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Alternative Pedagogies



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Introduction

The IDEA Network promotes various spaces of resistance to attacks on public education as a fundamental right. Intercambio functions as an informative tool for various intrinsically related concerns: to make visible denunciations and proposals to counter neo-liberalism and its ruthless effects on education, amongst others.

This edition focuses on alternative pedagogical proposals, some still in the ideas stage and others in the process of being implemented, in the face of neo-liberal cuts and policies that promote the commodification of education. Although each proposal has its own specificities rooted in its particular context, we are trying to build a bridge between peoples, a meeting-point, with praxis as a guiding principle. Without exception, these proposals have emerged from within educational communities who are participating in democratic action-research efforts, where classrooms become micro-universes and a synthesis of the many contradictions of a world in crisis.

As well as being a link between teacher and student movements in different regions and countries, the magazine provides a pedagogical tour of biographies and geographies, from South to North and from North to South. As Brazilian educator Paulo Freire has taught us, pedagogy is synthesized dialectically in praxis to the extent that it both transcends and forms part of, the political, ideological and the cultural. The reader will obtain new understandings from the reading itself, according to his/her own experiences, knowledge and feelings.

We begin in Argentina, with an assessment of the impact of the *Colectivos Escolares* (School Collectives), where action-based research has flowed into local and national networks. These, in turn, have transcended borders to form part of the “Iber-American Encounters of Educator Networks and Collectives Who do Research at the School Level.” This work is based on the democratization of knowledge, where knowledge and practices are reinvented, strengthened and contextualized daily.

We move then to Chile, where the neoliberal laboratory is falling apart and the student movement, along with teachers and other social actors, has become the best “classroom” for the fight for public education and the dignity of students. This valiant struggle goes back to the “Penguin” Revolution and unmasks the myth of Chile as the panacea of development, the fruit of neoliberalism. Chile shows that history is not linear, but spiraling as in the cosmovisions of the first peoples of this continent.

In the Andean region, the development of a Bolivarian education policy in Venezuela reveals a process of social invention that seeks to replace the old classist, sexist, and racist education system with a liberating one. In Peru, the Regional Educational Project continues in the vast Amazonian province of Loreto. Out of this collective experience has emerged the pedagogical proposal called “Holistic, Transformative, Democratic, Patriotic and Popular Pducation for the Development of the Peruvian Amazon and of Peru” which follows Russian education theorist Lev Vigotsky’s socio-cultural paradigm.

Also framed within this paradigm is the proposal for a Non-Sexist and Inclusive Pedagogy (NSP) in Central America organized by the Federation of Central America Teachers Organizations (FOMCA). And in this same context we have the experience of the Mayan Alliance for Popular Education in Guatemala with the Bilingual Education Centres, as well as those of SUTEP in Peru and UNE in Ecuador. These grew out of the question: How do we link inclusion, social justice and gender equity to our teaching work in the classrooms? Contextualizing that work, under Freire’s dialectic principle of praxis, allows for multiple readings, which can then be synthesized into new pedagogical practice and in the collective elaboration of teaching modules. The next question is: how do we translate the classroom experience into union and political education? In El Salvador, the critical participation of the ANDES 21 DE JUNIO teachers’ union, in the new political context, has had a significant impact on the development of new educational policies to replace those defined by previous right-wing governments.

We then examine two new alternative public post-secondary institutions in Mexico after 30 years without the creation of such schools. These are the Instituto de Educación Media Superior (senior secondary/pre-university) and the Universidad Autónoma de la Ciudad de México. Both represent a truly progressive and alternative vision and practice of education in a context where the student population has had less and less access to senior secondary and post-secondary education. This lack of educational opportunities is due to rigid pedagogical and evaluation models, as well as the many repressive structures that block any popular initiative to defend public education.

We also have the chance to share an experience from Canada where a new proposal offers a response to the official curricula. In “Education for Social Justice vs. Education for Social Responsibility (Civic and Citizenship Education)” we see how current programs merely encourage students to reproduce the dominant system. A focus on “Education for Social Justice” invites students to question existing structures and challenge those who institutionalize inequalities.

In a very different context, we learn about the Bolivarian experience where constitutional change, together with many alternative educational proposals, has resulted in the National Educational Project. We also look inside the Camaguey University in Cuba, which offers ongoing extension or continuing education courses in local social and cultural settings, using popular education principles.

These theoretical and practical challenges from classrooms throughout the continent are subverting pedagogical visions and practices of oppression and domination imposed by hegemonic groups. They reveal a rebirth of interest in liberation pedagogies by teacher organizations and educational communities and, just as importantly, they represent an ideological counter-offensive from our schools, colleges and universities after three decades of the imposition of neoliberal policies.

The Editorial Committee, Intercambio, IDEA

Collectives and Teacher Networks doing School-based Research

Miguel Duhalde*



In speaking about collectives and teacher networks that carry out research in schools, it is useful to take a historical glance at the experience that teachers in the region have had with alternative ways of thinking about collective organizing and teacher training and professional development. This experience has been built and organized on concepts such as “networks” and the “encounter” (encuentro or gathering) and has as its basis, politically and pedagogically, the democratization of knowledge. As this movement has evolved, it has taken on such importance that teachers themselves are now organizing “IberoAmerican encounters of collectives and networks of teachers that carry out school-based research”. This is a group building space that has the key purpose of defending public education and recognizing teachers as intellectual workers of teaching knowledge. Beginning and evolution of a collective pedagogical experience

In 1992, a group of teachers from Latin America and Spain decided to get together in the city of Huelva in order to meet and reflect on certain educational issues. Discussions focused on curricular design and development, on school transformation processes and on the role of teachers in those transformations. That meeting was established as the “First Iberoamerican Encounter”. It was agreed that these types of encounters would continue and a process for future gatherings was established. The second one took place in Mexico in 1999, the third in Colombia in 2002, the fourth in

Brazil in 2005, the fifth in Venezuela in 2008 and the sixth of these encounters took place in Argentina recently in 2011.

At these gatherings, a format was established so that teachers could “have an encounter” in which to share their different experiences and discuss the research work they carry out in their schools.

Basic features of Iberoamerican Encounters

These encounters take place every three years in the country of one of the participating networks. The current networks are: RIE (Network of Research in the School), Brazil; CEE (Practicing Teachers Qualification Network), Teaching Expedition Movement, REDLENGUAJE (Latin American Network for the Transformation of Language Teaching Education), ESMAESTRO Network (Teacher School, Medellin), Colombia; IRES (School Research and Renewal), Spain; REDIEEM (Educational Researchers, Mexico State); RETE (State Network for Educational Transformation in Michoacán); LEE (Language Network for School and Community Transformation), Mexico; CPDHIEC (Peruvian Group of Teachers carrying out Research and Innovation in their School and Community), Peru; CIRES (Research Groups and School Networks), Venezuela; various networks of Argentinean educators who carry out research in the schools, among them DHIE (Network of Teachers who carry out Educational Research AMSAFE-CTERA).

Participants take on an active role, different than the one of mere consumer of the work produced by other researchers or experts. In the activities, the exchange and flow of knowledge and dialogue brings into play the teachers’ daily lives in their educational institutions. There is also reflection and debate on different kinds of organization, among which we have the following: groups, rings, study groups, nodes, networks and other ways of working and connecting that social subjects deploy in schools.

In these events there is a real attempt to promote the active participation of teachers based on their research work. It is about breaking the vertical style of conferences that usually keep academia far removed from socio-educational realities. We try to organize the presentations at the Encounters in such a way as to avoid the separation of the speakers from the rest of the attendees.

Using questions as a starting point for discussion is a useful tool at these gatherings, promoting collective reflection, fostering discovery and favoring joint, collaborative and cooperative work. Among other issues, people are invited to

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reflect on: how is knowledge produced and circulated in schools? What types of relationships constitute school culture? What pedagogical and teacher education models are currently being used? How do we work with language and communication in school?"¹

Another technique, reading among peers, typically seen at those Encounters, is an interesting example of alternative ways of organizing as work that has been submitted as papers during an Encounter is not assessed by a committee constituted for such a purpose, but by other participating colleagues who provide feedback and suggestions. Thus, every group or individual who submits a paper becomes, at the same time, a reader of another one, sharing his or her own pedagogical beliefs, and making room for the opinions of a peer or group of peers regarding his or her own writings. This way, a text is enriched with others' contributions, progressing towards a complex form of the collective construction of knowledge.

With time and throughout the five Encounters, basic purposes and foundations have been established, such as: "1) understanding teaching work as a structure and condition for producing knowledge and recognizing teachers and professors as leading individuals in said production process 2) considering educational research models as adequate tools for the production of knowledge in school; articulated in reality with different methods such as systematization, educational innovation, teacher field trips and narrative research, among others 3) using network work both as an alternate way of teacher education among peers and as a democratic decision-making system, based on principles of horizontality, solidarity, equality and inclusion 4) promoting debate and group reflection in order to develop positions and proposals with which to influence public education policy 5) define experiences and proposals in common with other networks in Latin America and worldwide, that are coherent with the general foundations defined by this group."²

Challenges for Encounters and networks that carry out research in the school

While there are some issues that should be reviewed and improved, in general there is a very positive assessment of the Encounters by the different participating networks



and organizations, and recognition of progress made in the construction of a new shared culture that will certainly contribute to the transformation of education starting from the schools. At each Encounter the national networks and collectives have renewed their commitment to achieving concrete goals as well as to facing some challenges ahead. Among them:

- Setting objectives for the Encounters that go beyond the national outlook (that of the organizing country) in order to develop proposals and have an impact on educational policies worldwide.
- Participating actively in the redefinition and consolidation of the Latin American pedagogical movement
- Developing proposals for work among peers that goes beyond the simple exchange of experience in order to empower complex systematization and intellectual work processes, fostering meta-cognitive reflection of our own practices
- Rethinking the transformation of education through active research and different model of knowledge production in schools, such as narrative research, teaching expeditions and educational innovation.
- Promoting education and self-education processes such as network and group organizational models; democratizing knowledge and decision-making processes in national educational institutions and systems; school-based research and innovation as models for learning and the construction of knowledge.
- Generating discussion and debate on teaching work and working conditions, in the framework of defending public education and the rights of education workers.

1. Duhalde, Miguel "Iberoamerican network of teachers and school groups, research in school, a working alternative", *Novedades Educativas Magazine*, N° 209, Buenos Aires, 2008. Page 73

2. Argentinean group of teachers who carry out research in school. *Educational research and network work*, Ediciones Novedades Educativas, Buenos Aires, 2009. Page 57

Profit, Merit and Society: the Protest for Public Education in Chile¹

Jorge Inzunza Higuera²



The reality of education in Chile has shown its cracks, the old and new wounds are more apparent than ever. The universal segregation that we are living in the major Chilean cities is also expressed in all the social services, commercialized since the 80's and locked in the logic of private profit and tasteless competition which has demonstrated its inefficiency to fulfill the promises of quality that justified the state's uncommitted actions, promoted so avidly by neoliberal advisors to the military dictatorship (1973 - 1990).

A Sinister Corporation

Since the beginning of the Chilean Republic the discourse of merit has been heard of as the moving energy behind society. School rose up as the social institution which best allowed "to acknowledge" individual efforts, and in their virtue achieve "fair" reward to each person. However, at the beginning of the republic, indigenous peoples, poor ones, women, not even those with special educative needs, among others, were considered. The ideology of merit has had since its origin a strong correlation with the economic standing of families, and I dare say it still has.

The fact that today 56.7% of all Chilean students are attending some sort of private school, whether or not it

counts with state grant; and that 100% of all higher education students have to pay exorbitant amounts for university tuition (over 5 thousand dollars a year on average), speaks of a distortion that separates the so called "developed" and "underdeveloped" countries. In this sense, I agree with the OECD (2009) when it observes the lack of public (free) higher education in Chile. The universities of the so called Council of Chilean University Headmasters (CRUCH) are not public due to the financial layout that asphyxiated them; and today appear folded towards the sales dynamic of products to the private sector. The Chilean State itself, ever since it was kidnapped during the 80s, has preferred to transform the education system (considered to be a "socialist island" according to Milton Friedman) into a series of anti-democratic fragmented entities that compete in the market. Schools and institutions of higher education must deploy marketing strategies to attract clients and investors in order to grow and crush their rivals.

