PROPOSAL FILE

FOR EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

PREFACE

This Proposal File is the result of a collective work within the framework of the Education Working Group and the Socio-professional Network of Teachers, organized by the "Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World". The general coordination was in charge of the CTERA (Confederation of Education Workers of the Argentine Republic)[*].

Both dynamics, Education Working Group and Socio-professional Network of Teachers, have been developed simultaneously due to our double role as members of educational organizations. We consider that it is very important to overcome, on the one hand, the system obstacles according to which the educator is regarded just as a vehicle to transmit knowledge coming from somewhere else and, on the other hand, the typical reductionism of certain reflections that can not go beyond pedagogical and didactic issues. Therefore, instead of restricting the access to a group of "experts", the debate on education must be wide open to the participation of all people involved.

To develop this space of discussion, we have organized the work taking different thematic axes into account: Education and culture; Education, citizenship and democracy; Education and development; Culture of educational institutions; Education, state and curricular policy.

Several meetings on the previously mentioned issues were held from October 2000 to May 2001. Furthermore, the e-forum of discussion enabled people from all the continents to participate. In June 2001, the city of Buenos Aires, Argentina, hosted the

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[*] CTERA is an organization that groups teachers unions from all Argentine provinces and represents 280.000 educators of any level and modality, whether of public or private education (it accounts for 90 percent of affiliated teachers). It is affiliated to the Congress of Argentine Workers (CTA). On the international scale, CTERA occupies executive charges at the Confederation of American Educators (CEA) and the International of Education (IE). It also forms part of the Continental Social Alliance (of America), is a member of ATTAC and the Argentine Committee of the World Social Forum. As active promoter of the Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World, CTERA has coordinated since the very beginning, in October 2000, its Education Workshop and the Socio-professional Network of Teachers.

closure activity, i.e. an International Meeting with some 60 persons from Africa, America, Asia and Europe.

The present *Proposal File* was built with proposals arisen during those meetings as well as contributions delivered by the participants of the e-forum. It goes deep into each of the subjects, not only does it give reasons and proposals, but it also describes in detail the methodology used during the whole process. The last chapter introduces a summary of the most relevant proposals, in order that education becomes a way of transformation and emancipation.

Finally, we believe that this File must be a tool toward reflection and debate on education as a complex subject. By emphasizing the role of the methodology and the writing style, we have tried to draw up an accessible text without omitting a deep analysis of the different problems, raising not so much closed answers as new proposals and questions. This is why we have an open and provocative document.

Buenos Aires, Argentina, September 2001

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Introduction:

INTRODUCTION

Education: General context - an international approach to discussion

When the task consists in drawing up a document as a starting point, as an instrument toward a discussion that ends up in a perspective of educational problems world-wide, there are evident difficulties due to an essential question: educational processes evolve throughout concrete social and historical contexts. From a historical point of view, educational institutions play an active role as constituent parts of modern nation-states. Moreover, their scope and development reflect participation levels and the kind of relationship between peoples and states.

Historical dynamics of educational processes, above all in developed countries, can be seen from two complementary angles**.** In the first place, the development of educational institutions – not only regarding their scope of coverage, but also considering the plurality of the contents – takes part in social and popular movements. So they contribute to struggling for the democratization of culture and the access to the different spaces of power and decision in society and public spheres as well. On the other hand, the development and consolidation of nation-states throughout history can not be analyzed without taking the role of educational systems into account, since they favor the integration, cohesion and articulation of peoples with national identities and therefore with social and cultural projects. In short, we could say that the discussion on development and democratization of nation-states has always tried to analyze which direction educational processes head for.

We think that at the present time this debate is held on a global scale because education can play different roles according to the different directions imposed within the ongoing globalization process: it can either favor the current trends of neoliberalism, which uniform cultures; or try an alternative and opposite way, a transition toward a different world, characterized by humanity and solidarity. Nowadays the latter is expressed by the convergence of civil movements all over the world.

The key role of education in the consolidation of nation-states was evident in developed countries, and also had a decisive influence in those countries that underwent socialist transformations. This historical experience had a strong impact on other countries of the world, especially as they obtained their national independence. This is why it is so important to point out what happened in the countries of the Third World.

In spite of the politically and culturally heterogeneous processes – some nations obtained their independence at the beginning of the 19th century, others in the second half of the 20th century – the education was always influenced by a deep conflict between two mainstreams: a colonialist and homogenizing current prevailing among dominant classes; cultural and democratic changes supported by the peoples along these countries. Until the '70s, public education had reached a big development as public state education in many countries of the planet. It clearly appeared to be a key institution to build national identity, while social and democratic movements regarded it as fundamental to increase popular participation and democratize the culture. Whatever the social and cultural reality of each country, public education was one of the major subjects of discussion. In Latin America, for instance, the experience of Popular Education is worth mentioning.

To talk about a world-wide perspective of education in the late '80s and in the '90s, we must previously analyze the processes and mechanisms that allow current globalization process to turn into a concrete – cultural, social and historical – context for education. Hence there are some unavoidable questions: *How far does this new trend impact on educational processes, both on national and continental scales? And what role are they supposed to play at the end of this road?* From another point of view, we also inquire: *How can education play a key role in developing an alternative globalization, based on equality, solidarity, democratic and reciprocal acknowledgement of national and cultural diversities?* The answers are part of a discussion that gains importance and can also become an ideal framework to contain the proposals of this File.

As another phenomenon in this context and a process evolving in concrete fields, globalization has left its trace on education systems of many countries and nations during the '80s and the '90s. The consequences can be recognized through the following aspects: cultural transformations arisen from the mercantilization of cultural goods, especially scientific and technical knowledge; actions and speeches setting off a new educational demand; exacerbation of values like utilitarianism, competition and individualism; privatization policies regarding public education; and less responsibility of the states to ensure the right to education, reviewing their role as organizers and regulators in the education market.

The globalization process finds a strong opposition among social and democratic movements, which basically question the increasing social and cultural inequality reflected within educational processes of public school. Due to progressive social exclusion, accelerated migration and expansion of educational demand through all social fields, this phenomenon takes place almost everywhere in the world. The educational demand grows up rapidly in public institutions where scholars and students are exposed to

meaningful differences concerning social, economic and cultural life. Not only do these contradictory movements make educational processes more complex, but they also show the shortsightedness of the people who use the company as a metaphoric model to analyze school activities.

