



Sent in a Global Network

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“Networking: Collaboration naturally leads to cooperation through networks. New technologies of communication open up forms of organization that facilitate collaboration. They make it possible to mobilize human and material resources in support of the mission, and to go beyond national borders and the boundaries of Provinces and Regions.

Often mentioned in our recent Congregation documents, networking builds on a shared vision and requires a culture of generosity, openness to work with others and a desire to celebrate successes. Networks also depend on persons able to provide vision and leadership for collaborative mission. When properly conceived, networking provides a healthy balance between authority and local initiative.

It strengthens local capacity and encourages subsidiarity while assuring a unified sense of mission from a central authority. Local views are more readily and speedily heard.”

(CG36, Decree 2, 8²)

Introduction

The theme I will present is the fundamental purpose of **JESEDU-Río 2017**: our schools’ calling to become a global network, or how we are **Sent in a Global Network**.

The Society of Jesus and the world are calling on us, as schools, to discover our international potential. P. General Adolfo Nicolás, SJ, already challenged us when he asked: “can’t we go

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² Not official translation from Spanish.

beyond the close but autonomous relationship we now maintain as institutions and re-imagine and reorganize ourselves so that, in this globalized world, we can more effectively carry out the 'universality' that has always been part of Ignatius' vision of Society?" (Profundidad, Universalidad y Ministerio Intelectual. Mexico, 2010).

Therefore, the challenge is whether **we can reimagine ourselves and our schools, and thus view ourselves as a global network and work as such**; as a global network that is capable of going beyond the local dimension, and which therefore understands and takes on global challenges as opportunities from our world. This requires **a new way of thinking and a new way of proceeding**, since we need to work as an international network of schools woven out of different cultures, nations and societies. We need to work as a network that is united by a common mission and vision that develops its enormous apostolic potential when we recognize that our current context "requires that we act as a universal institution with a universal mission, keeping in mind, at the same time, the radical diversity of our situations"(CG35, Decree 2, 20).

5 key points for reflection

I consider these to be five key points regarding the call to work "United in a Global Network":

1. **What do we mean by Jesuit network of schools?** We can use the definition of "networking" from the Congress on International Networking in the Society of Jesus held in Boston: "as a way of proceeding apostolically that enables better global and regional cooperation at the service of the universal mission, raising the apostolic structures to a new level of agency with global (or regional) impact, and therefore connecting persons and institutions in such a way that they act as a global and interdisciplinary body, in collaboration with others" (Final Document, 2012). This way of understanding networking indicates, first of all, that we have great potential if we learn to collaborate as a global network and we discover effective ways of working apostolically that would otherwise be impossible.

At the same event, Chris Lowney explained the meaning of networking: "Jesuit institutions and individuals in them understand themselves as participating in a greater Jesuit mission that transcends the boundaries of their school or country, and are willing to lend their talent, time, or treasure as part of this broader mission."

As a result, the invitation is to **go beyond my school, my country, my province, my region**, and to be capable of understanding that if we move forward together, we will go farther and do better. This means that the management teams from each of our schools need to understand that international and global collaboration is also their responsibility. Real Ignatian leadership in our schools today should work to consolidate the global network with its resources, its people and its enthusiasm, as this is the only way that we can develop the global apostolic potential we have. Anything else would be burying our talents and

ignoring the call from God, the Church and the Society of Jesus.

We can reflect on this point with the following question: **how can we re-imagine our schools (and in particular, my school) and networks as collaborators in a global network with a global mission?**

2. The Society of Jesus asks that we return to our Ignatian vision and we recognize that God continues to act in our history and in our world. Therefore, loyal to our Ignatian tradition, we should ask ourselves: **how is God acting in the world today?**

One of the messages that the Church, the Pope, the Society and the most recent General Congregations have clearly delivered to us is that we need to recognize the reality of globalization, which opens a different perspective in history and presents us with new possibilities, challenges and opportunities. In recognition of our tradition of responding to the constantly-changing signs of the times, we need to explore what this new globalized reality means for our education. **JESEDU-Rio2017** happens to be an opportunity to continue this discernment, but this will only be possible if we come together, explore and walk as one.

In our schools, we can reflect on this point with the following question: **what type of fringes, frontiers and innovations can we explore and recognize together as a global network?**

This means defining what we can do differently, and identifying the fringes, frontiers and innovations that a single school, or even a country, could not take on by itself, but which we could take on as a group.

3. The third idea I would like to share with you today is that nowadays, we say that our schools have local roots. This is not only a characteristic aspect of our way of working, but also a strength that we would like to maintain. However, at the same time, we want and need our schools to respond to the global context by creating a common global perspective.

We want to prepare our students to respond to the problems of this global world: environmental problems, or problems involving justice and solidarity that cannot be solved or understood without a global perspective. In our schools, we want families and students to see themselves as global citizens beyond local, national or regional barriers. Now, more than ever, “my life” is connected to the life of all the inhabitants of the planet.

In a world like the one we have today, where fanaticism, extremism and nationalism are on the rise, our schools are called to be spaces for hope in a different future of global solidarity where we can realize that another world is possible.

The questions that can guide our reflections in this sense are:

How can we exercise unity and dialogue in a world profoundly divided by fanaticism and populism? How can we contribute globally to dialogue between peoples, religions and cultures?