The most evident consequence is the weakening of public matters. The governments of the Concertación³ could not (¿nor wanted to?) stop this privatizing wave. They were convinced that keeping a "moderate" expenditure in education was enough to "save face" as a country. During the democratic governments it was still thought that if families were willing to pay (to contract debts), then there

1. This article is a merger of columns published in the blog: <http://versus21.blogspot.com>, edited by the same author for the SEPA Network Virtual Magazine.

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3. La Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia es el grupo de Partidos Políticos conformados por el Demócrata Cristiano, Por la Democracia, Socialista y Radical/Social Demócrata, y que gobernó el país entre los años 1990 y 2010.



was no reason to stop them from paying for their children's education.

The results are quite visible. We had thousands of students out in the streets in the year 2006 and thousands more this 2011, claiming a simple fact: education in Chile has become a commodity. If students move forward in the education system according to their capacity to buy and contract debts along with their families, and if they remain tied to high interest rates ¿then where did the discourse of merit go?

By merit is a seductive discourse for our middle classes, it always has been. It promises that our children will enjoy a "good environment" (which is nothing more than old classism); and that the quality will be good...they will learn English and will have good results in the SIMCE⁴ grammar and math exams. Society does not depend on the success of a few who triumph based on their merit acquired with bank credit, and on the back hand, massive academic failure, but rather it requires the capacity to enrich the social group as a whole.

¿Teaching Society or State Teaching?

Recently the Chilean President has defended in several occasions a conceptual change to resist the proposal that the state's role in education must be rescued. He proposed replacing the idea of a State Teaching for that of a Teaching Society.

4. SIMCE: System for Measuring the Quality of Education, the main standardized instrument of Chilean education. See more details on: www.simce.cl

Just as it's debatable that Chile may have a Welfare State at some point in its history, so is the idea of a Teaching State. It is undeniable that the educational policies of the twentieth century moved towards a more leading role of the State. In this sense, it was not until 1964 that there was a significant educational reform, which reflects the serious political difficulties to face the resistance of the more conservative sectors to assume a national project that will be in charge of educating its own peoples.

The discussion process for a National Unified School (ENU) during the Popular Unity government (1970 - 1973), which was disapproved by right-wing politicians and the media at the time, and accused of wanting to install a Marxist education in the schools, was presenting a more demanding scenery in the relationship between State and Society. On the one hand, it looked to overcome the historical segregation in the education system, facing the fact that moving forward in the school system depended solely on the socio-economic origin of the families; on the other hand, to create mechanisms of good citizenship in the schools, where families, workers and communities in general may participate in schools management, in a clear democratic spirit; and lastly to establish faster ways of communication between the different education options, which speaks of trying to make a rational and flexible system, focusing on path of each student, and not on the privileged class.

The ENU, the project long lost in the shadows of history, spoke of the possibility of bringing State and Society together with a learning objective, without losing sight that

the pedagogical bodies were the teachers trained to bring to reality a democratic aspiration in every possible way. A democratic State makes no sense if it makes no reference to Society, if it is not capable of embodying its yearning for justice.

So, when we hear bold interventions that propose a new utopia, which means to establish a Teaching Society that overcomes a Teaching State, ¿what are we being told in the fine print? Clearly they are not speaking from the Marxist rejection of the State, for this being an instrument of the dominating class to control the workers, instead they speak of a marginalized place that is given to the State in the neoliberal ideology, that looks to the least participation around social matters (no longer is a great Social Contract spoken of).

So when the political authorities speak of the “Teaching Society” they are truly speaking of a fragmented world of interests, free of particular regulations, where everyone (and no one) is responsible. In the light of freedom of election, ill fully associated to buying “power”, this reveals the predominant corporate paradigm. This ideology of the Teaching Society, understand Teaching Market, looks to expire those teachers with a social state commitment.

Saving the School Year

¿And how does one light the way out of this conflict of visions of the world? After the new Ministry of Education’s campaign called “Save the year”, using student photographs without authorization, it has been announced recently that over 70 thousand students who have failed the school year, will have to repeat. The countless government pressures on the student movement are a true example of the capacity of response that political spheres in Chile have had in relation to social demands for an active State. The Chilean Constitution left us a Congress which has been suffocating during the 21 years of bi-nominal democracy³. Without citizen surveillance, they may pass down laws according to their personal convictions; they have dedicated themselves to put out social fires here and there, defending the political arena which the “system” has handed them.

Over four months have passed of the education conflict in Chile and the Ministry of Education has not been capable of launching a mid term policy. When the vast majorities of Chile, that 80% who values negatively the political parties, the executive power and the National Congress, are now in favor of breaking the educational structure inherited by the dictatorship, and are searching for substantial reforms that promote the re conquering of the public education system, then the ministerial vision barely tries to have students not

3. Chile has a “binominal” electoral system (two representatives for each electoral district), which promotes the concentration of political power in two main groups, preventing the possibility of electing people from other minor political forces.

repeat the school year. Wasted energy. The best way to save the school year is to save education.

The National Congress had the historical opportunity of ruling in favor of the basic components of free education, non profit, right to education, all this between 2006 and 2007. However, the Presidential Advisory Council was defeated by the privatizing defense headed by José Joaquín Brunner himself, who participated actively in transforming that first progressive report in September of 2006, only to promote a disappointing document in December of that same year. Then the Ministry of Education set forward to establish a proposal with clear public interest, but soon enough an alternative project not consulted with citizens was presented by the right wing sectors, and entered the dialogue in equal conditions as the project presented by government. Result... Frankenstein consensus.

¿What was the use of a social awareness process like the Penguin Revolution⁴? Surely, it was not to have the National Congress represent the majorities and generate a decent legislative process, but yes so that today we may have a movement which no longer believes in the politicians effectiveness, who are for the most part still the same ones as in 2006; and which demands guarantees, no to pass the school year, but to save education as an ethical a popular claim.

There are many possible alternatives, but the one that is taken must be meditated in virtue of the long term. That is to say, the path that must be drawn out is that of building a process consistent with re conquering schools and superior public education, which is the State’s responsibility, understood as spaces of excellence, democracy, secular, free and intercultural. National Congress may be the place to call upon the school and higher education stakeholders to initiate a dialogue, but it must take on the form of a mature debate, responsible with the citizens and binding. These are some characteristics to guarantee an authentic process.

¿Save the school year or save education? That is the question.



4. They call it the Penguin Revolution to all the high school student mass actions that have advanced since 2006 until at least 2008.

The new open period: New horizons in the struggle

Gustavo Pacheco Figueroa*



Several months ago our country's higher education issues re-emerged as one of the important political conflicts in the current social system. Student mobilizations brought these issues to the forefront, something that in the past also occurred, and that today takes on greater importance. This statement is not only based on achieved mobilization levels but also on when these take place and, therefore, in the socialization that derives from conflict in this context. But what context are we talking about? The country is currently immersed in Neoliberalism and after more than thirty years of its application, final touch-ups have taken place that more explicitly display its stark consequences. In this framework, we currently see more profound and widespread questioning than we did some years ago. As a consequence, important reconfigurations are occurring not only within the Dominant Block but also in the heart of the Popular Field and in the imagining of new Historical Projects to be carried out by the people at large. Consequently, the higher education model is being tuned up with the most recent adjustments of neoliberal capitalism, and therefore, struggles that today emerge do not correspond to a process of resistance, but

rather to the start of a new period that should be focused on the struggle to dismantle Neoliberalism imposed on the whole university system. What this simply means is that today we are facing a new private education model and in this framework, new challenges consist in getting rid of said model rather than resisting its application and defending an inexistent public one.

What leads us to understand the current university model as one with a private character? We classify the current higher education model as private because 1) its genesis is directly related to the country's economic opening in the framework

of liberalization of the Chilean economy's strategic areas; 2) the de-concentration and decentralization carried out in existing State Universities in 1980; 3) tariff and credit system formalization for the development of a new career with the self-funding logic; 4) constant reduction of state contribution to universities; 5) the emergence of "private - private"² universities, professional institutes and education centers without any planning, organization and control in the process; 6) understanding of the university system as a new market fostering competition (from 8 universities in 1980 up to more than 140 Higher Education Institutions (IES) in 2010); 7) new market opening and deepening, such as the advertising market, based on the university system; and 8) the fact that for the current population of a million students, their funding is at least 85% private; which means that students, their families and the people at large are the ones who pay for their own education, especially through debt and the resulting precariousness in their lives.

Based on this outlook, we sustain that we are currently facing a new period in the higher education model, which we want to understand in terms of core characteristics that cut across the entire university system.

Regarding those core characteristics, the first thing we should reassert is that, regardless of the IES where an individual studies, whoever receives the service of tertiary education without the possibility of having a scholarship, will be subject to a specific tariff regime that, in most cases,

* Student National Association, UNE Chile. Previous Secretary General of Valparaíso University Student Federation, 2009

1. 2 Refers to private universities created from 1980 on, and that are therefore not considered the country's traditional universities. The latter is explained because within the traditional category, there are some private universities that existed before 1980 that have a different recognition as a result of their contribution to Chilean society, and therefore, they are treated as public entities.

will be dealt with through debt with the private banking system at interest rates of no less than 5%. Those who do not go through education with a long-term credit and who belong to the mid and low-income population, will go through it with immediate precariousness in their own and their families' living conditions, even more so; a precarious supra-exploitation job and very likely dropping out early. A second core characteristic that derives from the first one is that those who are able to complete their university education, upon graduating as professionals, will find themselves in a precarious situation as a result of their debt levels and/or of the few or non-existent job opportunities in their corresponding professions. A third characteristic is that students have little or no space for participation and decision-making to influence policy and address the specific problems that the university or the system as a whole faces, a characteristic which is even more emphatic in the so-called "private – private" institutions. A fourth characteristic to highlight is the one which refers to the distortion and commodification of education quality standards, where we can clearly see how some careers and even institutions do not meet actual development needs and fields, as well as to minimum levels of what should be understood as a university system.

In summary, the current higher education period highlights the problem of the direction and ownership of higher education, which is expressed in the following core themes of conflict and subsequent struggle; 1) mostly private funding; in other words, an absent State and the right of use by the market and private banking system; 2) low levels of participation and decision-making by university governments and, in some cases, the impossibility of joining unions; 3) market-based quality standards and standards based on business logic; 4) deregulated and discriminated access and permanence as a result of student socioeconomic condition, which represents the expression of elementary and middle school education social inequality in the university system; 5) deregulated institutionalism that accounts for the lack of planning, organization and control in the university system and its components; and 6) low popular social liaisoning, showing us a university system that is closed to the vast majorities and to social needs.

That is why today strategic New Public Education banners have been taken up, with clearly established frameworks in higher education planning and organization, state funding that enables free education; profit banning from the system; students' and workers' freedom to associate; the establishment of three-tier university governments with full rights in the university community; high social popular liaisoning development and democratic access according to

social skills and needs requiring immediate improvement in elementary and secondary school systems, such as the demunicipalization demanded by the country's teachers and secondary school participants.

These banners of struggle and the connections that have been achieved between them and the people, is what gives us a new and solid base of experience that must be understood as the framework for new challenges. Today, the following constitute current and necessary lessons still in process that should be available to all the future popular struggles that the new open period presents us with: the popular support that has been obtained; the massiveness achieved in demonstrations; the freshness and drive of their expressions; the respect for grassroots discussion and resolutions; and the conviction and deployed strength and understanding that as Salvador Allende said: "Revolution does not go through the university", and as a consequence, through the detached education of workers and the rest of society

Definitely, the student movement must be capable of including the entirety of its components, always connecting with the rest of society as a live auxiliary force in all transformation, so that it initiates the strategic task of eliminating Neoliberalism in education; but without abandoning the possibility of specific and immediate improvements that could be achieved through current and future struggles.

We say the latter because it is necessary that we make the grassroots student movement and its leaders understand that the struggle to dismantle Neoliberalism in education cannot be realized if it is not assumed as one more struggle, together with other political and historical demands, of the people, and this constitutes the fundamental and revolutionary approach that the popular movement should raise and conquer.



REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL PROJECT: A TRANSFORMATIVE PROPOSAL

José Ramos Bosmediano*



In 2009, I was a consultant for the Peruvian Education Workers Union (SUTEP) in the Region of Loreto, one of the 26 regional offices of the union. I worked on the creation of an alternative education project that would be different from the neoliberal one imposed in Peru since the 1990s. As the person responsible for overseeing the work, it was up to me to develop the documents for the original discussion and then to produce a text that summed up the various provincial events for a final round of discussions and for the 2010 Regional Pedagogical Congress (which in the end didn't take place because of some political and union issues that "distracted" the Union).

The Regional Executive Committee of SUTE Loreto appointed a Regional Pedagogical Commission to discuss and make

decisions as the work progressed, and also to visit different provinces of the region, along with the consultant and speakers.

The regional context of Loreto

Loreto is the largest region of Peru, part of the huge Peruvian Amazon, and it borders with Ecuador, Colombia and Brazil. Because of its land to population ratio (slightly above one million inhabitants), it would not be considered under demographic pressure yet; but if one looks at the physical conditions of the land, a population increase could carry ecological risks.

As a part of the Amazon, Loreto houses an important and richly bio-diverse ecosystem which is now at risk of irreversible damage because of hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation by transnational companies as well as

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highway and railway projects. Over the last 20 years, 75% of the land has been given to international oil companies whose presence has become the source of social conflict. The native communities are struggling to prevent them from invading their ancestral lands, destroying their habitats and endangering their own survival as peoples.

From a cultural perspective, two cultures are found in Loreto. On the one hand, the native culture, consisting of a significant number of the 14 linguistic families and 44 ethnic groups of the Amazon, who possess great wisdom in the managing of the ecosystem and in the use of plants for natural medicine, and who have an artisan tradition that is a source of inspiration for both native and other artists. On the other hand, the official Peruvian criollo, or mestizo, culture which subjugates the native people through an acculturation process, using religion, the media, trade and the educational system which is imposed without recognizing the realities of the native and rural populations or the political power struggles going on at the local, municipal and regional levels. The outcome of this contradiction between the native and the official criollo cultures will not be favorable for the former, in terms of economic, social, political and cultural processes, without a significant change to all aspects of government policy. The current Peruvian administration does not guarantee a future that benefits the rural farming and native populations, or even the poor populations of the urban centers. The industrialization of Loreto is still a big dream, since the economic activity of the great majority of the population is one of subsistence farming for their own consumption, which is still insufficient. Commercial capitalism and the economic practice of extracting raw materials (wood and oil) do not benefit most of the people. To make things worse, the government whose term ended on July 28, 2011 enacted law No. 29760 that approves the diversion of the "surplus" of the Marañón and Huallaga rivers, the great waters that feed the Amazon River. Thus, not only has the future of Loreto and the rest of the Peruvian population been compromised, but also that of the other countries of the Amazon basin.

Although Loreto now has a formal education system, it is very limited in its infrastructure and is much dispersed. The professions offered by the higher education system are unrelated to the regional development needs and the aspirations of the majority. Loreto has very high illiteracy, functional illiteracy, school absenteeism and drop-out rates and is limited in its ability to offer technical training that serves development needs.

The situation of teachers is so weak that it prevents them from devoting themselves to the role of an educator determined to shape transformative, emancipating and change-embracing minds. Neoliberal reform has emphasized methodology and pragmatic pedagogy that seeks "concrete" and immediate results in specific areas (language and mathematics); standardized testing; and intercultural and bilingual education which has no basis in reality. In spite of the important union struggle of Loretan teachers, the

impoverished conditions they face make many feel impotent or pessimistic.

To help in understanding the situation, it may be worth mentioning that two regional governments in Loreto have developed their own educational regional projects as of 2002. However, they have followed the parameters of the neoliberal central government and have made the same mistakes and even have similar irregularities in their management. It has come to such a point of absurdity that teachers have been hired for regional electoral campaigns.

The stages of the work

The work was planned in two stages. The first phase was to have initial discussions of the topics within the schools (union schools); as well as at the provincial level (in the 7 provinces of Loreto: Maynas, Alto Amazonas, Mariscal Castilla, Ucayali, Requena, Datem del Marañón and Nauta). There were 6 topics to be discussed: the Peruvian educational crisis and its concrete expressions; the new curriculum design and its philosophical and psycho-pedagogical foundations; fundamental principles for a new Peruvian education system; the new law governing public school teachers and fundamentals of a systematic, scientific, holistic, ongoing evaluation of teacher performance; scientific and technological foundations for education in Loreto; and the guidelines to develop a regional educational project.

The first five topics were quite general to give the teachers a comprehensive overview of the educational and pedagogical perspective that was being proposed. These were presented by professional researchers and university teachers who work from a social change perspective. The sixth subject was prepared and presented by researchers from the Peruvian Amazon Research Institute (IIAP), a prestigious institution based in Iquitos, the capital of the Loreto Region. Its more than 30 years of research have provided valuable information that has been used by some entrepreneurs and some communities to improve the production of native crops and introduce fish farming for local consumption.

The first stage would include provincial events, whose contributions would be used to elaborate the original project proposal. This work, carried out in 2009, was publicly presented at the beginning of 2010 in Iquitos; and that is the text I am using for this article.

The second stage, which should have taken place in 2010, comprised firstly a new discussion of the text at the union schools and at new provincial events. Secondly, the Regional Pedagogical Congress would then discuss and approve the Loreto Regional Educational Project proposal, but as I have already explained, that has not happened yet.

A later stage would take place to develop the curricular program according to the guidelines of the Project, so that they reflect the vision of change and transformation and not merely the neoliberal views currently applied. The curriculum is not unconnected to the philosophical, anthropological, psychological and pedagogical perspective that will guide the kind of education that we envision.

Basic Guidelines for Creating Transformative Education

The reasons for a regional project:

It was necessary for the teachers to understand the reasons for having an alternative project. However, this is not easy in a routine environment filled with the demands of the neoliberal reform that the World Bank calls the “alternative to the educational crisis.”

First was the need to develop regional education that, without ignoring the national environment, values the development of regional elements that will ultimately enrich the national education project for a just, free and developed country.

A second idea has to do with the role of the Loretan teachers as lead players who go beyond the limits of the teaching-learning process inside the classrooms, to become thinking subjects capable of proposing a new type of education that serves the people and develops the country.

Thirdly was the need to create an educational project that reaches the vast majority of the people in the region; so that they know that an alternative is possible, that they can have a system of education that is different to the ones that have failed before. This new direction could also shed some light in the economic, social and cultural life of the country and of the region.

Finally, the new proposal would have to be different to the failed ones of the past, with resistance against neo-liberalism as part of the field of education itself, and an instrument for new relationships between teachers and the popular sectors, as well as a daily tool for the teachers as educators in the classrooms.

Principles, goals and educational policies:

The goals are only starting points for a commitment to a new kind of education, ideas to generate new ideas and to identify the curricular elements that will guide the schooling of children and the young.

The first principle is social transformation, expressed in the goal of building an education that contributes to a substantial change in social and cultural realities, and therefore, in education. The principle of justice considers education as a human right for everyone, under equal circumstances and opportunities. The principle of integrality represents a guarantee for education to cover all the potentialities of children, without imposing any additional limitations to the existing ones (which also need to be addressed as much as possible). The principle of abiding to science is important so that education is based on an objective reality, and uses knowledge for transformation that benefits human beings. The principle of theoretical-practical unity is expressed in education that unites school and work, studying and practical activities, theory and life. The principle of continuity views education as a process that lasts a lifetime, long beyond the school years and the principle of axiological formation cultivates all positive values: scientific, ethical and social.

The program guidelines:

The principles, goals and objectives of education, regardless of how valid, would lack substance without the right educational policies. Program guidelines provide the materials and political support for the contents and carrying out of the educational process. These are the educational policies that the state must promote and apply: Public school is for everybody, and it should be free and universal, securing the principle of justice; Co-education should be for all children, teenagers and the young, both as a tool for democratic education and in the fight for gender equality and as a pedagogical need for the human psychological development of both genders; Secular education is a condition for the scientific training of students. There should be an overall state financing of education, without which free and universal education cannot be guaranteed, much less justice. There should be long term planning to guide investment in education and in training for the professionals that the country and the regions require for development. These program guidelines are also important to identify educational priorities.

The general definition of the project:

The topics presented and the contributions of the participants during the workshops led to the creation of the educational proposal: TRANSFORMATIVE AND HOLISTIC, DEMOCRATIC, PATRIOTIC AND POPULAR EDUCATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERUVIAN AMAZON AND FOR PERU. The first definition (transformative) shows how our proposal contrasts with the official educational system in crisis. It expresses the need for education for social change and human emancipation, closely linked to the complete, theoretical and practical schooling of students. The 3 following definitions (democratic, patriotic and popular) establish the political conditions that must support a new education system. The tactical and strategic objectives of the new education will be established by the needs identified (development of the Peruvian Amazon and of the country as a whole).

The cultural and educational reality of Loreto:

This was one of the topics that had to be analyzed from an interdisciplinary perspective. Several aspects of that reality were studied, along with their relationship to education: native cultures, the process of acculturation and inter-racial mixing, dominant culture, artistic creation, science and technology, the economic crisis and socio-educational inequalities and the common aspirations in Loreto.

New conditions for a new education system in Loreto:

This requires a political project that must be fought for and without which a transformative project would be a mere utopia. Economic, political and social conditions must be considered. Economically, important criteria include holistic and sustainable development planning. The necessary political conditions include democratic, patriotic and popular government. Finally, the social conditions include

social justice, collective wellbeing and the autonomous development of indigenous communities.

Educational objectives and goals of Loreto for 2030:

We approached this as a planning exercise, both for the long term as well as for identifying education policy priorities. It includes problems that must be addressed in the short term, as well as educational infrastructure and its implementation, teacher training, the role of the municipalities, the redefining of administrative conduct and other unresolved issues.

Principles for pedagogical action:

These were defined as general tenets to guide the educational process and all of its components: the school of labor, scientific and technological research, curricular diversification and the professions that are necessary for regional and national development; as well as the interaction between different disciplines and the integration of knowledge.

Fundamental pedagogical areas:

These are the axiological, pedagogical and scientific categories that guide the teaching-learning process: the fundamental values, inter-cultural and bilingual education, the school as a center for promoting culture and the basic disciplines of study.

Pedagogical methodology:

Without overlooking the contribution of different pedagogical currents throughout history, there was a need to adopt a socio-historical and cultural perspective as the cornerstone for the teaching-learning process, and we chose the Vygotsky theory. It integrates different guiding elements like investigative and developing didactics, active methodologies, the idea of the teacher as a conducting agent and center of the teaching-learning process, an integral and diversified curriculum, the sequential and complementary development of curricular contents and ongoing, holistic, formative and systematic evaluation of students' learning by the teachers themselves.

School organization:

School is conceived as a coordinated, coherent and functional organization that responds to regional needs and realities. One that is flexible enough to allow for any necessary and timely change. It is also meant to organize rural and frontier education to solve the problems of rural students who are far away in the vast territory of the region. The new role of the National University of the Peruvian Amazon is considered, as well as university-trained professions and non-university technical training.

Administration:

One of the main problems of the educational crisis in Loreto and Peru in general is the presence of not only a corrupt bureaucracy, but also one that is incapable of promoting the changes necessary for managing education appropriately. The elements that require special emphasis are: the school as the basis of provincial and regional activity: the school



principal as the main authority; democratic participation in the management of schools; ongoing supervision and evaluation of the education work in schools; the establishment of public teaching and school administration as careers with all the corresponding professional, labor and social rights.

The Discussions:

In the provincial gatherings and in the workshops, the discussions have centered on the above-mentioned subjects. Delegates from the schools participated.

A list of issues was drawn up to guide the discussions. It includes things that have to be solved in the process of bringing about change. Some examples of the 21 items are:

- a) What are the manifestations of the educational crisis in Loreto?
- b) What are the implications for education in Loreto of neoliberal policies to privatize Amazonian land?
- c) Which social conditions are necessary to develop a new education system in Loreto?
- d) What profile should a teacher have in this new system?