The education crisis triggered off by the implementation of neoliberal policies has led humankind to lose one of its major historical conquests: social right to education and unrestricted access to knowledge. As a way out, neoliberal states boast the alternative of commercialization. Social poverty, unemployment, exclusion and absolute lack of guarantees to fulfill basic rights – education, knowledge – are not due to the impossibility of putting other policies into practice, but rather to a deliberate plan as part of privatization policies. They represent the consequence of concrete interests expressed by those who want to take possession of the whole knowledge, in order to patent it, master it, and then launch it to the market, thus reassuring themselves with huge revenues and getting an ideological control over the population.

Moreover, the global crisis of educational systems, the impoverishment and the difficult access to knowledge must be regarded as a categorical failure of neoliberal axioms, for they have purported to give concrete responses and solutions to social demands. It means the triumph of those who perversely decided to go over historical and social conquests of humankind, even though there is a growing loss of consensus.

To thoroughly understand the process of globalization we are going through, we think it is necessary to see the difference between it and their ideologies, like neoliberalism. The globalization is a phenomenon in constant evolution, it builds the central ideological axis of several mainstreams that express different approaches within the same process. To achieve a more comprehensive sight, we will describe some aspects of the globalization as problems affecting humankind in its entirety, which are vital for its subsistence and also have a strong impact on education. Instead of visualizing globalization as a kind of imposed process, as if there were nothing to do but adapt ourselves to the ongoing development, globalization must be considered as something we have influence upon, so that our actions determine what direction it takes.

Under current conditions, the first question to be analyzed on a world level is the organizational forms of economy and their effects on everyday life. From the point of view of production, the globalization process has speeded up, thus causing difficult problems for the peoples of dependent countries. First of all, the increasing lack of national and international restrictions: due to the need of currency and the burden of external debts, many countries allow an easy circulation of revenues yielded by productive activities held in their territorial, legal and political frameworks. In fact this is a problem, because the reinvestment does not

flow into origin countries, neither is it used for the pursuit of a balanced and sustainable development in the world. Today the circulation of money is ruled by world markets and their logic. There are also social and political elements involved, but thanks to a decisive convergence – high development of inner markets, science and technology, strength of cultural, political and military powers – developed countries outweigh any other influence. It generates then a productive system featured by huge inequalities regarding geographical distribution of income and employment.

The second problem, mostly recognizable in the richest countries, consists in strong national restrictions for workers to move all around the world. This widens the gap between wages according to the development level reached by each country.

A third problem has to do with the deep asymmetries in tariff rates and regulations, that are likely to be detrimental to the exportation activity from dependant countries. The most terrible consequence is that it accentuates distribution inequalities among countries and within each of them. Both the uneven income distribution and the unrestricted circulation of capital beyond national borders withdraw money from production sources, contributing to deepening the historical imbalance as regards economic, social, technological and cultural development, and allowing a few countries – United States, European countries, Japan – to lead the way far ahead from the others. Within the borders there are also strong dualities between cities and rural areas, between different regions or even in the same region, depending on the weakness of each production sector.

Still from the economic point of view, the huge technological level of the richest countries contributes to deepening the gap as regards income. This technological development is related to several factors such as: dynamics of inner markets; higher wages than in underdeveloped countries; and active policies implemented from public spheres. Developed countries put a special emphasis on high education and permanent education policies, considering both the axes of supply and demand. Nevertheless the power of educational demand has triggered off an expanding education market with its own dynamics and the objective of matching business needs. All this happens in a differential framework, whose "quality" seems to have a good reputation.

Dependent countries undergo a radically different situation. It remains little space there for developmental policies on science, technology and subsequently on education. What prevails today is the financial and economic weakness and the pressure imposed by international finance organizations –

basically the World Bank and the IMF – and the US Government. On top of that, these countries suffer from the unconditional subordination of their own governments. Unfortunately scientists are obliged to migrate into major centers of development, widening even more the technological gap. At this point it seems absolutely necessary to generate an alternative globalization process so that, unlike neoliberalism, the attention can focus on a world-wide policy for science and technology. All nations must agree on the general conditions, trying to contribute to a balanced and sustainable development.

Education must be part of the discussion, since from our viewpoint it represents one of the most important ways toward fair, balanced and sustainable distribution of knowledge. According to policy-makers IMF and World Bank, public spending – including education – appears to be bound for continuous cuts. This leads immediately to negative consequences. Public spheres are exposed to budgetary reductions, wages fall, working conditions become debased and the impoverished global system accentuates inequalities and polarization.

From a financial perspective, but always within the framework of the same economic field, we can see how capital market evolves with strong transnational dynamics and the pursuit of short-term profit. Due to safer conditions and rapid benefits, this is much more attractive than long-term risk investments. Financial flows have been channeled from these highly transnationalized markets into dependent economies, in order to support their structural change. As neoliberal principles state, this process is fundamental before opening the economies into the world market. Among the most terrible consequences we could mention: the giant external debt they are subject to; the ideological subordination to both the recipes prepared by international finance organizations – IMF, World Bank – and the political pressure implemented through military and economic US actions; and finally the policies fostering the reduction of the state's role and budgetary cuts in health, education and social security, thus favoring the growth of a market dedicated to these services.

Most governments have been obliged to face educational demand by cutting their education budgets, so they expanded private business-related education, weakening public education and developing at the same time educational circuits with differential "quality". The increasing grade of impoverishment can be recognized through the lack of didactic material, infrastructure and human resources. It gives evidence of the fact that public education has been weakened in many economically dependent countries. Wages keep on falling, the access to knowledge turns to be more complicated, and teachers can hardly develop an appropriate process of professionalization.

This transnationalization of financial markets is one of the most essential aspects of neoliberalism, the prevailing ideology throughout this globalization model. According to this ideology, globalization process means that the world can be regarded as one market, and due to the competition it demands, institutions must change: priority is clearly given to efficacy and efficiency. To maximize the performance and so achieve this goal, all activities must fit in the logic of market mechanisms. Hence states encourage this process and start playing a different role, privatizing anything that can be organized as an enterprise, and imposing business and market mechanisms as the most important axis of regulation. The remaining areas, whose features and structures make impossible any attempt of direct privatization, depend anyway on these mechanisms.

