONSOLIDATION OF PERSONAL IDENTITY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL CONSCIENCE

The university context is a privileged setting for the growth and consolidation of personal identity (Mavor et al., 2017). This is so due to its openness to the world, the wide variety of relationships that are established in it, the acquisition of new knowledge and competences, etc. In all this, becoming aware of the progressive evolution and growth process is very important, as well as the awareness of what factors have an influence on

this process. Achieving a notion of personal biography and knowledge of one's own personality, historical evolution, and projects.

Indicators:

- Conduction of surveys about personal evolution concerning the teaching-learning processes, motivation, and development of the professional profile.
- Development of a personal diary that collects the main manifestations of growth concerning their academic, professional, and vital project.

#### 5.8. ENGAGING IN DIALOGUE FROM CONVICTIONS, DIALOGUE AS GROWTH AND RECOGNITION OF THE OTHER, AND THE DIALOGUE WITH RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

A sound conceptualization about dialogue should be guaranteed that goes beyond mere debate. At the same time, the conditions needed to establish a dialogue –inner silence, welcoming, listening, personal relationship, knowledge, etc.– should be analysed in detail, as well as the different types of dialogue. Our proposal is to incline students to engage in dialogue with themselves, explore their own convictions, and create environments for dialogue. The point is to enhance a dialogue from a specific personal and cultural identity, and an openness towards another's specific identity (Kazepides, 2010).

In this context, this is a privileged setting to analyse the phenomenon of the different types of fundamentalism. This serious phenomenon, that is not new and was traditionally located in contexts with certain links to religions, acquires different profiles and is one of the biggest challenges of contemporaneity for democracy and citizen life. In the subjects, this means to guarantee spaces to create opportunities for dialogue as in the seminars, as well as activities that force students to face differentiated convictions of traditions.

Indicators:

- Basic systematization of the conditions to make dialogue possible.
- Enough assimilation of religious traditions different from the per-

- sonal option, and direct contact with personal stories.
- Exploration and knowledge of institutions and organizations that work in intercultural or interreligious dialogue.
- Exploration of the different contemporary fundamentalisms, their causes and main attitudes and capacities to develop in the educational context.
- Analysis of one's own biography in relation to the practice of dialogue and the characterization of situations when dialogue is broken or with previous fundamentalist positions.

#### 5.9. CAPACITY TO INTEGRATE NEW KNOWLEDGE BECAUSE THERE IS A COMPETENCE FOR ARTICULATION

The contemporary notion of significant learning (Ausubel, 2000) and learning to learn (Delors, 1996) involves a huge challenge in the university context due to the magnitude of learning, new knowledge, and their evolution. Once the stages of motivation, questioning, selection and access to sources, contrasting them, acquisition and comprehension of new knowledge, learning from errors, etc., are dealt with, it is necessary to guarantee their integration into the person's cognitive cosmos and, particularly, the possibility of their articulation for different and necessary objectives: discursive, relational, and constructive. In short, the point is to show a competence for the integration of knowledge (Maton & Moore, 2010).

There are three main articulations in the cognitive and competence context: the context of the religious in itself; the religious context with the humanistic one; the religious context with the educational-didactical aspect.

#### Indicators:

- Identification and access to the main knowledge on the religious.
- Links of knowledge about religion in the framework of humanities.
- Identification of the main sources and references about pedagogy and didactics of religion.
- Habit of reading information and research about the religious and identification of science or type of underlying knowledge.

## CONCLUSION

The practical experience and the reflection about this itinerary show that the humanization process does not end in compulsory education, and that the university can –and must– be a real agent of humanization. Indeed, this is a not closed process that at university can be kept open and alive beyond the humanizing training of children and adolescents, and also beyond some teaching that has usually revolved in specific curricular subjects and some didactics.

However, taking the pluralism of the educational and university reality into account, three conditions are needed for this to happen. As we have intended to show, firstly we need the clarification of a conceptual field about the notion of humanization. Secondly, a specific training itinerary, structured enough and carried out collectively; and finally the development of some indicators to verify and point out particular actions that show the achievements of this humanization.

The authors, beyond the goodness of the experience and the model presented, have the conviction that there are many underlying itineraries of humanization in the university campuses that could –should– be made explicit.

Finally, we would like to highlight the double perspective of the ethical dimension. We refer, firstly, to the ethical dimension of the trainer through respect, care, accompaniment, telling, etc. towards the trainees. Any type of training itinerary that aims at humanizing has an inalienable and at the same time fundamental ally in the trainer's ethical commitment. And, on the other hand, it is obvious that for the university students –future professionals– the bases and a holistic framework have been set for professional ethics closely linked to their global growth and highly fertile for their professional practice.

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Submission: October, 10th 2017  
Acceptance: June, 13th 2018