- e) Is there a regional culture in Loreto? Why?
- f) What are the obstacles against secular education?

During the workshops, marked differences were observed in the pedagogical training of the teachers, which caused diverse and contradictory conclusions on a single topic. This significantly limited the discussion on topics such as philosophy, anthropology, economics, politics, ecology and the history of the Peruvian Amazons.

One of the best contributions to the discussions came from IIAP, because of their innovative ideas regarding the Amazon biodiversity and the role of scientific research to enrich the educational process and the role of science and technology in regional and national development.

For education in the future, this view is fundamental to developing a new awareness amongst the next generations regarding the role of the Amazon for the survival of human beings, and of the need to defend it against the transnational and state appropriation. However, because of their short-term political motivations, Peruvian rulers have divided the Peruvian Amazon into different regions, a fact that hinders the development of integral regional policies.

Conclusion

I was able to corroborate that there is a significant number of teachers who are willing to work on the creation of an educational alternative. However, their numbers are insufficient to generate a movement capable of spreading their enthusiasm to others.

I have also witnessed the role of inertia in the traditional (procrastinating) way that important educational topics are approached. That tradition has led to a routine kind of teaching practice that has nothing to do with the changes that must be produced.

Another factor is the conservative attitude of the regional and local authorities who are used to regarding education as a means to keep on reproducing their own power. This has led to a relationship of political clientelism with parents, as well as with those teachers who have taken on administrative positions.

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Peru, August, 2011



ANDES 21 DE JUNIO IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

María Trejos Montero*



Based on an interview with Israel Montano Secretary General of ANDES 21 DE JUNIO¹

Background

In the past 50 years a stage has been set where public education, in its diverse expressions, has been weakened tremendously, while private education has strengthened. This due to initiatives and educative reform policies designed by right-wing governments, such as “Plan 20-21”, “Decennial Plan”, “Teach Me” Program, “Effective school networks” and “Learning to read”.

Amidst this context, teacher’s declarations and protests in favor of strengthening public education have had small possibilities of being heard and even less becoming part of an authentic consultation process to counteract the commercialization of education.

Salvadorian teachers and society are today facing a rhetoric situation. In the middle of conquests that have been achieved to benefit public education, teachers are forced to continue to fight for and demand retroactive payment of the formerly achieved wage increases of 6% and 10%, as well as the current accumulation of 20%; attend discussions for an integral proposal to assess 2012 budget and an increase from 3% to 6% of the GDP destined for public education.

Nevertheless, it is clear that Salvadorian society and government authorities, in the area of education, are making great efforts to achieve what they have always dreamed of: transform the education system.

1. Interview carried out in San Salvador on August 27th of 2011. Citations that may appear in the document were taken directly from the interview, at the same time that they are accompanied by our own analysis and information.

A hopeful ideological twist

In 2009, the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) won the presidential elections; though President Mauricio Funes has distanced himself from the party’s philosophy and is governing outside FMLN strategic guidelines. Professor Salvador Sanchez Ceren, former commander of the FMLN guerilla, was appointed Minister of Education, and began office by providing the teachers’ union access to consultation and debates regarding national education.

ANDES (National Association of Salvadorian Educators) 21 DE JUNIO is committed to support a deeper transformation of education in El Salvador for what technical and pedagogical teams were created in the 14 provinces to obtain a diagnosis of the general state of the education system in El Salvador. The results of their work became substantial reference to design an alternative pedagogical proposal in the face of a neoliberal model. This way, ANDES 21 DE JUNIO contributes in the definition of the “Social Education Plan Let’s Go to School” in September of 2009².

The Plan includes 7 programs for the following areas: school meals, school packages (uniform, supplies and others), restoring teaching profession’s dignity, literacy program, inclusive education, initial education and infrastructure. The core purpose resides in responding to the basic needs of children, among them to mitigate school desertion, which only means social exclusion.

“Regarding the quality of education, we need to face the fact that our children were not in school

2 This Plan has received criticism for the fact that it was pushed forward basically by the official party, analysis that will not be touched upon in the present article.

for the following reasons: they didn't have any food to eat or shoes to wear, let alone to buy uniforms. This is the reason why we implemented programs such as school packages complete with materials and uniforms for preschool up to the ninth grade... to motivate all the kids that were not in school, to enroll. Thus the slogan: "Let's go the school".

In this sense, the idea of quality education is linked to the objective of building communication between the school, community, institutions and other social actors, including teacher's organizations. For the first time teacher unions and guilds have been able to participate in parents' general assemblies.

"The reason of this being is to improve education for the people's children, our people, for the communities as well as to vindicate the teacher's guild. There cannot be a union which doesn't defend its rights. It is the base for motivating teachers to become more agile, better, with a more efficient performance. If you have a dignified salary, you will feel committed to the learning process same as if you have free health care or have healthcare insurance deductions."

The concretion of elements contributed by the teachers union is notable, for it shatters claims promoted by the right-wing sectors, that try to demonstrate that teacher union's actions are limited to economic vindications, forgetting about elements related to the quality of education.

"It is necessary for the Central American region to do research on the state of each education system, in order to build the foundations for a Central American pedagogical movement that may impact in the Latin American pedagogical movement; we will be giving life to it by the end of this year and beginning of the next."

Within the Social Education Plan there is the "Full Time School" Program (Escuela de Tiempo Pleno). It seeks to strengthen and extend the coverage of the educational centers that have greater resources and infrastructure and turn them into pilot projects where arts, culture and recreational activities are developed. This is an alternative to prevent and reduce the problem of youth gangs. There are 14 pilot centers already underway, one in each of the provinces.

Another Program called "Creating Nucleuses" (Nuclearización), focuses on building technical schools at a core where parallel to basic subject matters, courses like construction, research, science lab, agriculture, art and others are developed. It's meant to increase the enrollment of students of nearby schools where they lack optimum conditions for an integral education.



Next to this challenge, efforts must be guided towards higher teachers' education, in agreement with the new educator profile that El Salvador requires.

"Each day we can perceive that a different country is being built so that economy and development of the Salvadorian people meet the demands of a new time. We need profound changes in the academic, pedagogical and didactical grounds to build the society of the future, the society of knowledge, the society that the twenty-first century demands. We have the certainty that science and technology are the fundamental basis of this new learning process that has only started in El Salvador with the full participation of teachers, where Paulo Freire's fundamental idea of research-action and learning by doing are of utmost importance for this new course of action."

Following the line of contributions made by the teachers' organizations, one of the proposals designed and today materialized, in order to counteract the proliferation of private universities, is the creation of an Institute that specializes in teacher training, to neutralize the proliferation of private universities. For this the Ministry of Education (MINED) has created the Teachers Higher Education School (Escuela Superior de Maestros), replacing the Centers for Professional Development. It offers post graduate degrees with the objective of enriching the profile of teachers, their charisma and service call, according to the reality of Salvadorian society.

Another relevant contribution of ANDES 21 DE JUNIO is the concretion of a Pact with the MINED focused on taking non-sexist and inclusive education into the classrooms. Under the coordination of the Women's Secretary, the process was retaken in 2010 by a group of unionized women teachers, who next to a systematic training process, developed ethnography research in the classrooms. The results of their work became the starting point for a teaching module to deconstruct sexist and discriminatory perceptions and attitudes in general; to create new equal relationships within the education and social paradigms that may become truly democratic, participative and liberating.

IMPOSITION THROUGH FINANCING

Indigenous Educational Centers in Guatemala

Guillermo Chen*



ceremonial effects, aside from ruling people's destiny. It refers to cosmic or energy seals called "nawales", which play a transcendental role in social life and in the people's mental release and control. The different calendars that are still in use, its structure in days and months and its application to social and agricultural life is unknown and demonized by society in general.

While in many cultures around the world there have been specialized teams of serious investigation to learn about the essential elements of the Mayan calendar, in Guatemalan schools it is only mentioned.

Another fundamental element is Mayan mathematics, which still remains pure in its structure and notation. Similar to the calendars, Mayan numbering is only taught from

Most of the bilingual education centers of the Mayan Alliance for Popular Education (AMEP) in Guatemala are community centers created with the support of indigenous communities. In spite of their relevance, they have difficulties in accessing State financing.

As of lately, the leaders have seen the need for an urgent structural reform. The new National Base Curriculum (Currículo Nacional Base) does not satisfy the contents of our cosmovision, since it does not depict the values, meaning and representation of words in the indigenous language, as well as those related to spirituality and culture; instead it is included as a mere lesson of reference in the official contents. We agree with changes that must be made in Guatemalan education, although it is not enough for indigenous peoples.

An example of this is the Mayan Calendar. In all indigenous communities it has been conserved for purely

0 to 19 without any transcendence. Continuously like that, issues of vital importance to the development of indigenous communities are left out as a mere reference.

That is why the indigenous community education centers have been created, to strengthen the knowledge of these significant subjects, recreating new programs, taking into account both contents of the National Base Curriculum and indigenous matters.

In most of the centers, there has been a positive result and the culture has been strengthened; they have presented the opportunity to learn more about community life, values, cosmovision and cosmogony. But a serious problem is the lack of financing. Because they are community and indigenous education centers, the Ministry of Education authorizes its creation as private institutions, not as public schools, in detriment of State financing.

It means that our schools have to survive through community donations, parent contributions and in rare occasions, small municipal subsidies to pay teachers. Another

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way could be through a cooperative in which the community, the municipal government and central government become committed and involved.

The lack of state financing and the private or cooperative modalities weaken the education centers. For instance, one of the AMEP partners was approached by a political party that offered financial support in exchange for unconditional support for its candidate through all the families votes; they even demanded a change in the community's philosophy on which the centers are based.

Public education is a State responsibility as established on article 71 of the Political Constitution of the Republic of Guatemala which states: "It is the obligation of the State to provide and facilitate education for its inhabitants, without discrimination whatsoever."

In spite that the Guatemalan Charter of Rights established that education centers created to benefit communities, must be subsidized, little has been done to accomplish that. The Guatemalan experience tells the contrary. Private schools with "stature" where students from powerful economic families assist, and where high monthly fees are paid, receive State subventions by being considered "non-lucrative". This is a clear example of the inequality that exists with regards to financing for indigenous communities and private schools. This clearly violates Article 73 of the Guatemalan Constitution which states: "The State may fund free private education centers and the law may regulate all related to this matter."

Under the legal framework, the indigenous communities are protected by the State, as it's established in article 76 of the Constitution: "The administration of the educational system must be decentralized and regionalized. In schools established in areas with predominant indigenous population, teaching must be delivered in a bilingual form." By reading this norm, anyone would know that indigenous communities enjoy more privileges than in other countries. Mayan-Spanish bilingual education has been on the table since the Constitution of 1985; nevertheless little has advanced in bilingual education policies. So far bilingual materials have only been developed for first, second and third grades; it's to say for children from 7 to 9 years of age. There is still a need for bilingual materials for the fourth, fifth and sixth grades.

The high school level in Guatemala made up by two levels: the basic and the diversified levels, both lack bilingual materials. The National Base Curriculum has included some, although insufficient, elements. Over five years that there has been some work around the high school curriculum. A bilingual and intercultural teaching training program was began which presented difficulties, this professional career doesn't fulfill a desirable quality of life. In spite of the difficulties it is a good path towards building a bilingual and intercultural country.

AMEP is seeking to consolidate its experience in this matter by becoming involved with South American countries and with the indigenous regions of Mexico and Central America.

UACM and IEMS

Alternative educational projects for Mexico in the XXI Century

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Summary: This article presents some aspects of two educational institutions in Mexico City: IEMS (the High School Education Institute) and UACM (Mexico City Autonomous University). It describes what makes them progressive alternatives and also contains some proposals and suggestions for different educational sectors so that all citizens can have access to a better education. What is unique about these institutions is that they were the first two created in the capital city in the twenty-first century, after 30 years of no similar institutions having been created.

Background

The last time a public higher education institution was created in Mexico City was in the 1970s. Until recently, the main public post-secondary institutions were (presented in chronological order):

1. UNAM, 1914 (National Autonomous University of Mexico)
2. IPN, 1937 (National Polytechnic Institute)
3. ENAH, 1946
4. UPN, 1974 (National Pedagogical University)
5. UAM, 1974 (Autonomous University of Mexico)
6. ESEF, 1974

Those institutions were never sufficient to cover the number of young people who wanted to acquire an education or of adults who wished to go back to school.