Current neoliberal policies are rooted in these ideas, which aim at services privatization in the field of education, health and social security. If we judge the situation critically, it is essential to consider that what is at stake today is not the dimension of the state, but rather the features of the society we want to organize. In this context, we should underscore that neoliberal policies have not necessarily reduced the dimension of public spheres, although they have always changed the state's role. The implemented policies, based on the unique thought, yield as a result a society characterized by homogenization, compulsive consumption, mercantilization in all areas (even culture) and individualism.

There is another problem that needs to be analyzed on a planetary scale: orientation regarding production and distribution of scientific and technical knowledge. This process evolves under the influence of the so-called super-ideology of progress – useful framework for neoliberal policies and its subsequent concept of technology as the first agent of cultural change. Any material or symbolic production belonging to the dominant culture has a close relation with technological dimension. By this reason, scientific and technical knowledge is a key supply to move societies forward and becomes a distinctive feature. What must be underlined is that production and distribution of knowledge are strongly influenced by economic needs (big capital) as well as by political and military needs (developed countries). Throughout this process the use of patents plays a decisive role, since knowledge is subject to market laws and also to the logic of the big capital.

As we have said, the scientific and technological knowledge has an enormous influence on the production of material and cultural goods. Without regard to the particularities of each process, the power of this phenomenon affects to a great extent those institutional and public mechanisms that are responsible for its production and distribution. This is why major enterprises are so interested in this activity, this is why

public policies of developed countries find the subject quite relevant. Although the scientific community purports universality as well as moral and ideological neutrality, nowadays there is a serious debate on this issue, mainly because of the strategic role of knowledge regarding: the steady growth of arms industry; the endless devastation of our environment; and the continuous deepening of social inequality around the world, both comparing the different countries with one another and even within the borders of developed nations.

With respect to the impact of knowledge on education, it is necessary to point out that this is one of the most important factors for the expansion of educational demand the world is going through. The discursive ways used to channel this initiative are dissimilar and combined. However, there is something in common: they all attack the historical meaning of public education, the characteristics of school organization and teaching work. As seen from a neoliberal concept, culture objects are part of the market, as well as the educational processes that make its appropriation possible. Since education allows individuals to acquire appropriate cultural segments, its sense would consist in enabling the necessary individual capitalization to operate in that market, i.e. the society. Education is useful only for an individual capitalization, and therefore the quality of teaching depends on the relationship between its contents and the labor market. The more they contribute, the better.

Unlike neoliberal ideas, according to which education seems to be important only in terms of labor markets, the education project must push forward to build cultural identities, rethink a humanist philosophy involving every single human being in the world, and lastly develop fair and sustainable productive structures on a planetary level. These essential issues must become the axes of the alternative comprehensive proposal. Especially because under certain conditions – reforms and participation of civil society – public education would be undeniably the institution with the most appropriate background to accomplish the objectives.

The international approach to education must be thought as part of an alternative globalization, so that it takes into account that education must contribute to:

• Achieving a world citizenship based on humanism, solidarity, fairness, sustainability and interculturality, and also developing nations, regions and cultural identities.

• Raising awareness for peace, condemning war under any circumstance and any kind of restriction to peoples' self-determination by means of agreements and world institutionalization.

• Avoiding the use of capital and trade between nation-states as tools of exploitation, domination, social exclusion and poverty in underdeveloped countries.

• Regarding knowledge as cultural heritage of humankind, so it can not be used for social domination, subjection to centers of power, exploitation, armament race, growth of social exclusion or poverty. It is necessary to institutionalize international forums with a wide consensus and participation, so as to discuss these critical problems and their impact on curricular contents and teaching methodologies.

• Avoiding the dangerous manipulation of information and communication in favor of the most powerful sectors. It is necessary to establish controls, taking the interests of humankind in its entirety into account and setting up democratic mechanisms pivoting on the key role of civil society.

• Fostering structures of solidarity on a national, regional and planetary scale, in order that civil society solves specific cultural problems of human life; emphasizing the struggle for the right of different cultural identities.

• Understanding nature as the starting point toward any kind of political, economic, social and cultural sustainability. It is fundamental that everybody understand how serious the situation is, and face the problems with an attitude of foresight and respect for social and environment-friendly conditions in the whole planet.

Given this general context, each chapter in the present *Proposal File for Education in the 21st Century* introduces analysis and concrete actions according to the following issues or thematic axes:

Chapter I, *Education and Culture*, deals especially with the problems of cultural identity, social movements, mass media and language, human rights, knowledge, art and values.

Chapter II, *Education, Citizenship and Democracy*, is devoted to the analysis of Public Education as a space to shape an active citizenship and strengthen democracy.

Chapter III, *Education and Development*, provides concrete responses and explains how popular environmental education can contribute to achieving sustainability, justice and equity in human societies.

Chapter IV, ***State and Educational Policy***, approaches the role of the state and the civil society to establish policies whose consequences affect both educational institutions and curricular developments.

Each of the above mentioned chapters presents several proposals to overcome the obstacles and solve typical conflicts of the own context.

Chapter V describes the work methodology that was used to draw up this ***Proposal File***, while Chapter VI, the last one, reaches conclusions that rather than something definitive claim to be a starting point for new reflections, questions and actions. It would be desirable that the different social players read, criticize, amend, enlarge and even adapt or rethink the text, so it fits into the peculiarities of each situation.

CHAPTER I: EDUCATION AND CULTURE

Argumentation

The new social movements. Cultural phenomena can not be imagined outside the scene of social struggle. For the same reason, it is impossible to make any analysis without considering the inventiveness of the people involved, i.e. how popular sectors – excluded from the current process of globalization or affected by it – resist segregation and find courses of expression and integration with the rest of the society.

Exclusion seems to be an unavoidable consequence of globalization and its ideology. To do away with this terrible problem, it is necessary to revalue the magnitude of social struggles and horizontal organization. This leads to the reconstruction of identities and dimensions based on the axes solidarity-emotion, which are fundamental to yield organizational progresses. Fostering the reconstruction of new cultural identities, we will be able to follow the road of Chiapas (Mexico) or some other movements such as landless farmers (Brazil).

The uniqueness of social cultural struggles led by feminist and anti-racist groups, by activists from different parts of the world like Seattle, Prague and Porto Alegre, is a good example and should be recreated in different ways to suit the different requirements.

