

# PRELACJournal

REGIONAL EDUCATION PROJECT FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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education for all



The meanings of education



Regional Bureau of Education  
for Latin America and the Caribbean

## PRELAC journal / N° 2

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## PREFACE

This issue of the PRELAC Journal treats one of the most important and least discussed aspects of education: its essential mission and meaning in today's and tomorrow's worlds. The articles included call us away briefly from the necessarily pressing subjects of education resources, structures, and management, and take us on an overflight both transcendent and profound during which we can view the entire horizon in order to better see where we are going and decide where we wish to land.

The world moves at a faster pace than do schools, which that tend to resist the changes that their contexts place upon them. Education has not yet been able to decipher nor to respond proactively to the changes in public and private life. For education, rejection of the meanings of the past must be faced in order that we may find one new ones that recognize the worlds of individuals and their societies, the international scenario, and the sometimes unsettling pace of the production and distribution of knowledge, of scientific and technological progress, and of cultural diversity.

The articles in this issue offer theoretical contributions for this kind of essential inquiry; contributions for the humanization and full exercise of citizen rights. They present viewpoints that provide to education the perspectives of other sectors and disciplines.

Addressing the subject of the meanings of education is among the key concerns of PRELAC, the Regional Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean, which guides the efforts of UNESCO in our region.

There, this subject is presented in all of its elements of criticism and hope in Strategic Focus 1, deemed to be a top priority by the Ministers of Education of the region in the first meeting of the project in November, 2002.

PRELAC utilizes the "Pillars of Learning" of the Delors Report –learning to do, to learn, to live together, and to be– as a basis for asking about the meanings of education, stating that understanding these factors is the key to education finding an effective response to a globalized world.

The present issue of the journal is derived principally from papers presented at the meeting entitled "The Meanings of Education and Culture" organized in March, 2005 by the Ministry of Education of Chile and the Chilean Council of Arts and Culture. The event brought together participants from Europe and Latin America to share views on education from various perspectives—philosophy and ethics, the sciences, the arts, citizen participation and human rights. The meeting's subtitle, "cultivate humanity" was, and is the motto is that directs are efforts in this area.

To the papers presented at that meeting we here add other contributions from perspectives related to the construction of personal and collective identity for a world replete with haste and uncertainty, but also riches and surprising contributions.

It is a pleasure to share with readers these suggestive reflections that depart from theory without losing sight of the values derived from experience. These are transcendent themes which will find expression in the future in novel curricular designs, new roles for teachers, and in new agendas for school management culture.



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\* These texts were prepared for the international seminar "Meanings of Education and Culture" organized by OREALC/UNESCO Santiago, the National Council of Culture and Arts (Chile) and the Ministry of Education of Chile held in Santiago in March, 2005.

\* Bibliographic references in pages 146 and 147.

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The meanings of education

# The search for meaning

Roberto Carneiro  
Philosopher, Portugal.

The creation of meaning is part of the human adventure.

To be human –in its inner essence– means seeking to understand and to find meaning in life. Our untiring search for happiness is, without doubt, the search for a lasting meaning for human existence.

Understanding this humanist ideal is no easy task.

Therefore, we currently see a veritable explosion of studies on happiness and academic research on subjects such as optimism, positive emotions, "happy" personality traits and related attributes that contribute to self-realization.

Seligman, one of the most renowned specialists and a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, summarizes the results of his research in the book *Authentic Happiness* (2002), in which he presents three major components of happiness: pleasure, commitment, and meaning. This third aspect is what Seligman defines as "the use of personal efforts to serve greater ends or purposes". He adds that of the three components cited, research shows that the first (hedonism) is the least important or lasting.

It is, therefore, a profound commitment to family, work, friends, and other interests as well as the continuous effort to conquer the meaning –and coherence– of life that produces greater or lesser inner happiness in people.

It is a commonplace that people with "causes", those intensely mobilized in the struggle for great social or

humanitarian objectives that transcend their private spheres of interests, are spiritually more likely to live happily and in harmony with the universe around them.

However, the structured search for meaning for the human relation with the world is an increasingly complex personal concept.

We do indeed live in a special time; one that witnesses the death of distance and of time.

The popular internet search engine Google<sup>1</sup> currently reports more than 200 million searches per day in 90 different languages. Nevertheless, the frontiers of meaning and intelligibility do not expand proportionately in an increasingly complex and fragmented world.

VeriSign, a company that operates a large part of the infrastructure of the internet, processes nine billion domain requests per day (access requests to .com or .net). However, the "domain" of human understanding constantly shrinks in a context of progressive fragmentation.

Wi-Fi technology proclaims mobility as the supreme icon of post-modernity by providing high-speed wireless connections to any person, anyplace, anytime. Meanwhile, humanity continues to struggle with incomprehension, difficulties in creating a sustainable nexus for the planet, and the loss of good sense. "Broad-band" technology links face the difficulties of "narrow-band" dialogue between different people.

<sup>1</sup> Information regarding the latest information society enterprises was taken from Friedman, T.L., "Is Google God?", NY Times.com, June 29, 2003.



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It is a world that we have neither totally assimilated nor can control. The tension created by the disparity between our beautiful explanatory models of how the world functions and the general experience of syncretism creates new questions for key areas of human understanding. These questions call into judgment the place of the human conscience –and its future– and question the basic concepts of modern learning while they challenge our past concepts of education.

Jerome Bruner defines the great emerging theme<sup>2</sup>: “the narrative should construct two simultaneous landscapes. One of these is the landscape of action in which the constituents are the arguments of action: agent, intention or objective, situation, instrument, something that corresponds to a 'grammar of history'. The other is the landscape of the conscience: that which those committed to action know, think, or feel, or don't know, don't think, and don't feel. These two landscapes are essential and distinct”.

But the truth is that the landscape of the human conscience is an orphan. Technological vertigo has taken possession of daily life. The velocity of change is on the increase and hinders interiorization of crises. The future decreasingly presents itself as a project of the past<sup>3</sup>.

In this whirlwind, education –the eminent social function– is trapped at the beginning of the new millennium, finding

itself in the crossfire between two styles of society. Having always been on the dividing line between permanence and mutation, conservation and innovation, education is submitted to unprecedented tensions and clearly mirrors all of the contradictions that afflict our societies. But this having been said, it is also important to note that within education are contained all of the hopes of a better society in the future. In the era of knowledge and abundant information, education re-acquires a front-line position in the strategic visions of our collective future.

In previous societies –stable, simple, and repetitive, memory was dominant, with principles being transmitted immutably, exemplary models being conserved as archetypes, demonstrating the primacy of structure over genesis.

In the new society, unstable, inventive, and innovative, project overcomes memory, future dominates past, models are constantly placed before public judgment, demonstrating the primacy of genesis over structure.

On the horizon of the new century we see a rebirth of education as a both reflection and project of a culture; fixed in memory, but open to the future. This cultural densification of education requires wisdom in synthesis, correct definition of ends, and detection of the Adriane's thread that guarantees security in the adventure of learning.

<sup>2</sup> Bruner, Jerome (1986). *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Citation based on Carneiro, R. (2001). *Fundamentos da Educação e da Aprendizagem*, Vila Nova de Gaia: Fundação Manuel Leão.

In other words, we must re-invent a new *paideia*, a word rich in Hellenic tradition which is a synonym simultaneously of education and culture. There can be no *paideia* without commitment –the commitment of each individual personally and to a clear life project in order to fully become a person. It requires a commitment as well with its pertinent social groups and with society as a whole in order to become wholly citizens in carrying out duties and rights of participation that are inalienable to a well-trained civic conscience.

In the matrix of our civilization, citizenship and the city are of great importance.

Cities have always been at the center of the history of civilization.

The first known cities appeared in Mesopotamia six thousand years ago. Uruk, Eridu, Ur, Babylonia, are present in the distant collective memory of the planet as the first independent, autonomous city-states.

It is no coincidence that these first urban centers appeared together with writing. This leap in the gregariousness, in living together, is intimately associated with one of the most dramatic cultural discoveries: a stable way of communicating that crosses the barriers of time.

Similarly, Greek history in the period between Homer and Alexander is that of the *polis*, seen as the supreme form of collective life and expression of the spirit. Politics, understood as the organization of such collective life, turns concentrically around the center of the city, given that the *polis* is the basic concern of Platonic philosophy and the agent of the *paideia*.

Athens proudly assumes its condition as the educator city of Greece. In its streets and squares children and young people are guided by pedagogues who lead them to orators, musicians, grammarians, so they

may learn. Education comprised the ultimate end of society everywhere and at all times. Cities assumed the responsibility of never resting in their educational task. The Sophists –the first traveling professional educators– provided young people with three-fold training: in virtue, in the arts of politics, and in the governing and administering the city.



In Rome, the Hellenic tradition was taken up and the *polis* was replaced by *civitas* and *paideia* was re-constituted under the term *humanitas*. This was so much a priority in the eyes of Greco-Roman civilization that Plutarch, in a beautiful Alexandrian proverb, proclaimed the *urbes ludimus*; that is, the entertaining city, as the best instructional environment, in which education is identified with childish leisure.

Free time comes to be synonymous with the spirit of availability to learn.

This view is not far from Augustine's City of God (*Civitas Dei*), in which it is always Saturday and happiness is eternal, that of the *Heliópolis* of Campanella, in which the city of the sun is a new city-school.

In the first cities, temples played a key economic, political, religious, and social role. Functionaries and scribes therein represent the most embryonic forms of the State apparatus.

The Mayan civilization, which reached its apogee around the IV century, depended strongly on the city. Uaxactún and Tikal are undeniable exponents of this, with associated population nuclei such as Palenque, Piedras Negras, and Copán. For this notable civilization, cities as a whole were seen as temples.

The twilight of Mayan civilization –ending in its mysterious disappearance between the XV and XVI centuries– was a consequence of the terrible struggle between cities that weakened and wounded it to the death.

Free time comes  
to be synonymous  
with disposition  
to learn.

The great crises of cities are undeniably associated with political turbulence and education models. This correlation appears in its extreme form with the negative city, destructive for the education project of Emile, leading J.J. Rousseau to

theorize about the superiority of the education of young people in the countryside and small rural villages.

The *cittá* of the renaissance appeared from a mixture of utopia and topia. If cities lose their urban character, this must be recovered in a non-place or somewhere in which urbe and school do not conflict.

With the passing of various millennia and the successive rise and fall of cities as well as the multiple conceptualizations and accompanying crises of education, the old controversy remains. Today, in mixed tones of drama and urgency, it is pointed to as one of the new and most important subjects of our troubled contemporary situation.

In effect, if cities appeared enthroned as the expression of civilization, as its maximum exponent, it is no less certain that today they present troubling symptoms of the decline of civilization. Unjust cities, violent cities, socially fractured, inhuman, and with uncontrolled growth. Ecologically suffocating, soul-less cities, whose centers –the *agora*– are no longer centers of civic and community activities, have been transformed, mutated, degenerated, into scenes of every kind of human confrontation and hopelessness.

Restoring urbanity to cities is a condition for their survival and of the civilizations upon which they depend. Solution of the urban problem is today a kind of measure of human development. But it is also a prime challenge for the rehabilitation of the educator city that, by analogy with the procreative function that assures biological continuity of the species, is the faithful depository of the mandate of renovation of communities and guarantees the human survival of society.

*Civitas*, in its broadest sense, denotes the very roots of civilization and of citizenship; that is, in it lies an invitation to democratic participation.

The world, in its totality, is increasingly urban. Unfortunately, the population agglomeration of cities is frequently chaotic. Especially in developing countries, cities are the scenes of suffering and symbols of human degradation.

Thus, saving cities is an integral part of the idea of the progress of humanity. Sedentary habitation, begun some ten thousand years ago –if compared to the millions of years of human nomadism that preceded it– is still in its infancy. Learning to live together in large organized spaces is still a rudimentary, somewhat superficial skill. However, there is hope. The emphasis that is being placed on education for citizenship is one possible response to the urgent need for more civic spirit and better cities.



Reversing human erosion and combating urban decay are integral parts of a new education project for the XXI century. These objectives are linked to the humanization of large cities, the restitution of community life, the discovery of new venues for sustaining life-long education, with the peaceful and constructive mixture of people and to the reversion of anomic factors that have led to their decline in recent decades.

## A city of education and continuous learning must be keenly concerned with schools.



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Cities are home to diversity and creativity, receivers from their beginnings of the most powerful expressions of human pluralism. Transforming this potential through a creative act is one of the greatest challenges that the new society and the new economy present to the old city. In this way, cities are predestined to once again become the motors of progress and well-being, a function with which they have always been entrusted.

A city of education and continuous learning must be keenly concerned with schools, for they constitute its moral, cultural, and spiritual heritage without which it will be difficult to reconstruct the paths to human progress. Few other institutions possess the characteristics that allow them to elect schools as the social nucleus of a new project for the city.

The re-ordering of learning venues of the city, taking schools as points of application is in itself a civilizing challenge and a generator of civility.

But the *paideia* –and its application to the urban community model– also teaches us that the construction of meaning is typically a culture-driven activity. Given the fact that culture and its elements are products of history and of socialization, it is not surprising that in virtue of the partition of its symbolic systems –our veritable "community tool box"<sup>4</sup>–, education for meaning and the discussion of the meaning of education come together in the same arena of public concern. Human perfectibility and the development of citizenship are nothing more than two sides of the same coin; complementary objectives of the same learning enterprise. Bruner, in discussing social psychology, posits that culture and the search for meaning are the true causes of human action<sup>5</sup>. Thus, cultural progress is a primordial condition for achieving the desired educational consistency, providing the foundations of a collective conscience that will assure depth to the landscape of learning.

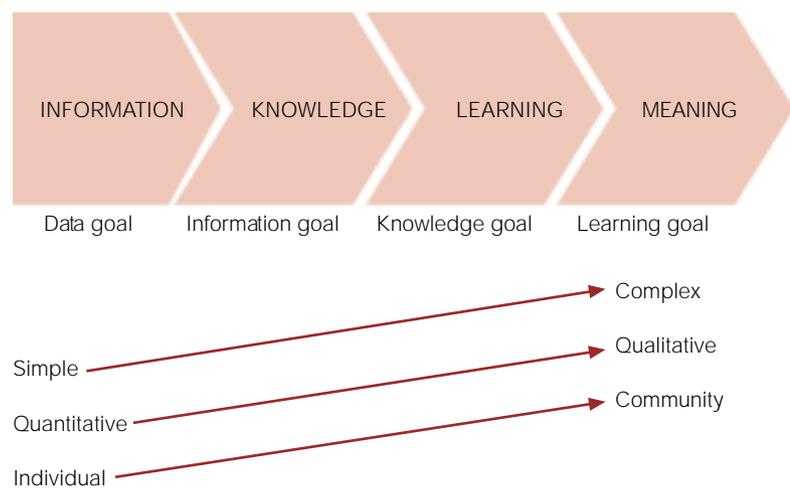
The coming decades –coincidental with the inauguration of a new century and millennium– merit a history substantially different from the recent past. If the *paideia* predominates –that is, if that which is social, cultural, and human gain priority over that which is economic– we will have before us an inclusive era in which all may inhabit the city and seek within it personal happiness and dignity in a coming together of interests with all other citizens.

This will be an authentic emancipatory narrative in which all are called upon to participate in the edification of the *polis* and in the construction of an educating society; that is, one of total inclusion.

This is also a dense period in which the continuation of meaning on the personal plane and the search for meaning on the social plane converge in a single challenge.

In this narrative we can discern four different although sequential levels in an ascending value chain of the creation of meaning process (Diagram 1).

**Diagram 1.**  
Value chain of the creation of meaning process



<sup>4</sup> Bruner, J. (1990). *Acts of Meaning*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Bruner, *ibid.*, p. 20.



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The first level is that which moves simple data collection to the category of information production. At this basic level, the information society is that which is concerned with the continual transformation of data, in the sense of re-ordering data in the form of information transmissible to common citizens. This is the phase of development of meta-data that feed the abundant and enormous universe of information that is sold as the basic product of the mass media.

The second level is related to the transformation of information into knowledge. The myth of a neo-prometeic and proto-cognocratic society, in which knowledge is raised to the status of a panacea of development was politically consecrated at the Lisbon European Summit, where participating Heads of State and Government formulated the celebrated Declaration of the Europe of Knowledge for the year 2010<sup>6</sup>. In this context, the infrastructures and networks of knowledge appear as the driving force of a new design for society: the knowledge society. The adventure of knowledge corresponds to general meta-information in the precise extent that one believes that cognition adds value of human intelligibility to informational raw material.

The third level is moves clearly from a context marked by the rapid pace of the supply of information and knowledge to a society dominated by the ecology of learning; that is, by the human capacity to maintain a high educational search standard. Learning, in its eminently relational and dialogue- related

dimension (Paulo Freire), and education, in its predominantly public and democratic purpose, demand a broad level of meta-knowledge in which understanding goes beyond being a simple object of knowledge to integrate itself fully into the subject of learning.

Finally, the fourth and last level involves learning to learn, or meta-learning, as a driving force of the meaning-creating awareness. This means moving toward a higher stage of life in which transformational learning occurs not only due to the prevalence of *habitus*, but above all due to the search for integrity, a congregating paradigm that is in contrast to the fragmentation of existence and a mechanistic division of life.

The trajectory herein summarized, that has as its object gradual evolution from a simple accumulation of data toward the superlative level of the conquest of meaning represents the three-fold maturity of the human condition involving movement from the simple to the complex, the quantitative to the qualitative, and the individual to the community.

These three steps follow timings and rites that each culture presents in its own way. With due regard for the diversity of cultures and plurality of configurations of identity, these traditions are invariably the result of learning journeys marked by progressive growth in the vision and ultimate sense with which human beings discover and re-interpret their singular relation with any form of transcendence<sup>7</sup>. *e*

<sup>6</sup> The major conclusions of the Lisbon European Summit held on March 23 and 24, 2000 are eloquently formulated in its concluding document: "Today, the Union assumes a new strategic objective for the next decade: to become the most dynamic and competitive economy in the world based on knowledge and able to guarantee sustainable economic development with more and better jobs and with greater social cohesion. Achievement of this objective involves a global strategy which seeks to:  
– prepare the transition to a knowledge-based economy and society through application of better policies within the information society and of R + D, as well as acceleration of the structural reform process in order to foster competition and innovation and conclusion of the internal market;  
– modernize the European social model, investing in people and combating social exclusion;  
– fostering healthy economic perspectives and favorable growth patterns, applying an appropriate combination of macroeconomic policies".

<sup>7</sup> Ferry analyzes how the definition of a "life of personal conquests" has changed through history, from the times of the search for a "good life", and lists the respective measurements. Ferry, L. (2002). *Qu'est-ce qu'une vie réussie?*, Paris: Bernard Grasset.

# Education during a time of change:

## A LATIN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

Martín Hopenhayn  
Philosopher, Chile.

### *INSTRUMENTAL DIMENSIONS* and dimensions of meaning

Instrument of cultural unification, the seed of progress, the basis for developing human capital, or disseminator of modernity – education has traditionally carried upon its shoulders an excessive burden. Today, it is argued that societies with high educational achievement extending throughout their populations tend to be more egalitarian in their income structures, due to both the employment benefits of education and its positive impact on health, connectivity, access to decision-making, etc. Highly-educated societies tend to have greater social cohesion, more diversified cultural markets, and exhibit economic growth based on productivity increases rather than on exploitation of resources. Today, there is a widely-held consensus both in the literature and in political debate that education is the “key-link”<sup>1</sup>. Along with the question of what kind of development we can carry out comes that of what kind of education we can offer and disseminate.

As the consensus of the day has it, the centrality of education for social and occupational mobility and for productive development is becoming even more decisive today, given the growing importance in the economic process of innovation and knowledge. The argument is that education enables people to participate in the technology revolution, get “intelligent” jobs, and join in the networks where knowledge circulates. A lack of education, on the other hand, leaves them stranded in cybernetic illiteracy and low-productivity, with low-wage jobs, and deprived of long-distance dialogue and extensive cultural interaction. The prospect of well-being offered by education today means not only the future opportunity to generate higher incomes than our parents had because of our greater human capital, but also the opportunity to use the skills we acquire in order to exercise new forms of citizenship, participate constructively in multiculturalism, combine immediate with media-transmitted experience; to, in short, update one’s own life history with the emancipating ideas of modernity. The more democratic and disseminated education is, the more we can approach this ideal.



On a more instrumental dimension, openness to the world is making national societies more and more dependent on external competitiveness, and this in turn depends on the incorporation of intelligence and fresh knowledge into the production system. The magic word is *innovation*. More than creation, this involves the creative use of knowledge and making use of this creativity in the economy. The competition resulting from the Third Industrial Revolution combines innovation with knowledge, and the development of knowledge with production of wealth. In the information society, knowledge is increasingly diverse, detailed, and multi-hued. At the same time, it is the major tool for generating money, power, and competition; imposing itself as both a norm and a requirement in terms of both supply and demand. It is ubiquitous; penetrating everywhere from the household to the State.

This means that development requires rapid progress in education. It is not merely a question of having a population with more years of formal schooling. One must learn more, but learn differently as well, acquiring skills in order to be incorporate ourselves into new forms of employment and to communicate rationally in negotiations and decision-making. ECLAC and UNESCO stated a decade ago that "with the transformation of knowledge into the central element of the new productive paradigm, changes in education become key factors for developing the ability to innovate and to create, while integration and solidarity are key aspects both for the exercise of modern citizenship and in order to attain high levels of competitiveness."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> CEPAL-UNESCO, 1992, p. 119. And in the same sense: "The dissemination of values, the ethical dimension, and behaviors that are part of modern citizenship, as well as the development of abilities and skills indispensable for international competition (increasingly based on technical progress) receive decisive support from the education and production of knowledge of a society. The reform of the system of production and dissemination of knowledge is, therefore, a crucial instrument both for facing the domestic challenge of citizenship as well as the external challenge of competition. Thus, this dimension is central for the proposal of ECLAC on economic change with equity." (Ibid., p.17).

So many benefits to society coming from education! Precisely because of the extent of its impact, it is impossible to limit it to the formal knowledge transmission system. The kinds of knowledge and skills that people require are scattered through multiple circuits of information and interaction. Variable combinations of formal education and industrial culture, internet use and technical training are among the options for encouraging useful viewpoints, testing new skills, enhancing talents. Through different levels these skills point toward use in the information society: the ability to express demands and opinions in the communication media and to take advantage of its increasing flexibility; personal initiative transformed into capital for enterprise and management; the ability to accept new personal and employment challenges; use of multiple rationalities; critical spirit in the selection and processing of messages; the ability to transform information into learning.

Acquisition of these new skills cannot begin with a blank slate. It is not just a matter of acquiring knowledge; learning must become an interactive process in which the emphasis lies far more on the production of new cognitive syntheses in the student than on acquiring ready-made knowledge. All this requires positive engagement, interaction, and a critical spirit. The very re-definition of learning involved in the transmission of these skills involves a paradigmatic shift in the style of education: from memorization to understanding; from absorbing information to discriminating between messages; from encyclopedic accumulation to digital storage; from mechanical discipline to responsible autonomy; from learning to learning to learn.

From a cultural perspective, the status of education is more ambiguous. On the one hand, it has been branded with a thankless historical role, subordinated to cultural homogenization projects under the paradigmatic Nation-State model seeking to align territorial and symbolic unity. From a multi-cultural perspective, traditional education carries a certain air of an illuminist, modernizing, and reductionist crusade. This kind of education, it is argued, seeks to eradicate local, and particularly ethnic cultures and to impose a common rationality in order to consolidate political and territorial unity by instilling its subjects with codes of modernity and adherence to nationalistic values.

In another, more typically humanist view, education and its dominant models exercises a counterproductive effect on its subjects: rather than stimulating their potential, its atrophies their creativity by forcing circular energies into square molds. By reproducing the patriarchal style of

repressing affection and exercising control over their bodies, it frustrates individual processes of growth and restricts self-knowledge.

But the cultural role of education has been reinterpreted positively, through an understanding that it is the basis from which one can critically rethink reality, conceive new collective projects, and learn to live in a multi-cultural world. Learning about differences or plurality should not be understood as one more subject matter (such as geography, history, or anthropology). It is necessary to re-formulate the encounter between the curriculum and the group to which it is directed. We do not understand the impact of this multi-cultural conception; nor the impact of audiovisual production, linked to the media society on learning materials and learners. There is a strange coming and going that, on the one hand, seeks to ground global content on local realities, and on the other, reformulates content from the worlds that students bring to the classroom. Their encounter is not resolved at high levels of education planning, but rather within the context of each school<sup>3</sup>.

The relation between education and multi-culturalism is no simple one. The kind of education able to bring together different world views incessantly challenges both teachers and students. To think of difference is to think of learners as "transversing" difference and of others as a questioning of self. This holds true for the encounter between different cultural identities, but also for the relationship between teachers and students, and between male and female students. Learning about differences thus comes to mean learning about citizenship: learning to put oneself in the place of the other and to see things through the other's eyes. As Magdaly Téllez says, "unless this relationship (alterity) is involved, the recognition of difference means no more than the acknowledgement of plurality, and what is required is for the difference to be resolved into experiences that construct democratic and civic relations (...). What is at stake is not just the problem of the existence of others as a historically and culturally produced difference, but the fact that the *self* is deterritorialized, and thus resignified in the sense that it ceases to be a closed identity in terms of membership in a nation, a race, a social class, a political organization, a profession, an academic community, etc., and becomes a plural space in which multiple narratives and languages interact" (Téllez, 1998, pp. 136-137). Opening oneself to differences, then, is not just a politically correct exercise in

<sup>3</sup> But left on their own, schools can disappear.



tolerance toward others. It involves people being transformed by the development of their ability to put themselves in the place of others, enrich themselves with others' world views, enlarge their own sensibilities with those provided by the experience of difference. Can formal education take on this challenge?

The signs change. It is no longer the case of culture being molded by education, but rather of education being questioned by culture and by the dynamism of identities in media interaction: the existence of differences in close proximity owing to the increase of migrants and their families; the segmentation of tastes due to increased supply in culture markets; the greater visibility of the *ethnic issue* in politics and the media; hybridizations between new and old and between local and external. All of this undermines the rigid, more homogenized ways of transmitting knowledge, and challenges the education system over those very historical referents that governed it for so many decades: the same education for all, long-running programs determined by central administration, and cultural unification through formal education. Both learning processes and the shared school environment are divided between a concept of education tinged with aspirations toward unity and new realities in the field of knowledge and daily life that fill the minds of students with all sorts of contrasting texts. These tensions require new cognitive synthesis and maps, and so far the formal education system has been unable to convert this demand, to use it as a lever to induce renovation.

With democracy progressively more related to broadened use of knowledge, information, and communication, education is increasingly considered to be of vital importance for the exercise of citizenship. More and more, processing of demands will be carried out through ICTs and networks more than through representatives. Use of state or public services and benefits will oblige citizens to be informed and to know how to manage and operate the codes of the information society. This makes education and knowledge increasingly important for fostering new forms of citizenship.

## CULTURAL CHANGES and confusion in education

We are beset by cultural change. Channels of information and knowledge diversify; the pertinence of accumulated knowledge is questioned and new organizational models appear. The hierarchies of text and image change, as well as the criteria that determine what is current and what is outdated, what is important and what is irrelevant. This obliges education systems to revise their classic paradigms.

Neither can one explain education only in terms of efficacy criteria; that is, to restricting reform to measurable achievements such as efficiency in the management of resources, student performance on standardized tests, dissemination of new technologies in schools, and/or coverage by level. The "ratio risk"<sup>4</sup> in information societies lies in imposing a reductionist logic to aggregated measurements when facing processes of high symbolic and cultural content. Thus, Magdaly Tellez seeks to approach the "education issue" from a dual perspective: in regard to the illuminist paradigm that sees education as the imposition of "rational bases that assure in advance the production and transmission of universal and true knowledge" as well as from "criteria of efficacy and operation to those who associate obsessions by controllable and measureable results, by specialists, by systemic function, by competitiveness, etc. (Tellez, 1998, p. 123).

It is at this point that we find Alain Touraine, questioning education systems and placing in doubt the transmission of functional knowledge: "One cannot speak of education where the individual is reduced to the social functions that he should adopt. Furthermore, the future of work is so unforeseeable and will be so far removed from what most of those now in school have learned, that the first thing we need to ask schools to teach them is preparedness for change rather than specific skills that will probably be obsolete or useless for most of them before too long." (Touraine, 1997, p. 326). In face of the uncertainty of the future and the relation between current education and future employment, Touraine proposes a *School of the Subject* oriented toward personal freedom, inter-cultural communication, and the democratic management of society

<sup>4</sup> For effects of this chapter, we understand ratio to mean a rationalization that excludes substantive considerations or cultural references, but instead gives preference to the efficient use of limited resources and the optimization of the impact of these resources in measurable variables. Some education reforms in the region have been criticized for using this type of rationalization.

and its changes. According to Touraine, schools need to bring together the two worlds in which young people live: "that which defines the material (above all professional) possibilities that society offers, and more concretely the employment market, and the universe of youth culture, disseminated by the mass media and transmitted through peers" (Touraine 1997, p. 333). It is not easy to integrate functional rationality of the transmission of productive skills with the codes that children and young people jointly construct in order to interpret the flow of images, symbols, icons, and informative fragments that they absorb from the mass media. How does one move from the operative to the interpretive, the rational-utilitarian to the symbolic-dramatic?

The idea of providing an education that takes into account the cultural processes and contexts of students brings us back to some of the premisses of the critical pedagogy that Paulo Freire proposed in the 1960s and 1970s seeking to bring education closer to the socio-cultural realities of students and to provide a critical, transformative perspective on the reality in which they live<sup>5</sup>. Times change, but the problems are the same. A study that summarizes case studies on the use of the internet in resource-poor schools states that in rural areas in Argentina, "success depended essentially on the ability to adapt the internet to the needs and environments of local communities (...) following principles that enabled knowledge to be exchanged in an equitable, horizontal way". (Bonilla, 2001, p. 10). In a similar sense, José L. González suggests a "critical approach" based on a constructivist model of teaching and learning. His objective, he states, is to "decode messages and contents by analyzing, ranking, and ordering the information put out by the media and the new information technologies" and that therefore "bringing communication and media educational material into the classroom and establishing it there means opening up the school to the outside" (González, 2000, pp. 4 - 5).

If cultural changes are in tension with the "hard" rationalization focus, they also raise a question in regard to assessment models restricted to measurable results on standardized tests. The "Newtonian paradigm" of assessment assumes bringing together information from atomized parts in order to construct an amalgamated whole. Here there is no room for complexity, ambiguity, subjectivity, or paradox – all of which are elements central to learning in the post-modern culture (Ray, 2000).

Assessment should not limit itself to measuring the final products of learning; it should reflect processes as well. As Ray points out, the new education model should transcend the domain of data or facts and emphasize knowledge of interconnections and self-awareness in regard to the learning process itself.

This type of discourse is not often encountered within the principal areas of Latin American education reform, which prefer to talk increasingly about learning pertinence, environments, and processes. Appeals to raise the quality of education (in that which is measurable), to train human resources in the interest of increasing the systemic competitiveness of national economies and fostering greater equity of access, relegates to a low priority cultural change, aspirations for self-knowledge, and juvenile cultures as part of the learning process. Euphoria for the new measuring instruments, for infrastructure in new areas of industrial culture and new information and communication technologies (ICTs), and for administrative reform –all necessary but insufficient– obscure these more qualitative questions.

These tensions present fundamental challenges to education and reveal a certain bewilderment on its part in the face of cultural changes. If we wish to move forward with a common educational and cultural agenda, then these challenges cannot be avoided. The Subject-Focused School proposed by Touraine is along this line. Identity conflicts between different groups, and the distances between the television screen and the classroom are tensions that, taken together, can combine education resources with others from the cultural area. But there is no guarantee of synthesis nor of reconciliation. The flight from the center appears as both reality and as horizon. Subjectivity is too fragmented to be absorbed and regimented into a system of stable knowledge and pre-defined disciplines.

## EDUCATION, audio-visual culture, and new ICTs

ICTs radically redefine communication, access to information, and the ways that knowledge is produced. They muddy the lines between learning and recreation, between roles of transmission and reception, between sedimented culture (values, religion, inherited knowledge) and contingent culture (video clips, television dramas, video games, chats, etc.), between illustrated and popular, selective and massive,

<sup>5</sup> "At the center of Freire's focus (...) students are encouraged to be critical analysts" and "critical teachers who follow this philosophy are encouraged to involve students in discussions and research of their personal situations. Personal concerns, needs, and experiences of students are at the center of the process" (García and Pruyñ, 2001, p.6). See also Freire and Macedo, 1987.

national and foreign, changing the perception of what, when, where, and why one knows and learns. Information is so accessible, immediate, varied, and detailed that the traditional figures of the tutor and teacher lose meaning in the eyes of children who log on and log off computer terminals as naturally as breathing. The loss of a cultural center, and of its locales of production and processing multiplies in this circulation between new places of creation and reception of symbols. Thus is created an appearance of democratic propagation of knowledge: the sensation that we drink at the font of the Great Universal Encyclopedia, with access for those who are connected to all knowledge.

How can we prevent education from finding itself in the dock, increasingly criticized for its ana-

chronisms while it confronts growing paces of change in the content and dissemination of knowledge? It is not easy to assume responsibility for formal education in the face of new sources of information, culture, knowledge, and entertainment; of new engineering of management and organization, of new computer-based systems of assessment and monitoring. There is no recipe that shows us how to incorporate new medias and skills into the recurrent classroom ritual, or how to prevent this modernization of media, methods, and content from resulting in a greater contrast between the education of the rich and the poor, between those who are up to date and those who are behind, those who are in-tune and those who are disfunctional. There is no recipe that shows us how to organize ourselves around a desire to transform education while being equitable in offering opportunities, to radically re-create knowledge while maintaining a critical and equitable view of the past; in short, how to rally hundreds of thousands of teachers, education planners, parents, and system financiers.



**But there is a limit to optimal use of the new learning technology. Media euphoria cannot sweep away pedagogical memory.**

The use of audio-visual media, as well as access to connectivity in interactive networks, are powerful instruments for enlarging and democratizing learning opportunities. There is a *distributive potential* in the new knowledge transportation vehicles. Used optimally, reconciling equity and creativity, the

incorporation of computer-based and audio-visual inputs can offer up-to-date information to students and teachers, make possible ongoing teacher self-training, facilitating distance education, make school management more efficient and learning processes more participatory.

But there is a limit to optimal use of the new knowledge technology. Media euphoria cannot sweep away pedagogical memory. I believe that there is a profound sense of learning attached to the view of the teacher and at-

tention of the student, and in order to approach this sense of learning one must surmount the mechanical ritual of pedagogy in order to recover the meaning hidden behind it; learning based on the subtle historical position of the transmission of knowledge in which it is better to seek harmony than to criticise.

This is not to disregard the fact that change also involves leaving things behind. Once information is stored on a hard disk, encyclopedic knowledge can become anachronic, but not the humanism to which it is attached. Today, more than ever, a critical spirit is needed in the face of instrumental reason (that annuls other rationalities). We require the ability to selectively discern between the advantages of message transmission technologies and the risk of reducing the spirit to the logic of mere transmission; to be suspicious in face of the overdose of stimuli when converted into pure sequence. We requires personal character and training in order to not lose clarity and precision in face of the seduction of textures that float on the textureless face of the monitor.

Education faces a dual challenge. It must capitalize on the new learning materials in order to democratize access to knowledge, the flow of information, and the right to be heard. On the other, it is expected to preserve its historical heritage –or that of peoples– in order to foster a use of these new inputs that doesn't involve the end of the subject nor the unbearable lightness of being. There are no clear formulae to determine what needs to be discarded and what retained, whether for curricula, didactics, pedagogy, organization, or system. In multi-media time an space there is no need to internalize the encyclopedia; it is enough to know how to bring it up on the monitor. But the monitor doesn't teach you to switch it off.

There is also the drama of schools that look toward the future through a rearview mirror, being unable to assimilate the new languages that students bring with them to class. Narrowness comes from both sides. We need to comprehend that "the transformation of ways of reading... is cutting away the ground from beneath the obstinate identification reading with books rather than the plurality and heterogeneity of texts, stories, and writings (oral, visual, musical, audio-visual, and telematic now in circulation)" (Martín Barbero, 1996, p.12). The author rightly points out that television rivals school in a profoundly epistemological sense, for while television "delocalizes" knowledge, blends it, uses it discontinuously and spasmodically in pursuit of entertainment and withdraws it from the "institutionality" whence it arose, school remains at the antipodes, dealing with long time periods, systematic thought, effort, and discipline. Furthermore, television is now the place where "frontiers shift between reason and imagination, between knowledge and information, nature and artifice, art and science, expert knowledge and worldly experience" (Martín Barbero, 1996, p. 14). Schools must give up their defensive positions in face of the competition of audio-visual communication or computer use, assimilate the plasticity of the mass media in order to transmit and combine knowledge; but at the same time organizing the mosaic of media stimuli, maintaining a certain "lasting meaning", "meaning of meaning" in order to prevent knowledge being reduced to banality.

Guillermo Orozco suggests going beyond the two antithetical views of education vis-à-vis communications media: defense of the audience against the media, and uncritical acceptance of the latter as an educational modernizing resource. Rather, he proposes a "critical pedagogy of representation" that opens a debate on media receptiveness in the classroom, treats school as one institution

among others competing to exercise hegemony over knowledge, inculcates skills that enable students to express themselves in a multimedia environment, and regards literacy training as an ongoing process linked to different alphabets –media, multi-cultural, and that of a fast-changing postmodern world<sup>6</sup>. Added to the challenges that the audio-visual industry presents to education are specific ones from ICTs. Virtual interaction increasingly draws on hypertext in which reading and writing, oral communication, and image culture mingle, and in which text is always a window to

many others. The pre-eminence of one over the other may depend on what users decide according to the way they view the interlocution of the moment through the screen. They may prefer written, acoustic, or visual communication. If school curricula are based on written culture and compartmentalization of genres and subjects, the hypertext of virtual communication transcends frontiers and watertight compartments. It is not just a matter of content, but also one of genres and hues that, when they change, transform forms of learning and teaching. Changes in virtual practices challenge the bases of the system.

Virtual interaction oscillates between means and end. When we "chat", communication is the object and there is nothing that transcends it. But if we seek scientific information to incorporate into our research, virtual search is only a means. For school-age children, the link with the internet tends to be playful and unorganized, emphasizing "virtual immanentism" rather than the potential of the web for gathering knowledge. The risks of this interchange of priorities lie in the loss of ability to organize knowledge and to order the dynamics of learning. But who knows what hidden production of ideas is at play in this frantic and apparently randomly wandering surfing? Who knows how, within the network, these bits of information are systematized? Or how digitization progresses on the tree of knowledge? The role of teachers, as well as that of teaching managers and planners must include being open to students who, technologically speaking, are playing the roles of receptors and of innovators, of protagonists and guinea pigs. Based on this openness, they will have to discover how to provide learning agendas and contexts so that ICTs may be used



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with a view to their overall context and direction; that is, with a view to their meaning.

Education here faces a dual challenge: mobilizing communication technology in order to make progress in motivation, expressiveness, and in new literacies, but igniting a critical spirit and enhancing the learning experience. There are no clear formulas for responding to this challenge: one is left with trial and error, sensible intuition, reasoned conversation, experience, and others.

## **BETWEEN THE DIGITAL GAP and the value of educating**

The digital gap appears as the mother of all gaps: in productivity and salaries, occupational mobility options, access to markets and publics, efficient use of time, access to information and services of all kinds, voice and vote; the gap in symbolic exchanges, power of management, velocity in acquiring and up-dating concepts, levels of life. Not being connected means being summarily excluded from all venues of the information society.

The digital gap draws the line that separates before and after, insider and outsider, viable and unviable. It strengthens or recreates contrasts between regions, countries, and social groups. Less computerized countries, very much like what were beforehand the most isolated and most impoverished, huddle together at the back of the line of globalization. At the same time, the more the gap is reduced, the more is diversity reconciled with integration, communicational democracy with equality of opportunity. On its more virtuous side, a networked world brings together the utopias that in the Cold War were at opposites: maximum freedom of the individual and better distribution of opportunities; maximum proliferation of diversity and optimal equality in communication.

An equity agenda cannot but foster access to more connectivity and computer use. Lack of access means cutting off tomorrow's options. On both individual and national scales, connectivity can trigger positive effects on economic dynamism, social equity, citizen participation, and cultural diversity. This explains the computer fever that besets education reformers. Who doubts that one must massively incorporate ICTs in education; above all computer use and virtual communication? Schools are the most expedient, systematic, economic, and mass-based venues for putting into practice national connectivity and computer use projects. They are the leverage that is called upon to provide a historic leap forward; to board the train of the information and knowledge society.

This doesn't mean that use of computers in education will necessarily illuminate knowledge and free students from the obscurantism of false awareness and ignorance. Nothing guarantees resolving the tensions between school and juvenile, lettered and virtual culture, instrumental reasoning and production of meaning. These can only be resolved in the act. And in order to do so, one must equip schools and train teachers.

Common wisdom says: the digital age is defined so much by ownership of computers as by access to the internet. This is a new argument for placing a window to the world and to the future within classrooms, above all when the great majority of Latin American households lack such access. There are countries such as Peru where internet use is being disseminated in cafes and public use computer booths. Or such as Chile (with the highest rate of connectivity in Latin America) and Costa Rica where the increase in users is due to networks installed in schools.

**Schools are the most expedient, systematic, economical, and mass-based venues for putting into practice national connectivity and computer use projects.**



Manuel Enrique López

In Latin America, primary school enrollment coverage approaches 100%, with rapid expansion of secondary coverage as well. Moreover, there are more poor today than 20 years ago. That is, a high proportion of people cannot be trained through their own income. The conclusion appears clear: it is in schools that children and adolescents develop a good part of their learning processes and peer interaction. *Therefore, it is there that access can be democratized.* Moreover, shared use of computer terminals between peers in classrooms can mobilize synergies for the learning of computer languages through playful interaction, instilling agility and confidence in the use of cyberspace. Nothing is more promising as an image of up-to-date education, than a group of students using a computer network in order to process information and construct knowledge related to the school curriculum. Socializing in networks must be part of socializing in schools.



In Latin America, there are many experiences in supplying public schools with interactive media. Brazil has its National Program for Computers in Education (Pro Info) experience and a National Distance Education Program, *TV Escola*, that supports public school teachers with a television channel dedicated exclusively to education. In Costa Rica, the Educational Computing Program (PIE MEP-FOD), operated nationwide since 1988 by the Ministry of Public Education and the Omar Dengo Foundation, seeks to improve the quality of education through the use of computers in public primary schools. In Chile, the *Enlaces* (Links) Network project operated by the Ministry of Education has created a computer-based inter-school communications network among students, teachers, and professionals from other education-related institutions. Begun experimentally in 1992, by the year 2001 62% of primary schools and 89% of secondary schools in the country were connected to the internet through the *Enlaces* program. Other countries such as Argentina, Mexico, and Cuba also are involved in extending school connectivity.