In addition, the demographic sector of young people of "school age" has increased over the last few decades. At the beginning of this century, UNESCO¹ recognized that just over one fifth of the young people who wished to study gained access to higher education. In order to contain the social pressure of young people wanting to enter the national and local systems, more obstacles to entrance and completion have been put in place through examinations that make them compete for a place in post-secondary education.

Aside from the entrance barriers, the pedagogical and evaluation models have been rigid and conventional. Thus, the number of students who graduate is very low in comparison to the number of students who begin. That is to say, very few people will be admitted in comparison to the number of applicants; and even fewer will finish their

studies, or will do so in a much longer time than is expected. In the late 1990s, the mayor of Mexico City tried to reopen a women's jail that had been previously closed, but the community fought the plan and proposed the building be used as a school instead. Out of this struggle, sixteen university prep high schools were created and coordinated by the High School Education Institute (or IEMS, its Spanish acronym), as well as the Autonomous University of Mexico City.² (UACM)

The two were founded as sister institutions because of their origin and educational aims. Even though each has followed their own distinct process, they share similar philosophical and pedagogical principles regarding the right to public education.

The educational project

The educational project or aim of both institutions³ is holistic and proves that it is possible to respect the human right to an education by opposing the neoliberal currents of the last few decades. It is a progressive proposal which is in accord with the constitution.

The existence of the two institutions is relevant not only for their own students, but for others as well, because it represents the possibility of a different type of education: one that is respectful, fair and protective of human rights. Their educational model is different to that of other institutions in several ways: the entrance process; its public and free nature; the strategies and support that are given to prevent students from dropping out; the attention that is paid to the learning process by accompanying students with tutorials and consultations; a curricula that is guided by critical thinking, science and humanism and not by early specialization; and the respect given to academic work as seen in hiring processes, the organization of teaching work and working conditions.

The following table shows some of the core aspects of this project and how it is different to other institutions that have been subjected to neoliberal and mercantile educational process.

What is the importance for society in having UACM and IEMS?

Keeping a project like this alive is very challenging, because it is like swimming against the current of the neoliberal model. Frequently enough, even teachers, students and directors oppose the idea, since they cannot accept the fact that the

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1. UNAM, (2008). Income Distribution and Higher Education: The UNAM case found at: http://www.planeacion.unam.mx/Planeacion/Apoyo/Equi_educUNAM.pdf Survey, February 22, 2011.

2. Created in 2001 as the Mexico City University, in 2005 it became autonomous and hence changed its name to the Autonomous University of Mexico City.

3. by Manuel Pérez Rocha, first principal of UACM, 2001-2010.

Differences between UACM and IEMS and other Higher Education Institutions regarding their EDUCATIONAL PROJECT		
Aspects of the Educational Project	UACM and IEMS	Other Higher Education Institutions in Mexico City and the rest of the country
Educational Principle	Education is a human right. Universities are cultural institutions.	Education is a tool to produce professional workers.
Philosophical and epistemological foundations	Schooling based on critical and humanistic thinking.	Competencies-based model
Costs	It is a free public service for students.	Fees are charged to sell students a service.
Roles of the University	Teaching Research Fomenting culture Academic development Social cooperation	Teaching Research Fomenting culture
Access	Unrestricted admittance: 1. High School Diploma 2. Proof of address within Mexico City 3. Notarized lottery (those who are not chosen go to a wait list for the next draw and will be admitted for the next period).	Student selection: 1. High School Diploma 2. Minimum average of 7 or 7.5 3. Minimum age 4. Good health certificate 5. Selection Exam 6. Sex ²
Ongoing Enrollment/Completion	Support is given to students in different modalities: in the classroom, through independent study, consultation and tutorials.	Regulations that restrict continued enrollment/completion
Evaluation	Qualitative evaluations: The student is accompanied in his/her learning process and is notified of what has been learned and what is missing.	Quantitative evaluations that select, rank and exclude.
Curricula	No early specialization. Socially-oriented programs.	Early specialization. Market-oriented programs.
Geographic location	UACM: 5 campuses IEMS: 16 schools with a maximum population of 1000 students. Located in areas where there is a lack of educational services.	Centralized in areas that already possess educational services. The population of students is very large.
Teacher hiring	Most are full-time employees. Wages above the average. All teachers belong to the same category, to prevent competition for privileged positions which in turn affects team work. Roles include tutorials and research. Classes are no larger than 25 students.	Most are hourly-wage workers. There are different teacher categories for the same job, so teachers are pitted against one another. The roles of teachers, tutors and researchers are separated. Teachers are regarded as inferior to researchers. Researchers get more resources than teachers. Classes are larger than 40 students.

4. See Sánchez, M., (2010) Exclusion: The Case of Teacher Institutes, Educational Supplement , UACM, No. 10, May 8, 2010, La Jornada Newspaper, Mexico



2. Students throughout the country must receive an equivalent type of education in terms of infrastructure, class size, materials, well-trained professors, student support, etc.

3. Teachers around the country must enjoy similar working conditions: number of students per class, number of students per course, time outside the classroom to help students and prepare classes, professional development programs offered by their institutions and decent wages.

4. All admission exams should eliminate discriminatory criteria such as age, grades, competitive exams, health and gender.

5. Teachers, institutions and unions should include school entrance requirements in their agendas, calling for a review.

6. School regulations should eliminate suspension and expulsion criteria due to low grades or performance. Regulations that truly favor student learning should be developed.

educational establishment is not correct or that it is possible to change it. On the other hand, the current system benefits a privileged few who do not want to lose their privilege or the status quo; even if that sacrifices the right to an education for others.

Outside UACM, there is a general lack of awareness of this educational project. Some people who know about it think positively of it, but they never regard its principles as something that could work for other institutions as well.

However, for some others it is very threatening indeed since it questions mercantile precepts of education. That is why the project has been attacked from its onset.

Even within UACM, there is a similar ongoing debate: to let the principles of the proposal unfold and continue to work for them; or to change these institutions into just one more example of the old system, in the capital city or the rest of the country, with entrance exams, numerical grading, exclusionary regulations, and competency-based models among other things.

The existence of these institutions is an opportunity for real debate on educational exclusion and the abandonment of the right to an education in Mexico, which are not issues that only concern IEMS and UACM.

What to do?

Several concrete changes can emerge from this experience and can be promoted by school directors, academics and unions, at the national and international levels. For instance:

1. Legislation should be passed regarding class size. At every educational level everywhere, the size of a class should not be larger than 25 students.

7. Compulsory education should be universal for all Mexican citizens. That is that is to say, every Mexican who is older than 15 must be guaranteed a basic education, and people older than 18 must be provided access to high school and higher education programs.⁵



5. Some of these ideas were presented by the author during the IX International Conference of the Tri-National Coalition to Defend Public Education in Montreal, Canada, in 2009.

Teaching and Emancipation in Bolivarian Venezuela

Pablo Imen*



In 1998, when Hugo Chavez took power, it set the stage for a new historical era that substantially changed the map of Our America, in political and institutional terms, by reinstalling two strategic topics in the agenda of our times: the true possibility of a grand national project and, within Venezuela, the decision to build the socialism of the 21st century.

Bolivarian education policy expresses an unprecedented social invention process that tries to overcome the old classist, sexist and racist education, creating an emancipating education.

As in every journey that puts forth deep transformations, it is essential to experience those practices, relationships and proposals that dismantle inherited realities and foreshadow the new model to be built.

In those challenges, achievements are not immediate or linear; they happen in the midst of multiple simultaneous battles, openly, against past forces that resist death and also against the subjects of change themselves in the measure that many values and principles of the old model nest among those who want to portray a revolutionary stance. On the other hand, the “birth” of the new model requires a dose of

creativity, boldness and patience: renewed ideas and practices imply a great effort that does not necessarily prosper at the first attempt. The “contradiction” concept acquires a complex and interesting dimension, because it is not only about struggling against antagonistic forces representing the project in withdrawal, but also about our own apprehensions and frustrated attempts that build a collection that is valuable because of both its achievements and its failures.

The Gramscian idea of the moment of the transition – in which old things are not completely dead and new things are not yet born – shows up in the luminosity of the 21st century opposing the one of the Italian revolutionary. If in the decade of the thirties capitalist depletion led to fascism, the close of the neoliberal century in Latin American countries appears as a possibility of building a socialist order: its creation is a common occurrence in Venezuela. However, this massive historical drive expressing the current transition is very far from unfolding as a one-horse race of the revolutionary forces towards some progress as a result of a hard work and a sustained creative effort.

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1. Estamos refiriendo al régimen político vigente entre 1958 y 1998, con la hegemonía de los partidos Acción Democrática y COPEI, que se alternaron en la administración del modelo que introdujo el neoliberalismo en Venezuela y que fue virtualmente arrasado con el triunfo electoral de Hugo Chávez Frías.

Education during a Revolution: complexities, tensions and conflicts

The Organic Law of Education crystallizes the advances of the Bolivarian teaching project. It must be mentioned that it was enacted in August 2009, and it is a contradictory indicator of two processes in reverse order.

On one hand, the Organic Law of Education sets a turning point for a legitimate and valuable participative process. Between 1999 and 2001, a constituent process was developed – Educational Constituency – that enlightened the National Education Process as a navigation chart of the course educational policy and public education should follow.

In the framework of Héctor Navarro's management as Minister of Education, the creation of what later became the Educational Missions started, an institutional network that was born as a parallel structure to the Formal Education System. Their creation proposed two articulated goals. First, incorporating children, youth and adults into the educational system because their right to education had been violated in the long history of the IV Republic¹. Back then, it was about ensuring access to education democratization. And secondly, developing the foundations for an emancipating education. Between 2002 and 2009, educational working modes were practiced and consolidated in the framework of the revolutionary process that was finally expressed in the Organic Law of Education. In this respect, it is worthwhile to record an unprecedented situation: For the first time, a general standard was the product of an intense social and pedagogical participative and leading process of territorial and educational communities. It is not about a forced creation for the alliance of political and technocratic power, but about a construction developed from "bottom" to "top", or, in order to be more precise, in a fertile dialogue between different individuals and different levels of the education system.

On the other hand, these twelve years had several ministers who upon assuming power partially disclaimed organizational and pedagogical balance every time. Minister Navarro was the one who fostered the *Constituyente Educativa* (Educational Constituent) that gave birth to the National Educational Project, discontinued by the following minister, Aristóbulo Istúriz. This second Ministry – that extended between 2001 and 2007 – deployed the project of Educational Missions, whose outline started with the previous minister, but some of the National Educational Project guidelines were not implemented. Adam Chávez, who based on the national political situational elements, started the Bolivarian National Curriculum, succeeded Istúriz. Héctor Navarro reversed this last measure, and he resumed PEN definitions as well as

consolidated progress in the journey that started in 1999. Under his management, the Organic Law of Education was enacted, encompassing at least three issues; first, democratic nature of its construction by abbreviating the educational political learning process in educational institutions and in their communities; second, setting the direction and contents of an emancipating public education that was already shaped in certain educational system fields; and third, it constitutes the legal framework that will manage the transition from oppressive education to liberating education that triggers and claims concrete changes in school institutions that actually exist.

Main contents of LOE

The new law defines education as a "human right", which presumes that the State assumes full responsibility for guarantees so that this right becomes effective. As a human right, it is taken on as universal, integral, enforceable and progressive. However, this is only the starting point towards guaranteeing access. This regulation contains other definitions that have an enormous civilizing projection.

The teaching project proposes, in social terms, contributing to overcoming social working division and fostering omnilateral development of every pedagogical subject. From a textual standpoint, the signal that the State plans, executes, coordinates policies and projects implying "integral, social and cognitive development of citizens, permanently articulating learning to be, to know, to coexist, in order to develop integrated cognitive, affective, axiological aspects in harmony, and overcome fragmentation, atomization of knowledge and separation between manual and intellectual activities" (Article 6, Numeral 1, Clause d). A method of teaching is proposed regarding the above: "centered on processes that have investigation, creativity and innovation as their core, which allows for adapting strategies, resources and organization of the classroom based on diversity of student interests and needs" (Art. 14). In this context, the evaluation notion is redefined as: "democratic, participative, continuous, integral, cooperative, systematic, quantitative and qualitative, diagnostic, flexible, educational and cumulative. Student performance, appropriation process and learning construction must appreciate and record procedures in a permanent manner through scientific, technical and humanistic procedures, considering social and historical factors, individual differences and they will value instructor performance and, in general, every element constituting the process above" (Article 44).