This leads us all to the need of building utopia and rethinking our world. This utopianism must somehow look like poetry, with a subversive dimension in its imaginary. As Enrique Leff says: *"Civic consciousness must come up from the faults of this closed and complete universe to produce new senses, so that the new civilizing values and utopianism include subjectivity and social actions, so that they think up something unknown and alternative, so that they build a political culture based on the difference and conceive diversity as a potential."*

The relation between *education and communication* represents a key issue in this ideological and cultural discussion. Neoliberal society, based on market values, manipulates information and creates a virtual image of the world, hindering an active participation and the development of alternative thoughtways. Thought as theoretical and practical reason becomes senseless. Under current conditions, communication reflects the

symbolic violence of power, reproducing the hyperreality of this globalized world as if it were a "spoken silence". This strategy sweeps away any attempt of imagining new possibilities against the obscurantism of hegemonic power and market laws.

In the context of neoliberal societies, the mass media is meant to erase the limits of social conflict. It generates messages and comes up before society as mere educational-cultural institution. Of course, since it is supposed to be neutral, apolitical and well-equipped to face the task under any conditions, no matter which social class rules, it can establish the legitimacy of the power. This is a disguise and a fallacy at the same time.

We must learn to live even in the silence, because the time of mass media is far from being a time of emancipatory politics. Hence it is necessary to develop a symbolic offensive, questioning the hegemonic speech and making democratizing proposals to change the existent mass media or eventually promote the appearance of alternative communication ways. Since politics of emancipation does not have any access to official places, it should build its own communicational methods to transform social reality.

Another pillar of culture is *language*, a socio-historical construction used as essential tool of communication, through which humankind has shaped itself. Nowadays it is distorted by the pressure of hegemonic classes and mass media, many words lose their original meanings and are given new ones geared to the prevalent speech. It is very important to think critically about this, in such a way that the discussion on the meanings turns into a battle of the cultural field with education as the main protagonist.

Rethinking a new society means the visualization of values like historical and cultural social products, without forgetting the role education has been playing throughout its whole development. Today the world is based on values like individualism, legitimacy of inequality, social and cultural discrimination. Using them as a platform, neoliberalism has

propagated its ideological project across the countries. What we need now is a different world whose scale of values rests upon the fights led by Human Rights movements, that is to say, with solidarity, democracy and justice as pillars.

Therefore, the hope of our societies must lean on male and female educators. *What shall we do? Are we supposed to be carried away by utopianism?* Yes, we must be carried away by this utopia, turning Human Rights into Human Duties. Ours are the Human Duties, ours is the moral principle of self-limitation to prevent the others' freedom from being affected.

Teaching Human Rights consists in conceiving every single man or woman of this planet as citizen of the world. It represents an action toward making a world worth living in, a world where hierarchical and dominant structures lose legitimacy, a world with invulnerable rights for everyone regardless of any reason of state, a world with resolute attitudes of persistence, revolt and hope. This education carries along the construction of a culture of and for peace.

All this makes sense as long as we do our best to conceive and construct another society as an alternative to neoliberalism. Hence, it is impossible to organize an effective social struggle if this is not anchored in the consciousness, conviction and passion of the protagonists, and also in the framework of an integral project able to preserve the own identity. There is no other way to stretch beyond the stage of resistance. Otherwise, separate struggles will lead us to a well-known scene – all against all to take possession of what is available, but without understanding what is really available.

Art has always been part of the culture, but nowadays it seems to be used in favor of social domination, especially as we see how it suits the market logic. Whatever the

situation, we are convinced that, as a different way to know reality, art constitutes a perfect complement for sciences.

Through its different ways and appropriate languages, the artistic experience reveals a relational condition of reality. Arts allow humankind to apprehend interference fields, fields of reality that go far beyond simple objects. Assumed throughout a process of expression and communication, the own body becomes a place of creative interweaving for various realities.

Rather than facilitating materials for comprehension, sensitiveness gives a wider framework to human understanding in the process of artistic creation.

Moreover, the artistic expression – through any of its various and specific creative forms – sets free, acts as a guideline and weaves an extraordinarily vivacious scheme of appeals and responses, stirring human beings to get involved in the relation with their environment. It is an essential process for human understanding, that is to say, for the base of social tissue.

The sequence of production, distribution and teaching of *knowledge* has become a major element of culture. This is the result of a historical process, where the capitalist development had undoubtedly a decisive influence. In order to adapt everything to the logic of profit rather than to the general interests of humankind, the own systemic dynamics hold on to market mechanisms.

One of the reasons that make education so important is the fact that the access to scientific knowledge calls for specific and organized action: didactic action. As things stand today, the scientific contents which are given priority are only those that previously got the approval, provided that they do not interfere with the interests of ruling classes and follow the scheme of various business mechanisms.

A non-unidirectional analysis of culture warns us about the need of considering other problems in this globalized society. Among them we have environmental crisis, epistemological crisis, painful inequality between wealth and poverty, environmental refugees, uncontrollable migrations, unsuspected urban growth, devastating violence, armament race, drug-trafficking, anti-ethical and predatory technologies, to name but a few. In view of so many unsolved questions, we are obliged to rethink drastically the characteristics of the ongoing process.

Proposals

- *With a set of tools composed by identity, organization, determination, knowledge, persistence and patience, the change is not out of reach anymore. Throughout this process, schools and universities are meant to play a growing role: reinforce equitable bonds between students, intellectuals and base organizations and accomplish as many actions as possible. Teachers and universities should intensify curricular practices of solidarity to help the economic victims of this system, and these practices could even continue during the whole year as an extracurricular activity. In other words, it is essential to offset the fragmentation by different means: taking possession of the spaces dismantled by the state; analyzing critically our own social reality; and playing an appropriate role to construct counter-hegemony.*

- *If we deal with the subject of cultural development, it is necessary to think what an important role education plays. Instead of depending on dominant structures, it must originate from a dialectic articulation between ongoing educational experience, cultural processes in the society and the state.*

- *Education must make an active contribution to the critical reflection and the democratization of the culture, including for instance new experiences of social and cultural struggle in its curricular development. That is, the institutionalized school-taught reality must undergo a constant confrontation with the new results of social change.*

- *It is fundamental to aim at developing alternative communication media from educational centers and other social players, like neighborhood movements and foundations.*