4. The fourth idea that I would like to share is closely related to the third. A couple years ago, Father Nicolás called on Jesuit education to prepare our students and our school communities for **global citizenship**. In other words, to understand that all human beings recognize our interdependence, responsibility and solidarity with all of humanity. Not just with my family, my local community, my country, my religion, my audience and my Jesuit conference, but with the entire world, with humanity as a whole. This means going beyond nations or ethnicities, farther than any cultural or social barrier, and this requires a new way of thinking. It breaks with national bonds from past centuries (especially the 19th and 20th), and it recognizes the new global reality that presents us with so many new possibilities.

Of course, as with all human things, we also know that globalization can bring darkness and increase exploitation and injustice in our world. But with our Ignatian vision, we want to work tirelessly for the new possibilities for solidarity, justice or environmentalism that it offers us.

Questions that can guide our conversation on this point are:

As a global network, how can we work together on a global citizenship program for our students? How can we help to build bridges of hope and solidarity in the divided world of today?

5. The fifth idea encompasses everything I have said so far. In addition, it states the importance of what the last two General Congregations and Father General Arturo Sosa SJ have also emphasized: **we are all apostolic companions** on a mission of reconciliation, justice and dialogue, and therefore **collaboration is our means of proceeding**. We need to learn to collaborate (to work together in service of the mission) as laypeople and Jesuits, Christians and non-Christians, believers and non-believers, different ethnicities and nations, different ways of understanding life and seeing the world, and as schools on different continents with very different local circumstances. This collaboration requires a new way of proceeding, of thinking, new structures and a strong global network that allows us to effectively respond to this collaboration challenge. Not only do our schools benefit from this type of collaboration; it also seems to be the only possible way of serving our mission in this day and age and of moving towards the educational and human frontiers of our time.

This means of collaboration constitutes a new perspective, as for many centuries, Jesuits believed that the only possible way of offering greater service was to increase the number of Jesuit callings. Of course, today we do need to continue working to increase the number of callings in order to maintain collaboration between laypeople and Jesuits. However, it is also true that we are convinced that by maintaining this collaboration on every level, we open up possibilities and strengthen our mission in a way that was not possible with the old way of operating, under the sole direction of Jesuits. We have won a great deal with our apostolic companions (whether Christian or non-Christian), who share our mission throughout the world, our perspective and who feel motivated by the Ignatian vision.

The question that can help us to reflect and to move forward along these lines is:

In our schools (and at my school in particular), what can we do on a global level so that the level of collaboration and commitment that helps us to better serve our mission can continue to grow?

Suggestions for upcoming steps to be taken in order to become “*Sent in a global network*”

There are several small and large steps we could take as schools to begin to think and act as a global network.

Some of these steps are: 1. Be aware that we need to train our educators and especially our management teams in a **global perspective**. All of our faculty training programs should include this global perspective. The message should be clear for anyone who manages one of our schools: what is expected of someone in their position includes co-responsibility with local, regional and global networks. The time in which management was simply seen as being responsible for a single school has passed. Without this awareness and commitment, it would be very hard to achieve the progress we seek.

2. We could also consider creating a coordinator or global delegate for our schools. In other words, a person whose principal responsibility is to ensure that the school is connected with its local, regional and global networks— **truly and effectively connected**. We are educators, and we know that for something to be really effective and useful it needs to go beyond speeches and documents— it needs to reach the foundation of the school and the curriculum.

3. We should also take advantage of what we already have that can be useful in helping us build this global perspective and way of working. In ***Educate Magis***, our schools have the opportunity to create an online community where we can address our challenges and solutions together. It is clear that **Educate Magis** echoes General Congregation 36: “*New technologies of communication open up forms of organization that facilitate collaboration. They make it possible to mobilize human and material resources in support of the mission, and to go beyond national borders and the boundaries of Provinces and Regions*” (Decree 2, 8). Using **Educate**

Magis we can, for example, discuss and work on global education and citizenship: as a global network, can we create common guidelines that our schools can use to make our students global citizens? This path is very promising, and not so difficult to travel. All of this will help us to move forward and to prepare our future generations for the world that is being born.

4. Pedagogical and educational innovation is clearly one of the frontiers to be faced in our schools. We need to think of new ways of doing what we do, new ways of learning and teaching. Innovation is a particularly difficult terrain for a single school to take on. Working as a regional and international network can help us to recognize borders or explore and implement innovative models with the same creativity as the first Jesuits had when they created the *Ratio Studiorum*. We should not forget that the creation of the Ratio itself was the result of collaboration in an international network, and without this it would not have been possible.

6. There is a great deal we can do to create innovative ways of training our educators in our mission and identity. We have many resources in this area, but these resources are not being shared throughout our network. Sometimes, we only repeat what others do, failing to take advantage of the opportunity to improve and collaborate. It is true that there are many barriers to a greater level of collaboration in this area, such as language and local laws, but we can be more creative and take advantage of what we do.

Ultimately, the question that we all need to ask ourselves as schools, educators, management teams and Jesuits is:

What steps can we take locally, regionally and internationally to become a strong global network at the service of our mission in today's world?

This is a question that needs to be answered locally, regionally and globally. What we will attempt to do in Rio de Janeiro is to answer it globally, but it will be very difficult to find a global response unless our schools answer it locally and our national and regional networks answer it on their level. We need everyone's creativity and commitment.

We all need to think as a single body with the same mission.

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