The programs also raise questions. The first relates to "computer density"; that is, the number of students sharing each computer in schools. In Chile, it has not been easy to reduce the number of students per computer. In 1998 this number was 71 students, dropping to 65 in 2001 (Jara Schnettler and Pávez, 2001). In the United States, the ratio was 125 students per computer in 1998, and dropped to 5 in the year 2000 for computers without multi-media capabilities, and 10 students per computer with multimedia capabilities, up-dated and on-line (Cuban, 2001).

The second question concerns the response of teachers, who tend to feel threatened by the greater speed with which students develop computer skills, and who watch anxiously as the gap between virtual and pedagogic culture widens. Given how little Latin American schoolteachers earn and how little free time they have for up-dating their skills after their arduous school hours, it is very unlikely that they would have the energy required to keep up with their students in acquiring computer and on-line communication skills.

The third doubt is in regard to the technical and financial possibilities of having up-dated and well-maintained equipment, above all in public schools that already operate at the limits of their resources.

When we get beyond the initial excitement, optimism diminishes. It is unclear to what extent placing computers and connectivity within the reach of all assures progress in computational literacy, learning abilities, and greater future employment options. Exhaustive research carried out in the

United States, placing special attention on the area of greatest computer development (Silicon Valley) and during the decade when the country did most to equip schools with computers (the 1990s) left many doubts in this regard (Cuban, 2001).

According to the author, one must be sceptical about the enthusiasm of businesses and specialists who believe that more and better computer technologies in schools will place learning processes in synch with the challenges of employment in modern market economies. During the last two decades, the U.S. federal government, with the enthusiastic support of parents, business people, public officials, and educators, invested unprecedented sums in order to equip public schools. Access was democratized. But in practice the assumption behind the enthusiasm, that more access in classrooms would lead spontaneously to more use, better and more efficient teaching and learning, and thus better preparedness for employment, was not confirmed.

After a detailed review of the data and case studies, Cuban arrived at four unsettling conclusions. The first is that there is no real consensus regarding what computer literacy is, i.e., whether it simply means using a computer with basic software, or, for example, having the ability to download programs, up-date software, and hard disks, etc. The second is that there have been no major changes in the quality of teaching and learning during the last decade (better academic achievement of urban, suburban, and rural students) attributable to greater access to computers in schools. The third conclusion is that teachers continue to be limited and occasional users of new technologies where classroom teaching methods are concerned, however much they might use computers for administrative purposes. Finally, school equipment levels have no clear impact on future access to highly-paid jobs, since the students who subsequently obtain the most high-paying jobs usually attribute their skills to the use of computers outside the school. (Cuban, 2001).

In Latin America the problems are of other kinds and are much further away from virtual utopia. School equipment makes possible sporadic, if not occasional use of computers. The cost of computerizing public education would permit at the most establishing special computer rooms, but not the extensive use of computers in regular classrooms. Even so,

## Teachers need to learn new methods and content while they simultaneously act as pedagogical reformers for and facilitators of a new tool that students seem to learn better and faster than they.

there has been progress: the growth in connectivity and on-line communication is quite high. Resources are optimized and knowledge and skills socialized. An increasing number of young people are becoming familiar with network and keyboard.

On the other hand, there is no clear ending to this process which brings the logics of networks and mass pedagogy into play together. There is both fear and enthusiasm, insecurity and curiosity, resistance and openness. Teaching based on memorization, lecture, and the compartmentalized presentation of knowledge will not survive the ease with which memory is objectivized and expanded in a computer, nor the speed with which heterogeneous data and disciplines are linked together in networked projects. Among the issues raised are the tensions that will appear between students skilled in network use and teachers who feel that they are losing authority in the process<sup>7</sup>.

Doubts also arise regarding the social gap in quality of access, because schools with more resources have better software, more computer accessories, fewer students per computer, adequate computer maintenance and up-dating, and better training for teachers. In some schools, computer use by students is restricted to mechanical exercises in the use of applications. In other schools, the use of computers is optimized for learning, experimentation, project construction, and cooperative activities. Some use the internet for games; others surf to learn (Trahtenberg, 2000, p. 10). Although, who knows how much one may learn while playing games?

There is no lack of reservations in regard to the undesirable effects of the dissemination of ICTs. Among undesirable consequences may be a proliferation of new game addicts, sedated by undemanding information and with low tolerance for frustration, little resistance to differing future gratifications, and bored by the prospect of effort; laziness in the face of print-based learning; lack of tenacity to carry out detailed research or to concentrate for extended periods on a single subject; little credibility granted to the authority of teachers and to the value of formal education; excessive utilitarianism in regard to knowledge; and an extremely limited oral expression capacity.

There is no lack of voices crying out in alarm: "the already weak reading comprehension abilities will become even weaker; not only because students will read fewer and fewer books, but also because they will increase their reading of short and broken messages such as those produced when surfing the internet and in exchanges in chats or e-mails." (Trahtenberg, 2000, p. 14).

Other criticisms of the application of computer programs point to the role and training of teachers, saying that such programs do not specify the profile of the trained teacher and do not incorporate ICTs into teacher education curricula and into their professional training (Martínez Santiago, 2000). Moreover, teaching a networked course is very different from teaching a traditional one, since teachers have to encourage the interaction of participants. This "requires teachers to spend the day answering questions, monitoring discussions, providing feedback" which requires "getting into contact several times a day, reading their students' notes and answering them, quite apart from correcting homework and checking individual or group work, which also needs dedication (Trahtenberg, 2000, p. 6). Teachers need to be simultaneously learning new methods and content while they act as pedagogic reformers and facilitators, in the face of a new tool that students seem to learn better and faster than they.

The panorama in Latin America is beset with ambivalence. Optimists emphasize synergies and "leap-frogging" that will deliver us to the information society, by-passing intermediate steps. A more cautious view sees equipping schools with audio-visual and computer equipment as the beginning of a long process of change in education that demands ample resources and broad consensus. Educating for the information and knowledge society involves much more than exchanging books for monitors. It demands combining the best of the critical tradition and accumulated pedagogical experience with new technological options, narrowing the digital gap and re-creating the value of education, harmonizing intellectual lucidity with affective intuition, stimulating *doing* without forgetting about *being*.

<sup>7</sup> Research at the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (Flacso), using case studies carried out in various Latin American countries found that "informal exchange generated between students during computer use neutralizes and decreases the teacher's ability to control" and that "the virtual classroom is a vertex in which playful activity comes into conflict with the vertical authority of teachers (...) the internet marks the limit between experience in and outside the classroom, within and outside the educational order (...) between the culture of books, conceived as a form of relation, of pedagogical control over students, and new forms of learning through surfing in cyberspace ... " (Bonilla, 2001, pp. 9-10).

In this process of trial and error, education must increasingly open itself to the everyday practices of distance education in a society in which these practices are ever more massive, frequent, and cross-cutting. The path involves planners, school principals, teachers, students and their families, software designers, communicators, and industrial culture strategies. It demands agreement between actors with different interests. It will be necessary to develop a multi-cultural disposition in education management in order to foster such a disposition through pedagogical practices. The heterogeneous fields of education, culture, and communication need to discover shared

languages, being open to each other in order to recreate this equation.

Educating *with* new information and communication technologies involves linking their use in some way with the production of meaning, both individual and collective. This production of meaning is nourished, in turn, by people's own culture. The idea, then, is not to transmit an "amnesiac euphoria", but to inculcate a taste and responsibility for the meeting between culture and technology, identity and alterity, meaning and instrument. As Jesús Martín Barbero said, education has to be a proper space for moving from media to mediation.



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## TALKING about values

Between old and new functions, education can be seen as a hinge upon which turn three great aspirations of modernity: the production of human resources, the construction of citizens, and the development of autonomous subjects. I deliberately use these words. I believe that this semantic detail differentiates and complements the instrumental, political, and ethical components that mark education for modern life.

Education, then, is simultaneously privileged to be on the pedestal of protagonism while suffering in the dock of the accused. There is an awareness of its accumulated anachronisms and disfunctionalities. But there is also resistance, above all from teachers but also from students, to the reductionisms of a discourse that proclaims to be modern and that emphasizes the equations of human capital over processes lived during learning. The march of education reforms mixes signals while hoisting the banners of autonomy, decentralization, selectivity, modernization, and flexibility. Education ideologues, futurologists, politicians, editors, television personalities, newspaper columnists, development theorists and operators, experts from international agencies, and popular agitators are increasingly given to proclaiming the great educational leap forward as the expedient for "re-launching" development in Latin America. And this leap forward involves the radical re-adaptation of education content, practice, and planning. Not an easy task.

In this educative impulse upon which all converge, the instrumental requirements of productive modernization are intertwined with the more complex ones of subjectivity and culture. It is difficult to pin much hope on education, a process the quality and achievement of which depend on so many levels, mediations, and actors. It is also difficult to expect much of it when the channels that link it to the labor market become increasingly diffuse; when the urgency of inculcating the instrumental skills required for competitiveness might end up by crowding out other aspects of education that require a different pace, those concerned with learning how to experience emotions and how to process personal histories.

During the last two decades almost all of Latin America has begun reforms, increasing human and monetary resources in order to produce advances in training and learning. These reforms seek to create systemic impacts on different aspects: curricular content and pedagogical methods; financing mechanisms; redistribution of public and private functions; decentralization of education management toward control by municipalities and schools; review of pedagogical practices and achievement assessment; and in its very beginning, adapting curricula to new productive norms and to the socio-cultural conditions of learners.

But critical voices have also been raised in the face of certain biases engendered by these reforms. Some say that the reforms suffer from excessive technocratism, that they concentrate on finance and management mechanisms but not on real learning content and processes. It is said the reforms tend to emphasize the learning of technology linked to future economic performance, while mutilating less instrumental aspects such as expressivity and self-understanding, and above all evading the importance of spiritual development and personal growth as key parts of what it means to educate. The need arises to return to the radical question regarding the meaning of education, going beyond its utility and understanding that a view that is too centered on performance can too easily forget the fundamentals: the emotional and intellectual development of learners.

Evidence shows that even achievement, in terms of progress in learning, is strengthened when students are not hindered by obstacles of emotion, expression, and daily life. The larger their ability to be aware of themselves and of their barriers to personal development, the greater their capacity and willingness to incorporate new skills and knowledge. A more human meaning of education is not only an imperative for training people who are more harmonious and better disposed to communicate; it is also a leverage for learning for employment and for the new forms of applying knowledge in the workplace.

Latin American education still bears a 'pre-68' profile, not yet having emancipated its system of disciplines nor its learning processes. It has only begun to internalized the discourse

of the rights of children and adolescents, the fostering of learner autonomy, the dialogue-centered vision of knowledge, learning linked to the life experiences of students, and the link between knowledge and students' surroundings. Communication between males and females, or between young people of different ethnic groups should be fostered as a daily learning practice for a multi-cultural society, respect for diversity and living with differences. The relations between students, and between them and their teachers, as well as the ability of teachers to foster the human and spiritual development of their students, are key so that new generations can develop within an increasingly complex society that is ever more in need of whole human beings.

Education in human development is necessary because we are moving toward societies that are increasingly complex in differentiation of identities, interests, demands, habits, preferences, and skills. In these societies, social cohesion will increasingly depend on the ability to transversely "interlocutate", respecting the interests and sensibilities of others through conversation and negotiation using a common language, being open to different world-views in direct and distance communication. Cultural pluralism should be a collective learning practice. These abilities are not learned in civic education courses, but rather in everyday practices within schools; in the forms in which curricula approach school socialization processes; in greater tolerance of teachers for the sensibilities of their students; in changes in the relations between sexes; in the so-called "transverse curriculum"; and others.



The need arises to return to the radical question regarding the meaning of education, going beyond its practical dimension.



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It is important to distinguish between educating in values, with values, and from values.

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Future changes present serious challenges to the style and content of education. New cultural forms (symbols, fantasies, desires, life projects) emerge in the society of risk, media, management, and democracy. These also present challenges to education systems and to the training of new generations. The notion of "education for life" contained in many education reforms of the region and in inter-governmental and international forums is an important one. It is necessary to provide tools so that students can live their own sexuality, minimizing risks without sacrificing their playful spirit; to provide venues for their desires to experiment and to expand, but with reliable information that allows them to minimize risks; to face situations of growing citizen insecurity toward the future; to be able to select information and knowledge that allows them to reflect on their own identities; to utilize resources from the audio-visual industry in order to think about cultural changes and how these impact daily life; to participate in an ethic based on full respect for universal human rights; and to develop an appropriate critical spirit in order to be linked productively and actively with interactive media and mass communications.

If the relation between education and development is strong, and increasingly so, human development demands a kind of education that combines the personal and spiritual growth of learners with training for new productive and social challenges. This brings us to a final point in our reflections: to the question about what values education means today. I limit myself to a quick listing of the tensions that link education with values.

1. It is important to distinguish between educating in values, with values, and from values. Educating **in values** involves making them the subject in the classroom, in philosophy, civic education, or social science classes, enriching reflection about values that guide action, bring into discussion situations that present ethical dilemmas that affect students, and teach basic content of axiology and ethics. Educating **with values** involves transmitting, pedagogically and in relation between subjects within the school, relation models inspired on respect, reciprocity of rights, the acceptance of differences, justice, and meritocracy, among other meanings. It means fair treatment between teachers and students, rules of behavior that harmonize conflicts and make possible talking about differences, and sanctions systems that constructively guide the fundamentals of relations within the school community. Educating **from values** involves contextualizing educational content in a perspective in which questions of duty, virtue, the common good, and others are present or underlying, giving direction and meaning to the different content and materials transmitted in class.

2. In societies that are increasingly open and multi-cultural, education in values can only be contextual. The subjectivity of children is the subjectivity of all; that is, the value dilemmas that face learners not only take place in the school, but go beyond it and are linked to changes experienced by all of society. This means recognizing that the rapid transformation of society obliges us to continually re-think the relation between values and behavior orientations. And it means contextualizing values in situations, which doesn't necessarily mean relativizing, but rather deducing and inducing.



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3. The great values challenges within the context of modernity and modernization have to do with dilemmas more than with convictions or beliefs. In this sense, we may underline:

- Problems that secularization of customs presents to values education. Should one educate in transcendental maxims or in ethical-practical minimums; in absolute values or in basic guidelines for minimizing aggression and injustice?
- The speed of change, the discontinuity of life paths, and radical changes in interpersonal relations: should one educate in continuity or in adaptation; in respect for tradition or in its re-creation; in solid principles or in post-modern flexibility?
- Education in values –or the values of education– create tensions between rationalization and subjectivity (Touraine), between systemic reason and worlds of life (Habermas), between logic of the means and logic of the ends, between technical reason and substantive reason, between economic productivity and personal development, between preparation for the future and present realization, between productivity and communication, between being rooted in place and cosmopolitanism, between negative freedom and positive freedom, between rights and skills, between specialization and a view of the whole, between respect for that which is private and defense of that which is public, between identity and difference, collective and personal projects, among these and others. What is to be done? *e*

The great values challenges within the context of modernity and modernization have to do with dilemmas more than with convictions or beliefs.

*This text reproduces the opinions of Spanish philosopher Fernando Savater, as expressed in a video conference on March 16, 2005 during the meeting entitled "The Meanings of Education and Culture". On this occasion, the moderator was conference participant Martin Hopenhayn.*

# On fashioning humanity

Fernando Savater  
Philosopher, Spain.

It is a great pleasure to be with you, even when it is through these images and these words. Perhaps in time we can become more accustomed to this kind of proximity that we are beginning to have as human beings. One must use all forms.

When I was asked about what and how I would direct my words, I was interested in emphasizing the **cultivation of humanity** –which for me is an essential characteristic of education. Education is not simply preparation in employable skills. It is not merely training children and young people to do no harm, to work, and to obey. Above all, its purpose is for each of us, throughout our lives, to awaken and produce the greatest quantity of human freedom. For me, humanity is not a given. We are not simply programmed by nature to be human. Animals, other living beings, plants, are programmed to be what they are (cacti are programmed to be cacti, panthers to be panthers). But we must develop the human possibilities in each of us. We possess the possibility of become human, but we will never be so if not for others, if we do not go through this process that awakens and brings forth our humanity.



Only the contact, the contagion with other human beings, can make us human.

We may say that each of us is born twice: first, from the womb –biologically and naturally– and a second time –which is a social birth– from the social womb. This latter is what develops within us our possibilities of humanity. It is not an inevitable process. For example, according to some reports –remember the books of Rudyard Kipling and other documented cases– children brought up by animals never develop their human possibilities –symbolic thinking, speech– that is, those qualities that other beings do not possess. We give humanity to each other and receive it from each other. No one becomes human alone. And I believe that this is the basis of education.

No one becomes human alone. Only the contact, the contagion with other human beings, can make us human. We need require being infected with the humanity of others. Thus to me it seems much more important to be in a classroom, in a place surrounded by human beings, facing human beings and facing a teacher –even if they are human beings at a distance as in this case– because I believe that this proximity is the key to education. We cannot be more human than other human beings.

You may say, "well, connected to the internet, education can be obtained through the web and by using computers ...". Yes, in this way we can obtain much information because surely these instruments are excellent for providing information. But they cannot bring humanity to us. Humanity can only be obtained from other human beings. We cannot learn to live from machines. We cannot learn to live from encyclopedias. We must learn from humans, from others. We are condemned

that this be so. It is others who awaken our humanity. It is they who present us with the most precious and most necessary gift: extracting from this diamond in the rough species that each of us are the possibilities of humanity.

I believe that it is to this, basically, that education should aspire. Of course, education has instrumental functions such as preparation for employment, job substitution, a series of social tasks including the teaching civic skills for living with others. All of this is important and basic. But all of it is dependent upon the development of human beings; the creation of human beings.

The important thing is that humanization is not an automatic process. It is not something that happens to us by chance. It needs to be awakened within us. For this reason, a good education involves the fashioning of humanity. I believe that the first product of a modern democracy should be the fashioning of humanity, in the face of the world in which we live aimed at the accumulation of objects, the manufacture of sophisticated things, and the acquisition of goods, etc. I believe that the true production of civilized countries –in the most powerful meaning of the word *civilization*– should be to produce more humanity. Producing more humanity in its citizens, more human relations, because humanity is not a mere genetic inclination.

I believe that the key difference between animals and human beings is that, in some way, animals are complete in themselves. They do not require a relation with other in order to develop their possibilities. While for human beings, the relation with other human beings is key to being able to

develop their humanity. Humanity is a form of relationship, a symbolic relationship, and we human beings are fated to develop our possibilities in relation with other humans.

## TRAINING those who govern

Aristotle, in his *Politics*, says that human beings, before governing, need to have been governed. In a democracy, in that Greek democracy that was beginning, Aristotle said: "Training citizens is training governors because in a democracy all of us govern. Politicians are those whom we command to command. But in a democracy we are all governors". Thus, the importance of education.

In the world –for example, that of the Persians– education wasn't necessary because each person had his or her social rank established beforehand and this couldn't be changed. The son of a peasant would be a peasant; the son of a tradesman would be a tradesman; the sons of warriors would develop war skills; the sons of nobles would learn to hunt and to organize feasts. Each one was directed toward a particular kind of learning. In fact, there was no need to educate in a free and open way. One simply needed to train people to carry out their tasks.

But, in a democracy no one has a socially pre-determined task. Our only task is to be human, and from there be able to develop our best possibilities. Therefore, we need to be educated as if we were governors because in a democracy all will be governors. It is for this reason that Aristotle emphasized: "Before you are able to govern you must have had the experience of being governed". To be educated is to be governed in a principle. To be educated is to know what it means to be governed by others, and in this way to develop the possibility of governing for others.

All democratic education is the education of princes, of people who will have in their hands

the fate of the community together with others. For this reason, when we want to posit the importance of education in one of our societies we have to think that education is so important that upon any person to be education depends our fate. Because it is they who will rule. It is they who will make the decisions. Our lives will be in their hands.

I once wrote that democracies educate in self defense, that they educate in order to defend themselves from what can happen if they do not educate those in whose hands the fate of the community will lie. For this reason, education transcends mere training, going beyond preparation to fulfill particular functions.

## TO PERSUADE and to be persuaded

What kind of humanity do we need to develop within a democratic setting? I believe that democratic education includes the ability to persuade and to be persuaded. That is, the ability to explain the social demands to others in an intelligible way; to make our desires and the justifications for them understood; to be able to argue in favor of social proposals; and the capacity to be persuaded by others. That is, to understand their social demands, to listen to supporting arguments, and finally, to be able to change our perspectives when in error, being able to be convinced by the reasoning of others.

The ability to convince and to be convinced, to persuade and to be persuaded is, I believe, essential in a democracy. These things will fail if we foster the mistaken idea that each should have his or her opinions and should be closed to outside influences. At times one hears: "All opinions are respectable ..." This is not so. Opinions are not respectable. In any case, people are to be respected. Opinions are made to be questioned, discussed, contrasted, and in the final analysis, to be abandoned if they prove to be wrong, and are replaced by others.



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For human beings,  
the relation with  
other human beings  
is key to being able  
to develop their  
humanity.

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That is, I believe that developing the capacity in people to persuade and to be persuaded is one of the extraordinarily important functions of education. This means not creating people who are impassible or locked into the caprice of their first ideas. Unfortunately, I speak to you from a country in which there is a preference for ideas that never need to be changed, for this is here the sign of a whole and stable person. I know people who say "I think the same as I thought when I was 17 years of age". This is a sure sign of not having thought anything, neither at 17 nor now. It is if to say that for you, ideas are placed in your head as flies are placed in a bottle, not finding a way out, and so stay there buzzing around.

Indeed, ideas need to be openly discussed and offered to others. The fact of someone becoming unpersuadable, adhering to ideas like a lichen on a rock, has no merit whatsoever. I recall an anecdote: a journalist once asked John Maynard Keynes, "professor ... two years ago you held an opinion completely the opposite of what you say now ...". Keynes replied, "Well, look, you are right; I realized that I was mistaken and when I realize that I am mistaken I change my opinion. What do you do in such cases?"

That is what is lacking. We must create the willingness to say, "when I realize that I'm wrong I change my opinion". Nothing happens. Not only don't I feel humiliated; on the contrary, what would be humiliating for me would be for my ideas to be closing me off in such a way that I could not change them by force of reason. We must develop in people pride in being persuadable, to be able to be persuaded by others and at the same time to be able to explain and to persuade others. This, I believe –although it is not so easy– is one of the bases of human education and above all, of democratic human education.



## RECOGNIZING similarities

There is another aspect of humanity in education that appears to me to be important. Much is said, with reason and with excessive praise, of human diversity. And it is said that the great wealth of humanity is its diversity. This is

obvious. Human beings are diverse. We are distinct in color, disposition, tastes, customs, and traditions.

All of this is then converted into the great wealth of humanity ... It is not true ... **the true wealth of humanity lies in our similarity.** What makes humanity important and what allows human beings to carry out extraordinary feats is the fact of how similar we are: the fact that we can communicate with one another, exchange information, that all languages are translatable. It is much more important that all human beings speak than the fact that we speak different languages. Speaking different languages is an accident, while that which defines us is the fact of being symbolic beings able to speak. Human beings that can understand one another, comprehend our needs, our demands. Herein lies the true wealth of human beings.

Thanks to this we have been able to develop the most important of institutions –those of mutual assistance, solidarity, and progress. I believe, therefore, that it is all well and good to recognize human diversity; recognize that human beings should enjoy the diversity that makes the world less monotonous and has more possibilities at all levels. But we should educate so that people know how important are the things we have in common; and that those things in which we differ –culture, customs, etc.– are an accident compared to that in which we are similar. And that which unites us is much more important than those things that make us different.

I believe that this is a message. Today, humanity needs to seek harmony among nations, tribes, and divisions; to develop people concerned with the community of humanity; understanding that it is our humanity that we all have in common, rather than it belonging only to some. We must not attempt to be incomprehensible to others. All of the ethnic groups, religious fanatics, nationalists, etc., enjoy being incomprehensible to others: "No one understands me"; "that's how we are here"; "if you're not from here, you can't understand"; "if you haven't gone through religious initiation, you can't understand it". These sentiments are the sources of fanaticism, integralism, and national backwardness.

What truly makes the world move forward is knowing that human beings are not enigmas for other human beings; that we seek one another; that we are able to understand one another, to communicate, and that our efforts should be in this direction.

And I believe that education today should be the path for opening ourselves to others and to making possible this human community to which we all belong and are a part. **e**

THE BIOLOGY OF KNOWING AND THE BIOLOGY OF LOVING

# Education as viewed from the biological matrix of human existence

Humberto Maturana and Ximena Paz Dávila  
Biologist, Chile.  
Matrix Mentor, Chile.

The responsibility for education: whose court is the ball in?

It seems to me important to reflect on questions that arise around the task of education. I propose to do so from an understanding of the relational dynamic of the biology of knowing and the biology of loving, or the biological matrix of human existence.

We live in a culture centered on relations of domination and submission. We are exposed to high levels of demand in the search for success. It is with alarm that we note the extent to which violence has increased in schools and universities, both public and private. Violence that is exhibited both between young people and toward their professors. Drug use has penetrated the school environment that was before "an area of safety for children" as well as universities that were "areas for research and creation" for the young. These are signs that something serious has damaged our living together.

Let us think seriously: What are we doing? How are we doing it? And who is doing it? Upon reflection, we see that we are immersed in a way of doing things in this patriarchal-matriarchal culture stemming from distrust and control. Control that submits ... submission that demands obedience ... obedience that generates fear and insecurity. From this emotional backdrop comes the lack of respect for oneself and for others. Parents, teachers, the State ... we try, from this environment of mistrust to do what we do and obtain what we wish through control. Control is the relational dynamic from which oneself and others arise denied capacities and talents, narrowing viewpoints, intelligence, and creativity, generating dependence, from which autonomy and self-respect are not possible.

In this environment of despair, the responsibility for the task of education is passed from one to another, without anyone assuming responsibility.



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In this ambience of dependence, children and young people have no presence and disappear. In this culture we exercise control with sanctions and physical and psychological punishment: "spare the rod and spoil the child", an old patriarchal-matriarchal saying that still applies in thought and in action. Sanction and punish, punish and sanction; fostering violence and unlove. How do children and young people escape from so much unlove? Is control the way to generate areas for sane living, open to creation and reflection? Do we recognize that we are living immersed in a network of conversations that emphasizes success, control, that submits us and submits our children to high levels of demand, generating in them despair and frustration due to not being seen? Is not this relational space what one sees in most schools, universities, and organizations? What are and what have been the consequences of this way of relating to each other? It leads us to being trapped in constant pain; to suffering in different aspects of our lives. Teachers, parents, guardians, and all of those who participate in the educational process have lost the confidence of being able to generate a different kind of relational venue, from which could emerge responsible and ethical conduct in the mutual respect of collaboration. In this environment of despair, the responsibility for the task of education is passed from one to another, without anyone assuming responsibility.

And who is responsible for education? We are all responsible for and co-creators of this process. All adults who respect themselves and live autonomously with social and ethical awareness, should know that we are part of the continuing generation of the world and cosmos in which we

live. The pain and suffering here present, and the distrust and control come to be part of a natural way of doing things, generating a way of living that we do not desire. Nevertheless, it doesn't have to be that way.

It is not enough to declare that education is the transformation of the way we live together. We must feel ourselves to be invited to live and to live with others, responsibly answering all of the questions that arise: What does it mean to educate? How are we educating our children and young people? What do we want from education? What do educators want from the educational process? Is education only the task of schools? Who are the committed actors in this process? Who is responsible for the task of education?

Only through an opportunity for reflection that reveals to us our relational multi-dimensionality can we generate a new look at ourselves, converting ourselves into adults on the cutting line of change, taking upon ourselves responsibility for the task of education: "*educating is a transformational process in how all involved actors interrelate and, if we wish our children to grow up as autonomous beings respecting themselves and with a social conscience, we must live with them respecting them and respecting ourselves in the continuous creation of a relationship based on mutual trust and respect*" (H.M.R.). It is not enough to say that the future of humanity is not the children, but rather the adults with whom they live, entering seriously as individuals into a conscious process of continual change that leads us to transform ourselves into adult persons with whom children and young people wish to live and respect. This is our task as a human community.

## WHAT DO WE DO when we educate?

To educate is to do in an artificial manner something that should occur spontaneously within the family and community. Hereafter, we will refer to educating people who educate themselves.

Those being educated transform themselves in their relationships with adults. Now, families and communities do not provide all of the experience that the person being educa-

ted must have in order to be an adult able to support himself or herself as a member of the larger community to be joined. Adults are not prepared only within the family. We require a special environment: schools, whether kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, or universities. When we refer to schools we mean the educational environment in general.

Learning is transforming how we live together. Those being educated become adults of one kind or another according to how they have experienced this transformation. They do not learn only mathematics or history, but rather they basically learn to live with their teacher of math and history, and learn to think, react, and see with them. They make up their psychic space with their teachers, and at times do so by rejecting that which teachers want them to learn.

If we want education to mean creating opportunities for relating together, in which those being educated are transformed into adults able to live democratically as beings who respect themselves and are not afraid of disappearing in the collaboration, then they must live with teachers who live this kind of life and live with them in an environment in which different subjects are only particular modes of carrying out this living together. Our task as adults is to create these opportunities for mutually relating.

The student who spends time with a biology teacher who uses his "biologizing" in terms of respecting and giving attention to the difficulties that his students may have will spontaneously incorporate the outlook of biology into his life. Biology will be the instrument of relating and through which he will transform the student into a socially integrated, self-confident adult with

The student does not learn a subject, but rather learns a way of living with others; a way of becoming a human being.

the capacity to collaborate and learn anything without losing his social conscience and, therefore, his ethic.

The task of education is to produce democratic adults. One must create a school venue in which teachers have the skills appropriate for this task. For example, in order to make



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mathematics an opportunity for relating as described, the teacher must master much more than the mathematics which the children are to learn in their school experience. The same is the case for physics, history, natural sciences, or biology. In order to guide the transformation of students into democratic adults, a teacher must possess resources of reflection and action with the children within a relationship in which they will not be afraid to be challenged by the momentary difficulties that they may encounter. This is possible only if teachers have reflexive autonomy, and respect for themselves and their students.

Education as a phenomenon in transformed personal relations is a relational venue in which the student does not learn a subject, but rather learns a way of living with others.

The student learns a way of being a human being. This relational transformation is not exclusive to human beings. It happens to mammals, and depending on the species, to a greater or lesser extent with all animals. The difficulty of returning to the wild an animal of a species threatened by extinction—for example, a lion, a cheetah, a small gorilla—lies in re-establishing the animal in its world so that it is a lion, cheetah, or gorilla, and not a semi-humanized animal. This is so because it is a lion, cheetah, or gorilla not due to genes, but rather based on living in the animal community to which it belongs.

Genetics is the initial condition, a point of departure. From this point of departure it is possible to grow in one way or another, depending on the environment. This is particularly visible in the diversity of human forms that can be assumed. For this reason, education is the most fundamental aspect of

current human relations; specifying the venue for training children to be adults and that which they will reproduce with their children when they are adults. On the way that children relate will determine the kind of adults that they will be. Children are not the future of the human community. It is we adults who are. We are the future of our children because how they will be depends upon how they live with us. The future lies in our present.

For this reason, it is important to decide now if we want democratic relations in our future: a future of collaboration and mutual respect, with participation in common projects linked to the well-being of the community to which one belongs. Only by living like this can students grow as beings able to generate this kind of world, by making our present their future. In order that they be guided in their training as citizens, it is essential that teachers recuperate their dignity, to once again respect themselves and their profession, even in the difficult circumstances in which they live.



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is centered on respect for oneself, being able to have opinions and disagree, without such disagreement being an offense. Rather, it is an opportunity for reflection. Autonomy is essential in the social relations of adults in a common project because it is the basis for collaboration. Adults generate opportunities for relating in which it is possible to collaborate because the different participants exist within an autonomy that involves respect for themselves, with no excuse necessary for being so.

Adults are not afraid to listen and to participate with others in the grand common project that is living together democratically. Democracy is the only way of living together that provides the possibility of fulfillment of humans as autonomous beings able to act socially through collaboration in a common project. This is the great task of education: that *teachers, parents, and social actors, as adult beings, guide those being educated in a process of being transformed into adults who respect themselves without fear of losing their individuality in collaborating in a common project of living together in mutual respect.*

If we consider human history, we will see that democracy is the art of living together in the fulfillment of oneself in community with others based on respect for oneself and for others. Democracy leads to self-realization as an adult, something that happens in no other form of social relations.

More than a political system, democracy is the venue for fulfillment of human beings as autonomous, collaborative, responsible, imaginative, and open, with the possibility of generating opportunities for living together in mutual respect and collaboration. For this autonomy to exist, it must begin from the womb. Respect for and acceptance of oneself have to begin in the family, starting from the love that surrounds a new arrival, in the acceptance of his or her total legitimacy, and not in negation, criticism, or demands. The new being must be received within an atmosphere that is based neither on expectations of what he or she will be, nor what will happen to him or to her.

## DEMOCRACY: work of art in living together in mutual respect

Self-esteem is often mentioned as being important to students. We exchange the notion of self-esteem for that of acceptance and respect for oneself. We believe that esteem is an evaluative opinion, and an evaluative opinion about oneself is not the key. What is important is to focus on acceptance and respect for oneself in order not to have to question ones' own legitimacy nor that of others. Collaboration exists only when relations are based on legitimacy of being, which implies respect for oneself and respect for others.

Collaboration and autonomy do not involve the negation of the other; one does not become a complete individual in opposition to others, but rather finds creative freedom in collaboration because one is autonomous. Being autonomous in regard to parents and teachers doesn't mean opposing oneself to them. One is autonomous from within. Autonomy

These needs to be the case throughout life, if we want to live together democratically. Living together democratically does not assure that we will not experience pain or suffering, times of struggle, or occasions of competition. But it means that competition will not be the emotional center of living together. Love is the emotion that constitutes and makes possible living together democratically. The subject of democracy in the area of education is not arbitrary; it is central. What we want from education at this historical moment is not to teach skills or knowledge for a technological, mercantile, or political future. Rather, it is to generate a transformation of students in their progress toward adult life so that they become autonomous adults who respect themselves, who collaborate and learn, and that they transform all things into social, ethical, and creative opportunities for living together democratically.



Children must  
be granted  
autonomy.

## DO WE EDUCATE FOR SELF-CONTROL, SELF-DEMANDS ... or for well-being?

In the introduction to these thoughts, Ximena Dávila says: *"Upon reflection, we see that we are immersed in a way of doing things in this patriarchal-matriarchal culture stemming from distrust and control. Control that submits ... submission that demands obedience ... obedience that generates fear and insecurity. From this emotional backdrop comes the lack of respect for oneself and for others. Parents, teachers, the State ... we try, from this environment of mistrust to do what we do and obtain what we wish through control. Control is the relational dynamic from which oneself and others arise denied capacities and talents, narrowing viewpoints, intelligence, and creativity, generating dependence, from which autonomy and self-respect are not possible."*

From an emotional environment based on control and distrust, we require of students self-control of their emotions and actions. This involves reducing their demands to legitimately express their emotions and hinder their possibilities to question, make mistakes, and explore their multi-dimensionality in order to discover their own answers. It is not control or self-control of their emotions that they should acquire in the way to adult life; but rather awareness of their feelings, reflections on their activities, and responsible actions in the tasks that they assume in living cooperatively and with mutual respect with others in the community. We want students to become adults who are spontaneously ethical in their daily

conduct; that their ethical conduct does not stem from the control of a possible non-ethical one. Giving a child responsibility for his or her self-control is a terrible demand because it places an external reference on his or her conduct.

Children must be granted autonomy. That is, provide them with the means and circumstances for them to act from within themselves, seeing and understanding what they desire in order that they may learn to be spontaneously ethical and socially responsible.

Children learn to see, listen, smell, touch, and think or not think with their parents, siblings, teachers, and with social actors of the community to which they belong. Upon being autonomous, they themselves become referents for that which is proper or improper in their conduct, *"saying yes or no from within themselves and not from others"*. Demands and expectations are negations of autonomy because they foster dependence on the judgment of others regarding what one must do in order to satisfy expectations and demands.

Frequently, one speaks of acting responsibly and seriously in terms of self-esteem. It is better to speak of respect for oneself in regard to autonomous and responsible conduct. Esteem is valuing something with an external justification, a judgment. Self-esteem is valuing oneself using a criterion external to oneself; it is a judgment about oneself. Self-respect is not a judgment, but rather an emotion from which one may

act without questioning ones' own legitimacy and without feeling that one must justify ones' conduct to others. It is only possible to act in respect toward oneself and toward others based on the well-being that self-respect brings with it.

Well-being is the sensation of being in coherence with one's circumstances. It doesn't have to do with having the latest model car, or possessing this or that. It has to do with being comfortable within the circumstances in which one lives. According to our "well-being" or "unease" we fashion the world in which we live with our conscious or unconscious conduct. For our well-being we follow the path of conserving this sensation; as for unease, we follow strategies that seek to change its circumstances. We are agents of change of the world in which we live, and we will generate a world of well-being or of unease according to whether we generate venues of autonomy or dependence in our students.

## **WHERE DO WE EDUCATE: at home, in school, in the community, the biosphere, homosphere, cosmos?**

In this generation of worlds, humans have so much changed the natural world that we are taking it to its destruction. The biosphere is finished; now we live in the homosphere. We are destroying our environment and transforming it so that living in it will be impossible. Caring for the environment means respecting it, not exploiting it, not contaminating it as if it were a trash bin. Forests, clean water and air, ecological areas proper for humans and for other beings, are no longer self-sustaining. They do not have the autonomy of the biosphere; they now belong to the homosphere of transformations generated by our emotions according to what we want consciously and unconsciously to preserve in our lives. Well-being means being in harmony with the circumstance in which human as well as world creative, aesthetic, well-being is possible, and where that which is natural is part of human well-being. In order to conserve this well-being we must respect ourselves and respect our responsibility in the generation and conservation of well-being as a part of human ecology in harmony with other living beings.

Environmental awareness and responsibility are learned spontaneously in a relationship in which ecological awareness and responsibility are present in the conservation of the human habitat as one that we generate continually with our actions. Home, school, the community, biosphere, homosphere,

cosmos, spontaneously become educational contexts of the conservation of living together with ecological awareness and responsibility.

Any educational context can be a prison as well: the family, the classroom, and university if they exist in an atmosphere of demands, distrust, and control. Only if in the family, the classroom, or in any educational context there reigns a climate of respect, these places will not be a prison. Children require the company of adults in order to grow to be adults; for this reason they seek out adults who take them in, show them the dimensions of a desirable world, open a welcoming space where the child does not disappear in the relation, but rather in which they have a presence until the time that they arise as autonomous and responsible human beings.

The home, when there are no conflicts and without extreme poverty, offers operational dimensions that children need in order to integrate themselves into the human democratic community. Schools, universities, and communities to which they belong should offer these same conditions. If this were the case, children would learn the basic tasks for adult life in these relational contexts in respect to themselves that permits them to be responsible and happy democratic citizens. But it is not enough to learn tasks in order to live in mutual respect. That is learned living and relating in mutual respect, living thus in all parts, primarily during infancy, at home, the school, and the street.

Schools, being a broader world, offer relational dimensions that homes do not. The dimensions of the home are set by family and possibly neighbors if nearby or accessible, and now by television or radio. Still, schools provide a much broader world. There we find children, adults, and venues for reflection and questioning the wider world, such as laboratories and libraries, as well as other fundamental aspects of the life of citizens. Whether or not a school is a prison will depend on the adults that make it up. In the face of insufficiencies in the educational venue, the solution can only come from loving human relationships, not in replacing adults by machines.

**Home, school, the  
community, biosphere,  
homosphere, cosmos,  
spontaneously become  
educational contexts.**



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We may believe that the internet can replace libraries or museums. Everything that we call information in daily life can be found there. But the emotional multidimensionality of the relation with adults that children respect is not replaceable in human training. Education does not consist in delivering information. Those being educated acquire information (data, tasks, operational notions) in their relations with human adult worlds, for it is they with their conduct in any domain, who give to these data, tasks, and operational notions their informational character. Those being educated learn to be human beings with human beings with whom they live. If we wish to live in a world of mutual respect based on respect for ourselves in honesty, spontaneous ethical conduct and social responsibility, we should live that way. Adults as socially and ethically responsible educators are not replaceable if we wish to create a biologically human world of socially and ethically responsible persons.

At times it is said that a new human being is necessary. We don't think so. We need to recuperate the awareness that we are beings who exist in a unity of body and spirit, and for whom loving is the basis of autonomy and social relations. Therefore, we propose a change in the basic question, from the question of being to the question of doing, that carries with it epistemological and ontological consequences.

## EPISTEMOLOGY?

In order to recover the understanding of what is human and that we are body and spirit, we require an epistemological-ontological basis that allows us to understand human beings as biological beings. We must abandon the belief that I came independent of myself. Renouncing this, without understanding from where I do it, generates fear. We need to open a venue for reflection for teachers about the biological and cultural bases of what is human so that they make or preserve this epistemological-ontological effort with understanding of why it is so and guide their students so that the new vision appears in them naturally because they understand its bases. If this happens, training these children as adults with the characteristics that this effort implies will be the normal, natural and spontaneous way of being.

The great enemy of democratic relations lies in someone thinking that he or she knows more than others how things are and is thus not disposed to reflect. The enemy of reflection is the knowledge that we know. If I know, I don't look because I already know. Democratic relations demand that I am always

willing to look, to reflect, and to not appropriate knowledge for myself. Since in democracy one is disposed toward mutual respect, one is open to examining the bases from which one affirms what one affirms. Knowing in democracy is not looking at things as such, but rather knowing the bases from which one affirms that something is and being willing to show it. That is, reflection. The key to this is to abandon certainties in order to look and assume what one sees from the standpoint of its doing, without supposing that this vision is independent from what one does. Democracy means opening oneself to reflection that makes it possible to see the bases from which one affirms that which one affirms. The emotion upon which democracy is based is loving.

Accepting as valid the statement that we are transformed according to the human relational space within which we live means that we learn to make our own distinctions and correlations of this relational space. The body is transformed according to the skills that we acquire, whether physical, psychic, or spiritual. If we jump and run, we acquire skills in jumping and running. If we play the piano, we acquire skills in playing the piano; if we interact with the computer, we acquire this skill. And this modifies the distinctions that we make in other dimensions. The human relational problem arises when we think that one or another of these skills is the most important, and we depreciate the others.

The nervous system functions by distinguishing configurations in the relational life of the organism. And what configurations of living to our students learn to distinguish? Those that live in the relational space within which human beings live. These configurations have to do with three fundamental aspects of living: to feel emotions, to reason, and to do.

We live in a world that emphasizes the use of technology in education. The consequences of this emphasis are not unimportant. There are many sensorial-effective skills that one can learn using computers. We learn sensorial-effective correlations that can be applied to any domain required, for their consequences belong to the area in which they are applied. But working in a virtual venue also changes the emotional factor of those who do so, experiencing the joys



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Emotions are not virtual because they correspond to what occurs internally in the organism as a relational basis.

and fears evoked by doing so. However, emotions are never virtual, and most of our emotions are unconscious. Television, films, and video games are virtual environments that evoke emotions that change the non-emotional flux of our experience of living. Through these media we learn, in the best of cases, to manipulate virtual realities that provide operational skills, but always provoke emotional changes that have an impact on our living in other areas.