- *It is necessary to learn the value of other ways of communication, even silence. Unlike the mass media in hands of dominant classes, we must realize how useful they are.*

- *To democratize communications, education must promote a critical reflection on mass media and its role in the exercise of social domination. Throughout the concrete practice, it must favor the development of alternative ways of communication. What we look for are educational institutions as strongly interconnected spaces, in which the generation of instruments carries along an active participation of the people involved.*

- *Education must foster the idea of language as historical and cultural construction, so as to show that the meanings do not arise by themselves – they are well suited for different interests and can even become an instrument of discrimination and social exclusion in the classroom.*

  - *It is also necessary to design a joint scale of values that represents the base for an equitable society. These first steps must become an unambiguous guideline for teaching practices, and the consensus must show enough flexibility. Otherwise, it would be absolutely impossible to comprehend and make concrete the various forms of struggle expressed in the society. The ideal values to be present in the practice of educational institutions are solidarity, life, dignity, peace, recognition of the other, justice, democracy and environmentalism.*

- *The objective is to shape education as a place for exchange, reflection, socialization and discussion, so as to get rid of loneliness, isolation and individualism. The objective is to encourage knowledge as collective construction, not just as individual effort. Rather than mere distributors of scientific and technological knowledge, schools, non-formal experiences and universities should be conceived as source for its production and reconstruction.*

- *Education must underscore the social and communicational component of sciences. It must generate pedagogical practices focused on cooperation and participation and display the situations where scientific knowledge is so powerful in. Another important thing is to point out that the truth can transform the world, although in this case the concept we refer to is quite different from unique thought and extreme or individualistic relativism.*

- *The selection of scientific contents in the educational field must be the result of a wide democratic consensus. It has to include not only the people who participate in the educational process but also different social and cultural expressions from every region and nation of the world.*

- *Taking into account that current educational trends choose the contents according to a series of pragmatic and utilitarian criteria, putting much more emphasis on scientific and technological dimensions than in artistic expressions. Therefore it is very important to question this bias and revalue the role of art as part of an integral development in social players.*

CHAPTER II: EDUCATION, CITIZENSHIP AND DEMOCRACY

Argumentation

Democracy is closely and directly related to the effective exercise of citizenship. It is impossible to have real democracy without active civic participation.

Given the interplay between concrete spaces for freedom, the definition of common good and the relation between individual and society, we could say that citizens determine the model of democracy, while the type of democracy determines the model of citizenship.

Within democracies, individual freedom is built with the responsible commitment of individuals. These individuals are absolutely different from citizens who populate authoritarian systems and so-called formal democracies, where civic participation is basically limited to the suffrage.

Substantive democracy strikes a balance for freedom and rights, whether individual or social, since both governors and governed are obliged to respect the law. It necessarily includes separation of power, publicity to control governmental acts, responsibility of authorities and effective defense of declarations, rights and guarantees.

Thus, a full democracy requires the active presence of citizens able to: exercise their individual and social rights; develop a critical and constructive participation in society either in a direct way or through social organizations and institutions. It also requires that most citizens support democratic consensus, including dissent, diversity and antagonisms, because this link with plurality regarding ideas and interests is vital for democracy.

Then the task consists in recomposing the sense of social and political roles toward substantive democracy. That is to say, a democracy strengthened by citizens open to dialog and initiative, able to discuss, decide, execute and make themselves responsible for

their acts and omissions. So, it is necessary to create habits for a critical rational thought; develop the capacity of persuading and becoming persuaded; replace fanaticism by tolerance; revalue diversity and pluralism as source of creativity; and admit that there is not only one way of knowing, feeling, living, acting or being citizen. This is a huge social task, it can not be accomplished only by the school, but it is impossible to think out any solution without its commitment.

Democracy and citizenship have a strong influence on each other. This is why schools, universities and non-formal educational institutions reproduce this correlation between the kind of democracy exercised in educational institutions and the teaching that is meant to shape citizens.

For such an educational process to be organized, it is fundamental a new educational paradigm able to overcome the structure of unique thought. What we need is an educational project that, instead of establishing the legitimacy of injustice, regards it as nothing other than injustice. An educational project whose pedagogy favors ethics and equality, encouraging at the same time the diversity as a right. An educational project unwilling to do away with inequality by unifying languages, contents, knowledge and symbols – any attempt of uniformity accentuates exclusion and reinforces the inequality that had to be solved.

Today this educational process faces huge difficulties because of various reasons: the own organizational development of educational institutions; their ways of intervention; and, above all, the fact that they are subject to a social, political and economic situation, which severely restricts its possibilities of change.

In spite of this, a great number of children, young people and adults from the most different cultures and social strata should be together for a longer time in the classrooms.

This emphasizes the increasingly greater role of schools, universities, non-formal experiences and teachers in constructing a model of citizenship.

For example, school constitutes the first step of non-family socialization and the first articulation between public and private spheres. If we become aware of its abilities and possibilities, school could go far beyond the stage of a simple challenge, turning into a true option of change.

To accomplish this transformation, it is important to detect the biggest obstacles in a society characterized by deep inequalities and growing gaps between the different countries and even within each country. We believe that our attention must be mainly focused on the following problems, so that we can lay down strategies to do away with them:

The existence of ***formal and contradictory democracies***. Although this kind of democracy keeps away the threat of coups d'état in many countries and somehow or other grants an institutional continuity through elections, it tolerates high corruption levels and preserves areas of power and privileges for a few social sectors. These exercise their lobby power not only within public spheres, but also in the framework of social institutions and organizations. Oligarchies make use of all privileges to take over political parties and trade unions. Bureaucracies put down collective will and run political structures consistent with their own interests. The historical permanence of local *caudillos* and clientelism damages, debases, manipulates and conceals popular will and interests. New technocracies promote rigid and totally impracticable schemes that follow the logic of neoliberal orthodox principles regardless of the most basic principles of social justice.

Institutional weakness. This situation affects both states and social organizations, not only due to loss of representativeness, but also because institutions seem unable to

define autonomous policies neither to reach common good nor to solve concrete problems. The loss of autonomy is inextricably related to a strong pressure and directives coming from international finance organizations and multilateral agreements like WTO or FTAA. They are so powerful that can even restrict the validity of certain principles and norms approved within the framework of the legislation in force. Instead of having the possibility to fulfill their genuine demands, societies are subject to a global regulation imposed by transnational companies. These agreements are often arranged under a strict confidentiality. They do not include any form of social participation or engagement, but must always undergo the judgment of major companies, in order not to affect their interests.