The Organic Law of Education favors a knowledge conception that fosters knowledge dialogue and that establishes a new relationship with the community, where the educational institution is defined as the center of community endeavor.

1. We refer to the current political regime between 1958 and 1998, with the hegemony of *Acción Democrática* and *COPEI* parties, who alternated the administration of the model that introduced Neoliberalism in Venezuela and which was virtually erased with Hugo Chávez Frías's electoral victory.

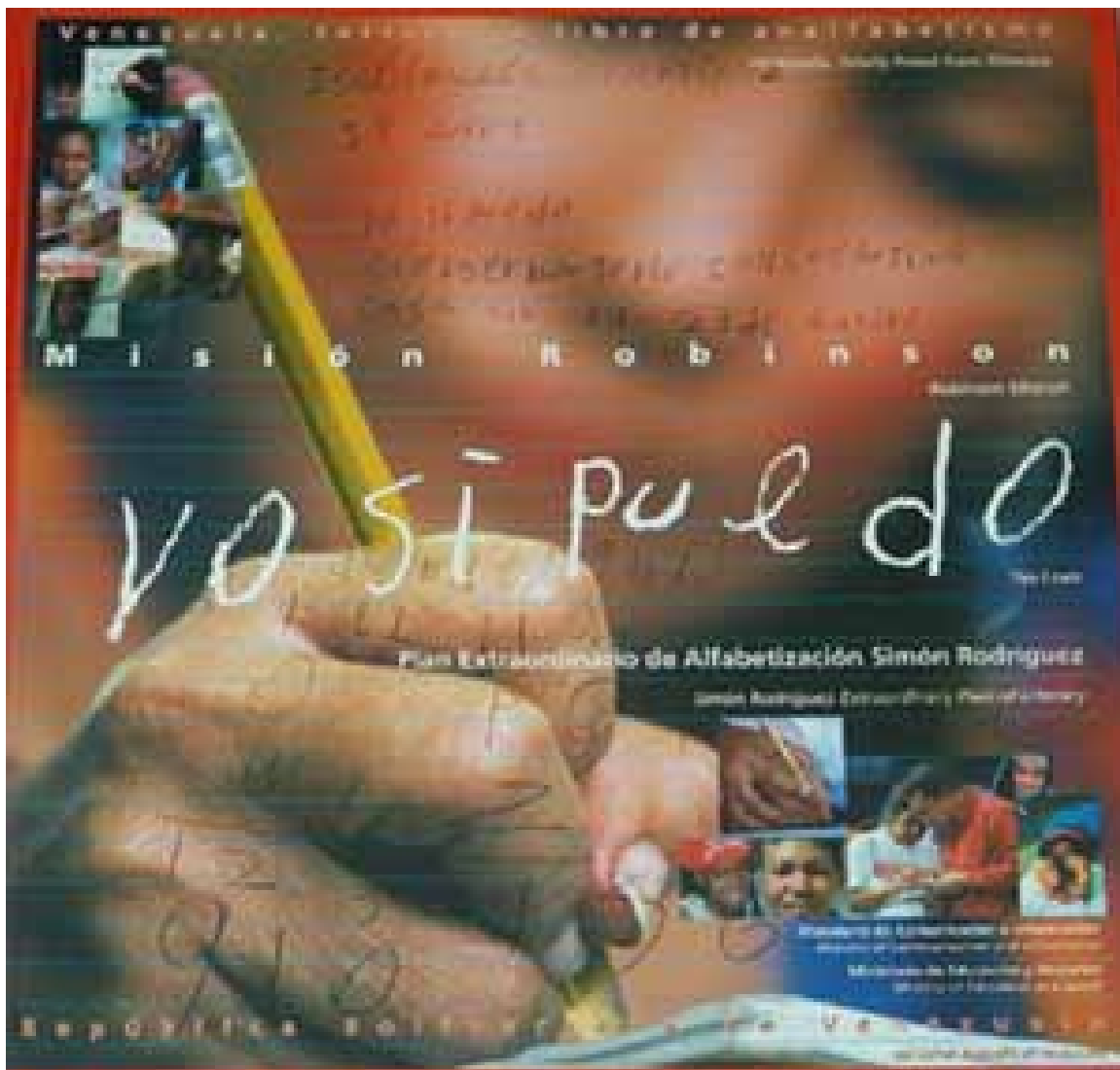
your, and territorial community as the center of educational endeavour.

Emancipating Practices and Challenges that must be solved

Regarding this political and teaching model, education is conceived as a citizenship-building instrument that will contribute to expanding and delving deep into the public space and deploying a Bolivarian socialism project. Practices, structures and relations that mutate the old classical school into an emancipating school are being rehearsed. There are some national tools such as the Program Todas las Manos a la Siembra (All Hands to the Planting Fields) that introduce new relationships between the school, manufacturing and food security. Other local ones such as the Citizenship Program are part of the appropriation and application of obligations and rights that turn a project into a collective initiative or state ones such as Spaces for Endogenous Cultural Curricular Development (Epedecués), whereby students and teachers reformulate part of the curriculum by defining flexible education proposals that reconfigure time, space,

and knowledge organization in the educational institution. All of these current transformations have a fundamental task that is the development of what has been called “cognitive sovereignty” or the ability to think with one’s own head. This goal constitutes an imperative requirement in political sovereignty in order to constitute the leading and participating democracy that is inherent to the Bolivarian socialism that is being created.

This revolutionary effort in the sphere of public education constitutes a true civilization delivery and in this transition, it is worthwhile to mention the enormous transforming and creative effort of the Venezuelan population, of many of its teachers, students and communities. As in any creation that aspires to deep changes, it has to overcome resistance, contradictions, tensions and learning. However, seeing the emergence of this novelty in teaching in action constitutes happiness and a challenge in a historical period when hope of a Patria Grande (Great Motherland) is re-emerging and it claims a liberating education for Our America. Venezuela is showing us a path we can learn from.



Teaching for Social Justice

Deirdre M. Kelly*



Talk of “social justice” has re-entered conversations about public school teaching, harking back to the grassroots political movements of the 1960s. The term suggests that advocacy of positive social change be seen as an integral part of teaching, albeit in a more self-reflective and humble spirit than was present in many earlier calls. Often, however, social justice is not defined explicitly, and when it is, the definitions are theoretical and varied. Explicit accounts of what teaching for social justice looks like in practice are sparse.

My own thinking about this to date has been highly influenced by the theoretical work of political philosophers Iris Marion Young and Nancy Fraser. In broad terms, I conceptualize teaching for social justice as involving both (a) anti-oppression education and (b) teaching for democratic citizenship. At issue in anti-oppression education is the value of self-development and concerted attempts to challenge the institutional constraints on self-development. At issue in teaching for democratic citizenship is the value of self-determination and concerted attempts to challenge the institutional constraints on self-determination.

Anti-Oppression Education

Anti-oppressive education seeks to counter various forms of oppression. Often these forms of oppression are conceptualized as “the isms”: sexism, racism, heterosexism, ableism, classism, ageism, and so on. Rather than categorize forms of oppression by which group is suffering, however, Young instead classifies oppression by the different types of structural constraints placed on the self-development of members of particular social groups. She discerns five major forms of oppression: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence.

This approach to defining oppression is attractive for several reasons. It avoids divisive, and ultimately unproductive, debates about which form of oppression is primary or which group is the most oppressed. It encourages a focus on the interconnections between oppressed groups, where these exist, while allowing important differences to be seen as well. It also acknowledges that all people in a country like Canada belong to, and identify with, multiple groups, and these group differences often cut against each

other. Thus, depending on the specific context, people may find that a particular group identity places them in either a relation of privilege or oppression.

I hasten to add that Young is not saying the “isms” are not important or do not need to be discussed or that all oppressions are the same. Indeed, a starting point for Young’s analysis is her recognition that various social movements (against racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia and heterosexism, and class oppression) have successfully argued for seeing each “ism” as having its own dynamic and history.

To illustrate, we can see educators attempting to work against cultural imperialism when they: (a) draw their students’ attention to the social studies textbook’s framing of the period 1870-1900 as “The opening of the West,” which presents as universal and positive the European settlers’ perspective; (b) discuss with students the reasons for the omission of Aboriginal perspectives and reflect on how the omission feeds into existing stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples; and (c) make visible Aboriginal perspectives. We can see educators working against systemic violence, such as gay bashing, when they name, discuss, and refuse to tolerate homophobic slurs or when they agree to sponsor a gay-straight student alliance at their school. We can see educators working against marginalization when they lobby for resources and institutional and classroom policies that would include people labelled with developmental, psychiatric, and physical disabilities and single mothers with small children. We can see educators working against powerlessness when they work with low-income families, who may not speak the dominant language, to make them feel respected, valued, and welcomed as partners in their children’s education. We can see educators working against exploitation when they explore with their students the idea of unequal structural relations wherein, as Iris Marion Young stated in her book *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, “the energies of the have-nots are continuously expended to maintain and augment the power, status, and wealth of the haves,” such as when disenfranchised immigrants or workers located in the Third World toil under poor conditions for the benefit of multinational corporations.

Teaching for Democratic Citizenship

Besides institutionalized conditions that make self-development possible, justice in Young’s conception requires self-determination. In the context of education, this means an emphasis on teaching for democratic citizenship. “If,” as Young argues, “all persons are of equal moral worth, and no one by nature has greater capacity for reason or moral sense, then people ought to decide collectively for themselves the goals and rules that will guide their action.” Teachers can, and should, play a key role in nurturing a more active and deliberative form of citizenship among young people. Such teachers help students to articulate their interests and learn analytic, communicative, and strategic skills and to think about the consequences for social action based on their analysis of public policy issues. Such teachers attend



to teaching critical literacy (including a collective critique of media and other key institutions that contribute to the quality of the process by which publics are formed), certain content knowledge, and classroom and school dynamics.

To illustrate, we can see educators teaching for democratic citizenship when they take seriously the decision-making of school-age children and youth. They do this, for example, by involving students in the setting and weighting of assessment criteria, by giving students greater responsibility in teaching and learning, or by changing the internal governance of the classroom or school, ceding more power to students to develop, say, codes of conduct or anti-racist school policy.

Social Justice versus Social Responsibility

How does my conception of social justice relate to social responsibility? The term “social responsibility” has gained widespread use in British Columbia, no doubt due to the publication in 2001 of the BC Ministry of Education’s *Social Responsibility: A Framework*, part of the BC Performance Standards. The authors of this framework were well intentioned and perhaps would not see their vision as at odds with the one I have presented above. No doubt frustrated by the conservative Fraser Institute’s guiding motto (“If it matters, measure it”), the authors and proponents of this document hoped to draw attention to and enhance the status of values and learning outcomes that are obscured by

standardized testing, namely: “contributing to the classroom and school community,” “solving problems in peaceful ways,” “valuing diversity and defending human rights,” and “exercising democratic rights and responsibilities.”

While in some ways laudable, the Ministry’s framework is fledgling. Where social responsibility is defined so abstractly, teachers are not encouraged to think through how injustice and social change occur—or how their practices support or challenge the status quo. In addition, the educators who developed these voluntary performance standards may underestimate an implicit orientation to compliance in the document. To take but one example, drawn from the “Elaborated Scale: Grades 8 to 10 Social Responsibility,” section on “Contributing to the Classroom and School Community”: A student who “exceeds expectations” (the top category), among other things, “displays leadership skills, including diplomacy, compromise, consensus, and accountability.” Students who merely meet or fully meet the expectations “sometimes” or “frequently” “support and encourage others.” Does this imply that only an elite group of students are expected to be leaders? What about other qualities of leadership, such as the ability to assess who benefits and who loses in the maintenance of the status quo, to question conventional wisdom, and to take a stand based on critical reflection, dialogue, and new knowledge? Highlighting only such leadership skills as consensus building assumes—and generalizes across all school contexts—a satisfaction with the status quo.