## VIRTUAL EMOTIONS or living reflections in the classroom?

We can speak of virtual realities in terms of the manipulation of space because one manipulates sensory factors and because the space arises in the sensorial-effective correlations proper to the meeting of the organism media and the media that makes it possible. Emotions are not virtual because they correspond to what occurs internally in the organism as a relational basis. If we see aggression, we live aggression and learn to live with aggression, unless we explicitly reject it. If we see tenderness, we live tenderness and we learn to live tenderness, unless it arises negated in our experiences with unlove.

Emotions are never virtual because we live that which we see as the presence of the present. It is no good to say, "it's only a movie". We live aggression, fear, repulsion, and tenderness, participating in the aggressive act, the repulsion, the fear, or tenderness as something legitimate for our lives, unless we reject it explicitly with some reflection that shows us that we aren't part of it. For this reason, television is potent, and under the pretense of delivering information or entertaining, manipulates the emotions and with it the relational lives of the viewers.

The world of virtual realities does not invite us to make reflexive correlations because it does not call upon us to examine the emotional bases of the act that it evokes. Virtual realities generate manipulations because the nervous system does not distinguish between illusion and perception, and the manipulation is present in the relational space in which we live, although it is virtual (in the eyes of the other). What we live watching television we live as if it were not virtual, and we associate

these emotions to living (doing, relating), whether this is virtual or not (before others). Emotions, as biological phenomenon, belong to the internal dynamic of the generation of space in the relational behaviors that an organism (animal) can experience at any given time, and are blind to the relational context of the organism in which they arise. Emotions are not changeable by reason. Only emotion changes emotion. We learn emotions from television, as a virtual space, evoked as if it were an emotion of our everyday lives.

Television programs manage the flow of human relations in terms of emotions. Television trains the emotions in a relational virtual space, in the same way that it can train, for example, to type or to drive an automobile without making mistakes. It guides the person in a space in which no errors are committed and one doesn't think about what one is doing, because there is no adult person to guide reflection or to invite the person at the opportune time by offering emotional alternatives.

If there were an adult person present, he or she would say, "let's stop a moment and think about what happened", thus generating a relational opportunity in which uncertainties would arise in order to show the basis of what is happening. We cannot press a button to see what is the consequence of the reflection that a teacher evokes unless we actually do so. One must experience it with the teacher. They are irreplaceable, because they act from the basis of human emotions and temporality. They generate the temporality that makes possible operationization of reflection and correlating separate things. Teachers that live as adults conscious of and responsible for what they do will return time and again to make these reflexive correlations as long as they see that their students do not do so. They will not abandon them. They will continue with them lovingly in the practice of reflection until their students learn to do so.

In teaching via television this does not happen. The key in distance courses (*e-learning*) is not the manipulation of an instrument or of a set of ideas through suggestions made in the televised course or by computer. What are essential are the meetings or direct inter-actions between students and teachers. Being physically present is not only being bodily present: it is body, soul, and time. These are processes. Temporality is not a watch; it is a process. Physical presence is not material; it is a relational dynamic; the soul is not a fantasy; it is relational, reflexive flow. Body, time, and soul are in a reflection; they exist in questioning, in meandering, in making connections, etc. There is a set of processes that take up many minutes and cannot be skipped. Reflection is not a rational skill. It is an operation involving emotions and one learns it by relating to others.

## GLOBALIZATION and relational skills

Relational skills are modes of relating, not knowledge. They are not skills in the common sense of the term, but rather dimensions of social conscience that children should learn in their lives at home and in school, with their mothers, teachers, and with the different actors in the social and cultural space in which one lives. Listening, for example.

Listening consists of hearing and attending to what we hear and in which what the other says is valid. There are two ways of listening. In one, we attend to what we hear to the extent to what the other says coincides with what we think, and so in effect we are only listening to ourselves. The other consists of attending to what we hear when what the other says is valid. Others say what they say always from a domain of validity and legitimacy of their own present. If one does this, one hears what the other says and the other has presence. That which is social and democratic is based on this second kind of listening, from whence it is possible for loving conduct to arise.

We should learn this latter kind of listening at home. When a child says something to his or her mother, she listens not to the form of what is said, but from a perspective of the validity of what is said, and from this acts, understanding what the child is saying. At the same time, the child listens to its mother paying attention to the validity of what she says. In this kind of listening, emotion plays a part because it defines the domain of the validity of what is said. The form of what is said defines what is said as a particular occurrence in the domain of "occurrences" in which the person is speaking. This kind of listening demands respect. Without respect, we can never listen to one another because our judgment interferes.

Listening to others requires confidence in oneself. Only thus can one not be afraid of disappearing in hearing what is said and there is not risk in hearing it. Listening requires acceptance of oneself, a willingness to know that which one does not know. That which we listen to offers us an opportunity to learn and not be competing. In competing, listening is directed at seeing how we can be better than the other. Only if one listens and where what the other says is valid can what is said be an opportunity for a non-competitive relation in mutual respect without aggression.

We live in a culture focused on relations of domination, submission, and competition, with the consequences of isolation and loneliness, and therefore of pain and suffering for whole communities and ethnic groups throughout the

world. It is from this way of living that arises our enthusiasm in talking about the need for globalization. It is interesting to reflect about what we want to preserve when we speak of a globalized world. If we say that globalization occurs as a recovery of mutual respect and collaboration, this means that we wish to preserve well-being. And this is not trivial, given that all human life and relations follow the course of desires.

For this to occur, we must live in autonomy. Being autonomous means that we do not have conflicts caring for the space within which we exist in well-being; where self-respect (autonomy), caring for one's spouse, family, children, friends, does not mean controlling and restricting, but rather being respectful of these spaces and moving in accordance

**Collaboration is  
only possible when  
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and care for the  
world and for  
others.**

with others because we want their company. We know that the notion of globalization seems to point toward the expansion of mercantile space based on the search for profit for one, without much consideration for what happens to others. In any case, the subject is the emotion from which we listen, since it is this that will determine the course of the relation with others.

In order for me to be able to understand the emotions of others I must listen without fear of disappearing, from respect for myself. For globalization not to constitute a source of abuse and dependence, people and countries must be autonomous, being able to say no or yes, without fear of lost opportunities and being left behind. Collaboration is only possible when based on respect and care for the world and for others. Globalization does not exist as collaboration when the basic emotion is the competitive struggle. Globalization doesn't exist by itself, but is always an individual phenomenon.

The United States, for example, is a very interesting country because it emerged in principle open to globalization, being a country of immigrants and as a world in which everything is possible anywhere. But the competitive expansion of this form of living led to the extinction of its original inhabitants and ways of life, because the competitive expansion of a way of life involves the extinction of other modes. The United States is a culture of globalized extension, and its citizens don't feel that they are in Minnesota, Massachusetts, or California. Perhaps there is now beginning to be an appreciation for local feelings. U.S. citizens belong to a history in which it makes no difference where one is born or dies. This "making no difference" is only possible to the

In Chile, for example, the privatization of electric companies and their internationalization through the sale of stock to Spanish companies, from the argument of globalization, says that what happens with electric companies has nothing to do with us, but is rather the concern of Spanish companies. When we say, "we are internationalized because our electric companies are Spanish", we do not recognize that we are conquered from the perspective of electricity. But what guides the activities of these companies is not the well-being of our country or of the Chileans that support it, but rather the interest in the companies as producers of wealth for a world outside of ours. In education, for there to be a collaboration of mutual respect it is essential that there be respect for the world in which we live, in the creation of a world of mutual respect.

### *IN OUR OPINION,* what is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education?

The Ministry of Education of Chile has a reduced capacity of effective action because it has delivered the task of education into the hands of the private sector, municipalities, and the free market. At the most, it can dictate certain general notions, such as the declaration of an education reform that is interpreted and reviewed outside of the ministry by schools that exist as private, business entities. It could create an opportunity for teachers to directly participate in a process of human training. This is done by generating opportunities for reflection and action of the type of human beings that we are and activities that restore to teachers confidence in themselves through a better understanding of who they are and what they do, as human beings, as teachers, and as adult persons. This opportunity should be focused on a process of spiritual and cognitive recuperation during their professional years. Thus, the ministry could guide, not in details of education, but in inspiring the educational process thanks to training in the biological and cultural fundamentals of teachers. *e*

extent that there is a federal State that defines a legality that protects all citizens wherever they are within its globalized space. But, is it thus with the globalization of which one speaks in the world today? If it is not, the dominant emotions will be greed and competition, and globalization will lead inevitably to the path of some exploiting others because in competition, the other does not have a human face; the other is only a threat or an inconvenience.

Globalization as a phenomenon of growth of communications is neither good nor bad. The important thing is the emotion that accompanies this growth. If we experience the globalization of communication from the perspective of competition, ambition, or vanity, it will be destructive for humans and for the biosphere. If we experience it from a perspective of mutual respect and collaboration for generating human well-being, it is possible that we will have a great opportunity to generate a desirable world.



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# Meanings, curricula, and teachers<sup>1</sup>

Roberto Carneiro  
Philosopher, Portugal.

## *THE CRISES*

Sustained reflection on the meanings of education closely followed the maturation process of the *paideia* during the Greek and Roman period, and has continued as a theme of social history until recent times, with development of modern schools such as we know them today.

Nevertheless, such reflection is today of increasing relevance. The need for it arises from a growing "disorientation" within education systems, either as the consequence of the subordination of philosophical concerns or alternatively, as a result of this subordination predominantly to current material pressures.

It is with uneasiness that we observe the loss of relevance of philosophies of education, as they give way to more pragmatic theses concerning the mission of education. The primacy of the economic factor and the imposition of its quantitative measurements are at the origins of theories of human capital. According to its logic, education should be profitable, and investment in its activities –whether public or private– can only be justified if there is sufficient economic return.

<sup>1</sup> Editor's note: this text was developed by the author as a personal summary commentary for the Meeting on the Meanings of Education and Culture. It contains reflections of the author regarding the contributions of participants during March workshop and by OREALC/UNESCO Santiago regarding curriculum and teacher training, key areas for expressing the new meanings of education.



Gabriel Mondaca

Similarly, the progress of information technologies has led to the demise of distance and of time. History is witness to an unprecedented acceleration. Memory is "forgotten" under the yoke of the ephemeral present and the ideology of urgency. Cultures of happiness and levity, based on the enjoyment of discardable goods and on the lapsing of ethical commitments foster a utilitarian approach to knowledge and a loss of priorities for the task of education.

In former societies, stable, simple, and repetitive, memory was dominant, principles were transmitted immutably, exemplary models were conserved as archetypes. It was the primacy of structure over genesis.

In the *new* society, unstable, inventive and innovative, the project overrides memory, the future dominates the past, and models are constantly called in to judgment. It is the primacy of genesis over structure.

In the eagerness to respond to this changing society, public policies often slip toward inconsequential reformism in the heat of hastily imported fads and in the name of a technocracy without cultural weight.

It is no wonder, then, that whenever education is mentioned, there is a feeling of growing crisis, both in vision and in meaning.

Opinions of dissatisfaction come from respective representatives of the most varied spheres of society: business people, union leaders, politicians, cultural figures, recognized authorities from international organizations, and representatives of families and local communities. The feeling of "emptiness" is not limited by progress in schooling. On the contrary, successive massification of various levels of education has accentuated the sensation that although we are adding more years we to education, we are not adding more education to the time spent in school.

Furthermore, it is not thought that the crises are a result of poverty. If it were so, the response would be linear; perhaps mechanical.

But the fact is that the greatest numbers of criticisms come from systems that, even existing in environments of relative abundance, do not add value of intelligibility to existence. The crisis results from the feeling that our education systems are limited to reproducing knowledge, to transmitting codified learning, without being concerned with pausing and reflecting on the relation between knowledge/learning and the production of meaning. Our scholars are increasingly erudite, but are also increasingly less cultured in regard to the world and its material attractions.

## TRAVELS

The pace of world events and the feeling of accompanying crisis demand development of a new education anthropology that responds to the following questions (as well as others):

- Will we be able to re-discover the centrality of what is human?
- What are the features that can favor sustainable "people-friendly" development?
- How can one help to build happiness?
- Can we re-discover the role of communities and the strength of the relation as a condition of progress?
- In the future, will there be a place for a return to emancipating narrations of humanity?
- Will we be able to reserve in educational missions a strategic function for story-telling, reading, and communication?
- How can we better relate scholastic knowledge and life meanings?

The response to a list of such fundamental questions for the densification of education missions require recognizing the value of veritable voyages of discovery – voyages through the world of disciplines and interfaces between knowledge that illuminate the search for understanding of our common condition of pilgrimage.

The amplified *corpus* of the human sciences, that include philosophy, psychology, sociology, neuro-biology, history, education sciences, literature, and communication sciences has been called upon and is well-represented in the case under analysis. At this time, the perspectives considered are attainable.

Instead of "closing doors", the question about the meanings of education asks us to open them. Therefore, the approaches chosen include considering people and individuals, without excluding those of the citizen and society, while paying due attention to the themes of *leisure* and *labor*.

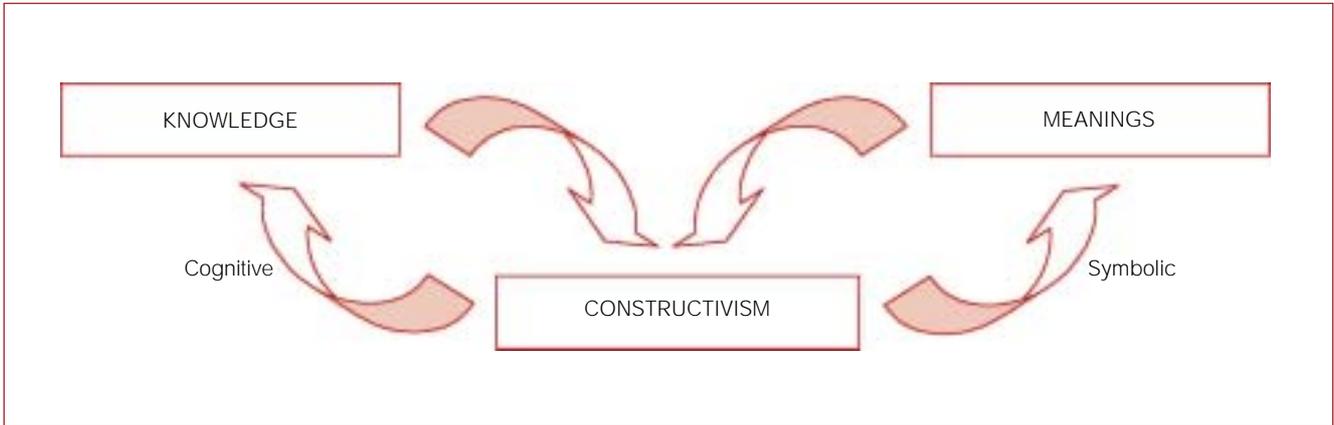
Similarly, we take as given that fundamental learning of human beings is based, invariably, on interior voyages. Growth of the spirit, something favored by these voyages, takes place at the cross-roads of discovery: of the personal interior treasure and that of the particular treasure of "the other" (constituting the relation of proximity or available nearness for socialization, the opportunity to carry out common voyages). The magic of these voyages is rarely limited to their destinations –often uncertain and contingent. The indelible mark of voyages of learning is found principally in their itineraries and in the vicissitudes of the journey.



Sometimes they take the form of human narration. Such narrations –real or imaginary– add meaning to our existence and frequently include histories of possible worlds. These, in turn, are powerful sources of acquisition of meaning and powerful drives, both in delineation of human aspirations and in the realization of personal conquests.

Life is full of encounters with the world. Each encounter is an invitation to a voyage of learning, the success of which requiring that we equip ourselves with a "toolbox" full of knowledge and interpretative algorithms. Schools have the primary responsibility for providing the personal implements included in this interpretive toolbox that determine our constant constructive activity. Thus, we may speak of a double constructivism, carried out at the meeting of knowledge and meanings.

Diagram 1  
Double constructivism



**Education emerges as a permanent “negotiation” of meanings within a community.**

While cognitive constructivism transforms daily knowledge into paradigmatic structures, symbolic constructivism makes use of the management power possessed by the signaling of human action representation codes. In this context, education systems are forced toward the active search or a new syntax in order to help construct meanings in an increasingly uncertain, vague, changing, instantaneous, hyper-informative, materialistic, unequal, memory deficient world affected by an unstoppable complexity.

On the one hand, the archipelago of knowledge continues to evolve due to constant specialization, strengthening a pulverizing trend opposed to the wisdom of synthesis. On the other, the architecture of learning resorts to material artifacts –machines with exponentially amplified processing power– that lack generating attributes lending touches of human genius and that unleash the power of creativity.

The lost syntax includes the empowerment of the networks of thinking that constitute the greatest attribute of the information and knowledge society, as well as the appearance of those intentional states of the mind that foster veritable “vigils” in terms of the creation of meaning.

In regard to this axial restoration of the value of human subjectivity carried out by the interpretive force of that of which it is composed –beliefs, desires, intentions, moral commitment, purpose, motivation, among others– education arises as a permanent “negotiation” of meanings within a community. The symbolic artifacts of this negotiation are language and culture, with the latter understood as being a product of social history.

In virtue of personal participation in the collective cultural adventure, meanings are public and shared. Thus, the more *dense* the culture, the more *condensed* will be the interpretation, in a crossroads enriched by the passing of the paths of affection and intellect.

Schools that are merely informative are potentially reductionist. Schools of interpretation are genuinely learned.

## LEARNING

It will be necessary to reconsider fundamental learning, that which cannot be avoided by each and every young person reaching the end of secondary education, a threshold that is increasingly identified as the minimum level upon which the knowledge and information society may be based.

The International Commission for Education in the XXI Century<sup>2</sup>, with the support of UNESCO and headed by Jacques Delors, which met during more than three years, presented a proposal for “vertical learning” condensed around four basic pillars: learning to be, learning to know, learning to do, and learning to live together.

**Learning to be** is an timeless priority already present in the Faure Report of 1971, that emphasizes the interior journey of each person as a process of spiritual growth and living that lends a final meaning to life and to the construction of happiness.

**Learning to know** is a type of learning fully inserted in the area of scientific and technological progress. The principle appeals to the urgent need to respond to the plurality of sources of information, the diversity of content of multiple communication media, and to new means of knowledge of a networked society.

**Learning to do** creates a terrain favorable to the nexus between knowledge and aptitudes, learning, and skills; inert and active learning; codified and tacit knowledge; generative and adaptive learning. To learn by doing and do by learning<sup>3</sup> is the key to the solution for facing the growing insecurity of the world and the changing nature of labor.

**Learning to live together** speaks to the extraordinary challenge of rediscovering the relation with meaning, to raise the thresholds of social cohesion, of making possible sustainable community development. Within it are found key values of civic life and the construction of identity in the context of multiple participation.

On the other hand, we understand personally that it is also important to satisfy a set of teleological or final learning that we attempt to summarize around six transverse axis that are synergetically complementary.



1. Learning to know the human condition in its infinite dignity and richness, but also in its mysterious contingency and vulnerability.
2. Learning to live as a citizen, celebrating diversity and appreciating democracy as active members of communities, as holders of unalienable rights and duties.
3. Learning to live in a matricial culture, in the fullness of its integrating shades: memory, idiom, civilization, history, philosophy, identity, and dialogue with the world.
4. Learning to process information and order knowledge; that is, to deal with the information society and the abundance its oracles in a context of life-long training.
5. Learning to manage a vocational identity, in the various fronts of personal intervention in the productive system, from the continuous acquisition of skills to sustainable employment.
6. Learning to construct wisdom, through balanced synthesis of knowledge and experience (*metis*), and the conscious evolution and interiorization of final meaning of content in the gift of life and the cosmic dimension of existence.

Combining the four vertical pillars of the educational edifice and the six kinds of learning here described into a single matrix generates a system of *integrated readings* that is extraordinarily rich.

<sup>2</sup> Delors, J. et al (1996): *Education: the Treasure Within*. UNESCO.

<sup>3</sup> Landes offers an interesting description of these two learning strategies successfully implemented by Portuguese navigators in their voyages to the Indies during the XV and XVI centuries.  
Landes, D. (1999): *The wealth and poverty of nations*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

The joint objectives of “being human” and “living together in solidarity” emphasize the two essential directions of the learning process.

Without attempting to exhaust the richness of possible interpretations, a vertical reading highlights how learning to be includes deepening of the self, moving toward discovery of the

wisdom inherent to the total human being. At the same time, learning to live together begins with understanding others (the human condition of otherness) in order to grow toward the conquest of solidarity as the guiding principle of living together. In the two intermediary pillars, learning to know highlights the quality of synthesis, while learning to do leads to the art of constructing happiness, touching upon the two other essential concepts of community and firm.

Diagram 2  
Learning the meanings of life

	<i>BEING HUMAN</i>	<i>KNOWING</i>	<i>DOING</i>	<i>LIVING TOGETHER</i>
<i>Human condition</i>	Self			Other
<i>Citizenship</i>	Participation	Rights & duties	Community	Diversity
<i>Matricial culture</i>	Pertinence			Dialogue
<i>Information &amp; knowledge</i>		Process		Share
<i>Vocational identity</i>	Apprentice	Production	Firm	Awareness
<i>Constructing wisdom</i>	Human	Synthesis	Happiness	Solidarity

A horizontal reading reveals the emergence of interesting processes for achieving large educational goals, generically expressed in varied ways, in the taxonomies of objectives to be met at different levels of education. Thus, learning of the human condition is in constant movement between autonomy of the self and dependence on others. Thus, training for citizenship begins with a **participating being**, aware of his or her range of rights and duties, leading to the responsibility to **part of a community** and an appreciation for diversity.

While matricial culture balances between knowledge of pertinence and of dialogue, it is the processing and sharing of information/knowledge that open the way to learning linked to the information and knowledge society. The construction

of strong vocational identities is based on learner personalities that are fully aware of the value of living together in order to achieve the objectives of production and firm. Finally, still in the horizontal exploration of the intersections, learning of wisdom involve construction of a whole individual able to achieve a synthesis and seek full happiness and who sees in relations with others the meaning of solidarity.

The combination of the vertices of the matrix, translated into the joint objectives "being human" and "living together in solidarity" emphasize the two essential directions of meaning-producing learning: personal meaning and community meaning. Through the "media" cumulatively emerge knowledge of synthesis and the conquest of happiness.

PERSPECTIVES

Latin America –and its contingency– furnishes the basic elements for the search for the meanings of education. It also provides a fertile ground for the germination of the seeds of our spiritual discontent.

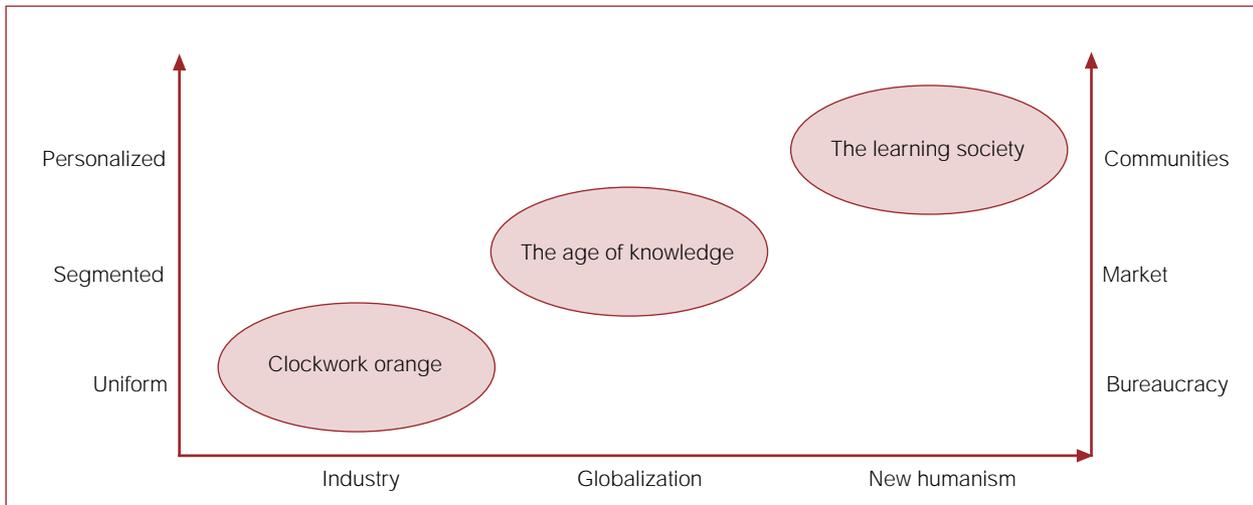
The Latin American context has been characterized in various studies of UNESCO/OREALC Santiago, particularly those related to PRELAC: poverty, inequality, democracy, human rights, multi-cultural concerns, hybridization, new social movements, intellectual effervescence. In a word, insurmountable contradictions in confrontation and a history of ideals and disenchantments serve as stimulus to launch a new look at education and its role in the production of meaning.

The traditional actors –families, schools, the communication media, communities, churches, cities, the workplace, the State –are also undergoing change. The pace at which they are doing so is incessant and unstoppable. The dream of education is inseparable from generative learning and transformation. Few disagree that the dream –a powerful

view of the future– is necessary in order to lend form to the present. But, does this mean that we really will be able to learn from the future?

In the air that one breathes at this change of century and millennium their are aspirations for a leap in quality in educational conscience of humanity and of our countries. We live during a time of a real "conceptual emergency" provoked by the failure of our traditional ways of understanding the world. The utopia of the education society well expresses this desire for a kind of education that is simultaneously an agent of change and a factor of stability. According to this general theory, we today face an enormous challenge: that of carrying out the transition from the clockwork orange of industry to an era of knowledge and learning. This change is driven by the forces of globalization in synergy with impulses of the market that impose an increasingly pronounced segmentation of educational services and of their respective modes of distribution.

Diagram 3  
Education and learning scenarios



A history of ideals and disenchantments serves as stimulus to launch a new look at education and its role in the production of meaning.

## CURRICULA AND TEACHERS

However, the clear limitations of these first scenes take us –by means of conceptual aspirations, as well as by analysis of the relevant social dynamics– to the formulation of a third paradigm of reference: the education society. This paradigm, projected within a horizon of two decades, represents simultaneously overcoming the limitations of a system under the yolk of techno-bureaucratization, and the liberation of an implacable economic predominance in the area of education in recent decades.

The situation marked by the dictatorship of supply information and knowledge is opposed by a society determined by the pace of learning and by the search for wisdom. The dream of this new society will be to achieve unity and the continuation of learning: for each individual, community, and nation. The education society also finds substance in the dream of a new humanism, so emphatically formulated in the UNESCO report.

This objective involves exorcizing the demons of utilitarianism that have colonized the mission of education and the concomitant establishment of schools according to the final purposes of education: that of giving priority to development of the total person; a subject of both autonomy and dignity, possessor of a unique and unrepeatable life project, being a responsible and participatory member of the communities to which he or she belongs<sup>4</sup>. We dream of a school that is "almost magic", able to fulfill aspirations and to aid each person in being the owner of a unique life project. In a word, to create schools that are at the service of *cultivating humanity*.

The bases upon which such a school of the future rest are three, the contours of which have been much-discussed. These have to do with themes related to curricula and teachers, discussed below.

The creation of meaning is part of the human essence.

The global sense is a backdrop for reflections on the meanings of education. One of its most visible signs is the speed of generation and transmission of information and knowledge. Beyond whatever value judgments it may provoke, globalization has as an objective shortening distances and time. It expresses and fosters profound changes in politics, economics, and culture.

Education faces various kinds of challenges. First, there are those between permanence and change –tensions between tradition and modernity, long-term and short-term, competition and equity. In addition, there are tensions between global and local, universal and individual, as well as growing tensions between the expansion of knowledge and the ability of human beings to assimilate and make use of it in the face of the priorities of human development. Finally, there are the eternal tensions between the spiritual and the material.

Particular traditions and cultures are being questioned. That which is new overwhelms the old in all spheres. Uncertainty reigns in public and private life. New and more powerful media are increasingly available for carrying out every larger activities. Just as de-humanizing trends are globalized, so too are the possibilities to extend fraternity, respect for rights, and protection of the environment and of life. However, in spite of what one hears, the world continues to be more unequal than homogeneous.

Economic and cultural changes move more quickly than those in education. This produces new incoherencies and more complex challenges because change multiplies in extension and depth.



<sup>4</sup> Carneiro, R. (2000): *Educação 2020, 20 anos para vencer 20 décadas de atraso educativo*. Lisbon, DAPP, Ministério de Educação.



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Our ultra-technological civilization runs the risk of widening the gap between the haves and the have-nots.

## CURRICULA

One of the sources identified to foster the creation of meaning is that of curricula in its broadest –not only instrumental– sense that includes everything from structure and process to the relationship with growing social demands.

Chief among these are those linked to new technological environments that, making use of the enormous potential of ICTs, transform the relationship of young people with knowledge and its sources. However, it should be remembered that the promises of greater democracy in the enjoyment and use of knowledge supplied by the new technologies are far from being fulfilled.

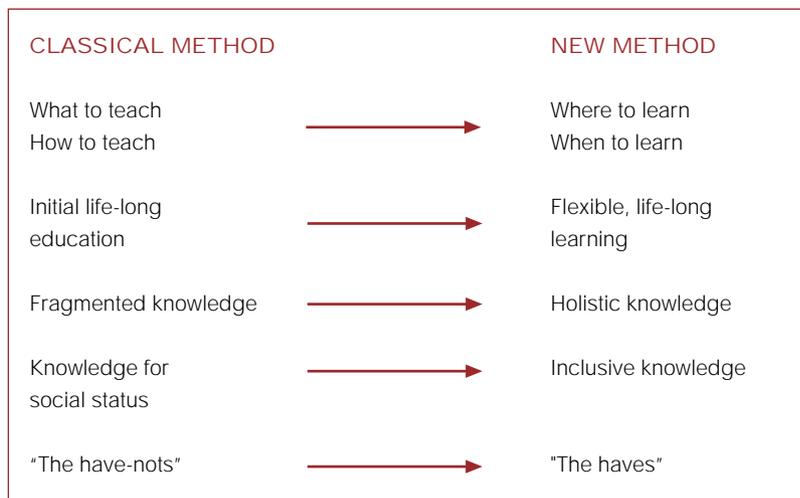
Moreover, our ultra-technological civilization runs the risk of increasing the gap between the haves and the have-nots. Full exercise of citizenship and inclusion depend upon a series of new social and technological skills that are either scarce or badly distributed within the fabric of modern society.

Inclusion now concerns the ability to access and use powerful internet resources.

An exploration of this evolving universe allows us to distinguish five paradigmatic mutations and at the same time consider transition patterns toward a new order for the knowledge society (Diagram 4). Among other key characteristics, this structural change seeks to cross the Rubicon of exclusion, a dividing line that was never overcome during the industrial age in spite of the clamor raised against perpetuation through education of a marginalized class in successive generations lacking in skills and socially deprived.

The following reflections treat a number of tensions that, understood in their complementarity and mutual relations, present a unit of analysis that provides a perspective to the joint issue of school curricula, programs, and content.

Diagram 4  
The road toward inclusive knowledge



## TENSION BETWEEN DEMANDS AND PRIORITIES

Curricula suffer pressures from two sides. One is from outside, expressed as increasing demands. The other comes from within the system. The resulting tension demands new selection criteria for lending priority to content. Curricula include views about life, education, and human beings, and involve political and cultural stands and positions.

The options point toward what is necessary to include in order to arrive at *Homo sapiens-sapiens* –beings who create meaning. It is important to remember that traditionally, education has sought to "deliver" meanings developed from outside, and very rarely in this triple dimension: personal, collective, and general. People possess multiple intelligences and different ways of approaching reality. For this reason, one should not choose an excluding form, but open the greatest number of doors in order to arrive at knowledge.

Much of this tension can be treated when curricula are structured based upon skills rather than upon disciplines. This idea warrants more discussion and creativity before being expressed in the school. Current curricula reveal key absences, such as that related to citizenship skills: rights, valuing differences, inclusion, commitment to common ends, a critical attitude toward the communication media. Curricula should reflect subjects of social concern within a flexible framework. Today, this changing social agenda has as its targets poverty, exclusion, differences, the environment, and peace.

The subject of values, freedom, and religious options in a multi-cultural world is complex, but cannot remain invisible. Personal and religious options have a place in reflection on schools. They are part of "educating for rights and duties" and of "learning to live together", as well as being a way to increase inclusion. The arts are relegated to a secondary position in curricula. Since the purpose is to not circumscribe the limits of a subject, changes involve new view and strategies of learning in subject various fields.

The utilitarian meaning of content is important as well. Contributions in the field of hygiene, health, nutrition, and safety should be discussed as tools that people can use independently in their daily lives. On the other hand, there is a need to facilitate access to information and communication through ICTs, remembering that they are **media** and that they require skills for search, selection, critical perception, processing, and use of their materials. All media should be included, from the internet to traditional kinds of communication.

Reading and writing (the latter is less appreciated) should be key elements for both students and teachers. Their value goes beyond the merely instrumental, for they make possible discovery, esthetic enjoyment, creativity, and broadening of horizons. Time must be dedicated daily to reading, fostering the pleasure of reading and extending this to other arts and languages.

## TENSIONS BETWEEN THE BASIC CURRICULUM AND DIVERSITY THAT GUARANTEES EQUALITY

This tension touches upon multiple dimensions: socio-economic, cultural, and individual. Moreover, it involves the consideration of what and how much should be considered common and what and how much should be differentiated.

A proposal seeks to develop basic common skills for all, and diversifications in function of different interests and abilities (multiple intelligences). Common content are still debatable, but it is possible to identify the basic skills necessary for facing a changing world, increasingly emphasizing reading and writing in the perspective of moving toward reading societies. Also up for discussion are curriculum diversification strategies in order to respond to different needs and to take into consideration various cultures and talents.

Recognition of diversity of talents is extremely important and should go hand in hand with recognition of the dignity and value of all crafts and professions. New systems of professional education are needed: general education of excellence and large top-level professional schools, so that people can attend this kind of school as an option and not because they cannot enter another.

It is possible to identify the basic skills necessary for facing a changing world.

Other common aspects include basic life skills: self-esteem, conflict resolution, communication, teamwork, etc.

This tension is related as well to autonomy. There is general agreement of the need for a certain degree of regulation in order to guarantee equality of opportunity. But these regulations should vary according to age and levels of education. This is not a question of independence, nor of mechanical subjection to uniform rules, for the need to for adaptations and creations coherent with particular demands cannot be delayed.

There is still no agreement on the modality for offering aspects that go beyond subject matter, such as themes linked to cultural and school management: school climate, relations, democratic exercise, living and experiencing one's rights, synergies with the surroundings. The traditional curriculum rarely includes them and usually circumscribes teacher-student relations to the classroom.

### ***TENSION BETWEEN ORGANIZING THE CURRICULUM AROUND EITHER SKILLS OR SUBJECT MATTER***

Questions abound regarding the quantity of content, number of subjects, the time devoted to each, their relative weights, changes and sequences without pedagogical criteria, and the irremediable segmentation that they present of reality.

Time and its distribution are important for developing meaning. Very short or insignificant fragments do not make sufficient contributions; neither do they take advantage of the fact that schools are the only institutions that that can provide the time for socializing, reading, conversing (families do not) which are precious elements for creating meaning. The problem lies in how to manage this time –thus leading us to the subject of the disciplines of knowledge.

The subject also contains other elements: supporting the construction of meaning in regard to other sources of information external to the school, and the need for special skills among

teachers that are common to all disciplines. These basic skills, able to be developed in various disciplines (research, communication, teamwork, creativity in the face of uncertainty and conflicts) provide the terrain for a different kind of curricular organization based on broad cross-cutting skills.

It is essential to take into consideration work in the management of tools, above all those that offer more added value and greater synergy (research, critical reading). This is also related to quality, because with equal time periods it is possible to achieve different levels.

Everything points toward the creation of new forms of curricular organization, beginning with the primary level and considering variants according to levels: articulating or integrating content around broad skills and constituting areas by fields of knowledge thus avoiding fragmentation. The guidance of the so-called pillars of learning contribute significantly, providing order for the new curricular structure. Moreover, a new curricular design should be necessarily expressed in new forms of measurement, assessment, and use of the information produced.

### ***TENSION BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND NEW TYPES OF LEARNING***

The dilemma lies in how to teach students to learn in other ways. This involves attributing meaning to learning: learning for what, and why. It also involves self-regulation and fostering the pleasure of learning, the passion to know.

On-going work on the ethical and historical dimensions of reality is also an ingredient in the new learning, beyond specific subject matter or content.

This new view sees value in the incorporation of a culture of permanent effort, of overcoming difficulties, of conquering something higher, which is different from making learning a sacrifice. In finding meaning, learning is no longer a sacrifice, and the effort can incorporate the pleasure of knowing.

In finding  
meaning,  
learning is no  
longer a  
sacrifice.

The manner of presenting content is crucial in order for education to have meaning for students. The role of technology appears as an unexplored possibility, besides supporting learning that is more entertaining, pleasant, and satisfying without forgetting that technologies are not ends in themselves nor without intentionality. It is for this reason that, in the end, it will be people who change education and the world by taking advantage of technologies. What is important are the relations between people, the harmony between them and their contacts, emotions, and mutual trust.

The great challenge in the area of curricula could be aimed toward a radical change in the sustenance, logic, priority, and organization of learning content so they may be

part of a new world agenda, foster human integration, reduce fragmentation, mutually reinforce one another, and maintain the unity of central themes in order to gain efficiency and effectiveness. Skill-based organization is on the horizon as an idea that requires further discussion and creative application.

The challenge is most notable considering that a cycle of reforms is about to conclude in Latin America and the Caribbean that has been curriculum-focused. This opens the opportunity for assessing and making a qualitative leap toward the future. But such proposals and challenges will have no value if both do not converge with urgent changes that must be made in the role of teachers.



Teachers play a determining role in the development of attitudes in the development of attitudes, positive or negative, toward study.

## TEACHERS

Much of the construction of meaning of education lies in the role and the pedagogical relation that teachers establish with students.

As the Delors Report produced by UNESCO between 1993 and 1996 stated, "teachers play a determining role in the development of attitudes –positive or negative– toward study. They should awaken interest, develop autonomy, stimulate intellectual rigor, and create the conditions necessary for the success of formal and on-going education."

True educators are those who –better than any other participant in education– cultivate humanity in the hearts of those with whom they live. Strategies for increasing the relational density within schools are necessarily linked with teacher mobilization, the moving force of social and emotional capital that constitutes the *sine qua non* condition of school models that induce increased personal and community meaning. Thus, most reflections and challenges of the meeting touched necessarily on teaching. We have here grouped them into closely related categories.

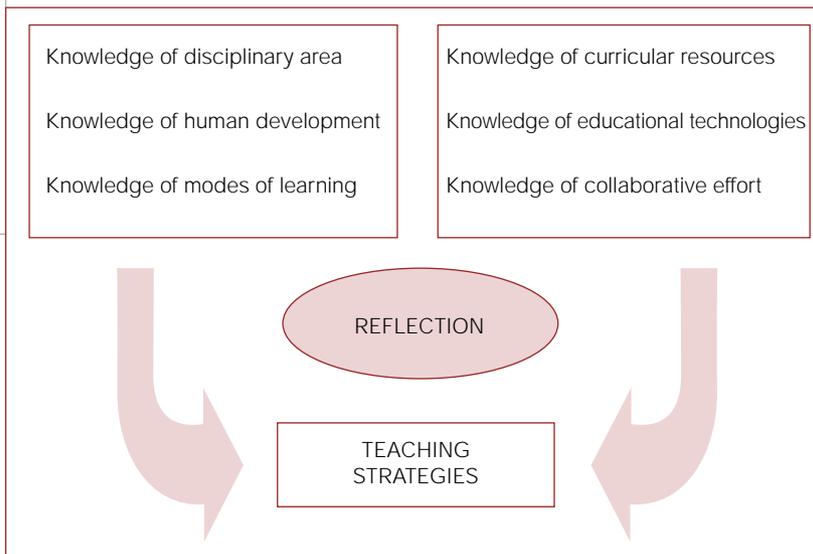
## A NEW PROFESSIONALISM IN TEACHING

Teachers instruct while they learn, guide while they collaborate, develop while they investigate, lead while they participate, utilize critical aptitudes while they constantly expand these attitudes, and create the future while they act in the present.

In Figure 5 we summarize a matrix of teacher knowledge and skills –able to be translated into a new professionalism– that must be encouraged in order to face the urgent challenges of establishing a new kind of school.

Truly, and especially in the era of scientific knowledge and the multiplication of the means of access to such knowledge, teachers must be recognized as specialists in their respective areas of expertise. However outstanding their skills, no teacher who is "out of date" can duly carry out his or her function. The act of teaching does not take place in a vacuum. The greater the availability of sources of information for students, the more security of content is required of the teacher in the scientific content imparted and in authority in guiding students.

**Diagram 5**  
The knowledge of teachers



A good teacher also is one who knows and applies knowledge tailored to human development based on the psychology of learning and knowledge of personality development. The knowledge and experience that a teacher has in different forms of learning, the better prepared to deal with diverse learning styles. Thus, the best teaching strategies will be those which best provide incentive and stimuli most appropriate to each concrete instance of learning without disregarding global objectives that must be common and equitably presented.

In the domain of the media, the new professionalism of teachers requires advanced knowledge in curricular resources, articulating those that come from the pericial sphere (programs, teaching manuals, reference books, support sites, etc.) with those from the local sphere of development (didactic materials "belonging" to the teacher, the classroom, the class, the school, etc.). Within the framework of growing dissemination of "authoring tools", the second sphere tends to dignify the teacher, who can increasingly become an "inventor" and "creator" of his or her learning/teaching materials rather than make mechanical use of instruments developed in "laboratories" by specialists not linked to the concrete reality in which teachers operate.

Consequently, it is not surprising that teachers are required to possess skills that go beyond mere "digital literacy" in order to enter into the domains of competence and pedagogical productivity using the extraordinary potential represented by the new information and communication technologies. A teacher unable to adequately master these communication tools will be severely limited in pedagogical practice and in the ability to respond to the complex demands presented in the combined interfaces of teaching-learning methods ("e-learning").

Finally, no teacher is efficient and effective alone. Knowing how to collaborate, being able to integrate, contribute, and fully take advantage of teacher networks –both face to face and computer-based– is truly strategic. Learner organizations are made up of networked professionals able to generate "spirals of knowledge" and "meta-knowledge" that combat structural inanition and lend vitality to education communities through on-going generation of new and active knowledge.

Experimental learning –lessons derived from active reflection on daily teaching tasks– are an inexhaustible sources of renewed knowledge. Life-long learning is, in great measure, also with life; that is, when, in the present case the nature of

the activity is eminently relational and communicational. Thus, reflection arises forcefully as the major attribute of higher order organizations and persons and the strategic response to systemic complexity.