Our communities become more helpless and vulnerable. On top of that, if democratic controls depend on institutions like Bretton Woods, WTO or IMF, which act secretly and against popular interests, if other organizations like ILO or UNESCO face such big obstacles to ensure minimum conditions for the support of human rights, then it is very difficult to help our societies maintain an effective engagement with democratic processes.

The institutional breakdown triggers off a widespread mistrust. Strongly influenced by individualism and the thought of "every man for himself", communities are exposed to a continuous disintegration and become even more fragile.

In addition, we should underscore that communication mass media may have a negative influence, since **multimedia groups belong to business enterprises** that slant both information and analysis. Not only does reality become distorted, but there is also a clear prevalence of attitudes and values that have nothing to do with local cultures.

Another obstacle lies in the endless ***breach of civil rights and guarantees***. Formal democracies support the concept of equality before the law, pretending that mere

statements included in law books can ensure real equality. From a legal point of view, every single person has the right to vote, there are rights for citizens, children, women and human rights, as if the only mention were enough to guarantee an effective enforcement. This situation comes to light more evidently in dependent countries, where the judiciary lacks its necessary independence and so contributes to the continuous infringement of the state of law. Even the appeals before international bodies or courts get lost in a bureaucratic network and fail to protect helpless citizens and communities.

The above mentioned conditions constitute the everyday life of millions of families, whose children come to our school. They do not know their rights, or they do not know what to do for their rights to be respected. Many times they are manipulated by interests that seem uncontrollable and unchangeable. They have big difficulties to ensure their own subsistence. Even though they perceive what is going on, it is difficult for them to articulate social, individual and institutional instruments and so change reality.

Lack of genuine participatory spaces. We should analyze the characteristics of what is formally defined as participatory strategies and even the referendum. Within this context of misery and exclusion, citizens are sometimes summoned to decide on subjects of general interest. Meanwhile they have neither access to an appropriate education, nor experience, nor opportunities for exchange and discussion. In other occasions, they suffer from discrimination due to their sex, age, origin, ethnic group, religion or economic situation. If we endeavor to create new genuine spaces of participation, it is essential to take this into account.

We need to realize the difficulty of civic participation, especially for a person that is unemployed and can not fulfill his or her basic needs of housing, health and education. How is he or she supposed to get involved under such material poverty, where poverty goes far beyond material questions and is strongly related to the lack of information,

commitment, experience, reflective and discursive resources? In this context it is extremely complicated to analyze the own reality and find out where the situation comes from. The causes fade away behind fragmentation, and people suffering from exclusion seem unable to reconstruct a global and articulated thought, even with respect to their own village.

Then it is necessary to understand that poverty and exclusion are definitely incompatible with democracy, because the latter can not do without fundamental pillars like equal rights and chances, or a basic level of social justice. These conditions favor the appearance of a foreign culture, thus keeping citizens away from a set of knowledge and tools that paradoxically would allow them to overcome the difficulties they are going through.

Besides, there are certain elements of the own culture whose recycling ensures the continuity of the exclusion model. If educational systems allow the failure of poor people to be confirmed inside the school, this difficult situation can get even worse, since inaccessible knowledge ends up deepening the existent gap.

Scientific and technological development guided by the hegemonic power and its interests. Beyond any doubt, the growing evolution of science and technology would be able to solve most essential deficits regarding housing, food, health, security and education on a global scale. The fact that we are far from overcoming such problems has nothing to do with levels of technological development, but rather with something quite different. Since today's researches are directed and exploited by business groups, the new knowledge is only used for their own profit and in accordance with their own interests. For example, it would be important to remember some macabre results of exclusivity in the use of medical patents; the exploitation and subjection of children and adults who work surrounded by the newest technology but under subhuman conditions; the extremely high levels of pollution around the planet due to inappropriate use of pesticides, herbicides and

fertilizers; or the terrible consequences of nuclear testing. All of them mean flagrant violations to the most basic principles of democracy and humanization.

One of the most important challenges for public education lies in solving this evident contradiction. There is the idea of civic education toward productive work, social participation and solidarity, in short toward strengthening democratic systems. On the other hand, classrooms full of children and young people that not only suffer from poverty and marginalization, but must also reach certain levels of competition required by market economies. That is to say, how to educate for a world of solidarity in the middle of wild competition; as part of a society that remains apathetic, abstentionist and incredulous; as part of a society in which education constitutes just a way to create human capital; as part of a world where human beings seem to be human beings as long as they represent capital, but afterwards they are ruled out as if they were an obsolescent tool or technology.

According to several international organizations, this contradiction can be solved by integrating both poles, i.e. citizenship and competition.

Citizenship to foster equality before the law, equality as regards rights and duties. Juridical equality for civic development in public life and, simultaneously, for the access to skills and abilities that are required to obtain a job in a market characterized by scarcity, inequality and economic differences. These differences are neither debated nor questioned seriously. They are supposed to come from dissimilar aptitudes, merits and initiatives, which give "legitimacy" to the relations of competition within private spheres. As Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes says, this social Darwinism – the acceptance of exclusion as something natural – "carries along the germ of a social outbreak without precedent or the germ of a repressive process, also without precedent".

The dilemma involves parents and teachers, and goes far beyond pedagogical and curricular matters. By this reason, it is essential to define an appropriate educational model for such a difficult scene, taking into account that the success depends basically on a social project, a scale of values, an attitude and a political decision including pedagogical and curricular issues.

Politics is deeply involved in the task of defining a model of democracy and citizenship, as a foundation on which we will build educational processes toward sustainable and inclusive development. The objective is a certain type of social development that rules out neither persons nor popular cultures, that does not treat anyone disdainfully, that does not speak of "backward people" or "nonviable nationalism" just because they do not fit into neoliberal models and hegemonic cultures.

We are totally convinced that educational processes can favor the organization and fosterage of inclusive, democratic and sustainable development. It is possible to encourage the participation and propagation of other organizational forms, networks and social alliances, thus promoting solidarity and knowledge as a starting point toward social protection.