The subtext of obedience to authority is underscored by the illustration on the cover of the Social Responsibility framework document—a schoolboy in a crossing-guard uniform holding a stop sign. However unintentionally, an image of the ideal student as conformist appears to guide what many educators choose to validate. For example, my daughter’s elementary school made social responsibility a theme, and one component involved school adults occasionally issuing written slips of recognition to students. My daughter was recognized several times for picking up garbage without being asked to do so. I am still waiting for her or another student to be praised for having the courage to speak out against a homophobic slur or for displaying creativity in group problem-solving.

The way students demonstrate whether they are meeting expectations in these areas imply that responsibility rests with the individual student; the document underplays the pedagogical, organizational, and social contexts within which teachers are asked to assess individual student performance. Even when modified by the word “social,” the word “responsibility” connotes being accountable for one’s own actions or having duties and obligations. (By contrast, the term “social justice” connotes fairness and equity.)

In addition, because the social responsibility framework suggests that teachers make judgments about, and extensively record, student attitudes

and behaviours, I fear that intensified surveillance of children and their families may result—and so too might the risk of infringing upon their civil liberties. Researchers in Ontario looking at how teachers were coping with changes in classroom assessment revealed numerous such concerns related to assessing what the researchers called the “affective domain.”

If we want to raise nonconformists and future democratic activists, maybe we want to praise students who have the courage to question their teachers’ perspective, the ability to defend their perspective against the majority, or the knowledge to critique the textbook. Although making for a riskier classroom environment, these qualities would serve our democratic society better in the long run. If we hope to press toward a vision where self-development and self-determination are valued for all groups, we need educators (in partnership with others in the community) to take a stand against the institutional inequities that constrain self-development and self-determination and to encourage their students to learn how to do the same.

Suggested website: British Columbia Ministry of Education. (2001). BC performance standards. Social responsibility: A framework. Victoria: British Columbia Ministry of Education. [Available: <http://tinyurl.com/bk5tm>]

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“University extension from a popular education perspective in the context of the New Cuban university”

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SUMMARY

The University is the essential education institution in society for the conservation and development of its culture. Cuban Higher Education in the 21st century is involved in the universalization of teaching, extensionist policy by nature and leaving an imprint in municipal cultural development. It is in this context that the role of University Extension stands out as an important social responsibility and an integrating educational process arising from the designed teaching model. In the accumulated experiences there are proposals, reflections, references and conceptualizations from different authors who venture in its implementation in the Ministry structure and in specific Universities; in any event, in texts that have been reviewed and as far as we know, there is not enough theory that enables us to systematize Municipal University Headquarters (SUM) from a pedagogical standpoint as a territorial cultural referent. Therefore, there is a need to set the foundation for potentialities offered by the model from a popular education conception, in order to carry out an educational process that serves existing demands and tackles pertinent issues in the cultural and social realms.

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Key words: university extension, systematization, popular education, teaching model, culture and society

“University Extension from a popular education perspective in the context of the New Cuban University”

The current and most recent universalization of Higher Education allows for university teaching outreach to the municipality. This vision changes the conception of the social surroundings the university has worked with so far. In other words, it is about making allowances within these surroundings, which adds to practices that have taken place so far.

In current work, this is defined as the core theme of systematization: How can we contribute to theoretical systematization of University Extension in the New Cuban University from the perspective of Popular Education? The goal consists in setting the theoretical foundation based on Popular Education conceptions, on potentialities offered by the New Cuban University model in order to establish a system of University Extension and reach pertinence in cultural and social issues.

“Establishing a system is a particular way of investigating, arising from Popular Education, which shares its social transformation commitments (...) it is a process that starts with practice, reflects on practice and produces knowledge



in order to transform practice”¹. Popular Education, as a political and teaching concept, is the basis of work that moves forward; therefore, some criteria and reconceptualizations which have been studied by some individuals educated in the topic, are revisited in light of the 21st century.

Paulo Freire said: “To the extent that man, becoming part of his life context relationships, reflects on them and provides answers to challenges that face him, that man is creating culture”². Therefore, with the proposed perspective as a basis, it is imperative that extensionism allows for human growth process in the cultural and educational arena in individuals developing it, in such a way that habits, interests, ways of thinking and feeling, and the way individuals project their future as well as their educational and cultural needs can contribute to increasing quality of life in the population. Thus, what was proposed gets reinforced: “Latin American Popular Education is, at the same time, a social and cultural phenomenon and an education concept”³.

The above is justified by the presence of certain features of the extensionist process, constituting social and

cultural problems and needs among others, which happen in the context of the Municipal University Headquarters, such as: heterogeneity in the composition of teachers, application and implementation of the new teaching model in higher education, psychosocial characterization, cultural diversity of student enrollment and its integral and general preparation, among others.

These features are based on some theoretical and practical elements supporting the teaching experience that is being developed, such as: designing a model that, on one hand, encourages progress, that does not allow for discouragement or failure, that conquers students so that they study and raise their general integral culture and, on the other hand, challenges the universal teaching model, its features, components as well as social and culture performance.

In the research, the following methodological steps were followed: analyzing the University Extension theoretical and methodological presuppositions; studying and analyzing Popular Education theoretical and methodological conceptions; studying the new teaching model as a higher education universalization condition; analyzing educational, cultural and social daily practice in universalization conditions; designing and implementing educational and cultural actions in the teaching process in universalization conditions, and systematizing designed actions.

In the extensionist task, massiveness should be harmonized with quality, individual responsibility with collective discussion, individual growth with group contribution. With the application of the new teaching

1. Messina, Graciela, Article: “Systematization: about its specificity” Taken from Revista Interamericana de Educación de Adultos (Interamerican Magazine on Adult Education). Year 27, No. 2 July-Dec / 2005. Page 163.

2. Freire, Paulo. Pedagogy of Hope. Editorial Paz y Tierra, Río de Janeiro, Brazil, 1968.

3. Jara Holiday, Oscar, Popular Instructor and tracer. Director of the Alforja Study and Publication Center. San José, Costa Rica, Taken from his Article: “Let’s re-define PE proposals and practices before current historical challenges”. From the book by Pontual, Pedro de Carvalho et al.: “Popular Education in Latin America: dialog and perspectives. “Tips on Education for Latin American Adults – CEAAL. Ed, MEC/UNESCO. Brazil, 2005.

model, this task considers students both as subject and object of their own learning and, at the same time, responsible for their own educational process. The above makes them deserve becoming cultural promoters that every society needs, by demonstrating how to be better individuals, better professionals, and most of all, better human beings, in their new working practice, in their family and in their community. Freire is revisited when expressing that: "Education is the means through which universal and social ideas are transposed for life through changes in our conceptions, knowledge, practice and attitudes which are materializations of our thoughts, our dreams and wishes in such a way that the individual and societal project that is necessary to build a human society can be engrained in young generations"⁴.

Ideas on the validity and contributions of Popular Education are shared: for this educational conception, education is a democratic and democratizing act both within and beyond the classroom. The key is the instructor's democratic attitude. Its proposal is based on the "pedagogy of dialogue" and on participation. He should be able to learn and to teach. He should know how to speak because he knows how to listen. He should offer his knowledge because he is open to another's knowledge.

Popular Education, according to its foundations, asserts that the "starting point" of every educational process is the level of the student, whatever this might be. "The starting point is always students' consensus and not instructor's rigor". Popular Education offers a relevant way to achieve such rigor and not only as an educational act but also in all sociopolitical, cultural and organizational development, fields in which it takes part with increasing impact every day. That is why Popular Education assumes a consequential position and also defines education as a "political act". Consequently, it declares, "Education is a political act, in addition to a teaching act"⁵.



By carrying out a reflexive and critical analysis of the above, upon considering University Extension as an educational process, seen from the perspective of Popular Education and especially as a socio-cultural phenomenon with the main goal of promoting culture, it is analyzed as the new model that creates practices that intentionally focus on improving human spirituality, which translates into cultural promotion from the curricular aspect in the teaching act itself and in every formal and non-formal educational space, in independent orientation and study control, in the use and management of scientific information, in the educational task and value creation in an intentional way and in a natural way, problem-posing education and not "banking" democratic education, education that is not authoritarian, in the individual's self-transformation and its influence in the academic, professional, social, family and personal environment.

In that sense, individual and collective efforts are taking place and they have provided the following results: discovering new teachers in the domain's professional force, work entry of most of the students who did not have any link with education and work, improving scientific and teaching cloister composition, systematizing scientific events involving students and teachers, where

research areas that are a solution to local and territorial needs are disseminated and promoted, systematizing educational classroom work, with the political intentionality required, specific cultural, professional and general promotion, and also respect for cultural diversity besides the creation of scientific groups geared towards the knowledge of Popular to the highest degree, for understanding students in this educational paradigm and their role in the education of the youth as active social individuals who transform their future.

As a fundamental conclusion, it is assumed that the New Cuban University Model offers some potentialities where Freire's teaching ideas converge, ideas that can be achieved from the Popular Education conception, in order to reach cultural and social relevance while systematizing University Extension as an educational process.

4. Paulo Freire. Contributions for teaching. Moacir Godotti, Margarita Victoria Gómez, Jason Mafra, Anderson Fernandes de Alencar (compilers). CLASCO, Latin American Council of Social Sciences, Buenos Aires. ISBN 978-987-1183-81. Article: Social Capital, Culture and Development, Page 469 and 470, January 2008.

5. Carlos Núñez Hurtado. Popular Education Instructor and trainer. Honorary President and member of CEAAL Steering Committee, Mexico. Taken

from his Article: Contributions for the Latin American Debate on PE Validity and Projection. From the book by Pontual, Pedro de Carvalho et al.: "Popular Education in Latin America: dialogue and perspectives". Education Council for Latin American Adults . CEAAL, Ed. MEC/UNESCO. Brazil, 2005.

A Path to Equality, Autonomy and Emancipation in the Classroom: Pedagogical Praxis from Central America

Esperanza Tasies Castro
María Trejos Montero*

First steps

At the end of the 1990s, after 30 years of union work, we found that in SEC¹, in spite of the fact that about 80% of the membership was female, almost all of the decision-making positions were held by men. Having looked at this organizational reality from a gender perspective, Sister Carmen Kuczma from the BCTF² and Jim Rader of CoDevelopment Canada³ offered their solidarity through support for a systematic programme of political and union training for our sisters. The purpose of it was to promote self-knowledge and understanding among women and the development of a gender perspective and sensibility as well as political and union awareness.

This complex and beautiful experience has touched upon identity and relationship constructions that were imposed by patriarchal capitalism. As a result, we have empowered ourselves and assumed a new positioning in the union and in the world as sisters, as compañeras and as engaged women who ask:

What can we do in our classrooms to link this experience to our pedagogical work?

This echoes a question asked during the first Central American Teacher Union meeting sponsored by CGETN-ANDEN⁴ (1992).

We first analyzed sexist perceptions and attitudes and then collectively developed a teaching module called “We, women and men, in our families, schools and the community” (2000) to be used as a tool to speak about gender in the classroom.

An experience that transcends borders

Once again the BCTF and CoDevelopment Canada, through Brother Steve Stewart, supported us in sharing this experience with FOMCA⁵, under the coordination of Luzmila Sanchez Cosio, of SEC’s Women’s Secretariat (2002).

Thus, we began a process of collective research and exploration with teachers’ unions in Peru (SUTEP), Ecuador (UNE) and Central America (STEG-Guatemala, COLPROSUMAH-Honduras, ANDES 21 DE JUNIO-El Salvador, CGETN-ANDEN-Nicaragua, SEC-Costa Rica and FREP-Panamá, 2002-2004).

We investigated the pedagogical practices of the different educational communities and we deconstructed the positivist educational models of the dominant sectors that assume that knowledge is to be found outside of the cognitive subject. This leads to a curriculum that attacks the cognitive subject by promoting classist, sexist, adult-centered and ethnocentric views of the world and pedagogical practices.

The unionized women of FOMCA have created a meaningful relationship as we unveil the official, the hidden and the real curricula. We have established conceptual and methodological tools that allow us to assume ownership of the real curriculum, in a critical and dialectical way, and to share pedagogical experiences in the classroom, in freedom and for freedom.