The ability of teachers to occupy a place in the vanguard of an educating and learning society is the inevitable consequence of the scenarios presented for the future of education and of society as a whole. We emphasize here the importance of teachers considered as **agents of change** in a re-valuing of their mission as preservers of memory. Reflection in regard to the new roles and knowledge of teachers also leads us to re-think –from top down–of appropriate teacher recruitment, initial and continued training, and career enhancement incentive policies. We firmly believe that we will never have good teachers without proportional and decided investment in comprehensive training that includes both human and professional areas.

A great challenge seems to converge toward understanding the forms of teaching and learning that begin with the training of teachers themselves. We must take a new look at these instances of enchantment reached when teachers provoke and guide the meeting between knowledge and daily life, knowledge and the future, and pleasure.

Today, as always, teachers continue to be the great renovative force of schools and education systems. The dream of education continues, in large part, to be in their hands. To this exact extent, a society that dreams and that cares about its collective future cannot but be concerned for the well-being of its teachers, encouraging the recruitment of the best of each generation to whom it confides its destiny, and fostering the continual progress of their knowledge and skills.

It is worth while in closing to recommend reading of the chapter of the Delors Report (UNESCO, 1996) entitled "Teachers in search of new perspectives". **e**



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Life-long learning is,  
in great measure,  
also with life.

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# The value of education for everyone in a diverse and unequal world

Alvaro Marchesi  
Professor of Educational Psychology, Spain.



## VALUES in action

The analysis of the terms "value" and "educate" is based on something more basic: the meaning of human life in a given society and the organized practices for transmitting to new generations the instruments that can allow them to achieve a happy life. For this reason, education is not an unimportant subject and cannot be reduced only to the knowledge to be transmitted. Nor it is enough to have good specialized professionals for assuring these objectives. What is required is reflection on human existence, society, inter-

personal relations, and the serious related problems of inequality, segregation, lack of resources, abandonment, violence, lack of interest of families, or the of teachers.

Thinking about the values of education leads immediately to the concept of equity and obliges us to respond to certain questions: What goods should be distributed equally? What inequalities can be considered to be unjust? What education results depend wholly or in part on society, and what of the personal disposition of the subject? The answers to these questions depend on the principles of justice that one accepts. Current theories seek to overcome meritocratic models that define the equality of opportunities for all, but accept the inequalities that are subsequently produced, and offer a more complete and detailed view of the concept of equity. Rawls<sup>1</sup>, in his landmark work on justice, applies the principle of differentiation to education, and accepts certain inequalities if posterior actions of the more educated benefit the future expectations of the underprivileged. From this perspective, social cooperation, democratic equality, should compensate for the errors produced by insufficient equality of opportunities. For their part, the "communitarians" (MacIntyre, 1981<sup>2</sup>) oppose liberal and universal principles and defend the social construction of values, and in consequence an apparent moral relativism. Their disciples emphasize the importance of the emotions in making moral decisions (Noddings<sup>3</sup>) or the need to take into account an understanding of the social situation (Taylor<sup>4</sup>) and not only, nor principally, the cognitive construction of established moral values in the style of the studies of Kohlberg. At the same time, theories of responsibility differentiate the situations of people who are not directly responsible from others that under the control of the subject.

<sup>1</sup> J. Rawls (1971). *A theory of justice*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>2</sup> A. C. MacIntyre (1981). *After virtue*. Notre Dame, Ind. University of Notre Dame University Press.

<sup>3</sup> N. Noddings (1984). *Caring: A feminist approach to ethics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

<sup>4</sup> C. Taylor (1989). *Sources of the self: the making of the modern identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Among the different principles formulated there are some that have greater force in the area of education. The seven listed below are those that I consider, according to my own beliefs, to be most determinant:

1. Commitment to equal access to and treatment in education.
2. Commitment to underprivileged students and contributions of the more educated.
3. Respect for and recognition of minority cultures.
4. Commitment to knowledge.
5. Commitment to harmonious relations and to the affective development of students.
6. Commitment to values.
7. Commitment of teachers.

These principles should not be a mere declaration of intent. They must guide educational activities for their own proper development. They should thus be considered to be "values in action". They are commitments that affect those responsible for education, schools, teachers, and people and social groups that have achieved a privileged position in society. For this reason we include below concrete proposals for change.

## COMMITMENT to equal access to and treatment in education

It is difficult, if not impossible for a just education system to exist in a profoundly unequal society. Even if one does not insist, as to the classic theories of reproduction, that education has the function of reproducing social inequalities, the influence of the social and cultural contexts on the functioning of schools and on student achievement results has been widely proven.

Inequalities in Latin America are striking, with the continent occupying a tragic first place on this indicator. Data for the Gini coefficient (see Table 1) show that all Latin American countries included in the 2004 UNDP Human Development Report are located at the 91st place and below of the 128 countries studied.

Table 1. Gini Coefficient\*  
(UNDP. Human Development Report 2004)

1. Hungary	24,4
2. Denmark	24,7
(...)	
91. Ecuador	43,7
92. Uruguay	44,6
93. China	44,7
94. El Salvador	53,2
95. Bolivia	44,7
96. Russia	45,6
97. Philippines	46,1
98. Costa Rica	46,5
99. Dominican Republic	47,4
100. Guatemala	48,3
101. Venezuela	49,1
102. Malaysia	49,2
103. Argentina	52,2
104. Mexico	54,6
105. Honduras	55,0
106. Nicaragua	55,1
107. Paraguay	56,8
108. Chile	57,1
109. Brazil	57,6
(...)	
127. Lesotho	63,2
128. Namibia	70,7

\* The Gini coefficient measures inequality along the distribution of income or consumption. A value of 0 represents perfect equality, and a value of 100 perfect inequality.



This unequal distribution of wealth undoubtedly affects the possibilities of access to study for the population and existing social mobility. There is a clear relation in Latin America between social origin, years of study, and the possibility of social mobility. A study carried out in Venezuela more than a decade ago (ECLAC, 1994<sup>5</sup>) clearly shows that the social strata of households, strongly influenced by the years of study achieved by parents, is highly correlated with the number of years of study achieved by their children. According to the data, young people whose parents had between three and five years of schooling have a 33.3% probability of achieving 10 to 12 years of study; a percentage that reaches 76.3% when the parents have between 10 and 12 years of schooling.

These social differences are also evident between public and private schools and between the probabilities of access to education in urban and rural areas. Available resources and materials in one and the other; the time students spend in school; the working conditions of teachers, and even learning demands are unequal. If we add to this the facts that the participation and dedication of families in most cases is different and that expectations regarding the possibility of study of children are unequal, it is easily to predict that the years of schooling of students and the results that they achieve in their studies will be profoundly different, thus perpetuating a cycle of inequality: low income levels of families, low levels of study of children, low income levels of children.

Within this desolating panorama one must recognize that in the last decade hopeful initiatives have appeared in Latin America: an enormous increase in schooling, improvements in school organization and management, curricular changes, improved teacher training, and the growing awareness of societies of the importance of education for future generations. Nevertheless, there

is still a lack of joint efforts by Latin American societies to make it possible to reduce the growing distance between their education systems and those of more developed countries.



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The continent demonstrates inequality of student achievement, in educational processes, in the access to learning, along with insufficient opportunities for all students to be in school for at least 10 years. In the face of this tragic reality, viable proposals must be found that contribute to raising the level of equity in education. The four proposals that follow seem to me to be the most important:

1. **Assure** that all students have 12 years of schooling, from four to sixteen years of age. There is no more important objective in a country than extending education during this age span. In order to achieve this objective it is necessary to act in two directions: on the one hand, constructing enough schools, which requires more investment in education. On the other, seeing to it that students do not abandon their studies due to a lack of family resources or because they find no meaning in the time dedicated to attending school. On this latter point, programs such as study grants, the participation of families, the dedication of teachers, and teaching that is attractive and motivating are key strategies.

2. **Guarantee** that all primary school students spend at least five hours in school daily. Study time is one of the most important conditions for improving student achievement. The class time difference between different schools is one of the causes of inequalities between students. The differences appear, moreover, not only in time dedicated to study, but in the organization of this time as well and in complementary opportunities for education after school hours. Full-time schools with only one term of students offer a better education than those that must divide their time between two or three terms. The difficulties of moving forward in this direction are enormous, not only due to the necessary construction of school buildings, but also because of the implications for teachers.

3. **Obtain** similar educational offerings in all schools. Achievement of this objective would undoubtedly lead to better education as well as to reducing the gap for public school students when they must compete for university entry with those who have studied in private schools. The design of adequate educational programs, improvement of school management, monitoring of students at risk of dropping out, and continuous training of teachers are some of the initiatives that can contribute to achieving this goal.

<sup>5</sup> ECLAC (1994). *Panorama social de América Latina* (LC/G,1844) November, Santiago de Chile.

4. **Pay attention** to the selection, training, working conditions, and professional performance of teachers. These objectives are not based on the problems of the teaching profession in Latin America, but rather from the perspective of the analysis of equity in education. It is just that all students receive a similar education, whatever the school in which they are enrolled. To this end, they must have teachers with similar levels of training, with time available for such training and with a working day that doesn't hinder them from preparing their classes, designing motivating teaching methods, following the pace of learning of all of their students, and being concerned for each.

## COMMITMENT TO UNDERPRIVILEGED STUDENTS and contributions of the more educated.

Equitable distribution of educational services assumes, as we have noted before, to provide unequal treatment to the unequal. This means providing supplementary support to schools with students at risk of failing or dropping out. There is widespread agreement on the importance of compensatory policies in education. We therefore will not dwell on the arguments. Where there is disagreement is in how such policies should be carried out –preferential treatment for students, schools, teachers, families, or for the areas in which they live. There is not doubt that intervention on all of these levels contributes more effectively to improving the education of students. But we must also recognize that this requires more budgetary expenditures, better coordination of the institutions involved, and a long-term effort. When all of these conditions are met, comprehensive programs for compensating inequalities are more likely to be effective.

Among the possible initiatives I have selected three that, due to being directed toward the school environment, may be the most viable. **The first** has to do with resource distribution. As opposed to the liberal option which says that good schools, according to results of students on outside tests, will have more resources as demands for their services increase, the equitable alternative here formulated argues that it is the most disadvantaged schools that should receive greater economic support. This budgetary increase should be carried out under two conditions: the existence of a school project that is agreed upon by education authorities and the assessment of such a project. **The second** initiative deals with the priority of these schools in obtaining resources such as libraries and computers, or in their participation in innovative projects. **The third** initiative affects the working conditions of teachers. Their working time in school should be reorganized in order to strengthen the functions of student support and follow-up, as well as giving more attention to families.



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It is the most disadvantaged schools that should receive greater economic support.

Affective and social relations that teachers establish with their students are also part of compensatory policies. Special concern for students with the greatest difficulties in school, the communication of positive expectations, protection of student self-esteem and their personal and cultural values, and support for their social integration reflect the active commitment of teachers to offer more complete and continue attention to the most at-risk students. Compensation for inequalities is not only the responsibility of education administrators and schools, but of each individual teacher as well, who can in this way develop his or her commitment to justice.

These proposals should keep in mind that their ultimate purpose is to assure that all students perform positively in school. They should thus give priority to strategies for students not to get behind in their learning or that they recuperate time lost. Establishing a standard for minimum results for the students of each school is a good indicator of school equity and can help to redouble collective efforts.

Some last thoughts on the principle of compensatory activities: how can we assure that an education system can take advantage of the collaboration of those who are better prepared? Is it possible to develop an initiative that puts this idea into practice? In a meeting of the OEI held a few months ago in Cancún, Mexico, I stated that it was necessary to mobilize society in favor of education. And among other suggestions I emphasized the possibility of incorporating an optional subject of school support in all university programs. My reflection began by noting the enormous potential of university students for aiding young people in their education, and the advantages of using this potential to strengthen the education system as a voluntary option and without interfering in the direct responsibilities of teachers in the classroom. The solution that I described was to incorporate an optional subject in university study plans for working directly in schools in order to aid teachers. Students electing to do so would earn credit hours collaborating with teachers in following up students with the greatest learning problems through extra-curricular activities, in organizing workshops (music, drawing, magazines, audio-visual aids), in computer use, adult literacy training, etc.

## RESPECT FOR AND RECOGNITION of minority cultures

Up to now, values have been mentioned as if they were something rational, objective, and universal, that one only has to discover or formulate in order to provide instruction in them to all students. Although I later referred to the them of values in education, it is worthwhile stating here again that which in many countries is a transcendent question: that of the plurality and disparity of values in a society, added to the presence of new cultures and citizens.

Besides the discussion of the dominant values of a society, if indeed one can speak in this manner, it is certainly the case that there are other social groups that do not share them. The culture of indigenous peoples in some Latin American societies is an expression of this statement.



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The presence of the culture and values of the East in Western civilization is another example. The mobility of citizens from some countries to others in search of better living conditions, the growing phenomenon of immigration, demands a more profound reflection about the relations between cultures and about their different values.

Education curricula and texts frequently refer to multi-cultural, or even "inter-cultural" education in which the history, beliefs, norms, and values of minority cultures are taken into account and are the objects of study by all students. The major objective of these proposals is the recognition of existing cultural pluralism and the eradication of any form of racism or xenophobia in schools and students. However, together with these laudable statements exist other social messages that come into conflict: the different cultures are a problem because they can put into question the values of the majority of the population; because they complicate educational activities; and because, as is sometimes stated, they gravely distort the school progress of "regular" students. The others, the minorities, the immigrants, come from outside, create labor and social problems, and those who arrive and wish to stay must be regulated and controlled.

Multi-cultural education, in most countries, has not gone beyond the limits of the subordination of some minority cultures to that or the other majority culture around which society and the State are organized. Even more complicated is the situation in which the values of the minority are those that mark the rules of society and to which the values and customs of the majority of society must be subordinated, as is the case with the indigenous peoples of some Latin American countries. There is no dialogue and communication between different sub-cultures in the search for shared values or in the acceptance of the values of others. Rather, in the best of cases there are certain dominant values, including respect and tolerance toward others who do not share the dominant values. In many cases, the meaning of "tolerate" is closer to its first definition of the term in the Spanish usage dictionary of Maria Moliner, that of "not opposing who is in power or authority" than the second listing of "the quality or attitude of one who respects and consents to other attitudes".

But up to what point should there be respect and consent for the behavior of those who do not adjust to that of the majority in a given society? What activities are permitted and which prohibited? What conducts are exemplary and which are deplorable? The discussion about the use of veils and the legal prohibition in France to use visible signs of religious preference in public schools is a good example of a concrete way to solve this contradiction (and in my opinion, a wrong way to solve it).

That which is religions, I believe, and with it all of its historical, social, cultural, and personal implications, doesn't have to be reduced to the private sphere and therefore prohibited as an expression of a cultural form contrary to the lay values of modern republican France. Rather, it should be a part of the school curriculum so it can be known and discussed. I am not referring to religious education from a confessional viewpoint; but rather to the teaching of religions from a sociological and scientific one, and therefore common for all students, whatever their personal religious beliefs. Collective consideration of the value of using a veil, as well as the value of other religious concepts of particular rites and beliefs in regard to eating, dress, or sacrifice are meant to help students to understand their meaning and to accept them or reject them according to the convictions that one constructs during one's schooling. In discussion and reflection, and if necessary in subsequent negotiation between teachers and students, is where one can best find mutual knowledge, norms of harmonious living, and moral education. Prohibition does little to aid this process and in fact restricts the educational possibilities that meetings between different cultures can provide.

## *COMMITMENT* to knowledge

Growth in student knowledge is the most important objective usually attributed to schools. This is without doubt a noble and necessary task to which it is worth dedicating effort, and one that it will have important repercussions on the development of society and of people. Nevertheless, the

One must change, or at least adapt, not only the basic objectives of teaching, teaching methods as well.

demands of learning are so extensive that there exists the risk that teaching content may broaden in an unlimited fashion. This can result in overloaded programs, little time for reflection, and few opportunities to relate some subjects with others. One must opt for profundity and the interrelation of knowledge. This demands limiting content in the face of unmeasured extension, separation, and superficiality.

One must change, or at least adapt, not only the basic objectives of teaching, but also teaching methods. What is lacking is the design of attractive teaching, connected to life, planned with rigor, but at the same time open to student participation. There are many initiatives for achieving such teaching. I cannot, given the scope of this text, make reference to them. I will, however, highlight one that appears to me particularly change-related: that of reading. Some may here be surprised that I do not choose incorporation of the computer in the teaching and learning process. I have no doubt that this is also important, and I cannot but value initiatives that seek to generalize computer use in all schools, especially in those whose students do not have access to computers at home. But if I had to choose one initiative above all others, that of reading would be my preference.

## *AN HOURLY DAY* of reading<sup>6</sup>

Thinking about reading in the teaching and learning process of students in the XXI century should not be separated from the society in which we live. If it has always been important to read, today it is even more so due to the possibilities that it offers in face of the risks of today's world. In face of domination of images; in face of the risk of isolation, and in face of the risk of superficiality, reading is an important antidote.

It is a curious paradox that most of those responsible for curricula defend in public the importance of developing basic skills in our students, yet forget about this, in detriment to the continuing increase in content, when they design such curricula. Nevertheless, aligning content to the development of basic student skills and the option for understanding and

profundity in the face of superficiality of learning is one of the demands of a curriculum intended to satisfactorily and in a balanced manner train all students. This is not the only demand. It is necessary at the same time to connect to how students learn and to awaken their interests. It is in this context that I propose including an hour of reading in most of the areas or subjects that make up the curriculum of primary and secondary education.

Daily reading is an activity that strengthens the major skills that education should develop in all students. Reading is one of the most complete and pleasurable of educational activities. It can increase our knowledge, transport us to other worlds, help us to become acquainted with others and with ourselves, and allow us to live exciting adventures in different situations. Reading has an enormous power to fascinate. Learning through reading does not have the single objective of having children understand the meaning of written text. Education in reading should go further and assure that students enjoy stories, narratives, and histories.

In order to assure these objectives, schools must become actively involved in the task. Students should be provided with meaningful texts; they must have adult models who love reading, who realize that reading is the pre-eminent task of schools. Reading must be an activity that is carried out and valued by all, with specific times reserved for it daily, one in which tranquility and enjoyment are combined with stimuli and demands.

My proposal is to establish an hour of daily reading incorporated into different areas of the curriculum. This is not a case, then, of students reading only during their hour of language and literature, which by itself certainly would be an important achievement. My suggestion goes further and proposes that most curricular activities dedicate an additional hour to the reading of texts related to their specific objectives and content: texts in geography, history, the environment, animals, artists, scientists... These should be planned readings, designed for the corresponding subject, and related to the learning objectives established therein. The need for part of the class week time of some subjects to be dedicated to reading will require a significant change

<sup>6</sup> This proposal was presented at the seminar organized by ANELE in Madrid in November, 2004 and was published in the records of that meeting.

in how teachers teach and how students learn. It will be necessary to select readings, establish reader itineraries for all students, relate what is read with other class activities, see to it that there are sufficient numbers of books and organize them in the school



library, classroom, or corresponding department. A daily reading hour will, I believe, be beneficial to students, who will become more interested in their academic subjects. But it will also be a stimulus for teachers, who should include the reading of texts in their class programming and who will note, I hope, greater motivation on the part of their students.

Besides the reasons here presented, considering reading as a preferred methodological strategy opens the way to the narrative perspective in teaching. Jerome Bruner<sup>7</sup> says that narration is a form of thought and a vehicle to construct meaning not only in the social sciences and humanities, but also in logical-scientific areas. The narrative form provides cohesion to our lives and our culture. It is not difficult to understand the history of peoples and their ideas, popular tales by using narrative. But the natural sciences can also have a narrative structure if conceived as a history of human beings who overcome previous ideas and discover new explanations. Narrative opens the way to fiction, to imagination, to the world of the possible, and awakens new sensibilities to approach the past, present, and future. Teaching through using a narrative structure can be a way to make school attractive, to awaken creativity and interest. Students can approach problems in another way and feel more motivated to think about them and to seek alternatives.

To aid the entire education community to broaden its knowledge of the world, to reason, to relate to and understand one another.

## SCHOOLS as communities of readers

Up to this point, I have considered the importance of reading for teaching and learning in each area of the curriculum. But this, although bold, is a limited objective. Student learning, and in consequence the learning of reading should not be the exclusive task of teachers within the school framework. Schools should become learning venues for all of those who, in one form or another, participate in them: teachers, students and parents. The objective of converting schools into learning communities and more specifically into reader communities would mark the agenda of a transformed education reform.

In order to achieve this objective, schools must value the importance of help parents become readers with their children. Collaborating with parents so that they dedicate 15 minutes per day to reading to their children during the pre-school and primary school years would mark a basic change in the learning processes of students, of parents, and of their mutual relations. It is important that everyone – parents and students, become actively involved in the task of awakening a taste for reading and seeing reading as a key strategy to learning.

Achieving these objectives requires a change in teacher attitudes, in their training, in the distribution of class and of teacher time, in available resources, in the organization of physical space, and in the role of classroom and school libraries.

<sup>7</sup> J. Bruner (1997). *La educación, puerta de la cultura*. Madrid. Aprendizaje-Visor.



Reading is a basic objective of education, but it should serve in the last instance to aid the entire education community to broaden its knowledge of the world, to reason, to relate to one another and understand one another, to be more creative, and to take advantage of the magic world of words and texts.

## COMMITMENT to harmonious relations and to the affective development of students

We live in a demanding and competitive society in which much value is placed on individual values in detriment to social and collective values. Moreover, families and social groups tend to relate to one another in function of their social and cultural status, forgetting about or placing aside those who do not share their norms or rules of distinction. The presence of new cultures due to the constant increase of immigration can open possibilities either for meeting or for separating even more.

The work dynamic does little to help establish relations between families and schools or between schools and other social sectors. Necessary education policies are generally reduced to school policies, limited to the work that teachers can carry out with students during school hours. Separation, lack of time, and little opportunity for meeting are normal characteristics of social life, especially in urban areas.

Given these problems, schools can become the most valuable option for correcting this situation. Schools must

be meeting places for students of different social, family, and cultural origins; shared places for socialization in which they can know and learn from others; necessary institutions for the construction of the values of respect, tolerance, and solidarity. There is, however, as I mentioned previously, a tendency among certain social sectors to prefer homogeneous to heterogeneous schools and to prefer selection to integration. A paradigmatic example of this conflict are the discussions that appear when education systems attempt to integrate students with disabilities into regular schools.

Together with harmonious relations between different groups of students, another important objective of schooling is development of the affective life of students. Here lies, on the one hand, their capacity to engage in social relations, friendships, and affection. On the other hand, affective relations have an impact on the ability of students to seek new knowledge and on their ability to be committed to helping others. Occasionally, the concern of teachers for the affective equilibrium of students only occurs when teachers perceive that such problems have a negative impact on a student's dedication to studies. But affective education should be an objective in and by itself, one that should be included in the education project of schools and in teaching strategies in the classroom, since it is one of the major components of the happiness of human beings.

Recent research on the emotions<sup>8</sup> confirm the relations between emotions and general cognitive skills of students, something that teachers have already noted in the classroom. Emotional competence includes self-control, compassion, conflict resolution skills, sensibility toward others, and cooperation. Human emotions allow us to be aware of the value of information received, which lends an emotional meaning to relations with objects and with persons.

Sensitivity and the emotional development of persons find their most solid roots in early childhood experiences, in a climate of trust and affection they share with their parents, who are able to transmit to them the emotional basis of future affective interchanges. The family context is, consequently, the most powerful basis for affective development. It is not surprising, therefore, that often schools are seen as being only relatively concerned with the emotional sphere of their students and that we attribute to parents an almost total responsibility for the experiences of their children in this area. Without denying the crucial role of parents, especially in the early years of children, one must equally accept the fact that students find in school a great part of their affective relations with others, knowledge of themselves, and their self-esteem.

<sup>8</sup> It is worth reading the work of J. LeDoux (1999) *El cerebro emocional*. Barcelona: Planeta (original edition, 1996).

Teachers must be aware that within their classrooms are created a world of relations and affects, and that this is an important point of reference for each student. Their way of communicating, of organizing class work, of approaching and assessing their students, will have a lasting impact. Teachers can foster the self-esteem of students, especially those with the most serious learning problems. To do so, they should provide students with successful experiences in order to break the negative circle of inability–failure–insecurity–low self-esteem–abandonment of school tasks. With this in mind, these students must be presented with tasks that they can resolve and that allow them to experience school success. Thus, one can improve the self-esteem of students and the relations with their peers so that the efforts in school and cooperation with others will have more meaning. Attention to the affective dimension of students not only contributes to their personal development; it also favors their commitment to learning and, as we will see below, to building a necessary basis for moral development.

## COMMITMENT to values

Although the moral codes of different cultural traditions are not similar<sup>9</sup>, there is broad agreement in Western societies regarding the fundamental elements that make up ethical behavior, personal freedom, tolerance, mutual respect, fulfillment of civic and social values, attitudes of solidarity, and responsibility. Moral education, however, cannot be presented as separate and unattached to other spheres of human development. Moral education should be formulated and lived within relations with others and should be consolidated by the knowledge of the principles that best regulate behavior. Moral education must be guided principally toward action, but should be based on affection, empathy, and reflection.

On many occasions, however, values education has been reduced to classes on morals, ethics, or good practices –omitting its affective and behavioral dimensions. The implicit theory that sustains this assertion is that the sphere of morality is circumscribed by its knowledge, much as the traditional way of teaching mathematics, languages, or physics. What is lacking is the integration of values education into the three great areas within which it develops: the affective and social; shared reflection, and action.



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**Integrating values education into the three great areas within which it unfolds: the affective and social; shared reflection, and action.**



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<sup>9</sup> In this regard, see Elliot Turiel (2002) *The culture of morality. Social development, context and conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Certain emotions have special relevance in moral behavior. Empathy is one of them. Linked to the trust that people have in themselves and in others, empathy assumes "feeling within" more than "feeling with", or "suffering-with"<sup>10</sup>. In this sentiment we find the basis of sensitivity toward others, toward their problems and their suffering. Empathy favors altruism and pro-social conduct and is also present in the attitudes that favor greater social justice and equality between people. Self-confidence is part of experiences of success, and this self-confidence promotes at the same time sensitivity toward others. It is not surprising that we find in some research<sup>11</sup> that students who mal-treat others in school or who are mal-treated show poor relations with parents and achieve poorer academic outcomes than those students who do not manifest such behavior. The affective, social, and academic worlds of these students are profoundly compromised, without one being able to establish the origin of these problems. The affection history of persons, with others and with themselves, thus explains a large part of their civic and social behaviors. Morality is constructed from social experiences.

Emphasis on life experiences should not disregard the cognitive dimension. Reasoning constitutes the nucleus of morality, and facilitates autonomous reflection on dilemmas and contradictions to those who face human action in this field. How one may conciliate social duties with personal aspirations is one of the most permanent questions. This knowledge is the richer the more it is based on reflection on the interchange of experiences and understanding of the point of view of others. Tolerance, respect, and social values are learned by living with others, but also by thinking together with others and perceiving different views of reality and facts. The construction of moral judgment cannot take place away from others.

This defense of affective, social, and cognitive dimensions in the development of moral education cannot disregard the fact that in the process of constructing moral values there must exist a practical translation. Knowledge is of little use without commitment to action. The main difficulty is how to see to it that schools develop altruistic and pro-social behaviors and that they foster a solid and autonomous moral option for students.

## THE DEVELOPMENT of moral education

Values education for students should begin in the functioning of the school itself. That is, it should impregnate and transform the meaning and educational activities of schools. One must create morally committed educational communities in which participation, mutual respect, tolerance, and solidarity with the weakest are principles that guide school initiatives and decision-making. Student admission criteria, norms that regulate the behavior of the educational community, relations between students and teachers, and the participation of all in creating codes of conduct and their control are some relevant aspects in establishing the willingness to develop a democratic and participatory community able to serve as a model that is adjusted to the values that one wishes students to adopt.

Inclusive and integrated schools, open to all students, from which intolerance is banned are the desirable horizons to which one should aspire. I believe that respect for differences is learned from childhood by living with and respecting those who are different. In this sense, the integration of students with special needs within regular schools is a valuable option with profound consequences. Certainly, moving toward the goal of inclusive schools is a slow and laborious process that at times does not receive the necessary support from governments. Nevertheless, harmonious relations between all students, the fully able and the less able, provides for enriching experiences and fosters mutual understanding and mutual aid. Once again, moral education is linked to the affective dimension. Empathy with the weaker is one of the impulses of solidarity that is strengthened at a later age due to more rational moral convictions.

The participation of students in the life of the school is another key element for their civic and democratic education. Students are not only actors in the construction of their own knowledge; they should also feel that they have a say in school projects, in its functioning, and in behaviors that are defended or reproved. The moral commitment of schools should not be the sole responsibility of teachers, although it may be through them that is encouraged and channeled. Students should have an active role in this process so that they will feel committed to it.

<sup>10</sup> The book of Alfredo Fierro (2000) *Sobre la felicidad* (Málaga: Ediciones Aljibe) is an interesting and attractive presentation of thoughts on the conditions for a happy life. In it he analyzes knowledge and its value, mental health and personal maturity, as well as the ethical dimension of happiness. The meaning of empathy included here comes from this book.

<sup>11</sup> A. Marchesi, E.M. Pérez and R. Lucena (2002). "La comunidad educativa". In A. Marchesi and E. Martín: *La evaluación de la educación secundaria. Fotografía de una etapa polémica*. Madrid: Editorial SM.

According to what we have argued above regarding the link between the affective, personal, and moral dimensions, schools and teachers must assume that care of their students is one of their most important responsibilities. They must care for their students' development, their experiences and their learning, their self-esteem, sensibilities, and creativity. This includes being aware of possible conflicts, tensions, or adjustments that can appear during schooling. Being concerned for students means helping them to assume responsibility for their own lives, for self-care and that of others, for the development of attitudes of compassion and solidarity, and the training of autonomous moral judgments, being able to make responsible decisions in the face of the dilemmas that life presents. In order to obtain these objectives, tutoring, educational guidance, joint reflection, and discussion about situations faced by students or present in the social environment must occupy a key place in the functioning of schools and in the activities of teachers.

Finally, moral and civic education should be complemented by action. On occasion, reflection about values in education runs the risk of becoming an intellectual exercise without being translated into effective action. Moreover, as I have pointed out, moral discussions should be put forward as guidance for action more than as a simple deliberation or theoretical discussion. The objective of moral reasoning is not so much to discover "the truth" as it is to provide training for a "virtuous" character in the Aristotelian sense, that permits individuals to make appropriate and just decisions in face of the problems that they must confront. Undoubtedly, respectful, tolerant, and solidarity-based action is exercised in the social contexts closest to home: in family relations and at school, during times of study and times of leisure, and especially in the relations with friends and colleagues. We must therefore take an additional step and aid students in carrying out voluntary community service activities. Students, beginning in secondary school, should have the opportunity to participate in socially useful projects: helping the disadvantaged, working in health or environmental programs, support for younger students in need, cultural initiatives or educational programs. There is a wide range of possibilities that each school can discover, develop, and offer to their students to which non-classroom hours can be dedicated.

I conclude with a final reflection that relates moral education to the defense that I made above regarding reading and the narrative strategy in teaching. The incorporation of moral models in education through stories, narrations, and histories can help students to discover certain values and to identify themselves with the protagonists. These kinds of narrations should be included in classroom time and selected appropriately. Moreover, reading or listening to stories can help in knowing and respecting the values and traditions of other cultures.



## COMMITMENT of teachers<sup>12</sup>

The task awaiting teachers is much broader than that of transmitting knowledge to their students, which until very recently was their major activity and for which they were trained. Other skills are now needed, without which it is difficult for students to progress in their acquisition of knowledge: the ability to engage in dialogue with students, to stimulate their interest in learning, incorporating information technologies, personal guidance, care in their affective and moral development, attention to student diversity, classroom management, and working in groups. Many teachers feel neither prepared nor supported to take on these new responsibilities. In this situation, unhappiness and demoralization reign.

The accumulated experience of successes and failures plays an important role.

### PROFESSIONAL HISTORY OF TEACHERS

Observing the careers of teachers and the studies carried out on this subject shows that the professional history of teachers passes through different stages, from the phase of initial discovery to another characterized by serenity or in some cases, bitterness. During this process, there are bifurcations that lead to remaining in the activity, to illusion, or to taking refuge in doubt and disillusion.

Studies on the careers of teachers do not pinpoint the factors that lead to these crossroads, nor why they take one path or another. We do know that there are a plurality of paths, with uncounted detours, cut-backs, and ways forward. But what is shown in practice is that some teachers maintain an attitude of search, innovation, collaboration in change, with which there is associated a certain degree of personal and professional satisfaction, while others remain stuck, nostalgic, and unsatisfied. To what can be attribute the difference?

There is no doubt that the accumulated experience of successes and failures plays an important role. There are also many other factors that influence the basic attitudes of teachers: personal satisfaction found, working conditions, perceived support, perceived social recognition, personal talent, affective balance, achieved maturity, and a renewed sense of educational action are among the most decisive. Each has its influence in every stage of life. Of all of them, there are two that appear to me to be important to emphasize here: the value given to teaching, and the meaning that a teacher attributes to his or her activity.

The first factor refers to the value given to teaching. This is not easy to measure. In Spain, with acceptable salary levels and with a majority of parents satisfied with the work of teachers, the teachers themselves say that society does not value them. Possibly, they are right, and undoubtedly they feel this way. What happens in less-developed countries in which teacher working conditions are so much worse? Are there other conditioning factors such as initial expectations, or the comparison with what happens to the majority of their fellow citizens that influences their opinions? In any case, what determines the feelings of teachers regarding the social value attributed to their work?

On this point, once again, it is not possible to generalize due to the influence of a variety of situational variables. However, some dimensions can be seen as in common: certain working conditions, the existence of professional perspectives, the offer of continual training programs, the support of innovation projects, the existence of just criteria in management and the absence of favoritism. Together with these, the supervision of the dedication of teachers and professional demands is a necessary correlate for valuing the work of teachers. The commitment of teachers to education responsibilities depends on the existence of initiatives that treat and improve these dimensions.

<sup>12</sup> Most of these ideas are found in the book *Qué será de nosotros, los malos alumnos*. Madrid. Alianza, 2004.

## THE MEANING of education

A second important, and from my point of view decisive factor, is the meaning that teachers do or do not find in the teaching activity. Education is not a bureaucratic and mechanical activity in which one can repeat the same actions without paying attention to what one does. Neither does it have an economic goal in which attaining given objectives produces important salary or professional benefits, although it would not be bad if something like this were the case. Finally, what helps to maintain a positive and constructive attitude in the always complicated task of teaching is the value that one encounters in contact with students, in their progress, or, even more difficult, in helping students with difficulties re-encounter the path to learning.

Some studies have highlighted the idea that the loss of meaning of learning for students is a key factor for understanding why they disconnect with the learning process. This loss of meaning depends, for its part, on affective aspects, limited expectations, past experiences, unreachable goals, and lack of support. Similarly, the loss of meaning for teachers depends on multiple factors, also related to affective factors, expectations, experiences, and perceived support, and explains in great measure why they may fall into dismay and lack of initiative.

There is no easy nor single answer to the question about the meaning of education. Each teacher must seek the clues that appear to best apply. The ideas offered in this text seek to open perspectives that may serve as referents to the activities of teachers: awaken in all students the desire for knowledge, care for their emotional welfare, and help them to construct civic values based on freedom, tolerance, and solidarity. Achievement of these goals in all students is a guarantee for equality. This in itself is a sufficiently attractive project for a team of teachers, and for each of them individually, and requires enormous amounts of decision, firmness, and personal values, especially when one seeks to instill these values in students with problems in school.

Thinking about education and finding meaning in the efforts that it demands, in the contradictions that it involves, in the incomprehension that it produces, and in the low social value it often appears to maintain, it is necessary to have available time, a certain tranquility of spirit, and even better, friends and colleagues with whom one can talk. The meaning of education is found and rediscovered in the experience itself, in quite conversations, in personal reflection about what each individual experiences and feels in the educational task.



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Teaching, to the extent that it should foster the social and ethical development of students, also involves a moral action. The function of teachers cannot be reduced to applying their knowledge in order to foster student learning or to fulfill norms established by the corresponding education administration. Rather, teachers must be able to understand the situations of their students and help them progress. To this end, teachers need to put their knowledge in action, but also use their capacities to relate and their sensitiveness towards others. Strict impartiality should not be the ultimate criterion for teacher decisions; rather they must use their practical wisdom, the *phronesis* of Aristotle, since it is as unjust to treat unequals equally as to treat equals unequally. From this perspective, moral, as well as assessment decisions involve the knowledge and application of norms, but also the sensibility to and understanding of the needs of others in their particular circumstances. For this reason, education and assessment put into play the values of teachers and reflect their way of being and of living. It is here that we find the greatness and the risk of teaching. **e**

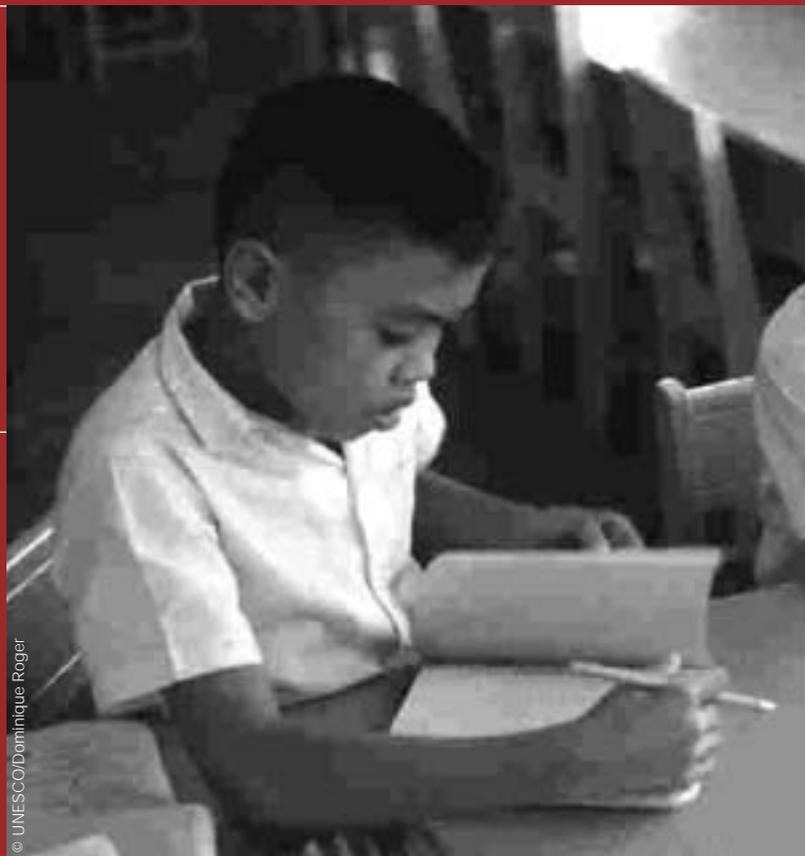
Education and assessment put into play the values of teachers and reflect their ways of being and living.



Mauricio Toro

# In response to the crisis of meaning, a pedagogy of trust

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## CULTURAL CHANGE and the crisis of meaning

The first strategic focus of PRELAC refers to the 'meanings' of education. This is symptomatic, given that we are currently experiencing a profound and rapid cultural change that affects our "way of living together" and that questions, moreover, the orientation and purpose of our cultural institutions –including our schools.

Some of these cultural changes are related to the way globalization, the expansion of the market economy, and technological advances and effects the way we live in society. All of these phenomena have cultural dimensions that change the way that we live together. Current market changes, for example, foster individual responsibility and the loosening of social ties.

This increasing individuality is one of the most important cultural changes that we now face. People seek more freedom to assume risks and to participate in social life while at the same time traditional links appear to unravel. In this process, many lose the protection of a society that had based its relations on the protection offered by extended families. Social changes have made this protection more tenuous.

In the face of such cultural changes, people sometimes find it difficult to find meaning in their ways of life. Perplexity reigns, while signs of emotional detachment multiply. This is confirmed by the 2002 UNDP Human Development Report which informs us that, in spite of the positive performance of social and economic variables in Chile, only 14% of those interviewed say that "the changes have a clear direction and I know where they are going", while one-third say that changes in Chilean society have no purpose and lack direction (Lechner, 2002).

People decreasingly see themselves as being part of a collective, of a "we", as free to chose their own destiny. A gap has opened between subjective daily experience and the way to live together. Many people do not encounter in democracy a "common feeling" to help them face social changes as a shared, meaningful experience.

The cultural dimension of politics concerns the subjective feeling of "we" and of our abilities to organize ourselves in forms in which we wish to live together. And the cultural dimension of public policies –in this case education policies– concerns how schools foster social factors.

We are currently experiencing a profound and rapid cultural change that affects our "way of living together".



## CULTURAL DIVERSITY: between social fragmentation and pluralism

Cultural changes increase the diversity of actors and of the factors that make up the social fabric. The social diversity of our countries is among their greatest advantages as long as it is contained within an atmosphere of social peace. But without such order, diversity tends to lead to fragmentation. A 2002 UNDP report, in referring to the Chilean society, calls this "disassociated diversity".

The mercantile mentality (competition, profit, efficiency) increasingly introduces into our societies a dynamic that was heretofore unheard of in our daily lives. Few activities now remain outside the market. Social reality is experienced by many as a crushing "machine" that ejects those unable to adapt. In confronting this "social logic", the individual requires a strong personality in order to take advantage of opportunities. Not all do. Many attempt to survive changes by retreating within and thus feel excluded from social life. Such exclusion includes the economic realm but extends as well to social networks and, above all to a "community of meanings" that concern the way we live together more than it does material goods.

The market alone cannot provide a feeling of living together. The market is unconcerned about the meaning of one or another way of organizing this aspect of life; nor does it generate agreements on the principles and norms that regulate social interaction and communication. That is, the market does not incorporate the subjectivity of individuals into its coordination calculations. The good functioning of the market does not prevent certain disassociating trends, such as violence, from disrupting our societies. Currently, the risks of a society fragmented into separate islands lends new importance to the subject of social cohesion. The weakening of collective identity fosters feelings of insecurity and of loss that make it very difficult to transform social diversity into an "us" that incorporates the subjective experiences of all citizens.



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## FROM HIERARCHICAL to network-based societies

On the other hand, cultural change means that the structures and social roles defined in function of these structures are decreasing in importance, while individuals and the networks that connect them are strengthened. Society is changing into one of roles, and of networks (Castells); from one in which the basic units were structures to one in which the basic unit is composed of subjects (Touraine).

The networked society contrasts with the industrial society due to the former's horizontal nature, its decentralization, the autonomy of its parts, its functional versatility, and the absence of formal norms that restrict the functioning of the organizations. Its values are the interdependence between parts, free association, and adaptability to change. This results in the need to develop the ability to act in consensus and to navigate in uncertain environments, making ever more necessary ongoing learning, risk management, and reciprocity based on trust.

In face of the diversity of functions, structures, and systems within society, networks offer a form of coordination that combines independence (autonomous organisms) and interdependence (inter-organizational cooperation). Given the diversity of contemporary societies, there is an increased need for integration, resulting in networks of cooperation and exchange; in pluralism.