Public school is without doubt the perfect place for early socialization. Its organizational strategies, its social engagement and its voice represent a great advantage, an excellent tool to build a new society and a democracy whereby the outcasts of this system get relief.

In our view, public school means a privileged place to foster and promote cultural changes, to build a new thought able to construct values for a new society with ethics and humanitarian principles as main axes.

Public schools and universities, as well as any other popular form of education, must be at the service of public and popular causes, so as to reinforce democracy and citizenship by means of everyday practices in their own fields. Throughout the educational process during childhood and youth, there is not any speech, text or theorization that leaves deeper traces than those coming from the concrete practice of respect, tolerance and pluralism within the school. The lack of concrete practice reduces the possibility of correction, which for democracy is a matter of life and death. It is necessary to use practice as a platform for comparisons, discussions and also for the development of new potentials; especially because education as knowledge process must aim at the multidimension of human beings, considering physical, psychic, emotional, rational and social aspects. When education dissociates theory and practice, reality becomes invisible and so the carnal human being – vivid substance of democracy – fades away.

Proposals

Under these conditions, we must undertake the following steps to encourage and develop democratic education:

- *Articulation of individual and collective interests, fostering diversity and plurality and encouraging the existence of different means to understand reality, recreate it and fit into it.*

- *Generation of participatory spaces for all subjects involved in the process, with real possibilities to take decisions and assume responsibilities.*

- *Reflections and actions to visualize conflicts. If we hide or conceal them, it will be absolutely impossible to arrive at the solution. We must prevent them from becoming a dilemma, institutionalizing at the same time certain necessary mechanisms to build consensus as a way to overcome the obstacles. Another*

objective is to change the curriculum drastically by encouraging the dialog and educating to live together.

- *Pedagogy of ethics. Rather than giving morality lessons, the question is how this weakened community can be offered a model institution – that is, an institution that exercises justice, encourages participation among citizens, protects the weak ones, respects suffering and promotes solidarity.*

- *Rejection of neutralism, making use of pedagogy, curricula and positive attitudes to start playing a decisive role in the fight against exclusion and injustice.*

- *Channeling of social demand, opening the school to the community, supporting the creation of social alliances to solve the problems and going beyond stereotyped forms of democracy by means of effective alternatives and opportunities within a framework of equal chances.*

- *Organization of school as the voice of those who are not entitled to express their disadvantageous situation, or do not know how to do it, stigmatizing inequalities as unfair and fostering diversity as a right.*

- *Strong pressure on the state, in order that it does its duties and the right to education, teaching and learning comes true. Rejection of any form of privatization or commercialization, whether open or disguised, in the educational process.*

- *Education for a citizenship with: technical knowledge related to work – not to employment; social knowledge as a base of interaction and intercultural dialog; political knowledge as a tool of participation and democratic exercise of power;*

and critical emancipatory knowledge as a way to overcome social, political and economic obstacles of the hegemonic model, and so conduct society into a united, plural and responsible world.

CHAPTER III: EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Argumentation

"This assumed model of development must change radically. Poverty, misery, environmental depredation and wastage of natural resources will continue as long as we do not get rid of this globalizing economic model, which accentuates an irrational form of producing and distributing wealth..." Rigoberta Menchú

One of the distinctive features of humankind is the crisis of thought, the crisis of reason, which plays a decisive role throughout the historical project in the Modern Era. We have to review the current models from the very beginning, since they are responsible for thought mainstreams, production methods, social organization, reason-related cosmovision, subjection of nature to science and other ongoing phenomena. Education – modern educational institutions – has contributed to developing and strengthening a culture of domination, exploitation and risk. It is dangerous to think and act in pursuit of a relentless progression based on technical-instrumental development. If we check the foundation and rethink the world, especially the model of development, we will be making an invaluable contribution.

By this reason education in a wide sense, with institutional base and also as a continuous process of individuals throughout culture, becomes a strategic instrument for the transmission of values, skills and capacities. It has to be used to re-learn the world and approach sustainable societies.

The way we see and organize the world is still influenced by the *force-ideas* of modernity: progress, economic growth, expansion, domination and exploitation. All of them are based on a sort of rationality or rational knowledge that presents itself as a way of appropriation and suits nature to human will from a unique and partial viewpoint.

The current hegemonic model of development carries with itself a long list of typical problems. For instance, nobody can be surprised at the environmental crisis, because nowadays it has an evident influence, changes our life rhythm, destroys not only the environment (environmental crisis) but also human cultures (social crisis). For that reason, these are the times of paradoxes, of change, of thinking and acting toward a fair and

equitable development able to preserve the necessary balance between: life of societies on the one hand; and the biosphere, i.e. the environment everybody's life depends upon, on the other.

Environment, Society and Development

This model is supposed to have a uniform impact on societies, although its consequences are not uniform at all, since they affect people in different ways. Due to the unequal development, northern societies show a phagocytic behavior against natural resources and southern peoples, violating the most basic conditions of environments and human societies world-wide. In terms of biosphere, the effects arising from the tensions the planet is going through turn out to be unsustainable. Within this framework, the irruption of neoliberal capitalist development – it has started a phase of economic internalization, toward the globalization of production and consumption systems – speeds up the destructive processes regardless of which cultures and values prevail.

Like never before, it is necessary to put a stop to the squandering and generate mechanisms of redistribution to avoid the nonsense and approach planetary sustainability. Otherwise it will be impossible to reach an acceptable and common future for the entire population of the world, especially if the powerful few organize a feast and the masses of others are not invited.

The following questions are transcendent, we need to answer them if we want to find a way out. *Is it possible to stop current self-destructive trends and so beat the inertia of unsustainable processes? Will current neoliberal capitalism turn into any economically sustainable way? If we want life to continue, which radical changes are necessary in human, economic, social and political fields? Will there be gradual or revolutionary policies?* These questions make us wonder how we can create the societies we want to build, how we can achieve happiness and rehabilitate the sense of life to counteract the

dominant and nonviable project. The problem is not to invent new values, but to give a strategic and vital sense to the ones that have always existed: common goods, diacronic solidarity, tolerance, respect for diversity.

Crisis of environment, crisis of growth in central countries, crisis of modernity, crisis of civilization. At this crossroads we are facing the challenge of reconstructing knowledge, with biological and cultural diversity, political pluralism and participatory democracy as main tools. All these elements are necessary to fight for a new apprehension of the world, so we can envision ourselves as human beings in the middle of a society where, for example, productive processes tend to be the result of collective decisions. If we want to build sustainability and do away with current crises, the reorientation of educational models is a must.