Within this scenario, one constant element has been the issue of external or foreign educational models which, as Freire discussed, bring about many contradictions in the official curriculum that was established to “discipline”, “normalize” and “fragment” relationships, practices and biased asymmetric views. They also “camouflage” behaviorist and reengineering practices, under a hidden discourse of domination that integrates constructivist principles –some may even call them “constructionist- to sell the idea that these unrelated concepts will create “critical citizens who are capable of transforming their environment”.

We have established strategic premises from which to deconstruct the official curriculum, starting from the classrooms, which are conceived as “micro-universes” that reproduce scholarly contents and vital moral mandates to sustain social control. We also look at the intrinsic nature of the teaching-learning process which in turn, replicates institutions that perpetuate a social order of asymmetric relationships in cultural trends or thought. This is a synthesis of Parson’s structural functionalism that redefined the school system in the 1960s in the twentieth century.

We question this social function of the “school”, the

*“Education in our Americas
can only be understood as an economic and
social problem...”*

José Carlos Mariategui

1. Costa Rican Union of Education Workers-SEC, now known as the Costa Rican Union of Female and Male Education Workers –SEC after the 2008 bylaw reforms.

2. British Columbia Teachers Federation, Canada

3. Co-Development Canada, NGO that shows a deep ethical and political commitment to social movements in the Americas

4 National Association of Nicaraguan Educators

5. Federation of Central American Teachers Organizations - FOMCA.



“normalization” of behaviors and pre-established roles that legitimates different types of inequality by stigmatizing children in classrooms through so-called socialization.

Furthermore, in conceptual and methodological terms, we have collectively analyzed the role school plays in reinforcing sexist, classist, adult-centered and ethnocentric roles and stereotypes. These are conveyed either explicitly or implicitly in educational resources and activities through a hidden agenda that legitimizes social and historical inequalities as “natural” givens. In this way, we continue working towards a double curriculum (both moral and academic) with which schools can socialize through cultural mediation.

Culture, gender and education

Understanding culture as a concrete humanizing form, we have added to it our initial pedagogical proposal and the processes and products that have emerged in each country. These stem from research and the direct praxis of teachers organizations and educational communities using the social and cultural paradigm of L. Vigotsky, considering the social and cultural factors of redefining students in the teaching-learning process; a core assumption that, aside from justifying different analyses, is part of the pedagogical praxis created by the educational communities.

What about the context?

We interpret the school system in the context of a deep crisis (political, economic, social and cultural) of the general norms of society. For us, the system “paralyzes” the cognitive subject, since its role is to establish a relationship with “legitimate knowledge and culture”; the dominant culture that limits thought and action. Thus, the subject is alienated

from the world, since it only relates to it though mediated domination. Freire refers to this as the “immobilization” concept.

The power groups that run nation states have exercised their historical hegemony (Yudice, 2002: 341) not only through their greater economic power, but through their ability to transform their interests into everybody’s interest. So, we understand the role of schools through an almost invisible process that selects cultural contents that promote internalized domination. Those concepts that are sewn into the official curriculum by the state become the day-to-day and thus, the real curriculum.

Drawing up a real alternative curriculum

The cultural selectiveness of the school system might seem arbitrary, senseless or without any direction. However, under the current circumstances, the role of the school as a homogenizing tool is also undergoing a crisis; a fact that has opened up space for questioning this cultural hegemony, as Yudice suggests. We have taken this as a starting-point for the deconstruction of official and hidden curricula.

These experiences help us learn through a dialectical synthesis and antithesis, rebuking the dominant thesis in the antithetic sense proposed by Freire. He emphasizes the need to locate the “epochal unit” in terms of time and space; “a group of ideas, notions, hopes, doubts, values, challenges and the dialectic interaction of opposites to achieve fulfillment. The concrete representations of many of these ideas, values, notions and hopes, as well as their obstacles (...) are the themes of an era.” (Freire, 1976).

In this sense, within the limits of freedom that teachers have, a path opens up for conscious pedagogical practice



with enough theoretical and practical tools to deconstruct the hidden curriculum. Thus, the rebuilding of the official curriculum by unionized Central American teachers involves an inquiry into the dialectical interaction of a group of definitions and world notions imposed by the official curriculum, in order to find the contradictions and to rebuild them in a context in which schools find themselves the disciplinary and norm enforcers of social control.

Using our biographies

Moving to a biographical location implies positioning ourselves in the history of our peoples, from the multiplicity of interrelationships that converge in the school day-to-day. Thus, we have validated and re-defined experience by assuming a collective epistemological position that supports our being in the real world. While aware of some of the valid questions about Piaget's work, we do contextualize some of Piaget's exercises in order to analyze the way in which we build knowledge, based on the "abandonment of our egocentric positions". The nature of reality is understood as a subjective agreement between many, necessary to transform an adverse reality that can be known by the contradictions that explain it.

A process that becomes richer step by step

Even though it is not possible to present everything that we have learned during the last ten years, we should mention some of the concrete modules that have been developed by the participating teachers: the UNE module, Jane Goyes coordinator; the FREP module, coordinated by Zoraida Aizpurua, and that of SUTEP, Teresa Chaves coordinator; as well as a didactic guide which summarizes all of these enriching and ongoing experiences.

Furthermore, a team of teachers from ANDES 21 DE JUNIO, accompanied by Teresa Perez Nolasco and members of COPEMH, are taking on the challenge of developing a new module with other components and connections for primary education and secondary education respectively.

Daily praxis/practice has allowed us to rediscover ourselves,

as teachers organizations, in direct relationship to the educational work. Alternative pedagogical ideas can only emerge from the actors in educational communities who are fighting for social justice in all areas of society; even moving from the subjects of gender and class, which are specific and always important, to a more general curricular analysis.

So, a concrete question that took us from the union back to our classrooms has resulted in the creation, with enthusiasm, clarity and commitment, of valuable initiatives and experiences. It has crystallized new relationships and visions of being in and with the world, as Freire teaches us, under the principles of non-discrimination, inclusivity and respect for diversity.

New readings of pedagogical work have triggered new questions related to teaching practice in the classroom, such as:

How can we link this pedagogical experience to the political and unionized training of our organizations towards processes of democratization and emancipation?

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FINAL DECLARATION OF THE XVI LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN STUDENT CONGRESS



MONTEVIDEO, AUGUST 2011

ORGANIZACION CONTINENTAL LATINOAMERICANA Y CARIBEÑA DE ESTUDIANTES

The more than five thousand students who have gathered for the XVI Latin American and Caribbean Student Congress in Montevideo, Uruguay, believe that the crisis of the capitalist system is unsustainable. It has created hunger, misery, desolation, wars, occupation, death and unemployment. We are witnessing the debacle of the neoliberal model and thus, we declare, from this corner of the continent, that we stand against imperialism to defend the life and dignity of human beings. We know that socialism is the only solution to this system in crisis and the only alternative for the dignity of the peoples of the world.

Remembering the still-relevant historic principles of the Cordoba Reform, we affirm both our will and our actions to defend free, public, secular, high-quality, engaged, jointly-governed and autonomous education that is committed to the essential social changes that humanity needs.

Just as the Cordoba youth expressed in the first decade of the century, we say again, with the same strength and vehemence, that we are stepping into a new American time, which can be seen in the changes occurring today in our Americas that are necessary to eradicate intervention and get us back our sovereignty and independence. We should fight against those things that have victimized us for centuries: underdevelopment, poverty and illiteracy. It is essential that integration processes such as ALBA, MERCOSUR, UNASUR and CELAC focus on the unity of our continent in every way: through education, health, and culture and by reinforcing our Latin American identity so that we can build one big homeland.

From the land of Artigas, we depart today, August 14, the day of the Uruguayan student martyrs, firmly convinced that struggle is the only path to victory and the ultimate liberation of our peoples, and that only they can be the protagonists of history. The young will play a paramount role in unifying the popular sectors. We call upon the students of the continent and of the world to join us in our struggle against imperialism for our ultimate freedom.

Our American hemisphere, which has produced illustrious patriots and brave men and women, witnessed the creation of OCLAE 45 years ago. That dream came true in order to resist the battering of our main enemy: imperialism. It proved its relevance by creating resistance during the times of the military dictatorships and by its perseverance during the neoliberal ascent. It has withstood the commodification of education, the repression of the student movement, the criminalization of protest and the dictatorships of silence that have been imposed by the media. All of these facts prove how current, necessary and relevant the organization still is.

We are determined to keep on building a platform that rises to the challenge of our time in the Americas, under the fundamental premise that integration and unity are our battle flags.

Public education is a fundamental human right and thus, it is the unconditional duty of the state to finance and regulate it. There is an urgent need to increase the budget of the public education sector since, with the advance of neoliberalism in the 1990s, almost half of post-secondary students are now studying in private institutions. Above all, we must fight against the intrusion of transnational capital into education on our continent. Our organization must be a tool for students to fight and create awareness. It must allow us to achieve many more victories and to defend all things public

We raise flags of solidarity with the Chilean student movement. We condemn its repression and we unconditionally support their struggle to recover the public, free, high-quality and democratic education that neoliberalism stole from them.

As educator Paulo Freire said: "In a revolutionary society, science and technology must serve the permanent liberation of people's humanity". That is why we stand firm; knowing that the future belongs to us and that the day will come when the sun will rise again and a beautiful spring will blossom.

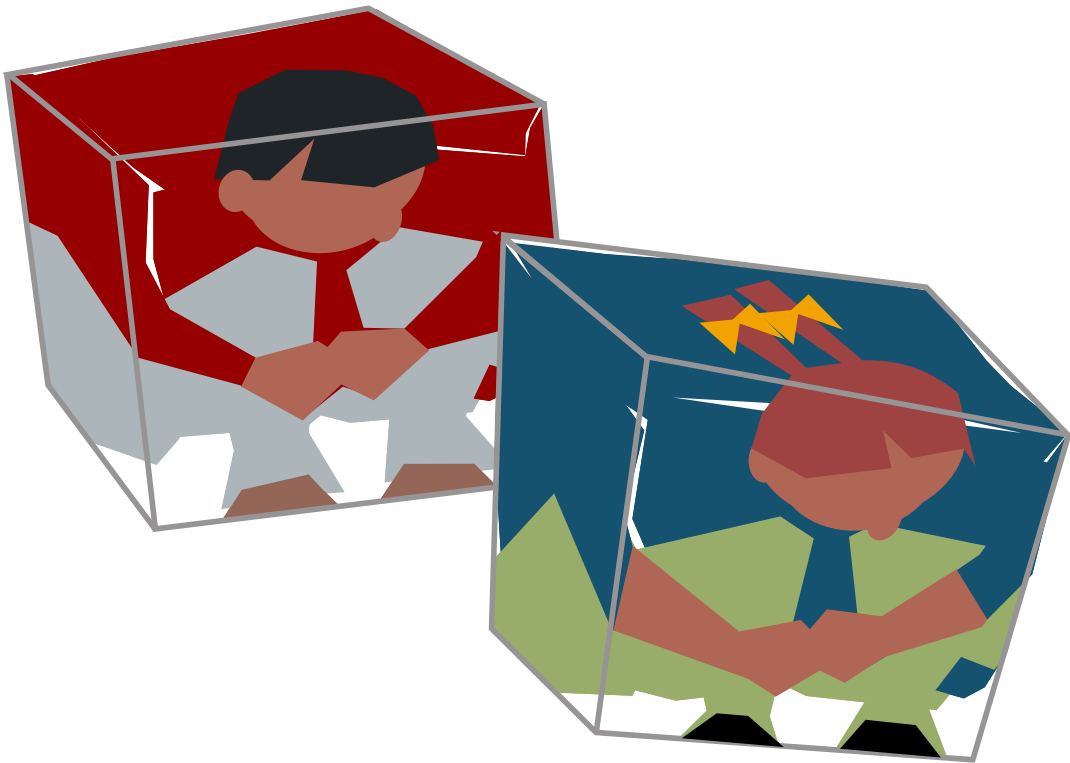
Hasta la Victoria! Siempre! Ever Onwards to Victory!



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