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When it is necessary to construct a “we”, one must support individualization.

“the poor”, apparently assuming that they are all equal; when in reality, poverty has multiple faces and dimensions. Not distinguishing these differences results in social policies not reaching everyone, since they do not respond to all in the same manner. In the case of education policies, it is very clear that some are designed in function of structures and not in function of needs of students, which does not lead to improving the quality of learning.

- Developing policies that allow people to assume responsibility for themselves and that encourage empowerment of the families so that they may transformed into social capital.

The concept of a network in its most basic form is a social field made up of relations between persons, with a permanent flow of reciprocal exchange. Actors establish cooperative ties in order to obtain results that they could not achieve alone. Collectively, they establish common objectives which are what lend life to the network, and they are rewarded with non-material factors such as trust and solidarity, establishing working conditions that make resource management more efficient.

Contemporary society is moving toward the idea of working with others through networks because it is understood that experiences in favor of fostering relations of association generate the possibility of exchange and of channeling and co-organizing social initiatives.

In light of the above, we may identify important challenges for public policies, and in particular, for education policies. Among these are:

- Developing policies that aid in the construction of meaning rather than roles. Communities constructed on meanings develop better in networked societies. When it is necessary to construct a “we” one must support “individualization”. There is no “us” if there are no individuals who can inter-relate.
- Developing diversified policies according to the needs of the actors, without being homogeneous, as policies tend to be now. For example, it is common to speak of

## FROM TECHNICAL to practical rationality

The distinction made by Habermas (1984) between technical and practical rationality helps us to reflect on the meaning of education policies.

Technical rationality is aimed at control or mastery of reality; it therefore is concerned with achievement, tactics, and strategies. Technical progress has to do with the instrumental –submitting reality to a process of objectification thanks to scientific rationality. In contrast, practical rationality is related to values, in the sense of seeking to increase understanding of the relations between people. It therefore is concerned with norms of social harmony, social life, and family. From this point of view, democracy is part of its venue, understood as the way that people come to agreement in order to live under objective conditions.

The question regarding the meanings of education refers to how schools and education policies approach these dimensions; that is, how schools and education policies resolve the co-existence between the instrumental and values, how to harmonize the technical components of education (concern for “productive” knowledge) with the practical –with social equity and with the world of values in general. The challenge is to understand how these logics are integrated or complement one another.

Under technical rationality, the organization of work is controlled by the mechanism of "command and control". In any working organization, whether a school or a business, the boss is the person who says what is to be done and how to do it, then controlling fulfillment of what has been ordered. The workers (teachers or students in the case of schools) obey, for they fear the consequences that result from not so doing. In the final analysis, "command and control" functions based on the use of force and fear. Besides being an important social control mechanism, fear is the instrument through which we learn to develop ourselves in hierarchical organizations. Trust, on the contrary, is the basis of all social relations based neither on force nor fear.

The question of the meaning of education should refer to whether we are training people who learn to base their social relations and behaviors on fear or on trust. There is increasing recognition of the value of the learning of trust as the emotion that should be the basis of skills required in order for people to develop successfully within any social organization, and schools should play a vital role in this.

## TOWARD A PEDAGOGY of trust

One of the traits that characterize human beings is recognition of the vulnerability that threatens our existence (Heidegger). We live in permanent doubt. Nevertheless, the perception of vulnerability varies depending upon the degree of trust with which we relate to others. Trust, or the lack of it, is an emotional indicator of one's degree of perceived fragility. When there is trust we feel more secure, more protected, less unprotected. When there is no trust, threats increase and we have the sensation that we are in danger. Lack of trust increases fear. Those who distrust live in fear and feel threatened by the actions of others.

Trust, or the lack of trust tell us much about the way we perceive the future in terms of the dangers that may lie ahead. It defines the particular way that we relate to the world, to the future, and how we perceive our place in it - a world that offers protection, or one that is more hostile and threatening. Trust is a great counter to fear, and involves a wager, for nothing can guarantee security; nothing can eliminate all contingencies. We can wager on one or the other and we will obtain different results.

If trust has the effect of countering fear, allowing us to view the future with optimism, to reduce uncertainties, and to decrease complexity, it thus becomes a fundamental requisite for action. Fear and distrust inhibit and paralyze; trust places us in movement and drives our enterprising capacities.

But trust is not only an antecedent to action, it is also the result of action. Each reinforces the other. Trust leads us to act, and our actions will determine whether the confidence that we have in our own performance increases or diminishes. Similarly, the performance level of a person will have an impact on the level of trust we have in him or her.

All social systems, and schools of which they are a part, must develop trust as a functional condition. School systems are called upon to develop, both at the level of their structures as well as in their organizational culture, mechanism for generating trust among their members. Schools must be transformed into venues that increase the creative and loving capacity of human beings, where trust is cultivated as a basic value where learning takes place.

Thus, the importance of putting into practice in schools a veritable **pedagogy of trust**, involving the institutionalization of certain mechanisms to foster this value in students. Among these mechanisms we suggest:



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- *The generation of shared norms of behavior and cooperation.* Trust will develop if teachers stimulate cooperation between students. If not, if they stimulate competition, they will foster various kinds of distrust. When the rules of the game of the school are known, clear, simple, legitimate, and respected, people will know to whom to turn, and uncertainty will be reduced and trust increased. But if the norms are not transparent, if they are refused, or if there is arbitrariness and authoritarianism, this will have a negative impact on the level of trust within the school.
- *Exercise of responsible authority.* A relation based on trust is not a relation of equals. The fact is that in schools not all people are equal, nor do all have the same power. There is a large power asymmetry between principals, teachers, and students. Experience demonstrates, however, that the difference between a good and a bad school often lies in the way power is exercised. In relations based on trust, power is exercised without recourse to force. In this sense, authority is power that is conferred, albeit reviewable and, possibly, revocable. Experience in granting and assessing power is a key element for generating and training in trust.
- *Contracts for engendering co-responsibility for goal-based learning.* Objective-based learning contracts not only should involve each student, but teachers, principals, and (hopefully) families in order to aid students to achieve their goals. These contracts should respect the cultural baggage of students and their own ways of learning. Thus, they should be personalized. The commitment of teachers is not to "deliver the subject", but rather to generate knowledge. This truly produces trust and facilitates mutual relations.
- *Carry out a process of socialization in values.* Schools not only should commit themselves to offering knowledge, but also train students in dealing with values. Values are factors that guide our decisions and express that which is truly important to us. A value standard that schools should inculcate in students is *solidarity*. In contrast to love, that assumes knowing another, solidarity refers to people about whom we care although perhaps not knowing personally. Solidarity, as well as love is a great

generator of trust. By it we declare that these people are important to us and that we are disposed to take action regarding their problems. In an organization such as a school, solidarity the level of internal its cohesion.

- *Participation as a preparatory value for trust.* A school that believes in the training value of participation does not distrust, pre-judge, or blame families for the learning deficiencies of its students. Rather, it incorporates them -as well as other members of the educational community- into institutional development proposals and in the planning and programming of teaching activities.
- *Other important values are those of diversity and pluralism.* Diversity should not be seen as a problem to be solved, but rather as an opportunity for developing the values of pluralism, tolerance, inclusion, and social equity. The more pluralistic a school, the more ethical will be its teachers.

In short, these are the values that can allow us to assume responsibility for ourselves and for others. For, the most important thing in the construction of our own identities is to be aware of our responsibility for others. (Levinas).<sup>e</sup>

Solidarity, like  
love, is a great  
generator of trust.

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# Education, evolution, and individuation

## APPROACHES TO QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE MEANINGS OF EDUCATION

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If we think about education as a "short-term" phenomenon, making use of the concepts developed by F. Braudel for thinking about historical and social processes in general (Braudel 1969), we would probably imagine it as a set of acts in which some teach something meant for others to learn; with this "something" being a specific content within an equally specific curricular option. The process would occur within an institution called a "school" and within the framework of a particular education policy implemented by an education system, etc., etc.

We would thus easily fall into the temptation of seeing education as a system of teaching decisions and actions that seek to, and finally do –more or less– result in innumerable acts of learning within a given organizational and sociocultural framework.

However, if we if only for a moment think of education as a "long-term" phenomenon according to the terminology of Braudel, the fact is that we are then faced with a very different panorama. In its most generic sense, education then appears as a mechanism responsible for the major processes that define the species of *homo sapiens* as such: on the one hand, its evolution as a species (philogenesis) and, on the other, individual development of its members (ontogenesis). And, as we will see, both processes acquire in the human species a radical and qualitatively new form, compared to the forms that these same processes have in regard to other living beings.

## Education finds its most basic meanings in the functions that it carries out, both in the evolution of the human species and in the development of individuals.

Education is, in itself, one of the various new emerging outcomes during the seven or more millions of years of the evolution of *homo sapiens*. In this sense, it is part of a constellation of closely linked achievements. Education is, in effect, part of a set of linked capacities in which each has become an evolutionary achievement involving a high degree of adaptative specialization and in which, nevertheless, each is dependent upon the others.

The evolutionary achievements of the human species have been so novel and distinctive, including among them a new and powerful means of transmitting these achievements, that they legitimize what one of the most prominent protagonists of biological evolution (Dobzhansky, 1972, p.418) affirmed when he said "although many species are unique, the human species is the most unique of all".

This means that any question regarding the meanings of education should -in my judgement-begin from the recognition of the singularity of being human, a singularity that does not lie in any way in some supposed distancing or separation from nature, but rather in the achievement of a specific hyper-complexity, as Edgar Morin has so convincingly argued since the 1970s (Morin 1973, 1977, 1980, 1999, 2001).

What we will attempt to argue here is, simply, that education finds its most basic meanings in the functions that it carries out, both in the evolution of the human species and in the development of individuals and, therefore, in achieving a fruitful tension between phylogenesis and ontogenesis that is essential to our species. In this sense, the argument that we will seek to develop adheres -with much enthusiasm- to the thesis that the essence of being human emerges in the triadic relation between individual, society, and species. This thesis has been defended by Edgar Morin during the last thirty years (Morin 1973, 1977, 1980, 1999, 2001) and is increasingly necessary in order to move forward toward an understanding of the specific hyper-complexity of human phenomena. This is above all valid for the understanding of the phenomenon of education.

Education has traditionally been considered from the perspective of the relation of the individual with society; a view from which it is easy to emphasize its transmissive and socializing dimensions and which reinforces a clear socio-centric bias. The work of the cognitive and neurosciences, that have defended a vision and argument regarding that which is human and which many like to call constructivist, has made it possible to begin to question the narrowness of the socio-centric tradition and has opened the way to a more complex and interdisciplinary view of education. It is interesting to observe that this new perspective begins to find its expression in sociological argument itself, with the ideas developed by Alain Touraine being the most patent and extreme example (Touraine 1994, 1997, 2000, 2005).

Our argument here is undoubtedly partial, and is so in various senses. For example, the emphasis given to the relation between species and individual has obviated from this work discussion of the problem regarding society and culture as such. However, this and other possible biases are due to our interest in approaching the education phenomenon in its most generic sense. We believe that this intellectual option is rewarded by the clarity that it provides in regard to the need to recognize the complexity of our ideas on education in the light of the arguments of science and of contemporary thinking.

Based on these arguments, we will conclude by challenging two of the principal conceptual formulas that still sustain educational practice, on both the institutional (systems, policies, and schools) as well as the professional (professional exercise, teacher training) levels. These two formulas are: 1. that which defines education as the mere relation between teaching and learning; and, 2. that which defines education as mere processes of socialization. We will see that both are unsustainable when one takes seriously the arguments developed by science and contemporary thinking.



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## EDUCATION: a mechanism at the service of the evolution of the human species

The most unique and decisive characteristic of the human species is not culture, but rather cultural evolution; that is, the capacity to evolve through the transformation and transmission of culture.

When, in the context of evolution of the species *homo sapiens* appears in Africa only one hundred or two hundred thousand years ago, we have an ape-like creature possessing a very well articulated set of powerful peculiarities that are the fruit of an evolutionary history of, more or less, seven million years.

More important than any specific trait, the human species is differentiated from all other animals by the form of its evolutionary process. As the dominant argument of modern biology has it, the human species has taken an evolutionary path that is –at the same time– biological and cultural. In other words, on top of biological evolution, the human species inaugurated a new form of evolution: cultural evolution, and thus accomplished a basic qualitative change in the way to evolve and adaptively relate to the environment.

This idea, formulated initially by Julian Huxley (1929) and Thomas Hurt Morgan (1931), received -in my judgement- its best expression in the arguments of Waddington (1961). Specifically, Waddington said that the most novel element that the human species introduced into the line of evolutionary progress at the species level does not concern results but rather the very mechanism of evolution.

"Evolution depends, of course, on one generation passing to the next something that shall determine the character that the following generation will develop (...) this transmission of what we can call, in a general sense, 'information', is carried out by the exchange of hereditary units or genes contained in germinal cells. Evolutionary change involves the gradual modification of the reserve of information, genetically transmitted. Some few animals can pass on to their

descendants a tiny quantity of information by other methods: for example, among mammals some agents such as viruses that have effects similar to hereditary factors can be passed on through milk. In some birds, adults can serve as models whose song is imitated by the young, etc. Man is the only animal that has developed this mode of extra-genetic transmission at a level that rivals and that indeed even surpasses the importance of the genetic mode. Man acquired the capacity to fly not by some notable change in the gene pool available to the species, but rather by the transmission of information through a cumulative mechanism of social teaching and learning. He has developed a socio-genetic or psycho-social evolution mechanism that surpasses and at times replaces the biological mechanism that depends solely on genes. Man is not merely an animal who reasons and speaks, and who has therefore developed a rational mentality that other animals lack. His capacity for conceptual thinking and communication have provided him with what is, in effect, a completely new mechanism for the most fundamental biological process: that of evolution" (Waddington, 1961, p.272).

This argument is of great theoretical importance. It defines, very clearly, the **biological meaning** (in the broad sense of the term) that education has for the human species. Education is a socio-genetic mechanism of transmission of information that adds, surpasses, and even replaces in importance the genetic mechanism (given that, as we will see, the latter is more rapid, massive, etc., ... than the former), and that provides the species with new abilities and skills that do not come from genetic changes, but rather from invention and the use of tools and instruments. That is, from changes in the world of objects around him and in the ambit of his relation with this world, to continue with the example, Man acquires the capacity to fly not because he developed wings, but rather because he invented and uses the airplane.



Human beings are the only animal that has developed this mode of extra-genetic transmission.

This means, among other things, that with this the human species achieves the possibility of evolving through changes not organic, but cultural. We can say –metaphorically– that the human species has discovered that, in order to evolve it no longer needs to wait for slow organic changes belonging to biological evolution in the narrow sense, given that now in order to improve and adapt it is enough to optimize the emerging cultural achievements of his sophisticated semiotic activity: ideas, tools, techniques, etc.

And all of this is made possible by the presence in the human organism of a brain strongly dependent upon cultural uses. The species thus moves on toward a new and powerful evolutionary dimension: the **cultural dimension**, that involves a continuity of creation, transformation, transmission, and social and individual use of culture; a dynamic that can only be sustained thanks to the educational mechanism of "social" teaching and of "social" learning (terms used expressly by Waddington).

Waddington also noted that this teaching and learning mechanism, as a means of social transmission of information, can only operate if its potential receptors possess the mental capacity necessary to receive and accept the information that is socially transmitted. This individual capacity to receive and accept messages socially transmitted from other human beings is the result both of a genetic predisposition –that is,

a phylogenetic achievement– as well as achievements in individual development, among which Waddington highlights the ability to develop ethical beliefs and an "authority-bearing system". (Waddington, 1961). This argument, developed under the influence of psychoanalytic theory, adds an important dimension to those that Dobzhansky and Montagu advanced in 1947 that specifically human evolution assumes in the individual a genetically-determined capacity of "educability" (Dobzhansky y Montagu, 1947; Dobzhansky, 1962). This type of argument is very important for our question in that it suggests a close and essential relation between the peculiarities of human evolution and those of individual development thanks to the mediation of the education mechanism.

It is important to note that this argument about the specificity of human evolution is currently a key aspect of evolutionist orthodoxy in biology. In fact, it was an idea developed by the most important protagonists of the theoretical synthesis between the ideas of Darwin and those of genetics that took place from 1940-1960 and that consolidated neodarwinism as the dominant trend in modern biology.

The argument agreed upon by the neodarwinists on human evolution is very clear, and may be quickly presented in the words of their major protagonists: Theodore Dobzhansky and Ernst Mayr.

- Human beings are an animal species (Mayr 1963, p.623).
- Human beings are as much the product of evolution as any other organism (ibid., p.624).
- But there could not be a greater error than considering human beings "only animals". Human beings are unique; (ibid., p.623).
- Humanity is the only species that is involved in two evolutions at the same time, biological and cultural (Dobzhansky 1972, p.423).
- Human evolution has biological and cultural components. Biological evolution of human beings changes their natures; cultural evolution modifies their upbringing (Dobzhansky 1962, p.23).
- Human evolution cannot be understood as a purely biological process; nor can it be adequately described as a history of culture. It is the interaction between biology and culture (ibid., p.18).
- The new evolution is the result of organic evolution, but it is of a totally different class. Although it is semantically correct and scientifically enlightening to call both of these "evolution", it is extremely important to recognize that the difference makes this in large part an analogy and not a direct equivalence (Simpson 1949, p.141).
- Humanity is a species that is adaptively specialized in a form of life different from any other animal species (Dobzhansky 1972, p.424).
- The adaptive strategy characteristic of human evolution, and solely of human evolution, is undoubtedly that of culture (ibid, p.425).
- Culture is, however, an immensely more efficient adaptation instrument than the biological process (Dobzhansky 1962, p.20).
- The cultural evolution of humanity has depended principally, and will probably continue to depend, upon the unique organization of the human psyche (Dobzhansky 1972, p.428).
- The "closed" program of genetic information is increasingly replaced in the course of evolution by an "open" program so structured as to be able to incorporate new information. In other words, the behavioral phenotype is no longer absolutely determined by genetics; rather, in a greater or lesser degree, it is the result of learning and education (Mayr 1963, p.636).

Magaly Robalino Campos



It is interesting to see how this argument, even when coming from the core of the discipline of biology, leads necessarily to the recognition that, as Dobzhansky himself categorically stated, "human evolution cannot be understood as a purely biological process (...) it is the interaction between biology and culture". Therefore, human evolution is basically a bio-cultural process, and its study requires dialogue between different arguments and disciplines. Human evolution is, from a disciplinary perspective, on the border of various disciplines. If we delve a bit deeper, and following the conceptualization of Morin, we can even say that we are in fact dealing with a bio-psycho-cultural subject.

The fact that education is a cultural evolution mechanism means that it is not therefore restricted to the mere transmission of a given culture. As Jerome Bruner once noted when critically commenting on some ideas of Dewey, education should support the development of intelligence and the mind "in order that the individual is able to *go beyond the cultural forms* of his or her social world, and be able to *innovate*, as it were" (Bruner 1967, p. 150).

In effect the evolution of the human species depends on its members being able to go beyond the existing culture and contribute thereby to cultural innovation. For this to occur it is necessary to seek the development of the ability to think and of the 'spirit of hypothesis' and intellectual innovation that characterizes the mind and brain of each individual. With this we come to the second generic meaning of education.

## **EDUCATION: a mechanism at the service of individual development**

A second generic meaning of education is related to the fact of its being an act of intervention in the individual development processes of the members of the human species.

The characteristics of human beings are, at any time, the products of millions of years of evolution and, therefore of the phylogenesis of the species. But all of them are also the products of individual development; that is, of ontogenesis as an individual immersed in specific socio-cultural processes. Thus, as the human species is characterized by a form of evolution that is unique in the animal kingdom, it is so due to the unique form of the processes of the individual development of its members.

As argued by Lev Vigotsky and Jerome Bruner, human development is –essentially– socio-culturally assisted. Moreover, this development is necessarily and essentially aided by the cultural achievements that the species has managed to accumulate, and that are the fruit of the species' evolutionary process. In this sense, the elements and processes of human culture possess an instrumental character in regard to development of the human dimension in each individual of the species. That is, they constitute veritable "amplification systems" of human abilities, as Bruner suggested in the 1960s (Bruner, 1971 ch.3). Among other things, this means that our abilities are truly prosthetic, in the sense of depending on external instruments (tools, signs, language, etc.).

As Daniel Dennett has suggested, under the influence of the arguments of Richard Gregory (1984), we are truly "Gregorian creatures" (although perhaps it would be fairer to say that we are Gregorian-Vigotskian creatures) to the extent that we function and act in the world with the aid of mental tools that are part of this world, and those that increase our intelligence (Dennett, 1996, ch.4). In this sense, culture is not nor does it function merely as a venue in which we wander, but rather as a constitutive element of what is human. That is, culture is not only the human environment *par excellence*, but is rather that which makes us human. It is for this reason that the mental life of humans deserves to be studied according to the charming formula expressed in the title of the book of Bradd Shore: *Culture in Mind* [note the "in" ](Shore 1996).

**Human development is, essentially, socio-culturally assisted.**



The great implications of this have been brilliantly and categorically expressed by Clifford Geertz as follows: " (...) there is no such thing as human nature independent of culture. Without culture, human beings (...) would be impractical monstrosities with very few useful instincts, and even fewer recognizable feelings and without intellect: mental amputees".

That is, we would be: "a type of amorphous monster with neither a sense of direction nor the power of self-control, a chaos of spasmodic impulses and vague emotions. Human beings depend on symbols and symbolic systems with a dependence so great as to be decisive in their viability as creatures (...)"(Geertz 1973, p.49 and p.99).

In brief, without culture we would not be the human animals that we are. As has been expressed in many ways (the thoughts of Herder, Rousseau, Gehlen, for example), the human animal is –from the point of view of biological individuality– an essentially incomplete being, whose most distinctive quality is, as Rousseau first suggested, our perfectibility thanks to our relation with other human beings and with our culture.

All of this means something very specific. Education, to the extent that it involves a mechanism of cultural transmission, is not only the central motor of the 'human' evolution of our species, but also that of the 'human' development of each of us as individuals throughout our lives.

This latter point is precisely one of the basic ideas of the most powerful theories of the human mind: those of Piaget, Vigotski, and Freud. In effect, as we will see below, for these theories the ultimate objective of education is undoubtedly, and in a very precise sense, the *development* of human beings as subjects; that is, their individuation.

Piaget, for example, is categoric in recognizing the decisive role played by culture and education, equal to that of biology, in human development. Clearly and unambiguously, in 1948 Piaget wrote the following:

"The development of human beings depends on two groups of factors: hereditary and biological adaptation, upon which depend the development of the nervous system and of elemental psychic mechanisms; and the factors of social transmission and of interaction, that intervene from birth (...). To speak of the right to education is above all to argue for the indispensable role of social factors in individual development".

"To say that every human being has a right to education (...) is therefore (...) to affirm that individuals could not acquire their most essential mental structures without an outside support that requires a certain environment for social training



Cristián Navarro

To speak of a right to education is above all to argue for the indispensable role of social factors in individual development.



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and that, at of all levels (from the most elemental to the most elevated) the social or educational factor constitutes a condition for development".

Therefore, education is undoubtedly: "[a] formative condition insufficient in itself, but absolutely necessary for mental development (...) a necessary formative condition of natural development itself (...) the *sine qua non* condition for complete intellectual and affective development" (Piaget 1972, p. 12, 13 y 17).

In sum, education is a condition for the natural development of human individuals. This is a very important assertion because as we shall see, and among other things, it represents an important approximation to (while at the same time a particular dissimilarity from) the ideas of Vigotsky.

Education is a necessary condition for development, but no more than a "condition"; never a formative causality. That is, it is one of the conditions that make possible the constructivist action of the subject, with this "constructivism" being that which is truly responsible for the processes of genesis of the 'forms' of human mental development.

This means that educational action does not impose processes on the individual, but rather that it is limited to unchaining certain processes from the individual and that are part of what he or she is able to do. Consequently, culture and educational transmission only represent worlds of possible perturbations (and not worlds of determinations) that lead the subject to achieve a balance, and it is this action of the subject that explains the changes in his or her development.

This also means that culture and education act upon an individual who possesses a capacity for self-regulation and guiding the construction of structures or of endogenous schematics. The problem of psychological development (especially in the case of its cognitive dimension) has to do, precisely, with the constructivism of a subject responsible for the genesis of his or her own mental structures. Individual development is thus an endogenous, spontaneous process for which the endogenous is limited to supplying unbalancing perturbations and not formative determinations.

It is important to understand that behind Piaget's argument there lies a very profound concept of self-organized and constructivist autonomy of human beings as well as the complex dynamic existing between the biological, mental, and social within the framework of which human development occurs. Individual humans are beings whose development -although assuming and depending upon the organic maturation of all animals and also assuming and depending upon socio-cultural transmission proper to the human species- is, without doubt, the result of internal constructivism (endogenous, spontaneous, "creodic" in the Waddingtonian sense) aiming at the formation of mental structures that are not pre-established, neither in the organic maturation process nor in those of socio-cultural transmission.

This means that human individuals are by no means a *tabula rasa* as assumed by Durkheim, behaviorism and the traditional common pedagogical meaning, a *tabula rasa* upon which some instructional action would operate from the surroundings, for example, from teaching. On the contrary, human beings are beings who -actively- conquer and assimilate their surroundings on the basis of their own internal processes. Therefore, education and the transmission of culture of which it is a part is limited to offering the elements of a possible construction for the subject, in the face of which the subject chooses and assimilates only that which is meaningful. Thus, for example, according to Piaget, children "do not choose environmental representations, but rather elements assimilable according to the precise laws of operatorial succession". That is, [human beings] "carry out an active segregation of that which is offered and reconstruct it in their manner" (Piaget 1950, p.195 and 190, respectively).

It is from this perspective that Piaget does something that is very important. Just as Vigotski and Freud, each in his own manner, Piaget differentiates the processes of **learning** and those of **development** as distinct phenomena, creating the need to think about the relation between them. This differentiation is key to understanding the specific complexity of educational

processes, which find in the learning-development relation precisely one of their most essential dynamics.

From the point of view of Piaget, learning always involves an assimilation of the logical structures of the subject, thus being a 'conquest' made possible by the subject's operational capacity. For this reason, learning cannot explain development, but on the contrary, assumes it. This leads Piaget to advance the hypothesis of the subordination of learning to development (Piaget 1973), which seeks to respond to the following key problem:

"Is it learning that constitutes the primary phenomenon, that which explains mental development itself, or rather does development obey its own laws, and learning, in a particular and clearly delimited situation, consist of nothing more than a sector more or less artificially separated from it (...)?"

In this regard, Piaget opts for the latter alternative, arguing the following: "If, in effect, development precedes and guides learning, this does not mean by any means that there is innate knowledge, or even acquired knowledge without learning. Rather, it means that all learning involves, besides exterior data S and observable reactions R, a set of active coordinations whose progressive balance constitutes a fundamental factor that in fact represents a logic or algebra".

With this, Piaget concludes that: "child psychology teaches us that development is a real construction, beyond innatism and empiricism, and that it is a construction of structures and not an additive accumulation of isolated acquisitions" (Piaget 1973, p. 163 y p.169).

Therefore, there is in Piaget a fruitful distinction between development, as a process of construction of endogenous forms, emerging from internal self-regulations of the subject whose dynamic of change is comparable to genotypical variation; and learnings, exogenous acquisitions comparable to phenotypical reactions and that assist development only in that its novelty represents a imbalance that results in an endogenous reconstruction under the form of a "phenocopy in the broad sense"; that is, of the replacement of an exogenous form by an endogenous form due to the activities of the subject (Piaget 1969, 1978, 1986).

On the other hand, for Vygotsky as well, education has to do essentially with human mental development. Thus, in his preface to a book by Thorndike, Vygotsky complains that traditional education texts "do not explain the crucial problem of the psychological nature of development itself, the origin and evolution of the psyche, and the personality of children, leaving without explanation the mechanisms that drive this evolution and that are the essence of the task of education" (Vigotski 1997, p.146).

The development of the human psyche is, for Vigotski, a process of an internal character that "makes use of internal laws with their own dynamic" and "in which are joined the influences of maturation and instruction" (Vigotski 1997, p.250). In this sense, the development of higher psychological functions is always for Vigotski the result of the appropriation on the part of the human beings of diverse elements of cultural and intellectual life, especially of language, which results in the transformation of the natural processes of development already existing in the individual, thus producing a fusion between his or her line of natural development and a line of cultural development created in the individual by the appropriation and mastery of language and culture in general. It is thus that development represents for Vigotski a "real leap from biology to history" (through culture); that is, "from the line of biological evolution to the line of historical evolution (and cultural) evolution (Vigotski 1997, p.165 and p.172), a leap that also characterizes human philogenesis. Therefore, the human psyche emerges from developmental processes. In this sense, and given that "development means, above all the appearance of something new" (Vigotski 1997, p.208), explaining it is to explain the genesis of new forms of psychic functioning and of behavior.

This is, as we see, an argument that by no means is very distant from that of Piaget, as orthodox thinking in education would have us believe. In fact, Viigotski also defines education in its relation with development, and does so with precision: "Education cannot be defined as the artificial development of children. Education is the artificial domain of natural developmental processes.(Vygotsky 1997, p.69).

As with Piaget, we here again see that the meaning of education is to support individual human development. In the case of Vygotsky, as with Piaget, learning is not that which *per se* will explain development, but rather it is culture and the intellectual live involved therein.

Moreover, Vygotsky's criticism of any conception that lends priority to learning is notorious. In criticising Thorndike, for example, he states that: "To the extent that this work is directed at a school system that gives priority to instruction and to learning it limits or silences pedagogical aspects *per se* (...) distorting the basic objectives of education (...)"(Vygotsky 1997, p.148).

In effect, the meaning of learning for Vygotsky only appears in its relation with development. Although it is the

Learning is not that which *per se* will explain development, but rather it is culture and the intellectual life involved therein.



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process of learning (and teaching) that metaphorically "tows" that of development, and that this is what results in the creation of future development, the key process is in any case development. Seen from this perspective, the meaning of learning (and of teaching) is simply to assist individual development.

It is vital to undersand that in Vygotsky what we have is –in fact and in an even more direct manner than Piaget– a powerful argument for the difference and, therefore, also for the relation between learning and development, and not a mere learning theory as is often thought. Pointing this out is of crucial importance in order to correctly assess his thinking. Vygotsky is insistent in this regard:

"(...) learning is not development; however, adequately organized learning results in mental development and puts into movement a variety of developmental processes that would be impossible separated from learning. Therefore, learning is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing specifically psychological culturally organized human functions.

"In short, the most essential characteristic of our hypothesis is the notion that the processes of development do not coincide with those of learning. Moreover, the developmental process lags behind the learning process. (...) Our hypothesis establishes the unity, but not the identity of learning and of internal development processes.

(...) "A second essential characteristic of our hypothesis is the notion that although learning is directly related to the course of child development, the two do not function in the same manner or in parallel. In children, development never follows school-based learning as a shadow follows the subject by which it is produced. In reality, there are highly complex dynamic relations between the processes of development and those of learning that cannot be understood by using a hypothetical, rigid formulation. (Vygotsky 1978, p.90-91).

With these words, Vygotsky categorically relativizes his own metaphor of 'tugboat of development' on the part of learning, a metaphor that has given rise to the interpretation that commonly circulates in

education debates and that, unfortunately, is easily utilized in order to relegate development to a mere epiphenomenon of learning. On the contrary, Vygotsky makes it very clear that between learning and development there is no simple relation of "towing" or of simply following behind. Rather, it is a case of "dynamic, highly complex relations" within change, which it is impossible to understand through the use of rigid formulas (such as, for example, that of "education =teaching - learning").

To tell the truth, the relation between learning and development is one of indissociable and complex unity that, in specific moments, may be –and in fact is– independent of teaching, to the extent that learning and development may result from the singular intellectual activity of children based on their own autonomy and from their direct relation with the intellectual lives of others (and of the species together) and its products. That is, resulting precisely from learning to learn. Therefore, the teaching-learning unit and the learning-development unit can constitute distinct and separate acts in the flow of the educational process itself. The teaching-learning relation, therefore, can hardly by itself define the nature of education.

It is necessary to recall here the idea of Vygotsky that, in my judgement is his most important contribution to a new and more fruitful view in regard to education. Criticizing Köhler, Vygotsky states the following: "animals are unable to learn in the human sense of the term: human learning involves a specific social nature and a process through which children develop within the intellectual lives of those around them" (Vygotsky 1978, p.88).

Vygotsky here moves toward an original and complex understanding of the notion of education and its relation to learning and human development. In referring to a "process through which individuals develop within the intellectual lives of those around them" he offers a definition of education that breaks with the traditional formula. Education is here a process of intellectual life in which individuals carry out their development and through it learn in a specific way. Therefore, development is the product of the insertion and participation of the individual into the 'intellectual life' of and with others (the alterity of other individuals, of the group, of society, of the species: of the different 'universes of discourse' to which G.H. Mead (1967) refers; that is, in the life and thoughts of its products. Consequently, education cannot be reduced to the mere didactic transmission of content, but rather involves the creation of processes of intellectual life among those who negotiate and transact thoughts.

As for Freud, I believe that Francisco Varela is quite correct when he says that the importance of psychoanalysis lies in the fact of its being a "pragmatic of human transformation" (Varela 2003, p.110-111). This means, among other things, remembering that for Freud, adult human beings are the products of a series of transformations that the impulse-driven world of the individual experiences from birth, as a result of social and cultural pressure; a process of impulse-driven modifications aimed at constructing the individual as a social being. And it is this that for Freud constitutes the essence of education.

Human culture emerged and is maintains, according to Freud, only on the basis of a necessary "renunciation of drives" on the part of individuals (Freud 1927, pp. 6-7) which, among other things, results in a restriction of original freedom. Remember that for Freud, "Individual freedom is not a heritage of culture. It was at its maximum before all culture (...) Due to cultural development it suffers limitations" (Freud 1930, p.94). Now, in order to assure such sacrifice of drives, society must exercise an inevitable external control over individuals in order to "inhibit, prohibit, suffocate" its original drives and metamorphise them in the most socially-acceptable drives possible (Freud 1933, p.138). With this it seeks to achieve a modification of the drive impulse of human action which for Freud is equivalent to a veritable "ennobling" of these drives in the sense of "a transposition of egoistic inclinations into social inclinations" (Freud 1915, p.285).



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The above also involves the progressive replacement of the basic "pleasure principle" by the "reality principle" as a guide to the functioning of the psyche and, therefore, the corresponding subordination of the former by the latter; all of which is directed at the reinforcement of the ego as the major articulator of the psyche and the corresponding development of the capacity for thought, intelligence, and reason. And it is precisely in the latter wherein lies the task to foster and assist individual human development that, according to Freud, is shared by culture, education, and psychoanalytic therapy: *"Where id was, there ego shall be"* (Freud 1932b, p. 112).

Freud can then present education in the following manner: "Education may readily be described as the incitation to overcome the pleasure principle and replace it with the reality principle; so, it wishes to come to the aid of that process of development in which the id is enveloped, and to this end uses the awards of love on the part of the educator" (Freud 1911, p.228).

The possibility that education has to impose these changes comes, in part from the presence in the individual of an internal factor that Freud thinks of as an aptitude for culture, consisting of the "capacity of human beings to reform egoistic drives through the influence of eroticism", with such eroticism being "the human need to love in the strictest sense" (Freud 1915, p.284), and which involves the individual opening up to giving value and priority to links to others. On the other hand, this possibility also stems from the existence of non-sexual drives that represent interests in self-preservation in necessary conflict with libidinous interests of sexual drives and the special capacity that these other self-preservation drives have to change under the external pressures exerted by education.

This means that for Freud, as for Piaget and Vigotsky, mental development results from a linkage between the exogenous and the endogenous, between the external pressures exercised by education and the history of an internal dynamic marked by the conflict of drives and the permanent possibility of transforming external pressures into internal ones. This should culminate in an internal drive transformation toward the social and in construction of a psychic organization around the ego and the reality principle.

It is interesting to note that, as with Piaget and Vigotski, Freud's argument also leads us to differentiate learning and development as distinct phenomena and, therefore, to think about the possible interaction between them. In effect, Freud differentiates the endogenous internal drive transformation from mere behavior change equivalent to a phenotypical change, and does so as part of a reflection in regard to the then recently initiated world war.



Mauricio Toro

## FINAL thoughts

The arguments presented here allow us to conclude that the most generic meanings of education, and those which define it, arise from the functions of education as a mechanism of evolution and of individual development. This leads to the need to think about education in its specific complexity, involving a meeting of processes of teaching, learning, and development. Thus, education necessarily involves the link between processes of socialization and individuation.

From here it is both possible and necessary to question two of the formulas still most used to think about and carry out education.

First, it would not seem correct to continue thinking about education as a simple world of processes of teaching and learning.

As we have seen, the most relevant arguments about the human psyche relativize the importance of learning and subordinate it to development. The traditional formula "education=teaching processes and learning" would then be hiding the true meanings of education by focusing on the a process that, like learning, represents for contemporary science a crucial but secondary part of a a more complex process. In fact, this formula suggests that the final objective of the act of education is learning, which is not correct. On the contrary, the final objective of the act of education should be found in the learning/development relation.

Freud suggests that war provides the occasion for observing that human beings are in general "cultural hypocrites"; that is, beings who appear to be social externally at the level of their actions, but in truth have not been transformed into social beings internally at the level of the basic drives of their actions. And this has to do in part with how education is carried out:

"Education and the environment not only have awards of love to offer; they also work with another class of awards of convenience: prizes and punishments. Thus, their effect may be that one who submits to their influence decides in favor of culturally positive action without having accomplished internally an ennobling of drives, a transposition of egoistic inclinations for social inclinations (...) one individual always behaves well because his or her drive impulses so require, while another is good only to the extent that this cultural conduct brings advantages for the ego, and only during the time in which this occurs (...) the society of culture, that fosters good acts and does not effect fundamental drives has thus achieved obedience for the culture in a large number of human beings who in this case do not obey their natures" (Freud 1915, p.285).

What Freud suggests is that education always has the option to limit itself to achievements at the level of purely adaptive social action, but without changes of basic passions, or could interfere in the dynamic of eroticism leading to processes for drive transformation. In this sense, the distinction between "love awards" and "awards of convenience" (=punishments and prizes) clearly represents an option for a constructivist perspective and its rejection of a behavioral perspective. This is equivalent to the later distinction between "education" and "training" formulated by Dewey (Dewey 1961).



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It would not seem correct to continue thinking about education as a simple world of processes of teaching and learning.

It is therefore a paradox that education continues to be defined simply in terms of processes of teaching and learning. This formula is not in line with contemporary scientific arguments. And it is incredible that attempts to move toward a change in this all too traditional formula have been so scarce. In fact, the most serious attempt of which I am aware is that offered by César Coll in his book *Psicología y Currículum*. There, seeking to overcome the traditional disjunction of "learning or development, Coll argues that, "personal and social growth, intrinsic to the idea of education, may be linked both with the process of development and with the process of learning" (Coll 1991, p.23), to then adhere to the Vygostskyian idea that "development, learning, and teaching are three inter-related elements" (Coll 1991, p.38). From there, Coll offers an extremely important idea in regard to the nature of school curricula:

"School-based educational activities respond to the idea that there are certain aspects of personal growth, considered to be important *within* the framework of the culture of a group, that will not take place in a satisfactory manner, or indeed will not happen, if one does not provide specific help, that put into place teaching activities specifically designed with this purpose in mind" (Coll 1991, p.30).

In short, his argument clearly presents a definition of education that, necessarily, includes a link between teaching, learning, and development, and in which teaching is a specific help, both for producing development as well as for producing learning. The reduction of the idea of education merely to the teaching-learning relation is therefore unsustainable.

Efforts such as that of Coll reveal the vital need to broaden the traditional formula and to make it more complex:

1. Toward discussion about the nature of culture and cultural evolution;
2. Toward discussion of the learning-development relation;
3. All of this from the perspective noted by Morin, of the triadic relation of individual/species/society.



Second, nor would it seem correct to continue thinking of education as a mere socialization process.

It was Durkheim who consolidated the idea that education should be defined as mere socialization. With his thesis that "education consists of methodical socialization of the younger generation" (1989, p.51), Durkheim coined a tremendously convincing definition due to its reductionism, above all when it is accompanied by a second thesis which says that "society finds itself, then, with each new generation, in the presence of an almost clean slate (*table presque rase*). Although without doubt socialization of the individual members of a species is an essential aspect of education, this socialization does not operate on individuals who constitute a clean slate, destined to be written upon at the caprice of a specific society. Durkheim's formula, which unfortunately very well expresses the current tradition in education, forgets and obscures almost completely another essential aspect of education -the individuation of these specific members of the human species.

For contemporary science, as we have noted, the processes of individuation and socialization are the two indivisible faces of the construction of human beings. We may add here that studies of the human brain lead to the conclusion that individual humans are "at the same time the most individual and most social of animals: the most individual because they are, by nature, the most social" (Prochiantz 1990, p.79). And it is interesting to recall as well that Marx, this time from social science itself, had already arrived at the tremendously modern conclusion that "human beings are, in the most literal sense, political animals, not only gregarious animals, but animals that can only become individuals within a society" (Marx, 1973, p.84).

In this sense, it is interesting to observe that from sociology itself there has recently emerged a powerful argument that questions the thesis of Durkheim from within his own discipline and that places itself at the very opposite of Durkheim's influential view. I refer to the considerations that have been developed by Alain Touraine (1994, 1997, 2000, 2005) regarding the concept of the subject and of the primacy of individuation over socialization, thus offering an important criticism to the socio-centric perspective that dominates education practice and policy.

Finally, I believe that it is both possible and necessary to venture the hypothesis that both notions –both that which reduces education to a mere teaching-learning phenomenon, as well as that which restricts education to mere socialization– in fact function as veritable social representations that determine the way that the reality of education is socially constructed and also the ways in which we lend meaning to and participate in it. The fact of these notions being incorrect, decidedly questionable from the perspective of contemporary argument, means that their use and maintenance may be one of the most important obstacles to the efforts of change and reform in which a large part of humanity is currently engaged. And I believe that this possibility lends by itself great meaning to the current discussion about the meanings of education. *e*

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individuation and  
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two indivisible faces of  
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human beings.

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# On the quality of education and its democratic meaning<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This study incorporates ideas developed by the authors in a report presented to the Diálogo Regional en Educación organized by the Inter-American Development Bank and published in Fernando Reimers and Eleonora Villegas-Reimers: "Educación para la ciudadanía y la democracia: Políticas y programas en escuelas secundarias de América Latina y el Caribe". In Espínola, V. (editor): *Educación para la ciudadanía y la democracia en un mundo globalizado: una perspectiva comparativa*. Inter-American Development Bank, Washington DC, July 2005.

## *RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE QUALITY and meaning of education*

During recent decades, the efforts of teachers, school administrators, and other actors interested in education in Latin America have placed concern for the quality of education at the center of the education agendas of all countries of the region.

With universal access to school now practically achieved, and with students remaining longer in school, it is clear that efforts to offer learning opportunities should move from concerns for access to school to that of guaranteeing that students do indeed learn.

However, there is a risk that this concern for the quality of education may be converted in practice into a self-referring uneasiness within schools and education systems. A self-referring understanding about quality could mean, for example, that actions aimed at improvements in the efficacy of schools –for students to improve their performance– may be centered only on curriculum-based tests. That is, without a critical examination of the pertinence of such an effort, without an analysis of the adequacy of their demand levels, without a discussion of the correspondence between the skills necessary to expand life opportunities and the opportunities offered by the curriculum.

The following caricature illustrates what this limited view means that relates the quality of education to the relative improvement of school efficacy. Let us imagine a system in which fundamentalist groups see to it that the biology curriculum teachers the doctrine of "intelligent design" in order to explain the origins of life and is able to eliminate references to the theory of evolution. Let us suppose that teachers do an excellent job teaching such a theory and that, in academic achievement tests based on this curriculum most students demonstrate that they know its principles. From a self-referent perspective, this system should have high levels of quality and it would be unjust to question its quality assessing students by using tests on the theory of evolution, since the teaching of that theory is not here an objective of the curriculum.

Let us now shift the analysis from this example to other skills used to assess the quality of education systems. For example, let us take reading skills as they are assessed by the PISA test<sup>2</sup>. It is clear that PISA defines reading skills in a broad and rigorous manner, assessing higher order cognitive skills. It does so as a result of a conceptual framework that considers such skills to be necessary in order to participate productively and to exercise citizenship in knowledge-based societies. However, are these tests "fair" as indicators of quality in education systems in which learning opportunities –expressed in curriculum content, study programs, and textbooks, and student-teacher relations in the classroom– are not aligned to a view that is not as demanding as that for reading skills?

In this article, we argue that –in order to offer learning opportunities that in fact to expand personal options and freedom– such an analysis of the meaning of the quality of teaching and of learning, is not only just, but necessary as well. Our central thesis is that the definition of teaching quality cannot be unattached from the definition of the purposes of education. This is so because teaching has or does not possess quality depending on some normative criteria that reflect value judgments as well as on the relations between what is learned in school and the social context in which those produced by the system will lead their lives.

The characteristic that distinguished schools and education systems that are truly effective from those that are effective only in a self-referential sense is that which has to do with the ways in which different policy options or pedagogical strategies contribute to goals and that are shared by key actors in different levels of the operation. This idea of quality –that links it to a clear view of the contribution to skill development with basic meaning outside the school– presents a high order conceptual and political challenge for education management.

The task of defining and of politically negotiating the purposes of education is more complex than achieving small increments in school performance within established parameters that are unquestioned and expressed in the current curriculum. From this perspective, the assessment of education programs and interventions is also more complex because it recognizes that judgments on the effectiveness of different educational programs should necessarily refer to how these effects are valued by different groups in society.

Once again, an example illustrates the implications of this perspective.

Let us posit a context in which the incidence of AIDS is high and is more so among young women than young men. Evidence indicates that this situation is a result of the fact that a proportion of the young women have sexual relations with older men. We posit, moreover, that intervention through an educational program on the risks of AIDS infection due to having relations with older men had two effects: a reduction in infection rates as a result of reduction in sexual relations between young women and older men and, at the same time, an increase in the percentage of young men and women who have sexual relations. The opinions of the parents of these male and female students regarding the introduction of this kind of program in school curricula will depend upon the risk group that their children are in. For those whose children belong to a high risk group, a program of this kind will offer knowledge and skills that can mean the difference between health and illness. However, for those parents whose children are not sexually active, introduction of a curriculum component that increases the probability that they will not remain so does not offer the same benefits. Given that instruction time is one of the most valuable resources in the construction of educational opportunities, and that the time committed to develop particular skills cannot be used for the development of others, it is

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<sup>2</sup> PISA: Program for Indicators of Student Achievement (in Spanish, Proyecto Internacional para la Producción de Indicadores de Rendimiento de los Alumnos) developed by the Organization Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

understandable that different groups expect that the focus of the school be focused on developing those skills that they, the groups, consider to be most important for their children and that it is more difficult to be developed in other institutions. Achieving negotiation of school programs –explicitly and satisfactorily for different groups– is a more complex and difficult task than carrying out a tacit negotiation and focusing on school purposes already established in school study plans and programs.

But, even when the purposes of education remain implicit and discussion on the quality of education is self-referenced, education continues to be an intentional activity, guided by purpose. The objectives of any program of study reflect purposes and a view regarding what is important to teach and how to do so. These cannot be critically examined when educational activities are assessed in terms of their relative effects on student achievement using cognitive ability testing that reflect such a curriculum if they are not accompanied by a broader discussion about what skills assess such tests and the meaning of them within the social context in which students live.

In this article we submit that a fundamental type of skill that should guide the definition of the quality of education in Latin America is that which makes possible the effective exercise of citizenship in a democratic society.

Education continues to be an intentional activity, guided by purpose.

## A DEMOCRATIC MEANING for education

At the beginnings of the XXI century, the democratic governments of Latin America face a challenge: that of making democracy work for people. Opinion surveys show, on the one hand, that support in Latin America toward such systems is fragile and that satisfaction with democracy is still low (as seen in the table of Appendix 1). On the average, support for and satisfaction with democracy in Latin America is lower than in the European Union, Africa, and India and on a comparable level with Eastern Europe<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, surveys on tolerance for diversity, a requisite for the functioning of democratic societies, show worrisome rates of intolerance.

The challenge to democracy is in part due to its development in the region, increasing expectations of what it means to be a citizen and to participate. In the face of these broader expectations, democratic governments must see to it that public institutions and social norms make possible effective, frequent participation on different levels for all people. For example, during most of the XIX and XX centuries different groups –women, native people, racial minorities, and at times religious minorities– have not had the same political rights as white or mestizo catholic males. In any case these inequalities are unacceptable, in light of the aspirations of the most democratic societies of the XXI century. In the face of these new standards of the basic equality of all persons, of this more modern conception of citizenship, the excluding and intolerant attitudes regarding the political rights of some of these groups are alarming. An example is the case of Mexico, where 59% of students finishing their secondary studies agree with the idea that women should stay out of politics, compared to 15% of students holding the same opinion in the OECD countries<sup>4</sup>. These data indicate that Mexican society is urgently in need of developing basic attitudes to permit the functioning of a democratic society.

<sup>3</sup> Press release Latinobarómetro 2002. [www.latinobarometro.org](http://www.latinobarometro.org)

<sup>4</sup> Felipe Tirado and Gilberto Guevara: *Educación Cívica: Un Estudio Complementario*. Mimeo, 2005, p. 31.



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Making democracy work for all people requires consolidating democratic institutions around a set of meanings and values widely shared by the majority of the population as well as possessing the skills necessary to participate effectively. That it, it requires a democratic culture in the broadest sense.

Democratic cultures are based in part on the skills and outlook of the majority of the population; on valuing one's own freedom and that of others; on valuing justice; on internalizing the sense of being responsible for one's own destiny; on the understanding that the preservation of individual freedoms demands institutions that serve the common good; on the generalized knowledge of the basic rights and obligations of citizens; on knowledge of the Constitution, of laws, of political institutions and of their history; on the willingness to participate in different venues that affect the future of people –their families, neighborhoods, communities, and of the local and national government; and on skills for deliberating and participating effectively.

Democratic participation requires abilities that allow people to think independently and critically, to communicate effectively, to have access to and to use available information on different subjects, to learn continuously, to work with others, to understand the importance and mechanisms of such participation, and to understand and value the differences that separate closed, totalitarian societies from those that are open and democratic. It requires knowing political institutions and the venues and forms of participation; being informed about and understanding the major themes of debate on the public agenda and understanding the historical context that lends them meaning; developing high degrees of tolerance for diversity and the ability to reason about complex subjects in which it is essential to put oneself in the place of another and to recognize the existence of legitimate and different points of view that must be reconciled within an agenda of collection action.

These skills are not innate; they are acquired and developed within different social institutions: the family, employment, religious and educational institutions. In some families, children learn through observing the adults around them how to participate politically, how to contact elected officials in order to demand their rights, or how to communicate their own ideas and how to organize others in order to advance common interests. In certain occupations, moreover, it is possible to develop these



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abilities. For example in teaching it is possible to develop the ability to communicate ideas, organize groups, and negotiate different interests. Interaction with students allows teachers to develop skills that are easily transferred to the political sphere. Due to these skills, that allow them to participate effectively, in many countries teachers comprise a politically important group, not only due to the number of votes that they represent in elections, but also because of their communication and organizational abilities. Within certain institutions it is possible to learn to recognize and value different points of view and to develop tolerance for such diversity. But in the same measure, in other institutions one may learn to discriminate against people based on their race, gender, sexual orientation, social class, religion, or culture. All of these forms of intolerance are incompatible with living in a democracy.

Of all of the institutions that facilitate acquisition and development of skills for living in a democracy, schools can most equitably imbue in all citizens the skills for effective participation.

The development of democratic citizenship skills requires a broad vision of what this means. It requires thinking about education content and proposals in their largest sense –in all subject areas and together with processes that the curriculum seeks to develop–: how to engender these values in students, opportunities to interact with diverse groups in particular schools, balancing the roles of parents, students, and government in management of the education system, as well as civic venues in which different groups may express and negotiate their interests in regard to the purposes of education.

It should be understood that the broad vision that we are proposing is different from the common distinction made when discussion if education for democratic citizenship should be an academic subject ("civics") or a focus that cuts across different subjects. We propose that training for democratic citizenship should certainly include both, since the development of skills and abilities –as a result of a deliberate curricular focus– is a fundamental part of education for this skill. But such education should



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**Educating for democratic citizenship requires thinking comprehensively and profoundly about the entire organization of the education system.**

be much more than a deliberate focus in the curriculum. It should be reflected in classroom and school climate –in active teaching methods that foster participatory skills; reflected in school management and organization– the way in which teachers and principals relate to each other and constitute important civics lessons with other members of the community; relate to the assignment of students to different schools, in order to avoid the creation of education systems in which poor, indigenous, or immigrant students are segregated into schools with more poorly trained and inexperienced teachers, since this sends a clear message in regard to the justice of resource allocation and the efforts of public employees. In short, we posit that educating for democratic citizenship requires thinking comprehensively and profoundly about the entire organization of the education system.

In Latin America, given the extreme inequalities of these societies and the way in which education systems frequently reflect and reproduce this inequality by creating different achievement expectations for different groups of students or by offering different learning conditions to students of different social conditions, it is important that educating for citizenship skills not be an alternative or complementary focus to a curricular emphasis on the development of conventional academic skills.

The development of democratic citizenship skills should include and guide –provide meaning– emphasis on the development of conventional academic abilities. Thus, for example, in many Latin American societies, students whose

parents have low income levels learn to read only with difficulty or develop very limited skills in math and science. This segmentation of education systems in supplying opportunities for developing basic skills should be a basic concern in citizen efforts for certainly, citizenship skills include these fundamental abilities for participation in the XXI century.

This emphasis on such basic skills of the model that we propose in this study provides a specific focus to the proposal to develop citizenship in Latin America. This emphasis on basic skills does not appear in the most well-known literature on what it means to develop citizenship in the OECD countries, perhaps because social segmentation in this subject is smaller there than in Latin America.

## **INCORPORATE INTO REFORMS discussion of the democratic meaning of education**

Three motives justify the study of activities for developing a sense of democratic citizenship in secondary schools. The first is that democratic culture in Latin America is undergoing change. The expectations of growing sectors of the population are that democracy will function and deepen in order to reflect the interests of the majority because the legitimacy of democracy itself rests in part on achieving just this. Such a challenge should not be underestimated. How can schools train young people who are committed to democratic values when other institutions –justice, elections, political parties, business, families, churches, for example– reflect and reproduce authoritarian values and practices? How may we foster democratic attitudes in contexts in which government and opposition do not regulate their participation according to democratic norms?

It is clear that in processes of broader social change the activities of schools can contribute only partially to developing a democratic culture because other institutional changes are essential as well. Nevertheless, schools can facilitate and support such changes, although they cannot produce them alone. In the face of this challenge, the response of schools is fundamental: policies that are not part of the solution will –by omission– be part of the problems of not moving forward in building a democratic culture.

A second reason for proposing that secondary schools contribute to developing a new democratic culture in Latin America is based on the fact that secondary school reform is at the center of current education agendas in the region. It is foreseeable that, in the coming decades, the efforts of Latin American societies and governments will be centered in universal access to secondary education, and with this deliberate discussion of the questions of what, for what, and how to train young people at this level.

Discussion about the function of citizenship in secondary schools is part of a broader debate: what to do with secondary schools in Latin America. It seems appropriate that, when arguing for universalization of access to and completion of secondary education, such a discussion be expressed in a more general form about what should be the purposes of such education once universal access is achieved. For the same reason, it is congruent with the political development of the region to assume that these purposes must be aligned with the construction of democratic citizenship.

A third reason, in order to examine how secondary schools contribute to the creation of a new democratic culture rests on the fact that the development of the social identity and citizenship of young people is a recent and growing concern in societies of the region. Extra-school institutions such as communication media, ITCs, social movements, and from the other side, organized criminal groups –present abundant opportunities and stimuli that compete with school for the attention and interest of young people. It is with young people that educational institutions and practices most clearly demonstrate their failure.

In the face of pedagogical deficiencies of primary schools, expressed primarily in academic failure of students and high grade repetition rates, the response of adolescents is to drop out of school. When we ask them why they do so, many of them answer simply "because it doesn't interest me". For young people, it is easy to note the irrelevance and lack of synchrony and connection between school practices and a 19th century curriculum and the world and society in which they live. For secondary education, the growing assertiveness of young people suggests that either it must change or face the risk of disappearing, of being replaced by other institutions in which young people can find adequate preparation and the recognition or acceptance needed to confront the changing demands of their world.



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For secondary education, the growing assertiveness of young people suggests that either it must change or face the risk of disappearing, of being replaced by other institutions.



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To the extent that one of these dimensions is the world of politics, that requires a definition of citizenship between young people, secondary schools disconnected from the tensions and dilemmas of training for citizenship –in the context of changing political culture in Latin America– will be increasingly seen as irrelevant and disconnected from the demands of the real world in which adolescents live. At a time when inter-generational cultural gaps are of growing importance, if schools do not help them to answer questions about who they are, how they can advance their interests in society, and the venues in which they can participate, and if schools do not treat the complex problems that face citizens in democratic societies, they will be increasingly distant from the concerns of the younger generation. It is essential that schools prepare young people to take themselves serious from a historical perspective, as well as help them to understand the nexus between public events and their own personal responsibilities.

## A MODEL for conceptualizing education for democratic citizenship

Using the definition of skills for democratic citizenship as developed previously, one can arrive at a conceptualization of school-based experiences that contribute toward this process being comprehensive, systematic, cumulative, and focused on the daily experiences of young people in school<sup>5</sup>.

### Comprehensive and systematic civic education

Comprehensiveness of education for democracy refers to the mobilization of all parts of the school to effect the developmental domains of young people: cognitive, social, emotional, value-based, and attitudinal. This is only possible if one thinks about education in its broadest sense; that is, not only as content or processes that are developed in the

strict sense within a subject, but as a set of experiences that, in their totality, take place in school and from which school culture as a whole is derived; the social and demographic composition of the student body, the role models presented by faculty and administrators, the way time is organized, and the interpersonal relations within the school<sup>6</sup>. By this we mean that it is difficult to teach democratic relations –even when their discussion is an explicit theme in the curriculum– within institutions characterized by authoritarian relations. It is of little use to teach about respect for human rights within a subject if the school is characterized by disrespectful gender relations. It is not possible to foster a culture of respect for law and incorporating content into the curriculum to this end if students know that a proportion of their teachers hold their posts due to the payment of bribes or through influence trafficking. In particular, when one is teaching adolescents it is vital that there be good alignment between the project of the school and the curriculum at different organizational levels of school organization.

The systematic character of education for democratic citizenship refers to the inter-dependence and the synergies that arise in the simultaneous action of the different venues mentioned above. Thus, concepts of gender equality that young people may learn are simultaneously influenced by explicit curriculum content, the hidden curriculum found in teaching practices –the time, attention, and stimulus that young men and women receive– by the role models revealed in the proportion of men and women teachers and administrators, in the gender relations existing between teachers, and in the school culture in its broadest sense<sup>7</sup>. In those schools in which sexual advances toward students by teachers are not severely controlled and sanctioned, this –in combination with what kinds of opportunities exist for men and women teaches, together with the curriculum and instructional processes– represent a positive moral lesson on the gender relations that are in fact accepted in school.

<sup>5</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this model, see F. Reimers and E. Reimers: "Open schools, open societies. The Challenges of Educating for Democracy in Latin America". In J. Harrington and J. Kagan: *Westview Press*. To be published.

<sup>6</sup> This differentiation between the traditional minimalist civic education focus and the maximum focus of citizenship training is discussed by David Kerr (2002): *An International Review of Citizenship in the Curriculum*. In Steiner-Khamisi, G., Torney-Purta, J., and Schwilole, J. (eds.): *New Paradigms and Recurring Paradoxes in Education for Citizenship: An international comparison*. London, Elsevier Science Ltd.

<sup>7</sup> For an analysis of the role of gender inequalities in school management in Mexico, see Reimers, F.: *Principally Women. Gender in the Politics of Mexican Education*. In Randall, L. (ed.): *The Changing Structure of Mexico* (to be published).



### Cumulative education for democratic citizenship

The cumulative character of education for democratic citizenship is related to the extent to which learning –during the continuum of student development– rests on previous learning, thus forming a chain of opportunities in which what one learns at one moment facilitates or hinders subsequent learning. For example, one of the most basic, fundamental lessons for valuing one's own freedom is that each person may discover his or her own "voice", the capacity to articulate ideas, to express them; that is, to discover one's own individuality. Very early experiences facilitate the discovery of this voice: having opportunities to be heard, being able to write essays that reflect an individual point of view, to write texts that reflect one's own interests. In short, to receive attention as a person.

To the extent that children, and later young people can find in their schools experiences that tell them that they are valued as individuals, that they are respected, it will be easier for them to find their voices and to learn to respect the individuality and freedom of others. The lack of these early experiences will make it more difficult for them to discover their own ability to think, to develop original ideas, and to value freedom. This concatenation and cumulative character of school-based learning has a clear expression in the acquisition of basic reading and writing skills. Without the ability to read with high rates of understanding, in later moments of their education it will be impossible to history in depth and difficult to follow deliberations on public matters. Without the possession of basic communication skills it is not possible to construct more advanced opportunities for citizen education.

### Education for democratic citizenship in daily life

Although we share the thesis of John Dewey that one teaches the way one teaches, we believe that the purposes of the school –including the extent to which these foster a democratic culture– are also expressed by who is taught, what is attempted to be taught, how well it is taught, who teaches it, in what kind of school climate, and in what social and cultural context.

The civic purposes of schools demonstrate all of these aspects of the educational process, not only in the open and explicit objectives of education policies and curricula, nor in the contents of textbooks. Consequently, in order to examine the extent to which schools prepare young people for democratic citizenship it is necessary to have a broad and deep view that goes beyond the analysis of the contents of civic education subjects.

## The development of skills for democratic citizenship is not an alternative to the development of academic skills.



We will explain below the components of the theoretical framework in order to analyze the relation between education and the development of democratic culture. In doing so, we will present information derived from the Latinobarometer survey –mentioned previously– as well as complementary information from other sources when pertinent. We present a more detailed analysis of the results of this survey in a later section.

The school experiences that help students to develop skills consistent with participating in and maintaining democratic societies produce a system of inter-related experiences in which each level of possibility facilitates subsequent opportunities to develop the ability and will to be free.

At the micro level, and at the center of this integrated system of opportunities, are possibilities for the social interaction and experiences of students and of them with teachers, which present young people with the means to elect in a way congruent with their short and long-term aspirations. Together with multiple opportunities to learn to choose, there are others for developing skills that are essential for the functioning of a complex, modern society. Young people need, for example, to develop the ability to read at high levels of understanding, essential for effectively participating in the majority of XXI century societies and because this ability opens up other opportunities<sup>8</sup>. Learning to read and to write, and maintaining and improving this ability, offers broad opportunities for exercising freedom.

Children and young people can read various materials, have the opportunity to write based on their own interests or not. During a visit we made in 2003 to some secondary schools in the south of Chile in which the *Enlaces* program supported classrooms for teaching technology, a number of students said that the most valuable thing for them about the

time devoted to this activity was that it was the only time that they could carry out research projects that responded to their interests. In this context, learning to use the internet or simple programs for word processing and presentation of ideas is an innovative instrument allowing students to learn through exploring their own interests. In visits to schools in 2005 in San Luis Potosí (Mexico) we saw how implementation of the National Reading Program –that provided children's' stories and different kinds of literature to public schools– makes possible in some cases that students have the opportunity to choose what texts they read, an important form not only of stimulating reading, but also of recognizing and legitimating the various interests of children.

The teaching climate and the kinds of teaching practices in use in schools, the academic standards –and the quality of education in the achievement of such standards– are key aspects for an education for democracy agenda. As we mentioned previously, the development of skills for democratic citizenship is not an alternative to the development of academic skills. On the contrary. Skills for achieving citizenship in complex societies demand academic skills as well.

This fundamental level of the development of democratic skills was not included in the survey here reported, and should be a priority area for an agenda of future research.

<sup>8</sup> In this sense, note that reading skills are a variable objective, depending on the reading skills level in question. The XIX century concept that defines reading skill as the ability to read and write one's own name or a simple sentence, perhaps appropriate for the demands of citizenship two centuries ago clearly does not allow one to participate in a knowledge-based society. This is the reason that the comparative study of the OECD, PISA, measures advanced levels of reading comprehension, which are low in all OECD countries, and particularly low in the five Latin American countries that participated in that study.

Besides these everyday experiences for developing the ability to be free and to make choices, school curricula can develop –specifically– interest in and skills for the exercise of democratic citizenship, providing for specific opportunities in which students can reflect on or learn content that help them to understand what is necessary for the functioning of democratic relations or societies. Either by means of a subject matter openly directed toward this purpose, or integrated into or cutting across other subjects, students can learn about universal human rights; to what extent these rights are protected or are not by the laws and institutions in their societies in the present and in the past. They can learn about and reflect on diversity; learn about and discuss participation within the local, state, and national context; discuss the performance of elected leaders; become familiar with political institutions and their histories. These comprise the most traditional components of civic education focused on the study of democratic institutions. Other contents can focus on the study of cultural diversity in a country, gender relations and sexuality, or complex subjects that influence identity, individuality, and relations with others.

In order to guide these opportunities, teachers need to be well-educated and prepared show students what it means to think on your own, value the freedom of research and independence of thought and appreciate and respect diversity and the rights of others. There is data that indicates that teachers –in various countries of Latin America– are not particularly tolerant or democratic role models. A survey of public school teachers carried out in Mexico found that 29% cited as a citizen obligation respect for the law, but that only 18% mentioned the rights of others. Some 41% stated that the public should always obey the law<sup>9</sup>; one in every five of these teachers would not permit a native person or a person of another race to live in their home, and two out of five would not allow a homosexual live in their homes. These attitudes of Mexican teachers reflect and contribute to reproducing similar intolerant attitudes within the general population. A national survey on discrimination in Mexican society revealed that nine out of ten women believe that discrimination exists against the disabled, indigenous people, homosexuals, the elderly, religious minorities, and foreigners. One in three claims to

have suffered discrimination within the last year, and one in three also claims to have been segregated in the workplace<sup>10</sup>.

Recent surveys of teachers in Argentina, Peru, and Uruguay also illustrate high levels of rejection of diversity. The highest percentages of discrimination are, as in the Mexican case, against homosexuals. Some 20% of Uruguayan teachers, 34% in Argentina, and 55% in Peru would not accept having homosexuals as neighbors. There is also strong rejection based on nationality, ethnicity, and social origin. In Uruguay, 11% of teachers, 15% in Argentina, and 38% in Peru discriminate against people based on their nationality or ethnicity. There is also discrimination against inhabitants slum-dwellers by 16% of Peruvian teachers, 33% of Uruguayan teachers, and 52% of teachers in Argentina<sup>11</sup>. There is rejection not only of persons from neighboring countries, but also of immigrants from other latitudes and of people based on their religion. Some 19% - 20% of Peruvian teachers discriminate against Arabs, Jews, Japanese, Chinese, Ecuadorians, Paraguayans, and Chileans. Discrimination levels of this kind are lower in Argentina and Uruguay. In Argentina, 9% of teachers discriminate against Bolivians, 6% against Chileans, and 4% against Arabs, Jews, Japanese, Chinese, Ecuadorians, and Paraguayans.

In this area, the direct development of civic knowledge and attitudes is commonly identified with civic education. This dimension is undoubtedly important, but as we have explained, it is insufficient. An essential part of citizen training is the development of cognitive skills expressed –among other ways– in a profound knowledge of the history of a country, its social movements, and political changes with impacts on the democratic nature of the society. The disciplinary areas most directly related to the development of these skills are history, political studies, and civic education. However, the skills that contribute to citizenship can and should be developed in a cross-cutting fashion in the other subjects of the curriculum as well as in complementary activities that stimulate willingness to act and that influence attitudes and values. In-service learning, for example, is a way of involving students in the analysis and solution of local challenges and of combining these forms of support and participation with their academic training.

<sup>9</sup> Fundación En Este País. Mexico, 2002.

<sup>10</sup> Secretaría de Desarrollo Social. Mexico (2005): National Discrimination Survey.

<sup>11</sup> Tenti Fanfani, Emilio (2003): Les immigrés à l'école. La xenophobie des enseignants en Argentine, Peru et Uruguay. Buenos Aires, Instituto Internacional de Planificación de la Educación, p. 4.

Systematic information is not available on the level of democratic citizen - pertinent knowledge in all countries of Latin America. However, partial data suggest that it is necessary to increase efforts in this area. In 1998, Chile and Colombia participated in an international study on civic knowledge and attitudes of secondary school students. Only half of Chilean young people and 77% of their Colombian peers, given four response options, could correctly identify who should govern in a democracy. Considering that in this case it was possible to give a correct answer 25% of the time without knowing anything, the low percentages of students who know that in a democracy it is the elected representatives who govern merit concern. Also of concern is the fact that one-third of Chilean students believe that in a democracy it is the specialists who should govern<sup>12</sup>.

In Mexico the proportion of those who have finished their a three-year college preparatory program –the *bachillerato*– who think that in a democratic system it is specialists who should govern is 50%, with only 41% choosing "popularly elected representatives" as the correct option<sup>13</sup>. Equally lacking is knowledge of constitutional content, of the functions of civic organizations, laws, periodic elections, political parties, and the Congress, identification of examples of corruption, and of the function of press diversity. Also in Mexico, one in three teachers say that secondary school graduates are people who try to evade norms (37%), prefer competition to cooperation (33%) and value their own interests over those of the community (27%)<sup>14</sup>.

The clearest efforts to specifically introduce education for democracy as an academic subject are in Chile, Colombia, and Mexico. In Chile, in 2004 the Ministry of Education created a high-level national commission to assess the extent to which the curriculum fostered democratic citizenship. "The commission invited a wide spectrum of actors to submit their opinions on the civic training curriculum. These actors included the Ministry of Education, sponsors of private schools, research specialists –both national and foreign– teacher trainers, and members of congress. The major recommendations of the commission were: a) the formulation of a definition agreed upon by all sectors of a concept of democratic citizenship that includes concepts belonging to the liberal tradition (holding of rights vis-à-vis the State), the democratic tradition (citizenship as belonging

to a self-governing community), and the republican tradition (citizenship as an area of specific qualities); b) the need to define sequences for citizenship training in the new curriculum in effect since 1998 –emphasizing a focus at the end of secondary school on the institutionalization of democracy; c) the filling of two gaps observed in the curriculum –educating about the risks for democracy, anti-social conduct, and bases of the penal system– as well as enriching content about the economy, which was thought to be insufficient; and d) methodological suggestions on in-class teaching of civics, focusing on an approach that combines classroom lectures and traditional formal study with discussion and community service experiences and participation in levels of student government"<sup>15</sup>.

The skills that contribute to citizenship can and should be developed in a cross-cutting fashion in the other subjects of the curriculum as well as in complementary activities.



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<sup>12</sup> Torney-Purta and Amadeo, 2004, pp. 50-51.

<sup>13</sup> Tirado and Guevara, 2005, p. 23.

<sup>14</sup> *En Este País*, 2002.

<sup>15</sup> Response of the Ministry of Education of Chile to the Regional Dialogue Survey.

Although there have been initial attempts to foster the linkage of communities with schools, they have concentrated on primary education.

In Colombia there is a citizenship skills program that cuts across all curricular areas, and giving special attention to the social sciences. This program "seeks the commitment of the entire education community to the development of cognitive, socio-affective, and communication skills in order to foster living together peacefully, participation and democratic responsibility, and the valuing of differences". The definition of standards of citizenship skills, the inclusion of these skills in the National Assessment System, the emphasis on citizenship training as a policy priority, and the support of these priorities with strategies for identifying local experiences and the dissemination of international experiences has stimulated a variety of promising activities in Colombian schools. Recently, the country's Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the *Fundación Empresarios por la Educación* published a report entitled "Fifteen experiences for learning citizenship ... an one more" that reports some of the best practices in this subject and is an excellent example of a way to recognize and disseminate pedagogical innovations developed by groups of school teachers in this area<sup>16</sup>.

In Mexico, education for democracy is reflected in a compulsory civics and ethics school subject the objective of which is "to provide conceptual and judgment elements so that students develop analytical and discussion abilities necessary for making personal and collective decisions that contribute to improvement of their performance in society. Students are to learn to consider their social environment as one proper for the exercise of community and civic attitudes"<sup>17</sup>. Moreover, six entities implement a subject seeking to train citizens by fostering a culture of legality, an initiative of those responsible for education in the State of Baja California in the face of phenomena such as corruption, delinquency, and organized crime. The program support introduction of an optional school subject that allows students the reflect upon and adopt a culture of legality. At the same time, the Federal Electoral Institute has played an important role in developing the curriculum for democratic citizenship training in schools by preparing materials –in collaboration with the Center for Civic Education– that have been disseminated in the country and integrated into the National



Professional Up-dating Program and thus contributing to the professional enhancement of teachers. Efforts to train teachers have been modest, given the dimensions of the country and the challenges facing consolidation of a democratic culture. There is a secondary education teacher training program with a specialty in civics and ethics education, but most teachers who teach this subject in secondary schools are not trained in this specialty.

Besides the existence of specific opportunities in the curriculum for developing democratic life skills, such opportunities need to be placed within an institutional context that respects young people and their families. Although there have been initial attempts to foster the linkage of communities with schools, they concentrate on primary education. In secondary schools opportunities are rare for students to directly participate in activities that allow them to develop negotiation, coordination, and managerial skills. Secondary education reforms currently taking place in various countries of the region are excellent opportunities to invite young people to participate in the definition of school policies seeking to develop skills that make possible effective democratic citizenship.

<sup>16</sup> Ministerio de Educación Nacional y Fundación Empresarios por la Educación (2004): *Quince experiencias para aprender ciudadanía... y una más*. Bogotá (Colombia).

<sup>17</sup> Response of the Ministry of Education of Mexico to the Regional Dialogue Survey.

At the same time, these relations between young people, teachers, and communities take place within a system of institutional norms that govern school management and effect the selection of teachers and nomination of principals, and determine the social climate of schools. In some cases, these tacit norms openly contradict a culture that respects legality and democracy; for

example when teachers purchase their posts, principals demand sexual favors of teachers or students, and unions or political parties require that teachers participate in activities outside of the school in exchange for support in order to carry out their tasks.

In cases in which illegal activities take place in schools –sale of qualifications, kickbacks, etc.– the institutional culture thus reflects the tensions between trying to consolidate modern democratic values in the face of traditional authoritarian values contrary to democracy. It is not surprising, then, that a civics education survey administered to Chilean and Colombian young people from 14-17 years of age revealed their inability to recognize "threats to democracy such as corruption, nepotism, and control of the communication media"<sup>18</sup>. This study repeatedly noted that students see civics training as theoretical, disconnected from their immediate reality. Compared to date from the United States, there is a greater gap among Chilean and Colombian students regarding their ability to interpret civic principles represented in concrete, everyday situations –such as newspaper articles, pamphlets, or comic

books– and not in the knowledge of basic facts regarding democracy in theory<sup>19</sup>. The fact that schools are governed by anti-democratic codes that contradict specific civic education content probably explains why Latin American students learn to be citizens "in theory", but not in practice.

In a survey recently carried out in El Salvador on the ways that common citizens most frequently encounter instances of corruption, a large percentage stated that their most marked direct experiences concerned requests for illegal payments in public schools –two times greater than bribe requests in public health centers, three times greater than requests for bribes in ministries or bribe requests from the police<sup>20</sup>. This finding does not necessarily indicate that corruption is higher in the education in El Salvador than in other countries. It happens that this one of the few countries where there has been an effort to empirically study manifestations of corruption in the management of education and in other public services. In the survey, those with the highest levels of schooling are more inclined to think that corruption is necessary in order to gain wealth. In effect, 33% of university graduates agree with the statement that, "in order to become wealthy it is necessary to be corrupt" compared to 30% of those who have completed pre-university studies, 25% of those completing secondary school, and 22% of those completing primary schooling<sup>21</sup>. The study clearly illustrates the relation between the extent of corruption and disillusion with democracy: "A direct consequence of corruption is disillusion of citizens with democracy. The Millennium 2000 Survey carried out by Gallup International, that interviewed nearly 57,000 people in 60 countries showed that the greater the corruption, the greater the disillusionment with democracy"<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> Judith Torney-Purta and Jo-Ann Amadeo (2004): *Fortalecimiento de la Democracia en las Américas a través de la Educación Cívica*. Washington DC, Organization of American States, p. 66.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> José Miguel Cruz and Álvaro Martín de Vega: *La Percepción sobre la Corrupción en las Instituciones de El Salvador. Los Ciudadanos Hablan sobre la Corrupción*. San Salvador, Universidad Centro Americana, Instituto Universitario de Opinión Pública, p. 58. 16% of those surveyed report having been direct victims of bribe requests in public schools.

<sup>21</sup> Ídem, p. 45.

<sup>22</sup> Ídem, p. 17.

## Schools that respect students and their families, and that are models of openness and transparency, are strong communities, focused on learning.



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It was not among the purposes of the survey analyzed in this report to explore these aspects of the institutional culture of schools in the broader sense. But the study of these norms –specifically of how administrative practices in education reflect or sideline democratic purposes– should be a priority on the research agenda of this subject in the region.

Schools that respect students and their families, and that are models of openness and transparency, are strong communities, focused on learning and administered in a transparent manner in order to achieve the purposes of public policies. For their part, if they are to contribute to the development of a democratic culture –being strong communities that provide to all children high-quality learning opportunities, and above all opportunities to choose– such schools operate within a larger system of social institutions and aspirations committed to providing similar experiences to all students.

The system of inter-dependence that we have described includes high-quality and consistent experiences at the micro level that make possible internalization of the capacity to choose, that make it possible for students to discover and to develop their own voices. This includes opportunities in the curriculum for learning about democracy and freedom, and demands teachers well-prepared to set examples and value the freedom of carrying out their own research and having the freedom of choice. These schools relate with young people and their communities in a respectful manner, and have teachers and principals who themselves demonstrate that they can relate between themselves respectfully, honestly, and openly in the microcosm of the school and in managing school policy. In exchange, these schools require a greater commitment from society to education everyone at levels of excellence and for democratic life. These inter-dependent conditions make up a system of concentric circles of influence, at the center of which are the experiences of young people in school. At the outermost circle is the commitment of society to provide high-quality education to all young people

Besides being unidirectional, the relations between the components of this system are inter-dependent, given that there are feedback cycles of each element with the rest, as well as feedback cycles of results of each level that –in time– influence the other components. For example, to the extent that young people have in school experiences that allow them to value differences and freedom, there will be greater commitment for supporting high-quality education for all. At the same time, this greater social commitment to quality education makes possible higher quality experiences at the micro level.



## CONCLUSIONS and suggestions

In Latin America, and during the last decade, education reform efforts have been inspired largely by the desire to respond to the democratic aspiration of offering to all citizens equal opportunities to participate in increasingly knowledge-based economies and societies.

Efforts to provide universal access to secondary education, affirmative action policies aimed at reducing gaps in the quality of education, and emphasis on improving the basic skills of those graduating from primary and secondary education reflect the aspiration to prepare people at a basic level to participate and deliberate in democratic societies.

This way of understanding the relation between education and democracy is justified partly by empirical studies. Research on the nexus between education and democratic attitudes based on a survey carried out in 48 countries –including Chile, Costa Rica, and Mexico– found that people with more years of schooling were those who had the most democratic attitudes<sup>23</sup>. Another study on the same theme, but carried out in three Latin American countries, concluded that although the majority of adults surveyed did not trust other people (which suggests a low level of civic culture), the 30% that trusts others had higher levels of education and were more likely to have complete secondary and university schooling<sup>24</sup>. In these three countries, the level of inter-personal trust is low; but it is more so among those with less schooling and in countries with populations with lower levels of schooling. A similar relation between education and inter-personal trust was found by Robert Putnam in the United States<sup>25</sup>. In a

survey administered in 17 countries in 2002, on the average only 19% said that it was possible to trust most people. These figures vary from 3% in Brazil, a country that has the lowest education indicators in the region, to 36% in Uruguay, a nation with high education indicators for the region<sup>26</sup>.

Given the belief that educating all persons to high levels of quality is a necessary condition for democratic citizenship, recognition of the specific need to carefully define the skills essential for democratic citizenship, identify the most appropriate methodologies to develop them, and develop systems of support and assessment in order to bring them to schools, such methodologies make up are the subject of recent debate. In most countries, this has been more a discussion among specialists than one touching all education communities in a broad sense, and even less so one involving the various interest groups that converge around the subject of education. Education for democratic citizen training is, in Latin America, an emerging theme with little empirical evidence on what works and with what results.

Some ministries of education have created study commissions in order to analyze the subject and to make proposals. To our knowledge, the results of the deliberations of these commissions have not yet been reflected in innovative teaching practices, or less yet in skills demonstrated by students that have been shown to be particularly promising. On the contrary, analysis of civic skills among young people 14-17 years of age in Chile and Colombia and 14 years of age in Mexico point to serious deficiencies, greater in the cases of Chile and Mexico than in Colombia. Although Colombian students, and to a lesser extent their Chilean and Mexican peers, know the ideal characteristics of a formal democracy, they tend to view such knowledge as outside their own reality<sup>27</sup>. These studies particularly indicate a deficit of civic education in primary school. They also point to the inability of young people to recognize practices such as corruption or nepotism as impediments to democracy. One of the studies shows that teachers in both Colombia and Chile are inadequately prepared to train students for democratic citizenship, considering that it would be much more effective to establish an integrated approach throughout the curriculum, and not concentrate on a specific subject, and that they tend to rely principally on the study of original documents such as national constitutions. This suggests a formal and limited means of support acquisition of knowledge about democratic institutions, but not the capacity to participate democratically.

<sup>23</sup> Moreno, A. (2001): *Democracy and Mass Belief Systems in Latin America*. In Roderick Ai Camp (ed.): *Citizen Views of Democracy in Latin America*. Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 27-50, p. 35.

<sup>24</sup> Power, T. y Clark, M. (2001): *Does Trust Matter?* In Roderick Ai Camp (ed.): *Citizen Views of Democracy in Latin America*. Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 51-70, p. 59.

<sup>25</sup> Putnam, R. (1995): *Tuning in, Tuning out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America*. *Political Science and Politics*, 27(4), p. 665. Cited in Power and Clark, see note 15.

<sup>26</sup> Latinobarómetro, 2002. Press report. [www.latinobarometro.org](http://www.latinobarometro.org).

<sup>27</sup> Judith Torney-Purta and Jo-Ann Amadeo (2004): *Strengthening Democracy in the Americas through Civic Education*. Washington DC, Organization of American States, p. 48. See also Felipe Tirado and Gilberto Guevara: *Educación Cívica: Un estudio Complementario*, 2005, p. 31.

What options would make it possible to move forward in school-based training for democratic citizenship?

1. **Define** the skills that make democratic citizenship effective. It is necessary to continue to develop and foster discussion on effective citizenship skills. The assessment itself of democracy and its quality is a process. Costa Rica is carrying out an interesting project called "Citizen Audit on the Quality of Democracy", the purpose of which is to discover the expectations of citizens in regard to democracy<sup>28</sup>. Based on these kinds of studies it will be possible to operationalize the skills and attitudes necessary for effective citizenship. Mexico has recently carried out an extremely important study on discrimination, the results of which were disseminated by the press. This kind of initiative is very valuable in stimulating public discussion about the specific components of democratic citizenship.
2. **Identify** gaps between skills for effective citizenship and the knowledge, abilities, and attitudes of students and graduates of the education system. Research –such as the International Civic Education Study– provide very valuable information about the civic knowledge and attitudes of students. Unfortunately, only two Latin American countries –Chile and Colombia– have participated in such studies. Recently, Mexico has incorporated some questions of this study to an assessment of those graduating from pre-university courses. These –as well as periodic surveys such as the Latinobarómetro– opinion studies such as that on corruption cited above and carried out in El Salvador, make it possible to understand to what extent there is a correspondence between demands that democracy makes on effective citizenship and the skills and attitudes of real citizens in each country. Understanding the gaps between the demands of democracy and the results produced by the education system will make it possible to define specific proposals for in-school citizen training.
3. **Foster** democratic forums in order to negotiate proposals for secondary education. As theoreticians of the study of democratic education have noted, there is no single way of defining how to educate for democracy<sup>29</sup>. It is for this reason that democratic theory seeks participatory forms to define the purposes of schools. Current efforts to expand secondary education in Latin America are an excellent opportunity to capitalize on such expansion in order to move forward with open and broad ways of defining and discussing the purposes of schools.
4. **Identify** in schools experiences that contribute to the development of democratic citizenship skills within the Latin American context. This will require ambitious conceptual efforts and research. Together with the thesis that we have progressed, in that civic education transcends a single subject of the curriculum, it will be necessary to study the pedagogies in use in schools, the forms and opportunities for participation of students in schools, and the effects of these on the development of skills, abilities, and social capital.
5. **Carry** out comparative research and analyze empirical evidence from different countries throughout broad historical periods, thus making possible a better conceptualization of effective civic education.

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<sup>28</sup> Proyecto Estado de la Nación: *Auditoría Ciudadana sobre la Calidad de la Democracia*. San José (Costa Rica).

<sup>29</sup> Amy Gutmann (1987): *Democratic education*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

6. **Prepare** specific programs for civic education and educational materials that can support teachers and students in programs of proven effectiveness. In particular, deepen the study of history and government, incorporating comparative content that documents in what ways the participation and social action of individuals has fostered the democratization of societies (for example, studying the civil rights movement in the United States, or the fall of the apartheid region in South Africa); study historical processes that have resulted in the reduction of citizen rights and freedom (the rise of Nazism in Germany and recent genocides in Rwanda and Darfur, among others); moreover, incorporate the comparative study of authoritarian regimes in Latin America and their effects on personal freedom and rights.
7. **Create** training programs for teachers, principals, and school administrators in order to develop in them skills for supporting high-quality citizen education.
8. **Develop** and assess specific experiments for the development of innovative citizenship training programs –that can be carried out within the framework of secondary education reforms taking place in many countries in the region– in order to take advantage of the most recent knowledge of the subject and make it possible to assess on a wide scale the viability and cost of carrying out such experiences. For example, assess service learning models and study their history.
9. **Create** research and practice networks that link researchers and broad communities of educators in various countries of the region and in other parts of the world in order to exchange practice-based knowledge in this field.
10. **Plan** and implement on-going professional development programs for teachers with a focus on education for citizenship and for democracy. No innovative program will be completely successful if teachers who are to implement it are not well-prepared in the area. **e**

## Appendix 1

Percentage of people who say that democracy is preferable to other forms of government and percentage who are satisfied with democracy

	Democracy is preferable to other forms of government" (% agreeing)							Satisfaction with democracy
	1995	1996	1997	1998	2000	2001	2002	2002
Argentina	76%	71%	75%	73%	71%	58%	65%	8%
Bolivia		64%	66%	55%	62%	54%	52%	24%
Brazil	41%	50%	50%	48%	39%	30%	37%	21%
Chile	52%	54%	61%	53%	57%	45%	50%	27%
Colombia		60%	69%	55%	50%	36%	39%	11%
Costa Rica		80%	83%	69%	83%	71%	77%	75%
Ecuador		52%	41%	57%	54%	40%	47%	16%
El Salvador		56%	66%	79%	63%	25%	40%	38%
Guatemala		51%	48%	54%	45%	33%	45%	35%
Honduras		42%	63%	57%	64%	57%	57%	62%
Mexico	49%	53%	52%	51%	45%	46%	63%	18%
Nicaragua		59%	68%	72%	64%	43%	63%	59%
Panama		75%	71%	71%	62%	34%	55%	44%
Paraguay	52%	59%	44%	51%	48%	35%	41%	7%
Peru	52%	63%	60%	63%	64%	62%	55%	18%
Uruguay	80%	80%	86%	80%	84%	79%	77%	53%
Venezuela	60%	62%	64%	60%	61%	57%	73%	40%

Source: Latinobarómetro. Cited in *The Economist*, July 28, 2001, volume 360, number 8232. data from the year 2002 from Latinobarómetro: *Informe de Prensa Latinobarómetro 2002*. "Support for democracy" is the percentage of people who expressed agreement with the following text: "democracy is preferable to any other form of government". Satisfaction with democracy is the percentage of people who claim to be "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the way that democracy functions in their countries. [www.latinobarometro.org](http://www.latinobarometro.org)



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# The construction of essential meanings of education<sup>1</sup>

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## *IDEAS* are wings

How could we possibly begin without citing Martí?: "Leaves are the wings of trees; ideas are the wings of men; stones have no wings". The ideas to which he refers are those regarding justice. Among these are equity, freedom, participation, and truth, all of which should be translated into concrete works and actions. The present moment in Latin America challenges us to lay a wager on change and to redouble our efforts in favor of a more aware, articulate, empowered, proposal-centered population in search of inclusive, democratic, and just societies able to resist the tide of inhumanity that threatens to sweep us away.

Diagnoses abound that detail our reality. Let us take a recent one: the UNDP Report on Democracy in Latin America, in which our situation is described as a triangle, the first point of which is the dissemination of electoral democracy in the region; the second is poverty; and the third is inequality.

Application of the neo-liberal adjustment model (the "Consensus of Washington") has not solved the great problems and has generated the second and third points of the triangle. For the first time together, these three factors along with scarce understanding of this reality can lead to serious consequences. The formula cannot be the neo-liberal adjustment model that has brought with it in the last two decades more poverty, unemployment, and inequality. Our societies are wracked with violence, insecurity, shrinking social policies and the rise of *ad hoc* powers –especially certain business-related interest groups that function as powerful lobbies– the growth of drug trafficking and *mafias*, and a culture of corruption and impunity.

<sup>1</sup> These are merely "felt and thought" ideas arising from practice, ready to enter the virtuous cycle of dialogue and fruitful discussion.



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We could add a fourth point: threats to peace. Today's world is uni-polar and its most powerful country sets itself up as its policeman by carrying out a preventive war and disrespecting international law with the excuse of combating terrorism.

Within this panorama, in Latin America politics continues to lose its central importance, haven fallen into disrepute. Among the reasons for this are "political fragmentation, clientalism, *caudillismo*, the absence of democratic parties, band-based exchange rates, demagogic political projects, that absence of programs and internal rules of the game, and other problems" (Pedro Santana). Governments and societies –mutually deaf to one another– provoke a permanent crisis.

To govern is to exercise positive control over the march of public affairs. It is the duty of those who govern to periodically consult citizens; it is the duty of citizens to organize and participate with proposals and protests, support and criticism. Here, communication is essential. According to Durkheim, "democracy is the political form for a society to govern itself. A people are more democratic the more that deliberation, reflection, and critical spirit play a role in the march of public affairs".

It is in this relation that we find the intervention of the communication media. In Latin America, after the Catholic Church, it is the media that has the most acceptance and credibility, maintaining an important presence, setting the public agenda. But the media possess "a dangerous contradiction in their own constitution and functioning: the carry out a public service and participate within the public arena (...) but do so from a private logic which is that of the market (...) and are largely in private hands" (Luciano Leiva).



In the face of this reality, there is a need to create alternative political, social, economic, and environmental models that make it possible to move toward a more democratic society through:

- Improving the quality of life of the majority of the population, beginning with those belonging to segments that the concentrating and excluding model has most injured.
- Reversing the most damaging effects of the liberal, concentrating, and exclusionary model.
- Opening channels for citizen participation.
- Generating transformations in the structure of economic and political power, reaffirming equality of opportunity, transparency, and honesty, and the unlimited defense of all human rights.

## COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION: roots and wings

On the beach at low tide, I encountered a group of children and youngsters from a nearby fishing village. They were drawing in the sand enormous figures of fish, boats, hearts, dates, and names. Behind them was a school building, closed for vacation. One of them told me that there, they had never used the beach as an enormous blackboard full of pedagogical possibilities. For this youngster, the school was synonymous with boredom and monotony, and classes (*aulas*) only lacked the letter "j" in order to express what they really were: cages (*jaulas*) that imprison students and teachers through an education that is conformist, repetitive, memory-based, and lacking participation.

Education systems require a profound re-structuring. We must re-think the pedagogical model, emphasizing in mass education provision of vital elements such as re-evaluating the knowledge of learners and its relation to context. It is essential that education express our culture, capacity for inter-cultural understanding, idiosyncrasies, history, perspectives, and identity.

Education should contribute to the consolidation of solidarity, participation, industry, honesty, creativity, critical thinking, and commitment to change. It should be able to

develop the ability to articulate participatory proposals for teaching and learning as well as in planning, assessment, decision-making and management, understanding, and problem-solving. Education should provide opportunities for developing these skills and be linked to social participation, the sciences, the arts, technology, developing skills, creativity, and discernment.

It is important to develop the collective production and appropriation of knowledge. Education is of little use if not linked to life, seeing people as actors in the process. Only mass education, with roots and wings, will be able to respond to the challenges. The roots lie in building a new appreciation for memory and historical processes, identities, and cultures. The commitment is to the excluded, the segregated, the forgotten, and the oppressed; to reverse discrimination of gender, age, and ethnicity; to participation and ethics. The "wings" refer to the capacity to renew and innovate, boldly and creatively assuming new tasks; rejecting dogmas and stigmas.

Comprehensive education means including little-integrated universal values into school programs, such as the participation of women, respect for cultural diversity, the environmental question, ethnic education, a re-

Many intellectuals, technical specialists, educators, and communicators run the risk of closing themselves into a circle, far from real life.



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## CULTURE: dialogue of knowledge

Culture is a set of expressions, activities, material and spiritual products, symbols and representations that arise from human activity expressed as something which is alive and dynamic. It is the collective process of creation and re-creation that corresponds to a particular view of reality and also of human beings in their social relations.

Many intellectuals, technical specialists, educators, and communicators run the risk of closing themselves into a circle far from real life. Often, one encounters an asymmetric conception of human capacities that leads to a lack of recognition of how people produce and circulate their knowledge.

We are often faced with contradictory cultural dimensions. One of them is that of **popular culture** seen as a multi-colored set of cultural expressions existing in popular thought. It is inorganic, multiple, disperse, juxtaposed, and divided. It is asymmetric, for a people do not possess the necessary political, economic, and cultural hegemony that could lead to an authentic national popular culture. Social hegemony is in the hands of sectors that imitate the culture of the dominant powers and even absorb elitist consumer products into the culture of the people, incorporating fashion, music, food, customs, and objects.

Popular culture is politically ambiguous. Underlying it are both conservative and progressive positions. Non-critical, it is often submissive to the established order, mixing messages of the dominant elites with increments of the native culture. This ambiguity appears in shared conceptions throughout society, such as machismo, racism, authoritarianism, religious escapes and playing politics.

The current crisis results in popular culture being affected with other contradictions as well: solidarity and competence, in order to capture scarce opportunities, exist in a difficult and contradictory balance that leads to a part of the population seeking religious refuge, political pragmatism, and forms of survival linked to violence. In this stew of ingredients we can encourage the reassessment or recuperation –in the heart of popular culture– of transformational content and affirmation that contribute to the construction of identity in its various dimensions.

conceptualization of propaganda, replacing it with political education. Education should be related to the organizational and social processes of the community. There can be no separation between the daily life, needs, and potential of people and educational programs. This kind of transformational process involves three dimensions: discovering and recognizing (research, recovery, and appreciation); ownership (pedagogy); sharing and explaining (communication).

These dimensions are interconnected as well as linked to the lives and practices of people. Education is a dimension of the process: it is not a case of only improving "pedagogical acts" without touching other facets of people's lives. Comprehensive education must include the dimensions of ownership, sharing, and discovering.

Education moves between the poles of knowing and transforming. It involves a dialectic: we know by transforming and we transform by knowing. Education should not be assessed on the basis of appropriation of concepts, but rather by its capacity to instill practices that are improved or that have greater capacity to transform in the correct way.

The affirmative dimension of popular culture lies in the existence of popular forms and codes that sustain, by their very presence, a sense of collective identity. Examples are popular crafts, beliefs, literary or musical production, dress, dietary habits, behaviors, languages, etc. An expression of this dimension is the speaking of national languages, managing a set of habits and customs that define inhabitants according to their ethnicity, region, or country. The **transformational dimension** presents an inventory of potential forms and codes that reveal injustices, make possible expression of complaints and desires for change, and resuscitate educational elements of change. A new appreciation of daily life, the recognition of a popular culture that struggles for its survival and recovery are not in conflict with universal culture. Rather, they complement and strengthen it within the perspective of constructing a national and Latin American culture based on our wealth of popular culture.

Identity is linked to decision-making capacity over a society, its human resources and materials, to what we have been and what we wish to be. But identity very much requires creation, for its must be re-created continually in order to exist. For this reason, identity is at the heart of the true comprehensive democratic project that our countries seek. And the soul of identity is culture. It also requires a pluri-cultural vision of the nation, for we risk seeing culture as folklore or as an absolute expression of a region, thus generating a kind of internal cultural colonialism. A common case is that of native peoples when a sector of non-natives tries to integrate them, requiring that they relinquish their values in exchange for "civilization".

The times challenge us to open up to accepting a pluri-cultural environment. In this sense, the functions of communication and education can be reconsidered and seen as a recovery of what is ours, but also as a means of fostering and valuing the plurality and diversity of culture. This recognition of the plurality of culture is not sufficient if one does not foster the convergence of different ethnic, idiosyncratic, cognitive, and cultural facets. That is, inter-culturality recovers and projects a synthesis that is not a fusion, but rather a contradictory meeting of possibilities and experiences within the framework of the "process of the creation of humanizing educational relations that make possible recognition of that which lives and of identities" (Sime, 1991:73). A new appreciation of the local, the different, the identity of subjects is not opposed to inter-culturality, but rather is complementary and potentially humanizing.

The times challenge  
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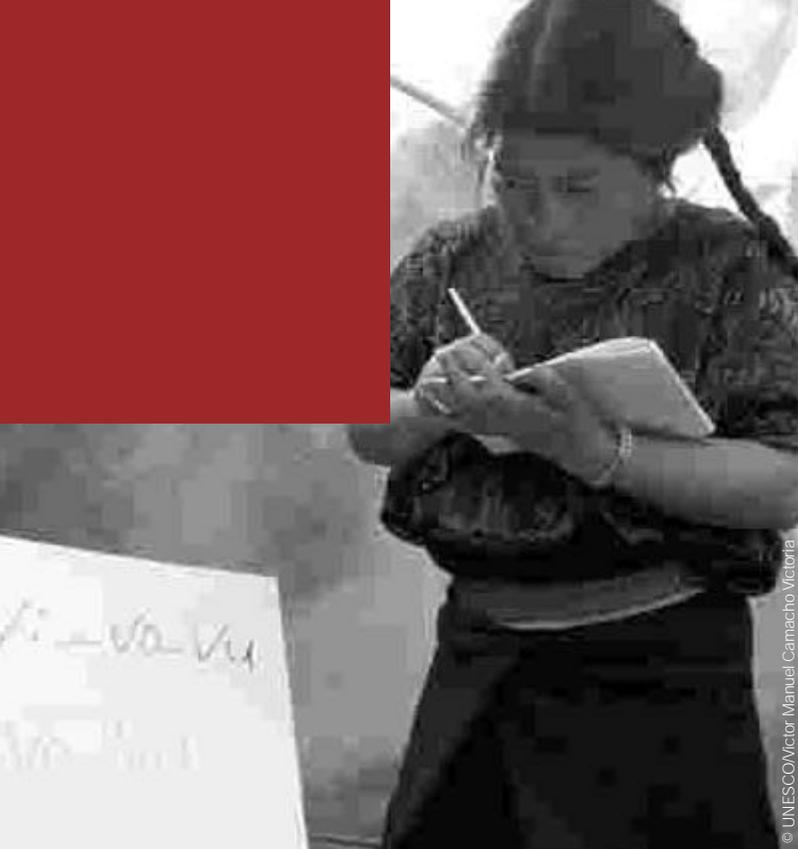
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The Latin American context and changes in the world also generate an accelerated process of inter-culturality –both internal and external– in countries that possess characteristics of loss of a sense of territory and of the collective<sup>2</sup>. That is, the loss of territory and its set of monuments, rituals, and objects that are part of the identity of many human groups. Today, migration, technological changes, and the efficiency of communications are producing a radical reorganization in the forms of popular production and the circulation of symbolic goods. Cultures are increasingly hybrid and inter-cultural, while at the same time many cultures that have lost their territories –such as Latinos in the United States– find identities through radio and television stations, publications in Spanish, and the possibility of re-creating territories and collections in their new habitat, a veritable implosion of the third world in the first, leading Rouse to call for the need of an "alternative cartography of social space" based on notions such as frontiers or circuits (Rouse, 1988:1).

Pluri-culturality and inter-culturality foster a more fluid access of popular cultures to a range of symbolic goods and to cosmopolitanism. But at the same time they lead to atomization and loss of territory, especially within the context of large cities they impede the construction of new identities and "of subjects able to effectively intervene in the reconstruction of the social fabric... We need trans-disciplinary studies, diagonal knowledge, in order to capture the inter-

<sup>2</sup> See García Canclini, Néstor: "Escenas sin territorios", in *La comunicación desde las prácticas sociales*, Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico, 1990.



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cultural processes in which hybrid identities are being formed at this end of the century" (García Canclini, 1990: 56). Who are we? What have we been? What do we want to be? These are frightening, revitalizing, and piercing questions. We must provide answers to them and foster the self-construction of identities through discussing social and personal differences without one side assuming the values of the other, but with each being enriched, and consensus achieved.

We must be critically aware of our cultural, political, and social horizons. We must mature and strengthen cultural creation, reject self-censorship and intolerance.

## SOCIETY and communication

Communication is a social practice that is also related to social movements. Communication –especially the mass media– expresses, is affected by and affects the asymmetry of social relations where hegemony is sustained both in the imposition and complicity of the symbols that reproduce a way of life. Therefore, it should foster venues for expressing contradictory symbols of a living culture; the construction of powers, identities, and memories; the ability to think and to create personally and collectively; discussion on critical, democratic, self-managing intentionality.

Mass communications are a phenomena, a manifestation of modern times. Much of the theoretical debate focuses on viewing the mass media in its threefold function: as ideological apparatus, political entity, and for-profit business.

In Latin America during the 1960s, theoretical reflection was directed at criticism of exogenous analytic models of society and communication. The contributions of Antonio Pasquali (*Comunicação e cultura*, 1962) and of Paulo Freire helped to construct a conceptual focus that outlined a different picture of United States communications. Writers such as Eliseo Verón proposed their own methods using semiology. The discussion was centered more on messengers and messages, focusing the analysis on business and ideological dimensions, the political economy of the mass media, and social communication as the exercise of power through the work of Ariel Dorfman, Michelle and Armand Matelartt with their famous *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic*. During the 1980s and 1990s there was a coming together of the reception of the mass media and socio-cultural mediations, as shown in the works of Jesús Martín Barbero, Néstor García Canclini, and Mario Kaplún, that integrated themes such as globalization, the culture industry, hybrid cultures, massivity, multi-culturality, and transnational consumer communities.

These contributions treat mass communication as imposition, gratification, addiction, or dulling habit. Writings also treat the social processes and phenomena generated by the media. Social-critical reading methods are proposed that make it possible to reflect on the audience role of the population. The analyses are directed toward the relations of the media with democracy and the public sphere. The reassert the role of the media as public watchdogs and citizen representatives; studying the effects of the media and the power of audiences. Within this framework intercultural communication arises as a relatively new venue of research, understanding multi-culturalism as "the situation of a plural society from the point of view of cultural communities with differentiated identities. While inter-culturality would make reference to the dynamic between these cultural communities ... Communication theory has already noted repeatedly that perfect communication, even between those of the same culture, is really quite difficult. People interpret messages according to their knowledge, that may coincide, approximately, with that of the author, or coincide very little" (Alsina, 2001).

The communication media should help to unite, correct, and mobilize rather than fragment, atomize, and demobilize. The media are not responsible, the responsible parties are those who own them and determine their policies. The problem is that the media are seen unidirectionally in regard to emitter-receiver, or with a weak feedback message of the receiver with a behaviorist note. There is also asynchronism between the images or texts of the media, since they are not representative of the population, lending an incoherence in the image the the media deliver to the population, which often does not express neither national diversity nor specificity. The objective is to approach a model in which emitter is receiver and receiver emitter, producing messages in coherence with the construction of identity. All socially and politically-related processes have a communication component, and vice-versa. A uni-directional communication model is authoritarian, unable to generate identities. On the contrary, a synergetic and participatory model will find and will need communication capacity with the possibility of interacting and fostering action, change, and exchange. The actions of civil society and social movements play a role between massivity and the massive. The latter refers to the technological capacity of the media; the former to the possibility of offering a communication proposal using networks, without necessarily needing to use the technology of the mass media.

The prevailing concept is of mass communication that produces messages to be disseminated or imposed based on an absolute truth. The communication dynamic should produce messages underlined by the condition of subjects who possess a horizon marked by diverse and complex relations. It is important to utilize argument, seduction, or utility, but directed at creating participation, public judgement, and image-truth. It is vital to be familiar with the audience to whom messages are directed. Influential management leads to the media fostering public judgement and freedom of expression, making it possible to make more transparent the opacity of society.

The media should not only inform. An training element in the media is a vehicle for the development in the audience of elements of judgement that allow them to "assimilate" a message, and more important, compare ideas, discern, reflect, and choose. This is not a case of instructing or of providing recipes, nor of explaining eternal truths. Rather, it is one of encouraging the audience to consider their opinions, listening attentively to the experiences and thoughts of others.

Public opinion –understood as the set of judgements, sentiments, and options possessed by the majority of people of a sector, region, country, or set of countries in the face of particular public themes or conflicts– is almost always momentary. That is, it operates when something happens, is primarily more affective than rational, expressing sentiments in favor or against someone or something. It is important to distinguish between these superficial characteristics of public opinion and the more thoughtful attitudes of what Yankelovich calls "public judgement". When people accept responsibility for the consequences of their opinions, we have a clear case of qualified opinion or public judgement.

Being well-informed is not necessarily synonymous with expressing qualified opinions. When people think, opinions can change. It is important to aid in the creation of these public judgements, to foster evaluation and discernments that serve as guides for reality. Public opinion exists only when one knows about it through opinion surveys, and it is influenced by opinion leaders. Public opinion is expressed through public agendas –the themes that are legitimated as important at a particular time.

Dialogue with the media should be part of the image of development projects. An image is "the idea that people have in their minds about another person, institution, facts, or processes; it is an idea that is created through inputs called information, that accumulate in the conscience of individuals and social groups until they are consolidated in a concept, good or bad, reliable or not, dynamic or estatic, progressive or conservative, to only mention a few"<sup>3</sup>. Images influence decisions and attitudes that can change development policies and actions. One must define the type of image that is best to have, the initiatives that must be taken to achieve it, that the entity and its development project are in practice what we want people to think they are, for one cannot offer what one doesn't have.

On the other hand, communication also can influence the possibility of linking the media with social movements, relating messages, situations, and subjective topics as well. How may we carry out education communication in schools

<sup>3</sup> ICODE: *Materiales de apoyo*, San José, 1994.

and in non-formal systems? How may we substitute political communication for agitation and propaganda? How may we achieve active participation of people in mass communication? How can their interests be reflected? Diagnostic community experiences and participatory research/action processes in indigenous, peasant, and afro-american communities, as well as alternative communication experiences in neighborhoods and countryside through the popular press, community radio, theater, murals... open up a series of possibilities.

The communication media, development projects, churches, political parties, associations, schools, should foster more communications between each other seeking to develop in people the growth of democratic values with capacities for self-management, solidarity, critical thinking, freedom, and creativity. They should support the building of just consensus and education in accepting and respecting disagreements.

## POPULAR EDUCATION IN HUMAN RIGHTS and the building of democratic citizenship

Based on a number of contributions of experiences in popular education for human rights within Latin America we provided feedback to the participants that included these critical reflections that should serve to better understand the theme and to propose alternatives for the improvement and expansion of Popular Education in Human Rights.

The Latin American experience indicates that there are important changes toward a more democratic life and more effective protection of human dignity in our continent. There has been an incorporation of the teaching of human rights as a cross-cutting subject in various levels and modalities with a broad focus.

The experiences seek not only to rationally transmit the concept of human rights, but also to find paths to live them, putting them into practice, exercising rights and duties, and taking ownership of fundamental values and their challenges.

The experiences seek not only to rationally transmit the concept of human rights, but also to find paths to live them.

In the end, what favors the potential of education is necessary reflection regarding the conception that we have of human rights, their internal coherence, comprehensiveness, and the kind of education that results.

This framework results in challenges such as the following:

### 1. The need to link democracy and development within a "high-density conception of citizenship.

Education for Human Rights is a prime focus of democracy, exercising modern citizenship within a democratic political culture, with citizen responsibility and ability to act in carrying out positive changes. But it is not possible to disregard the fact that Latin American societies emphasize the citizenship relegated to the role of consumer, or to limited participation or excluded from development, often surviving within the cracks of private economic development of a part of society. Development is linked to democracy through factors such as the impulse and support of national proposals that lend equity to economic growth, active democratic participation, and environmental sustainability with the help of citizen organization, participation, and management and emphasizing marginalized and excluded sectors, collaborating in the creation of citizens with the ability to participate in the construction of their fate. The incorporation of the focuses of gender, age, ethnicity, environment, and local development should interact and enrich development.



The statement that needs are not only deficiencies, but rather individual and collective potentialities allows one to transform the vision of development into a people-centered process in relating their needs to social practices, organizational forms, values, and global alternatives. When needs are viewed only as deficiencies one runs the risk of entering into an assistential logic that disregards the synergetic and systemic focus<sup>4</sup> that seeks to replace the vicious circle of poverty with comprehensive development.

Social and economic development require synchronization with processes of democratization and with the design of inclusive political strategies in order to guard against exclusion. One requires a strengthened civil society and an autonomous competitive political system with political parties sensitive to the needs and aspirations of the population. A high density citizenship requires the capacity to conjugate political and social-economic citizenship, and this represents a challenge to education in human rights, in that one must construct more comprehensive concepts, methodologies and practices.

## 2. The need in human rights education for pedagogical and androgogic models and more innovative, participatory, and effective education and communication methodologies

The challenge is how to work with concrete realities and new ways of: thinking about and carrying out education for democracy; dimensioning the roles of society, the State, schools, teachers, citizens, militants, subjects and supporters; coordinating and constructing social alliances; conceiving and constructing educational-cultural infrastructure; combining and articulating different forms and models of education in relation to types of education corresponding to all age groups; and obtaining resources and physical space.

A key theme for a critical pedagogy is to found it on "the recognition that only those who are trained as subjects can raise in opposition a principle of resistance to domination or authoritarianism. Citizen education, in this light, should be understood as a process for creating individual and collective identities that develop policies of recognition of rights and of struggle against all types of discrimination. An education that: (a) appreciates pluralism and respects the rights of minorities and of different cultural groups; (b) fosters processes for the construction of identity based on the particular contexts of each subject; (c) takes into consideration the particular conditions of each community in order to strengthen the dynamic of production of the rights arising from demands of "difference" (gender, language, ethnicity, age, etc.); (d) develops not only a critical

discourse, but also one of possibility, thus fostering collective dynamics aimed at creating new orders; (e) encourages the explanation of the educational projects of schools and communities, generating communication processes aimed at making clear the values upon which educational processes are developed"<sup>5</sup>.

Political culture entwines micro politics and macro politics, and links the conduct of individuals and the behavior of systems.



## 3. The need to strengthen democratic political culture

We need to delve deeper in the ability to strengthen democratic political culture from education in human rights, within a reality in which coincide –simultaneously and contradictorily– greater exclusion and poverty and environmental damage, with the possibilities of economic growth and better opportunities for democratic participation.

Political culture entwines micro politics and macro politics, and links the conduct of individuals and the behavior of systems. Relevant individual attitudes may not be explicitly political, but rather located among non-political attitudes and non-political affiliations of civil society. At the same time, politics is understood as the venue associated with the

<sup>4</sup> See various authors: Desarrollo a escala humana, CEPAAUR, Uppsala (Sweden), 1986.

<sup>5</sup> Jorge Osorio Vargas: Pedagogías ciudadanas: mapas actuales de sus propios e híbridos aprendizajes de la com(per)plejidad. Una contribución al debate sobre liderazgo y educación (work presented at the III International Multi-disciplinary Meeting organized by the Centro de Desarrollo Humano y Creatividad, Lima, June 28-30, 2002).

organization of power –the venue of decisions linked to a society or group, in which political culture is comprised of the meanings, values, conceptions, and attitudes that guide one toward the specifically political environment.

Democratic political culture –as a set of variable values, attitudes, and preferences influenced by the substantive changes of a society– play a crucial role in democracy, comprising agendas and limits of behavior for citizens and political leaders, legitimating political institutions, and providing a context in which are found the thoughts and feelings of the majority of the population. An expression is the existence of channels of agreement –which correctly used– produce communication channels that collaborate in the recomposition of the form of administering power. Human rights education should foster the capacities of democratic political culture, making possible the development of the construction of consensus, values, participation, and social association.

#### 4. Human rights education should contribute to and foster participation as the fundamental element of its activity

Participation is the corner stone. It is intimately linked to access to decision-making, taking into account the will of the subjects. It is the will to be less an object and more a subject; to develop citizen empowerment through democratic participation, and increasing participation in all spheres of democratic life. Participation is the pivot point; critical, cumulative, and germinal.

For educators, it is the pedagogical line –as something central to the educational process in terms of communicational space, a venue of cultural negotiations and knowledge– which requires that, through its practices, educators carry out a processing of the narratives of actors and de-structuring of authoritarian practices in schools... Under this focus, the professional quality of educators is defined according to values. Educators must be able to construct "ethical estimations" in their work, while at the same time being actors in the systematization of knowledge and learning. They are "action professionals", and their "teaching" lies in developing reflexive and transformational knowing and doing.

"It is necessary to foster formative neo-paradigmatic actions with educators that give them hope in order to confront the problems of their profession in the face of lack of

appreciation for their social function and that, together with actions aimed at public and economic recognition of their tasks, teachers: a) glimpse alternative worlds; b) re-establish from their practical and local efforts the theme of the purposes of education; c) identify pedagogical knowledge as a form of associative intellectual production; d) specify the arguments that sustain their practice and express the horizon of meaning that every teacher must construct from everyday practice as they live it and describe it"<sup>6</sup>.

Reconstructing politics, considering all possible areas, setting out a concept of life with transformation-based human rights education; supporting the development of other, better, or new ways to carry out politics is the enormous and urgent challenge facing human rights education and the actors involved. This requires the force of thoughts, methodologies, methods and techniques that cross the entire field of social action, moving toward the construction of a democracy of subjects, paradigms, and societies.

Alain Touraine<sup>7</sup> proposes three elements as epicenters of education of democratic citizens: resistance to domination, self-love, and recognition of others as subjects, expressed in respect for the rules that open the possibility of people living as subjects. These elements bring together in the subject the formidable challenges faced by human rights education on this continent beset by fragmented realities and luminous hopes.

<sup>6</sup> Jorge Osorio Vargas, op. cit.

<sup>7</sup> Touraine, Alain (1995): ¿Qué es la Democracia?, FCE; Mexico.

## EPILOGUE: The little lizard

Will it be possible? This final question is not a strange one, although the answer lies among us. Faced by a reality of growing social exclusion and environmental degradation, the need for changes is inescapable. But its direction cannot be provided by economic, social, and political models that exclude, segregate, centralize, subordinate, and impoverish the population, the territory, and the environment. On the contrary, the direction must be found in dimensions that humanize, liberate, exalt, and raise this continent and its peoples.

**Many centuries ago, the Kunas lived on dry land, deep in the Darién jungle. The green foliage, abundant game, the products of the earth and fresh springs were not sufficient to gladden their hearts. Why? They had no way to warm the long, cold, and rainy nights; no way to drive away the darkness. They had no fire, being obliged to eat raw and hard the eola, corn, bread fruit, otoo, and other foods. The children cried and shivered from the cold; beasts crawled near during the night.**

One day, their ancestors decided to solve this problem. They met in the meeting place, the Onmaked Nega, and reflected at length.

–We know that the ferocious panther has fire for himself in his den on the grey mountain, and doesn't leave there for any reason –some said.

–We must snatch from his some of this fire, a small piece that will allow us to live –said others.

But the panther, the Lord of the Jungle, was very fierce. Sad they were –because they knew where the fire was, but they also new that he who watched in was very selfish and wouldn't share it. Then there passed a tiny lizard. Upon seeing it, a woman said excitedly:

–Look, it is Aspan Pipigua, the small lizard. He runs so fast that he can even skim on water. He is agile and tiny. He can bring us the fire without the panther seeing him!



At first, some doubted and a heated discussion followed. When they reached agreement, they called the lizard and said to him:

–We need your help! Go to the panther's den and take a piece of fire. A small burning twig will be enough. Then, run like the wind. Remember that if the panther captures you he will eat you.

The little lizard accepted readily. She didn't need fire, but even so decided to cooperate and left to fulfill her important mission. She crossed mountain ranges, rivers, and much more before arriving at the grey mountain and the den of the panther. The beast was sleeping. The lizard crept through a crack in the wall, and approached the eternal bonfire. She took a lighted twig, and with quiet steps went away from the den and began to run, as swift as the wind. She crossed the river so fast that the turtles thought that she was a reflection of a falling star on the water! But halfway through her journey the jungle shook with the terrible roar of the panther. The lizard didn't hesitate. Without releasing the smoking twig she arrived at the meeting place, where they were waiting to use the twig to light an enormous bonfire.

Everyone sang and danced! They laughed at the panther, who continued to roar far away! With the fire, they overcame darkness, hunger, and cold. The community thanked the little lizard for her tremendous effort. They made chicha de kai from sugar cane and offered a toast to the fire.

–Many thanks for the fire, Aspan Pipigua –they said–. We have learned something so important as obtaining fire, but the most important thing is that we have learned. You helped us without expecting anything in exchange, because you saw our need. For this reason, this fire will be all that you will ever need.

It is possible to find in the ancestral traditions of our indigenous peoples a small animal or being who succeeds in obtaining fire –controlled by a fierce animal– for the community. This image clearly draws the need of opportunity of access of all to earthly goods; for neither riches, nor political power, nor education, nor information can remain inaccessible behind the walls of forbidden cities. *e*

Faced by a reality of growing social exclusion and environmental degradation, the need for change is inescapable.

# In favor of humanism in education

Ana María Machado  
Author, Brazil.



I am not an education specialist. When I received an invitation to participate in this meeting, my reply was just that, in order to avoid any mistaken impression. But they told me that there was no mistake; that I had been chosen not as an educator, but rather as a writer because the objective was to hold a multi-disciplinary meeting bringing together the contributions of diverse experiences and comparing contrasting points of view.

Therefore, I accepted, although I again repeat my warning. I humbly bring here some comments and reflections in order to share them, without any pretension of tracing paths, but only with the intention of offering the fruit of my experience.

As a novelist and writer of books for children I travel extensively within Brazil –as well as some in other countries, especially in Latin America– in order to visit schools and to talk to students and teachers. Some constants are striking in these encounters.

The first is the extremely low status and neglected state of the teaching profession in my country. This is shown by its extremely low salaries and poor working conditions.

The second constant, in spite of the above, is the dedication and ability to improvise and to invent that teachers show, together with their thirst for knowledge, interest in learning more and preparing themselves better. This enthusiasm is at the same time undeniable and moving, given the adverse conditions under which they are obliged to work.

The third constant is the abundant evidence of poor preparation of most of those dedicated to teaching. It is shocking just how deficient and precarious their training generally is.

Undoubtedly, there  
are assorted  
individual examples  
of excellence and  
success.



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I repeat that I am speaking of Brazil, and I realize that the situation varies greatly between countries. Certainly, there are cases in Latin America in which similar things occur, and others in which they are completely different. Even in Brazil, this situation is not uniform. What I say can be refuted by citing various examples to the contrary. This is to say that my diagnosis, as with any generalization, should be read with caution. Undoubtedly, there are assorted individual examples of excellence and success.

But we know that the low scores systematically earned by Brazilian students in international learning achievement tests have much to do with the low quality of their teachers. I am sure that if such tests assess the teaching abilities of instructors and not the abilities of students to learn, we have here ready confirmation of this fact.

Because the constants that I here present don't exist separately, but are inter-related, the result is that we at times note surprising and even paradoxical situations. Anthropologist and educator Darcy Ribeiro used to say that all of this is part of a great national farce –one in which students pretend to learn and teachers pretend to teach. The reactions to this opinion have always been intense and impassioned, both on the part of those who readily agree and those who are offended and take it as a personal insult. But it does carry with it a

certain sense, the usual exceptions and dangers of generalization excluded.

One may also say that Brazilian society pretends that it trains teachers, but in fact purposefully avoids doing so because it doesn't really want to give them the opportunity to grow. On the one hand, it affirms rhetorically that education is important; while on the other it discredits educators and denigrates their work. That is, it in fact seeks to keep them badly prepared in order to justify their low salaries. Thus, they are prevented from being real teachers and from receiving that pay that a true teacher deserves. It isn't the place here to discuss the mechanisms that operate efficiently to stop such a situation from changing, nor to mention the interests that feel threatened by a possible radical transformation of this scheme and that act to maintain the *status quo*.

This is an internal political discussion that Brazilian society must some day face, and that will oblige us to examine a complex set of motives. These range from the historical (such as a colonial system that hindered the reading and writing of books and periodicals in a country in which the first university was only founded in the XX century) to a legal tradition that includes in the constitution such a large number of fine details, that although well-intentioned, in fact keep institutions bound in a knot and stop them from performing as they should.

Here, two examples will be sufficient:

First, according to the constitution, primary education is the responsibility of municipalities, secondary education of the states, and higher education of the federal government. Thus, federal budgetary funds, from the Ministry of Education, should be channeled into universities (that of Rio de Janeiro boasts one administrative employee for every two students, not to speak of professors...) leaving aside schools in which children and adolescents should be educated, which at the most receive school lunches, books, and transportation. But the priority of education, for the federal government, must be another by constitutional mandate.

Another example: some years ago, a recently-elected state governor (Victor Buaiz of the state of Esp rito Santo) began his mandate by significantly increasing teacher salaries, as promised in his campaign as a Labor Party candidate. Other public employees appealed to the courts, guaranteeing that a so-called "isonomy" stipulated in the constitution be respected, and thus acquired the same salary increase. In a short time there were police who became millionaires. The state went bankrupt. There wasn't money to pay anyone. Teachers (and health system doctors) spent almost a year on strike. Students were without classes and without opportunities to learn, and the governor was expelled from his party, losing the support of public opinion and ended up abandoning politics. The country learned the lesson that in this subject it is better not to meddle.

These are merely two examples. I am not going to enter into this discussion now. I am only formulating a diagnosis of the concrete and real situation of teachers in my country. Teachers earn very little; are not well-prepared; and are without perspectives for the future.

In view of the fact that teachers recognize that they are not well-prepared, they tend to take advantage of any opportunity to up-date themselves. Courses and talks that are offered attract multitudes. They participate, ask questions, show their concern. But at the same time there is something human and understandable in the way that they react: while they recognize how very much they don't know and how serious this lack of knowledge is, the more that they are threatened and insecure, the more that they try to deny it. This is a very natural reaction in such circumstances, all the more so if we consider that they do not feel valued and supported when noting these deficiencies.

At times, they carefully follow the new models as they understand them, without any questioning or criticism, just like following a recipe or an infallible chemical formula, with

meticulous doses of various ingredients and without any personal contribution. They may become fanatic defenders of the teaching method currently in-style, without any flexibility that would allow them to accept divergent opinions, utilizing the latest pedagogical theory.

Or, they may move to the other extreme and take refuge in the past, rejecting anything different from habitual practice and disparaging anything that is new. They cannot publicly admit their own intellectual weaknesses, are wary of changes and innovations, and rely on inertia, opting for a repetitive "go along" attitude that is the very negation of the educational process. That is, the little information offered on these occasions, being scarce and inadequate, often ends up helping to hinder improvements in the quality of education.

Some years ago, the numbers referring to schooling and literacy in Brazil were alarming. Due to an enormous effort



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made in the last decade, the country was able to serve 97% of school-age children, including offering daily school lunches, even during school vacation periods. One should also note income redistribution programs that require parents who wish to benefit to keep their children in school.

In addition, created during the previous administration but aided by a degree of continuity in the present one, we have large-scale school book programs that show world record numbers, and school library programs with millions of copies of high-quality books provided annually. The numbers are impressive. That is, the country seeks to give attention to education and is investing. But what kind of education? That is the current issue. After a major quantitative improvement, we see that now attention must be given to quality.

As stated by a high authority of the Ministry of Education of the current administration regarding whether to go ahead with the delivery of literature texts to public school children, there was no doubt that the books were well-selected and of

high quality, or that their delivery was going very well, with effectiveness, achieving the objectives and reaching the hands of children in even the most distant corners of the country. All of the doubt centered, however, on the quality of reading that such books would find in the hands of their potential readers.

This diagnosis has its reasons. What it doesn't mention, and what I do, is that there really is room for concern when we take into consideration that the teacher doesn't read, never has read, is not familiar with books, and is fearful of books. This isn't the teacher's fault. It is a consequence of his or her "training" far (and increasingly far) from books.

We arrive, then, at what I propose to discuss here: the basic importance of reading in the training of teachers. Above all the reading of historical and literary narrative. Octavio Paz liked to say that "the plurality of pasts makes plausible the

But these very media, so useful and welcome, also present very strong collateral effects.

plurality of futures"<sup>1</sup>. Such plurality is known and assumed by citizens only through reading –especially literary and historical narratives. Personally, I am convinced that in our times, democratization of the reading of literature is an indispensable step toward a more just society. And I believe that we will never be able to approach such a society if we do not have teachers who read.

Some countries solved centuries ago the problems of literacy and schooling of all of their inhabitants. In such cases one may expect that families will facilitate initial contact between their children and books and provide a reading environment that stimulates contact with the written word. In countries where this has not happened, schools take on the responsibility of satisfying this need and become the only hope that the situation will be remedied. They cannot remain immobile.

We live in a time in which various other media compete with books (or that add to them, as I prefer to say) in the

transmission of knowledge and the acquisition of information. It is well that this is so, and it is important that the internet, television, and films are present in schools and homes, opening doors to new generations. But these very media, so useful and welcome, also present very strong collateral effects that need to be balanced by more stabilizing and integrating influences such as affective relations and narrative reading. The cult of dispersion, fragmentation, and the ephemeral are characteristics of contemporary culture. To this we must add, as George Steiner notes, the hypertrophy of technological and mathematical language –often used only in their superficial aspects– in order to create the illusion that all knowledge is the same, having single and exact meanings, without allowing discrepancies, contradictory or contrary arguments, or logical expositions. Separately, this is not a propitious cultural environment for reading, literature, or for art in general.

However, not even for this have human beings stopped feeling the need to seek some form of intelligible unity in their own lives, some kind of meaning for what occurs in their day to day experiences, or in the relations between events and memories or in the expectations that they have for the future. It is for this reason that it is so important that education not distance itself from humanism.

In the Brazilian Academy of Letters (of which I am a member), it was my privilege to know Celso Furtado, one of the most respected Latin American economists, a founder of the thinking of ECLAC, professor of the Sorbonne, and a name so often mentioned for the Nobel Prize. Something that very much impressed me in our relation was the vehemence with which he defended the importance of humanism, the enthusiasm with which he discussed poetry and literature. The master of the theories that studied dependence and development insisted that the so-called "exact sciences" are insufficient for constructing social justice and democracy, and that outside of humanism and literature there is no hope. He was very concerned by the fact that education is currently placing aside the humanities, literature, philosophy, and history. We used to talk about this, something that brought us close together in the time before his death in November, 2004, and I recall it here in this sense.

Not long ago I also encountered some stimulating ideas about education in the article of someone who must have been born at least one-half century after Celso Furtado: a young man called Michel Lent Schwartzman published on the web site *web insider*.

<sup>1</sup> Cited by Ana María Monteiro, *Nossa História*, year I, number 5.

He brilliantly demonstrates that uncreative ideas about education have grave consequences and a strong "impact on the world in which we live: a place practically controlled by people who were trained to seek a job, but not to create jobs. A world in which there are many who seek and few who do, invent, create, outside the traditional format they taught us in school. Because in school we learned much about trigonometry, biology, and tributaries of the Amazon River, but where there was no class on how to construct a business, position oneself in the market, administration, nothing. Facing today's reality we observe: there are no jobs. And what is worse, we can't even blame "the crisis". Because with or without a crisis the model upon which the world functions is changing. Systems become automatic, technology makes possible decentralized labor, distant relations, everything becomes modular. And worst of all, there are many more people seeking employment than creating employment. Increasingly, each of us must be the owner of our own work, invent our own business, find a unique path, understand our place in the chain of services, and make others perceive their relevance in the system".

As with others of his generation, the author develops his ideas through experience and reading, producing content for multimedia, inventing what is new, creating teams to work in this area to tell stories, create images, invent new formats. In brief, he made what he calls a "dream machine". But in order to do so, he had to leave behind what was transmitted in a traditional way in school and seek other paths<sup>2</sup>. We know about this because he tells us of his experience. And he tells it well, convincingly, and thus supports his argument.

A story is always a search for meaning. A narrative is not merely a linear and timely enumeration of trivial events. Preparing a story for narration involves eliminating irrelevant incidents, prioritizing chosen facts, ordering them in a coherent manner that highlights their movement in a given direction. That is, it involves



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making order of a chaos composed of infinite fragments, making heterogeneous elements come together in order to extract from them a resulting cohesion, conceiving a temporal framework for all of this, and lending to particular facts a resonance that gives them a greater meaning, that can be absorbed by other human beings. For this reason, a good narrative that is well-prepared, well-formulated, well-written, one that is a lasting contribution to literature, often provides sudden illumination and revelation.

There is a beautiful episode in *The Odyssey* recalled by Hanna Arendt<sup>3</sup> that deserves to be mentioned here in order to illustrate these comments. In his return voyage to Ithaca, the resourceful Ulysses arrives in Phaeacia where he is well-received by King Alkinoos who, without knowing the voyager's identity, welcomes him at a banquet with all the honors that Greek hospitality reserved for travelers. At the end of dinner, Demodokos begins to sing of the feats of great heroes, reciting a poem that recounts the episode in the life of Ulysses in which he had a terrible discussion with Achilles. Listening to the song, Ulysses covers his face and begins to weep, in a manner that he hadn't wept at the time of the episode nor when he later recalled it. Only in listening to it being sung, thus performed, could he perceive that this dispute between the two most valiant of heroes had given Agamemnon pleasure by fulfilling the prophecy that he had heard from Apollo. That is, only when the episode was transformed into a story did it become important in the mind of the hero. And that brought him to tears. Ashamed and repentant, groaning and sobbing, he covered his head with his cape.

There are many more  
people seeking  
employment than  
creating employment.

<sup>2</sup> Besides [www.webinsider.com](http://www.webinsider.com), other very interesting sites are [www.tecnopop.com](http://www.tecnopop.com) and [www.nominimo.com](http://www.nominimo.com), all with intelligent and stimulating articles.

<sup>3</sup> In *The Life of the Mind*, Secker & Warburg, London, 1978.

I owe this example to the excellent study of the Chilean Jorge Peña Vial on the importance of narrative, entitled *La Poética del Tiempo* (ética y estética de la narración)<sup>4</sup>. I was about to finish this talk when I began to read the book, given to me by a friend, and I had the sensation of a beautiful synchronism, in one of those moments of encounter that reading provides. I made space in my text in order to include some contributions from this text, as well as for the coincidences of my constant dialogue with authors such as Steiner and Arendt, two of my favorites as those who read my theoretical texts know.

Human beings are story-telling animals. Some philosophers define us in this manner. But beyond the philosophical vision, the most advanced students of the mind, such as Steven Pinkert of MIT, point toward this human characteristic, emphasizing that the minds of human beings are biologically programmed for the use of narrative and language, just as a spider is programmed to fashion a web through the geometric use of secretion that hardens upon contact with the air.

In individual terms, Freud and psychoanalysis have demonstrated the intense power of narrative to move people toward self-knowledge and reduction of their suffering. By telling and re-telling his or her own story, the individual is able to order inner chaos and build a structure of references and meaning and thus attain self-understanding and the ability to live better. By reading and re-reading the stories of others

we broaden our universe of experiences, better understand human nature, open ourselves beyond the limits of our lives, and incorporate into our conscience different levels of reality.

Reading a narrative is an ongoing exercise in examining alternative possibilities, trying to perceive subtleties, and not allowing ourselves to be led down false paths, rejecting impertinences, identifying possible allies and adversaries,

recognizing obstacles, and remembering them, projecting viable solutions, and carefully considering all circumstances that can modify an action. To this end, it is

necessary to always keep in mind what one has read before, to arrive at opinions regarding the psychology of people, to have a spatial image of the scene within which the story takes place, to pay attention to time coordinates and to questions of simultaneity and succession, assessing the probability of relations of causality, observing the general sense within which the action develops. In a good narrative everything is important, since what lends artistic quality to a story has to do with its ability to configure, to connect disperse elements, to order the search for meaning, the "synthesis of the heterogeneous" of which Paul Ricoeur spoke.

A reader accustomed to good narratives will do this naturally, much like the adult who walks from one place to another without being aware of all of the muscles that such movements involve. And, to the extent that they add new experiences to their collection, the readers of stories also become able to exercise these abilities in their daily lives, being increasingly able to not be deceived, to distrust incoherencies, to distinguish the logic of possibilities that are opened ahead. Thus, the reader is able to become a more prepared citizen, with better possibilities of possessing defenses against empty and deceiving arguments, and to better choose between whatever alternatives that may appear.

From the psychological perspective, the reading of narrative also awakens powerful mechanisms of identification with some characters with which the reader feels (or would like to feel) certain affinities while at the same time developing other equally strong mechanisms of projection to other characters in which the reader can channel feared or shadowy aspects. A good narrative presents opportunities for contact with all –protagonists, antagonists, supporting characters, transforming characters, monsters, fathers good and bad, mothers good and bad, confidants, rivals– between dances and contra dances of desires and fears.

Finally, as novelist Ítalo Calvino stated with special acuity, a writer writes for one side and the other<sup>5</sup>. This allows him or her another essential element that another Italian, Umberto Eco, defined so well:

"That is the consoling function of narrative, the reason for which people tell stories and have told stories from the beginning of time. And it has always been the supreme function of myth: to find some form in the chaos of the human experience"<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Editorial Universitaria, Serie Reflexión, Santiago de Chile, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> *The uses of literature*, Harcourt Brace, San Diego, 1986.

<sup>6</sup> *Seis Passeios pelos Bosques da Ficção*, Companhia das letras, São Paulo, 1994.



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In collective terms, it is the re-call of narrative that forges a people and that lends to it a cultural and ethical heritage. I have much insisted on this point in various essays, defending the right of all citizens to read literature (and to thus know its history), always emphasizing the importance of the democratization of the reading of literature. Both (literature and history) lead to a better understanding of the reality and condition of human beings.

A society that wishes to be just should provide everyone with the opportunity to have access to the art of the written word, to foster the encounter with books. It should offer each individual the opportunity to discover that which poetry and narrative can reveal. Books that offer us all of this represent a valuable inheritance of citizens to which they have a right. A democratic society has the duty to create conditions that guarantee this right to all.

Education has the obligation to provide every student with the tools necessary to be able to take advantage of what this universe offers. In this sense, Ortega y Gasset said: "In the face of physical-mathematical reasoning there is narrative reasoning. In order to understand that which is human, personal, and collective, it is necessary to tell a story. This human being, this nation does this and that, and did so because before it did something else in another such way. Life only becomes a bit more transparent in the face of historical reason"<sup>7</sup>.

On the other hand, history shows us how things that appear to be chaotic and confused to an individual at the time that they occur, in fact are part of a whole. They acquire meaning when they are narrated with constructive and disciplined imagination, within a discourse that lends them coherence and orders them into an understandable image. At the same time, fiction, allows us to live a multiplicity of lives and various experiences, to understand the emotions and reasoning of others, and can thus illuminate our own reality. We need both forms of narrative, historical and literary.

Narratives preserve our memories, construct tradition, and transmit wisdom, which is much more than only information and knowledge. They constitute a barrier against forgetfulness. And allowing forgetfulness to enter, in human terms, is the equivalent of removing a dimension from life: that of profundity, as Hanna Arendt demonstrated in all of her work, above all when she treated the theme of evil. In the diverse texts that she dedicated to the analysis of Nazism and its atrocities, she emphasized the importance that that which happens be

narrated and that literary and historical narratives be read in order to learn and perceive the importance of that which, without this, would continue to be merely an insupportable sequence of events. In her impassioned defense of narrative she closely examines various literary texts (such as stories by Karen Blixen, for example) and states that the most important paths to preserving memory, hindering forgetfulness, and arriving at the truth are in the hands of journalists, historians, poets, and writers. Only thus can humanity judge and condemn evil. "No philosophy, analysis, or aphorism, however profound, can compare to the intensity and wealth of meaning of a well-told story", she says<sup>8</sup>.

And here we approach another key aspect of narrative: the essential role that it plays. The point of encounter of philosophy and literature, according to Ítalo Calvino, is the common ground of ethics. A coherently told story possesses a veracity that makes us love and desire the truth and to seek it beyond the text itself. It awakens us to assess what is told from the point of view of the other, the protagonist of the scene. Thus, it leads us to reflect on good and evil in a process that cannot nor should not be confused with a simple reduction to Manichaeism. In truth, a narrative invites us to judge. In other words, it places us fully in area of ethics, leading us to seek our own value judgments. This is even more important in an age such as that in which we live, since these post-modern times, as Peña Vidal states so well in his study, are characterized by the suppression of any totality, by the absence of central values and by the disarticulation of identity. More than ever, literature has a role to play within this framework. An integrating role.

Moreover, being an art, literature also participates in another function as well. There is an interesting study by Elaine Scarry about relations between aesthetics and ethics in which the author, a professor of aesthetics at Harvard University, posits that proximity to beauty constantly renews our search for truth and moves us toward an ever-increasing concern for justice. She says that development of the perception of symmetry and harmony leads one to seek a balanced distribution, that the intensity of feeling toward the

<sup>7</sup> *La Historia como Sistema*, Ed. Revista de Occidente, Madrid, 1975, cited by Peña Vial, op. cit.

<sup>8</sup> *Men in Dark Times*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York.

marvel for beauty tends to be expansive, leading us to want to share our sensations with others (whether speaking of a work, recommending it, criticizing it, or wanting to create as well). And even more important, she shows how subtlety of perception, developed together with art, sharpens the senses and helps to increase the ability to affirm life, detect injustice, develop one's conscience, and incite to action. She writes, "The very pliancy or elasticity of beauty –hurtling us forward and back, requiring us to break new ground, but obliging us also to bridge back not only to the ground we just left but to still earlier, even ancient, ground– is a model for the pliancy and lability of consciousness in education"<sup>9</sup>.

I mention all of this in order to support my conviction of the urgent need to preserve a place for humanism within education. To this end, it is essential that children and young people have teachers who read quality narrative. It is not sufficient to follow a plot in the daily chapters of a television soap opera or to accompany the vicissitudes of the love life of a celebrity of the week in illustrated magazines. Nor should one think that an occasional talk on the importance of reading will have a lasting and transforming impact.

What our teachers need –of itself and as educators and multipliers of opportunities– is to associate with the arts, including those of the word. No one can be taught to love good books, literature, or art in general. "To love" is a verb much different than "to buy", for it admits no imperative. The grammatical form exists, but doesn't function in practice. The advertising with which we are surrounded can encourage buying by repeating: "use this; buy; be as others; follow what is in style". But it cannot say: "love it". This is not an order that can be obeyed, even if we want it to be.

Therefore, bringing teachers closer to good books does not mean merely telling them that they should like literature. What is possible, however, and what should be done is to facilitate closeness to art, both in the training of future teachers as well as during their professional careers. We should offer them the conditions so that, little by little, they may develop their sensibility, helping them to become submerged in a universe replete with opportunities for contact with art through good music, viewing the fine arts, theater works, great movies, reading and discussing quality texts. In practical terms, initially it is possible to develop a guided, on-going program that allows teachers to gradually discover their own preferences and to be familiar with the places where these can be satisfied. Later will come the time to facilitate access to these works

so that they can follow their own paths, fly solo, seeking affinities and respecting that which they reject.

The government of the State of Paraná in Brazil attempted something in this sense years ago, but only episodically, without continuity. Even so, it had moving results and proved that it is possible to seek something through these means. Currently, I know of a project that has just been approved by a large company to begin a pilot project of this nature this year in Rio de Janeiro. The program calls for awarding grants to 5th to 8th grade public school teachers so they can meet together every two weeks during the year, directed by a qualified team. I am happy to be part of the working team that developed this project, betting on the transforming power of art and on the multiplying ability of teachers.

It seems to me that this is an alternative worth attempting, thus valuing of humanism, believing in the inquietude of the human spirit, and considering that we all have much more to gain through contact with the plurality of knowledge and the experiences of our ancestors and of our brothers and sisters.

Literary works invite us to exercise freedom of interpretation while respecting differences. They place before us a challenge for the future of moving toward a discourse that offers reading plans in a language rich in unexpected possibilities that is full of ambiguities. Just like life.

In a world in which we increasingly realize how mistaken it is to hold the illusion of having an education that delivers ready-made answers, contact with art in general (and with historical and fictional narrative in particular) obliges us to deal with the lack of certainty and reminds us that there is no single meaning for things, awakening us to developing our own ideas.

This can be a valuable tool for consolidating the collective conscience and for formulating new individual programs, for our eternal search for some meaning that can transform our pain or perplexity into hope for a better future. **e**

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"To love" is a verb much different from "to buy", for it admits no imperative.



<sup>9</sup> Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just*. Delivered as a Tanner Lecture on Human Values at Yale University, 1998. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

# THOUGHTS ON MEANING

## Conversations at the station



The President of Chile, Ricardo Lagos, with World Philosophy Day participants.

On November 25, with the presence of distinguished specialists from all continents<sup>1</sup>, World Philosophy Day was celebrated at the Mapocho Station Cultural Center in Santiago, Chile.

These pages offer a summary of the most interesting ideas resulting from three conversations in regard to the theme of the so-called pillars of education and their meanings.

### 1. OBSOLESCENCE OF THE CLASSICAL MODELS

*Today, permanent education is seen as the great instrument for confronting the demands and transformations of the new century. However, for many it is difficult to make a connection between education and the meaning of life. For this reason, they do not understand the profound and human value of life-long study. What follows are some thoughts on this subject and other related subjects in the words of Korean philosopher IN SUK CHA<sup>2</sup>.*



<sup>1</sup> Taking advantage of this opportunity, Gilles Cavaletto (Italy) and Maria Eugenia Meza (Chile) from OREALC/UNESCO in Santiago de Chile talked with some of them.

<sup>2</sup> In Suk Cha is Emeritus Professor of Social Philosophy at Seoul National University, holder of the UNESCO Chair at the same institution, and vice-president of the International Council of Philosophy and Social Sciences.

Studying serves, first  
and foremost, to  
maintain personal  
integrity intact.

A recently-published article in the *New York Times* showed that in the United States many retired people move to be near universities in order to have access to classes and libraries. They are aware that study serves, first of all, to maintain personal integrity intact. For this reason, life-long education is key. Our mission, that of UNESCO professors, consists in shedding light on this need and in making every effort to bring people closer to education, a discipline that has gone through changes since the 1960s when German students rebelled against traditional systems in which professors were seen as unassailable kings. Thanks to these protests, the system changed and became democratic.

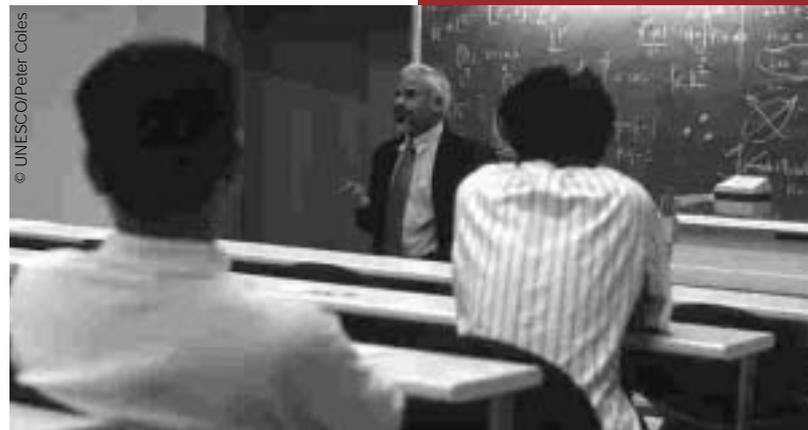
This same phenomenon took place –more or less contemporaneously– and in similar ways –in Latin America. However, here the effects weren't lasting due to the imposition across the continent of totalitarian military regimes that forced a return to conservatism of teaching methods, provoking the exodus of the best teachers, many of whom were exiled.

Authoritarian states –from which this continent finally freed itself– were against democratic education, and this explains in part the decrease of quality of education that occurred in Latin America. This is because in non-democratic societies it is difficult to find conditions that encourage critical thinking or for philosophers to motivate people to develop, to relate with society, and with themselves.

However, today in Latin America things are slowly but surely changing as well in the area of education. Equipped with the necessary patience, intellectuals, journalists, writers, and academics are working to assist new generations to think, live, and act as autonomous individuals. And this is the objective of education: to make people responsible, helping them to find a meaning in life and to recognize the value of the autonomous thought of every human being.

The goal of UNESCO is to find a path so that democratic education, human rights, individual freedom, social justice –all of these values– continue existing in circumstances such as these. Today, particularly in Latin America, the challenge is to overcome the differences that today characterize these societies so that democratic education can be a reality.

UNESCO has grand ideas, and for them to become real a strong commitment is necessary. There has always been a gap between theory and practice, ideas and their application. Although no one should ever limit our capacity to dream, one should remember the German philosopher Max Sheller who wrote about the existence of real factors –such as politics and money– as bases for achieving ideal factors. That is, a real base from which dreams may materialize. These two factors, reality and ideals, play an important role in the educational process. There should therefore be a middle ground between pragmatism and theory, understood as the path to cross the gap that still separates ideas and reality.



Today, it is not possible to flee from technology; one must accept it as part of our life style and at the same time seek to harmonize our existence with it.

On the other hand, the world is becoming increasingly scientific and technological. This is an unchangeable and unstoppable trend. If before we were used to working with our hands, now machines have become extensions of our hands. Computers are no longer esoteric tools –as was the case years ago when their use was limited to the privileged. They are now common even on the nursery school level. Today, it is not possible to flee from technology; one must accept it as part of our life style and at the same time seek to harmonize our existence with it and avoid its negative effects such as the various addictions that it provokes.

Teaching the new technologies, then, is today a responsibility, given the fact that they represent the need to live in the modern world. However, cyber-culture can also represent a hindrance to learning if one does not make responsible use of the resources that it provides. The internet allows new generations to have a privileged relationship with these technologies, and the venue for democratic dialogue found there makes people more independent in regard to the places and systems of traditional teachings.

These same traditional teachings, or traditional ways of approaching them, are also changing. In Asia, the influence of religions –Buddhism, Christianity, Taoism, Confucianism– have lost their key roles in school classes and universities. Objectivity has gained strength in the face of traditions. The holistic, classical mentality of the Orient has given way to Western analysis. But in the West, something else is occurring. For example, contemporary German philosophers with a hermeneutic orientation tend to be more integrating and, in terms of education, progressively refute the analytic model. Therefore, I believe that the models are changing and this characteristic thinking is being applied outside its place of origin.

This is transculturation. And this phenomenon, as well as cultural exchange, is rarely a one-way street. This is true in the transculturation that took place in the world during colonial times and is true in the era of cyberspace. Think, for example, of how the rhythms of African music have influenced country music in the United States, or how Koreans and Japanese sing French songs or Russian folklore melodies. Culture is always a bubbling crucible of both assimilation and unity. For this reason, culture is always bordering on instability, because it transcends limits. During the history of humanity, many factors have precipitated this process. But in modern times perhaps the most preponderant factor is the force of science and technology. It is for this reason that they must be considered in any discussion of the meanings of education. *e*



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Through education we should seek, in our countries, to generate our own knowledge and make use of it in order to solve our problems.

## 2. COMMENTS ON THE PILLARS OF EDUCATION

From his perspectives, and his view as a Mexican philosopher, LEÓN OLIVÉ<sup>3</sup> analyzed the four pillars of education conceived by Jacques Delors and assumed by UNESCO as an essential part of Focus 1 on the meanings of education<sup>4</sup>.

### Learning to know, or learning to learn

In Latin America we often view things from the outside, disregarding what we can learn from our native peoples. Just as we need to acquire the capacity to generate the knowledge and technology necessary in order to solve problems using solutions that appear to us to be acceptable, we should also learn to value the traditional knowledge of our peoples and learn to make use of them.

Our peoples can have a common project –allowing us to mutually develop our societies and the different communities of which they are composed. But instead of doing so through our own knowledge, we tend to simply assimilate that which is produced in other parts of the world and in the best of cases attempt to apply it. Transnational companies flood us with their technologies, and we don't notice that they appropriate our popular knowledge. This happens, for example, with our traditional medicine that is taken and patented by these companies, and then returned to us, but obliging us to pay copyrights for products derived from our traditions.

Through education we should seek, in our countries, to generate our own knowledge and make use of it in order to solve our problems. In this sense, education can serve to identify acceptable means to use in regard to the demands of all, in contrast to what happens in the exploitation of knowledge by foreign interests. That is, we should develop our cognitive capacities. That is what we mean when we speak of *learning to learn*.



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<sup>3</sup> León Olivé holds a master degree in philosophy from the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras of the Universidad Nacional de México (UNAM) and a doctorate from Oxford University. Since 1985 he has been a researcher at the Instituto de Investigaciones Filosóficas of UNAM and currently coordinates a inter institutional and trans-disciplinary project entitled "Sociedad del conocimiento y diversidad cultural", of the Coordinación de Humanidades of UNAM, as well as a joint project "Filosofía analítica y filosofía política de la ciencia".

<sup>4</sup> In these comments, Olivé does not mention a fifth pillar included by PRELAC and called learning to endeavor, that some thinkers see as an extension of learning to do, while others separate it in order to emphasize its dimension of creation and construction.

Learning to do means identifying problems and solving them.



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### Learning to do

*Learning to learn* has meaning only in terms of generating knowledge that can be socially useful. Therefore, *learning to do* means identifying problems and solving them. Doing things and intervening in natural and social reality, but always with acceptable solutions in accordance with the values and beliefs of different peoples.

The great problems of our societies are health, housing, and food. In this sense, their solutions should be compatible with the different realities. Many of these difficulties can be solved through the organization of labor within communities themselves. That is, it is not the case of thinking only about established institutions and economic relations –that oblige people to emigrate in order to seek (often untrained) employment– but rather having education policies aimed at the development of *learning to learn* and *learning to do* in these communities.

Therefore, learning to do also means learning to organize institutions or organizations in order to take advantage of resources at hand and using these resources for the benefit of the community so they may be used in a sustainable and responsible manner in regard to future generations.

### Learning to live together

In a culture of inter-culturality, *learning to live together* is a key theme.

*Learning to live together* with others involves the need to develop an education policy –and ethical norms– with explicit content that make it possible to identify what kinds of values are indispensable. It is necessary to think about a model for an authentically diverse society in which citizens learn to tolerate others even if and above all, when, they choose actions that are not shared but that should be respected as long as they are not an impediment to the realization of the life plans of others. An example contrary to this principle, and that involves education is what is happening to Moslem girls in France who due to laicism are not allowed to wear veils in public schools.

In order to learn to live together in society we need to learn that there is a value that is above all others: that of harmonious living. There are matters that must be tolerated; but it is not the case

of the State obliging people to have certain attitudes. Rather, it is related to the commitment of governments –and of international organizations– to foster inter-culturality through explicit education policies directed at everyone; not only at indigenous peoples –in the case of Latin America– or of immigrants, as in the United States and Europe. Natives of Europe, the United States, and Latin America need to be educated on how to make inter-culturality function starting at the most basic levels of the school.

We need to learn that there is a value that is above all others: that of harmonious living.



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In a truly plural society, this applies at the horizontal level of the State. A truly plural and lay State should be at the service of all communities that exist within it, and foster –in contrast to tolerating– harmonious relations thanks to education that fosters this value. Plurality not only includes the theme of ethnic origins, but also of gender and those related to options that for some appear reprehensible. In this sense, and from my point of view, the projects for creating specialized institutions of higher learning for native peoples are cases of mistaken education policy, given that they would mean a continuation of segregation with the probability that such institutions would become second class with few resources, instead of moving ahead with policies that allow real access of native people to the best institutions.

Plurality is part of human rights and therefore it is the duty of all peoples, cultural communities, or nations to deal with it, carrying out necessary changes so that harmonious living is possible; moving ahead with reforms that establish –including legally– new norms for living together. The objective should be to create a common project based on a consensus on a minimum set of norms and values, always keeping in mind that these norms and values do not hinder the development and the capacity to carry out life plans of each community or people.

## Learning to be

In this sense, philosophy needs to carry out a profound self-criticism in order to understand the detour it made recently, removing from it what we consider to be its indispensable character. This is because its great objective is to make people reflect on their own lives, the norms and values under which they act and the way they acquire experience. It is necessary to teach people that philosophy is related to everything that one presumes every time one acts.

What is certain is that in Western societies, philosophy no longer forms conceptions of the world, and in large part this role has been taken by the empirical sciences. But philosophy has the role of making us critical of our own experiences, or our ways of acting and of living, beyond presenting a conception of the world.

Therefore, in education it is essential that its meanings, from primary school to university, be linked to the interests of people. And philosophy in particular should aid in discovering values and norms by which we live and lead us to critically review them. *e*

Philosophy has the role of making us critical of our own experiences, of our ways of acting and of living.



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The search for happiness defines the very meaning of life itself.

### 3. POINTS OF REFLECTION

*PIERRE SANÉ<sup>5</sup>, Assistant Director for Social Sciences of UNESCO, warns that he won't speak of education, preferring to leave this task to specialists. The conversation has a recurrent idea as a point of departure: the loss of meaning in contemporary societies.*

There is a tendency today to believe that our societies suffer from a loss of meaning. Although this statement perhaps can apply to some aspects of our societies linked, for example, to religious beliefs, what no doubt continues to exist in human beings is the process of searching for a meaning of life. This may be defined as the search for happiness, whether material or spiritual, that has been a part of each human being since ancient times. Although this concept appears simple, we may say that the search for happiness defines the very meaning of life itself, including that part of humanity that, having an existence that cannot be defined as "glorious", aspires to improve its situation.

This is a goal that is at the same time very concrete and modest, compared to more transcendent ideals. But since our societies are permeated with simple values and needs, we should re-think the great responsibility that falls upon the more favored inhabitants of our societies. The social sciences can contribute to achieve these goals, interpreting the world and formulating paths for reflection and action for transforming it.

Societies, both rich and poor, have not lost the awareness of the value of happiness; but they have left behind the importance of solidarity. The problem, then, does not lie in wealth, but in the lack of solidarity and in the absence of distribution of what each society possesses.



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<sup>5</sup> Pierre Sané holds a doctorate in Political Science from Carleton University (Ottawa/Canada), a master's degree in Public Administration and Governmental Policy from the London School of Economics, and an MBA from the Ecole Superior de Commerce (ESC) Bordeaux, France. He was Secretary General of Amnesty International, and worked for 15 years in the area of international development.

In this sense, UNESCO –as a platform for exchange between different cultures, traditions, and schools of thought– has the objective of constantly reminding us of the commitment of societies to carry out a more equitable distribution of wealth. When I speak of this, I emphasize that I don't refer only to material resources, but also to access to that must be shared in order for a society –as a whole– to develop, attain happiness, and principally, knowledge. This is a wide-ranging task that can never be considered finished. Each new generation carries out a new search, and societies always run the risk of falling back into barbarianism, as occurred in the case of Nazi Germany.

UNESCO should foster continuous and direct contact between the intellectual communities of countries and regions of the world in order to create a shared vision of human society and its needs. Among these, and very important is education and its meanings. *e*



Each new  
generation carries  
out a new search.

“MEANINGS OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE”

# A stimulating meeting



In March, 2005, an international meeting entitled "The Meanings of Education and Culture: Cultivating Humanity" took place in Santiago, Chile. The event was sponsored by OREALC/UNESCO Santiago, the Ministry of Education, and the Chilean National Council of Culture and the Arts.

Participants included noted intellectuals from the fields of education, philosophy, ethics, the sciences, culture, communications, and law: Roberto Carneiro, from Portugal; Alvaro Marchesi, from Spain; Luc Ferry, from France; Raúl Leis, from Panama; Araceli De Tezanos, from Uruguay; Ana María Machado and Polan Lacki, from Brazil; and Martín Hopenhayn and Humberto Maturana, from Chile. Among the highlights was a live video conference with the Spanish philosopher Fernando Savater.

The occasion provided an opportunity for reflection on the essence of the task of education from an interdisciplinary perspective, and combined three modalities: an open meeting with Chilean educators, a closed workshop with specialists, and wide dissemination of the event through the media. Authorities participating included José Weinstein, Minister of the Chilean National Council of Culture and the Arts; María Ariadna Hornkohl, Assistant Secretary of Education, and Ana Luiza Machado, Director of OREALC/UNESCO, Santiago.



José Weinstein and  
Ana Luiza Machado

## SUMMARY of Panel 1

The meanings of education in a globalized world: generation, distribution, and use of knowledge in the global age.

### Participants:

Roberto Carneiro, Álvaro Marchesi, Ana María Machado, Humberto Maturana, Ximena Dávila.

### Moderator:

Beatrice Ávalos, Ministry of Education of Chile.

### ROBERTO CARNEIRO, Portugal

A key principle: the creation of meaning is of the human essence.

It is possible to distinguish two visions of knowledge: (1) knowledge for control and its relations with fragmentation, alienation, and homogenization, with its direction leading toward disenchantment and fear, and (2) knowledge through participation and its relations with diversity and inclusion with its direction leading to hope.

There exists a persisting dysfunction between two phenomena: the on-going increase of complexity and demands on the system, on the one hand, and the growing fragmentation of knowledge and of responsibility on the other.

The movement from information to meaning is much like a symphony in four movements: information, knowledge, learning, and meaning. A movement from the simple to the complex, from the quantitative to the qualitative, from the individual to the community. Meaning is the point of convergence of human searches. Meaning as a guide.

The need for learning is a new puzzle. Learning to be: interpretative knowledge; learning to know: cognitive knowledge; learning to do: resolving knowledge; learning to live together: relational knowledge. The priority of a new social contract: education as a right and learning as a moral duty.

## ÁLVARO MARCHESI, Spain

The message on meaning posits three conditions: ideas for transforming education and its objectives; distribution of responsibility in order to avoid assigning it to government or to society alone; contributions for achieving new and transforming perspectives on inequality.

Regarding the *objectives of education*: the search for knowledge, the yearning for love and unsupportable pity for the suffering of humanity. The desire to know, affective development and moral training of societies. Increases in knowledge lead to extending themes and skills, with planes becoming broader, and paces faster. Education must provide training for skills, integrate knowledge, deepen rather than extend, and awaken the desire to know.

Educating in *inter-relations* is not easy in the present context. Schools must be places for the encounter of different cultures, sectors, capacities. Integrating schools, open to all are vital in order to generate effective citizenship. There is no danger involved in bringing together different cultures. There is no danger in bringing together children with different abilities. Moral development should be based on the affective instincts of students and be translated into action, providing opportunities for children to exercise solidarity and tolerance.

Reading should be emphasized in fostering *strategies for change*, for it is one of the most pleasurable of activities and that which most motivates children. Students should read in all subjects. It is necessary to fashion "communities of readers" for all actors.

Regarding *equity* and the distribution of knowledge, we can only answer: unequally. We should ask: what should be distributed in an equal manner? What inequalities are the fault of society? The answers point toward the education media, teacher training, the contribution of those who have more education, more texts, etc. Particularly, we should think about assessment models: elements of educational equity must be incorporated into the idea of quality.

In regard to *the commitment of teachers*, their thoughts should be directed to how to approach values in their tasks. We should work with the perceptions of teachers regarding valuing teaching as a moral option. The values, the meaning that each teacher finds his or her work is fundamental. We should support them so they may communicate and create opportunities for reflection, stimulating the idea of personal teaching projects. Three key aspirations: that all students are in school together; giving the highest value to the work of teachers; and incorporating daily reading.



Mauricio Toro

## ANA MARÍA MACHADO, Brazil

One can arrive at knowledge through the reading of narrative and history. Stories involve a search for meaning. To narrate is to order facts in a particular way, putting together a chaos of fragments, finding form in the chaos of the human experience, giving it a temporal framework.

Reading broadens our experiences, opening ourselves to things beyond our own lives, seeking meanings. It contributes to transforming people into better-prepared citizens, who can be less easily fooled. The role of narration is loving and desiring the truth. It makes it possible for us to reflect on good and evil, to make our own value judgments.

Through the narrative of history it is possible to understand the facts. Two forms are necessary: literature and history. Without them, one falls into forgetfulness. From the encounter of philosophy and literature arises ethics. A democratic society should guarantee the right to read.

It is vital that teachers read quality narrative. They should live with the arts, and we must facilitate the opportunity to do so, offering a guided, on-going program that permits them to discover their preferences and ways to satisfy them. History and literature should be parts of the world view of teachers.

We exaggerate that which is technical and scientific. There is an excessive cult of the body that shuts us off to 'the other', a lack of appreciation for lasting pleasures compared to preference for the ephemeral. We must reserve a place for humanism in education.

HUMBERTO MATURANA / XIMENA DÁVILA, Chile

Education, culture, that which is human, love, are concepts that come from within. The world is generated by each of us. The importance of the individual is vital. Culture changes through each of us, from our daily experiences.

Human relations are transforming. Children are transformed in the presence of adults. Education is what makes possible hearing about notions of responsibility, ethics, etc. The learning of responsibility, of ethics, comes from and is understood based on daily life. One acquires the world in living with adults.

Human beings lend meaning to life if we want something from it; we give meaning to education if we want something from education. Education is the artificial manner through which children are transformed into adults. One learns living with adults. To teach is to demonstrate the use of abilities.



Gabriel Mendáca

## SUMMARY of Panel 2

**Meanings of education: participation, diversity, equity, and social development.**

**Participants:**

Luc Ferry, Araceli De Tezanos, Polan Lacki, and Raúl Leis.

**Moderator:**

Jorge Pavez, Colegio de Profesores de Chile (Chilean Teachers Union).

LUC FERRY, France

There are three philosophical concepts of education that explain its meaning and its purpose.

The **aristocratic** concept, that assumes the power of the best. It is related to the Aristotelian idea of natural disposition that is stimulated by education. One educates to produce the best, for excellence, to foster natural talents.

The **meritocratic** concept, which argues that through effort, each can go as far as possible. There are common standards in the country, reflected in school programs. The educator emphasizes not natural talents, but the effort to meet standards. There are universal norms. One leaves the aristocracy through effort; this is the modern ideal, the ideal of effort, through which individuals develop. What is important is personal effort.

The **ethic of authenticity** concept, that arose in the 1960s, in which the objective is to develop the personality of

each individual. Here, it is not the case of being the best, nor to seek discipline through work. What proliferate are techniques, psychotherapies, etc. for human fulfillment. One seeks the fulfillment of each individual.

ARACELI DE TEZANOS, Uruguay

The continent has absorbed different currents of thought, providing a source of opportunities, but also dangers. Opportunities to review epistemological, philosophical, and historical foundations; dangers that the unquestioned appropriation of models that cannot be adapted to a particular reality.

The concepts have been translated from other languages, and this has produced a continuing epistemological debate on the ends and purposes of education. The concept of training has disappeared within the notion of education. There is a tendency to equate education and schooling.

If the borders of education are ambiguous, the relations established lose clarity and meaning. This fosters the failure of some reforms. The ends of education involve a philosophical discussion, not an evaluation process. There is a tendency to see education as merchandise more than as a public good.

Education systems need to respond to the essential needs of society. Because they are responsible for the training of a nation's citizens, they are intrinsically committed to the construction of meaning of the relations that control the social harmony and social, economic, and cultural development of the country. The principle of equality of opportunities is related, based on the substantive content of the pedagogical tradition, to the link between education and democracy.

Culture is present in curricula; these are therefore an expression of the culture. Education is fulfilled when schools are able to produce individuals who are cultured, able to distinguish beauty, be autonomous, incorporate themselves into society, question it, and contribute to its development. Achieving this is the function of schools. Schools are the place for appropriation of culture; the windows of access to produce cultured beings, open their lives to the world, and see others as equal but distinct, in order to live in a better society.

**POLAN LACKI, Brazil**

The demands that are generally made of governments related to education are in regard to increasing the number of days and years of schooling, improving infrastructure, resources, and salaries. These are demands which governments have not been able to meet. There is skepticism as well regarding the ability of international organizations to solve the problems. Therefore, it is necessary to seek non-dependent solutions.

That which one learns in school does not serve to solve daily problems; the lack of encounter is total. The solution lies in improving curricula, which is possible today thanks to decentralization policies. One must pay attention to the skills of teachers, for it is they who can change what they teach.



RAÚL LEIS, Panama

It is necessary to ask oneself about meanings from the perspective of Latin America. There are four essential areas: inequality, poverty, electoral democracy, and peace.

Vital questions: Can the search for meaning provide contribute to views for changing society and life? Is possible to contribute in favor of emancipatory paradigms?

Today, culture is transmitted through the mass communication media, which is more attractive than the means provided by schools. There is a uniform, transnational culture, while at the same there is a strengthening of local culture.

Among contributions for creating emancipatory paradigms, that involve not only education, but society as well, we may note: combating all forms of exclusion and discrimination; fostering participatory democratic culture and relations between governments and civil society; intervening in public policies to foster greater inclusion and quality; supporting social movements that generate changes through democratic pressure.

The search for meanings involves both meanings themselves as well a their capacities to construct emancipatory paradigms, considering the realities of Latin America. *e*



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# Strategic focus 1

ON EDUCATION CONTENTS AND  
PRACTICES TO CONSTRUCT  
MEANINGS IN REGARD TO  
OURSELVES, TO OTHERS, AND TO THE  
WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE.



Magaly Robalino Campos

The meaning of education should be reflected in its purposes and its contents. Schools are not the only places for the transmission of a culture and for socialization. They are also environments within which personal identities are constructed. Making schools people-centered involves changes not only in the curriculum but also in the ways in which teaching and learning processes are approached.

Currently, it is difficult to discuss the meaning of education, due to the changes in and apparent instability of knowledge. This project seeks to contribute to defining the meaning of education within a world of uncertainty, in which knowledge changes at a growing pace and doubles in quantity every 5 years. This situation raises a series of questions about education: What other skills should be taught, besides the basic subjects? At what point and in what way? What emotional skills should be fostered in students? How can we organize a curriculum based on knowledge that is increasingly inter-disciplinary and in permanent change? What weight should be given to knowledge of disciplines and the acquisition of general skills? What learning should be the responsibility of schools and what should be assumed by other areas? How can schools take advantage of learning that students acquire outside the school environment?

Given that education serves human beings, it is important to foster the development of human abilities to construct meaning within a context that is increasing devoid of meaning. The construction of meaning, although influenced by external determinants, is basically a function of the desire of each human being to do so. This means that meaning should be conceived not only in the rational dimension, but that this vision be broadened to its other dimensions emotional, corporal, and relational.

Although education continues to be essential, it is not enough that it supply the traditional basic skills; it must also offer elements necessary for the full exercise of citizenship, contribute to a culture of peace, and to the transformation of society. From this perspective, education has a civic and liberating function for human beings. The so-called "Pillars of Learning for the XXI Century" defined by UNESCO, are an excellent guide for asking ourselves about the meanings and contents of education: **Learning to be** in order that we may know ourselves and value ourselves and to construct one's own identity in order to function with growing personal autonomy, judgment, and responsibility in different life situations; **Learning to do**, developing skills that prepare people to confront a large variety of situations, working in groups, and developing themselves within different social and work contexts; **Learning to know** in order to acquire a general culture and specific knowledge that stimulate curiosity in order to continue to learn and to develop in the knowledge society. **Learning to live together**, developing understanding of and appreciation for others, perceptions of forms of inter-dependence, respecting the values of pluralism, mutual understanding, and peace. To these we should add **Learning to endeavor** in order to develop a pro-active, innovative attitude, putting forth proposals and taking initiatives.

These kinds of learning aid in preparing people to construct their futures and should also guide the activities of schools to make this possible.





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Constant reflection regarding the meaning and content of education and adopting the results of such reflection in school curricula and practices can be achieved through:

- **On-going public discussion and forums** within the framework of society and of schools, and which include the participation of students, professional educators, academics, policy-makers, families, and diverse organizations within civil society. It is essential that ideas about education be openly discussed and be shared with multiple groups within society, serving as a basis for organizing alliances and mobilizing groups so that education be included on the public agenda, with increased resources for education provided by the State. The use of available information and knowledge is necessary in order for informed public debate to take place. The participation of teachers is essential in reflection about the meaning and content of education. Therefore, it is indispensable that mechanisms be created and/or strengthened that make it possible for teachers to participate effectively in these forums and debates. The ongoing interest and action of the communication media must be stimulated in order to create public awareness and to move forward toward an education society.
- **The design of open and flexible curricula** that make possible on-going revision, construction, and updating by teachers and education administrators. This means that teachers cannot be considered to be mere executors of the decisions adopted at different levels of the education system. Offering life-long educational opportunities involves as well designing curricula as a continuum of learning, including a balance of learning for the comprehensive development of citizens.
- **Considering social, cultural, and individual diversity** to be keystones in curricular design and development in order to achieve equity in quality of learning. To this end, we should strengthen the inter-cultural dimension, the learning of native languages, and gender equality. Moreover, it is necessary to foster attitudes that respect differences, avoiding stereotypes, prejudice, and ethnic, cultural, and gender discrimination. Curricular flexibility will also aid in creating curricula that respond to the individual learning needs of students, seeking maximum development of the potential of every individual.



- **The review and transformation of teaching and of learning.** Teachers need theoretical frameworks in order that they may reflect upon their practices and transform them. Education must be student centered, and consider them to be participants in their learning rather than mere receivers of knowledge. In this regard, it is essential to foster and strengthen the research skills of students beginning in the very first years of schooling. A variety of methodological strategies should be used to tune the teaching process according to student differences, strengthening at the same time cooperative learning among them. Changes in pedagogical processes require that teachers have opportunities to train and to exchange experiences as well as being able to work together. These changes also require that diverse teaching material be available that are meaningful to all and pertinent in terms of culture, language, and gender.
- **The incorporation of new technologies and communication media in education.** The use of these media offers important learning opportunities for students and for teachers, for the management and administration of education systems and schools, and for the exchange of knowledge and experience. A question often asked is, "how can education teach new skills if students have not fully mastered the basic skills?" In fact, one does not exclude the other. Rather, basic skills and new skills should be offered simultaneously. We need to assure the learning of basic skills, since they are necessary for performing within the global society of information and knowledge. But we should simultaneously incorporate, as soon as possible and in all schools, information and communication technologies in order to solve old problems and to avoid increasing the social gap between those who have and those who do not have access to them. Thus, we must encourage the use of radio, the press, and television since they are a valuable asset, not only for student earnings, but for the society in general. Progressing toward an education society involves taking advantage of the potential of these media. *e*

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