Environment, Education and Development

Education is one of the most evident social facts in the history of humankind. This universal phenomenon forms part of everyday life among the most different peoples and the most dissimilar cultures of the earth. Thus, it becomes one of the variables in human communities and has a tangible connection with other facts in economic, political or cultural fields.

If we want to think up a critical dialog that stirs human societies to build sustainability, then it is essential to connect education and development. All peoples need this link education-development, because it comprises a dialogic relation that forms the basis of a new historical project for humankind – as diverse as ecosystems and ethnic groups world-wide, encouraging solidarity with current demands of justice, equity, participation and direct democracy.

For this, we must rethink education in its widest sense as a learning process throughout individual and collective life in the family and other groups nearby. The resulting knowledge should support sustainability as a balance between human cultures, life and environment. There is a clear relation between education and the way societies organize themselves, how they transmit and preserve their cultures, how they produce and change the environment.

Building education for sustainability

Within the framework of sustainability, the education must propose a critical approach to human system, in order to reestablish Ethics as founding principle of the only possible rationality. A rationality that considers the current state of real debt, whether financial, environmental or cultural, between the peoples of the world; a rationality that fosters the production of responsible knowledge toward society and also toward the own earth.

It is necessary to rethink human wealth, with material and symbolic multicultural diversity rather than consumption goods as main axis.

It is necessary to implement an economy of solidarity, with equitable distribution and social justice. Beyond any doubt, this assumption is a political choice. Due to this situation, education must focus its attention on the production of environmental knowledge for free political subjects, both critical and responsible, because they are meant to compose the new social players of planetary sustainability. Other key issues for the design of educational guidelines will be collective rights and social reappropriation of nature.

If we conceive education in terms of sustainability, it should therefore reformulate educational and social categories that are at stake. Then there must be a critical analysis

of production systems, supportive knowledge, educational or non-educational institutions involved in this process and necessary alternatives.

The above mentioned situation urges us to set up a first framework able to rule the whole human activity and any development, whatever it may be, in order to build environmental sustainability. The necessary rationality belongs to the field of Ecology, as a discipline of synthesis that incorporates the human process – unlike modern sciences and analytic disciplines, it does not break reality into fragments – and works out under the principle of complex thought. It is based on the idea that education can contribute to reorganizing societies, mainly the Western, capitalist and neoliberal society by means of cohabitation, diacronic solidarity, creativity and integration (Social Ecology). In this context, education plays a fundamental role.

Proposals

- ***Build education for sustainability and therefore for popular development. This implies the proposal of pedagogies and methodologies. As well as defining concepts like society, nature, individual, social organization and educational praxis in the particular context, it is essential to address different structural components such as:***

    1. ***Definition of educational institutions and objectives involved***

    2. ***Social and referential principles as motor of educational processes (axiology and epistemology)***

    3. ***Concept of education, considering the different subjects that participate in educational processes, whether formal or non-formal***

4. *Methodological and pedagogical principles, used as a guideline to structure the educational process*

5. *Analysis of the important role played by nation-states and the neoliberal capitalist ideology during this historical era of humankind*

6. *Definition of education for sustainability as Environmental Popular Education – that is to say, an ideological builder able to respect biological, physical and cultural diversity*

7. *Analysis of the close relation between model of development and education for ecodevelopment*

- *Apprehend reality and build citizenship: Perhaps the biggest challenge is the construction of a society that recreates and/or fosters appropriate scales of values, everyday practices and knowledge. The challenge is to shape individuals moved by collective interests, by effective and affective political attitudes toward their environment.*

- *Support ethics, development and common responsibility with regard to knowledge and its use: Nowadays the main problem does not seem to be the accumulation of knowledge, but what we do with it and what it reproduces in terms of ethical values. The education for development and sustainability will therefore be able to combine educational needs with ethics of environmental harmony within the framework of an educational program. It is fundamental to develop an ethical reeducation for sustainability from a global point of view.*

- *Take the need of public policies and civic participation into account: Given the vital importance of educational programs, they must turn into participatory public policies with some characteristics, so that they:*

  - *Fulfill the role of strengthening social base organizations and their power as decision-makers*

  - *Comprise the different human groups and transmit this idea in terms of organization for educational institutions and curricula*

  - *Approach new objects of research at each level of the educational process and in their different dimensions*

  - *Define the notion of ecodevelopment as frame of interconnection between societies and nature*

  - *Integrate the explicit relation between education and development, considering that the fulfillment of human needs depends on the kind of satisfiers – not on the presence of a neoliberal-capitalist relation*

  - *Respect different cultures and different methods of access to knowledge, so that they pave the way to the implementation of educational processes*

- *Educational Systems: If we want to reinforce the educational social fact on a global scale, educational systems are meant to play a decisive role. Since nation-states have the main vehicle of cultural transmission, it is necessary to channel an organizational reorientation toward ecodevelopment. Another top priority is the school organization as a result of democratic educational practices, here lies most of the symbology that is necessary for societies to take shape .*

- *Change the university subsystem, so that it plays a major role regarding the production of appropriate knowledge: for instance, productive forces within a framework of ecodevelopment and integration of environmental knowledge as a new paradigm.*

- *Reorganize the society to reorganize production and economy subsystems. The entire humankind and all the peoples participate in each human activity – in economic activities too – as means, objects and decision-makers.*

The whole economic activity takes place in the biosphere, along with some other human activities that surround us and have influence upon our life. Since the economic field has been given a central role (the neoliberal-capitalist way of appropriation has radically distorted the order in the biosphere), it is necessary to find its right position and then rethink its function to fulfill human needs. Accordingly, economic activities will be the result of all-embracing decisions, a productive system led by life-giving values, objectives and reasons.

With its complexity, material and symbolic production, the human process is immersed in the higher universe of live and inanimate matter which constitutes the surrounding world. This makes transcendent the notion of production within the framework of nature and societies. Ecoproduction, i.e. production at the rhythm of nature, appropriate technology, development of knowledge consistent with these parameters – all of them support an educational project with sustainability as ineluctable condition.

CHAPTER IV: STATE AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY

Argumentation:

Nation-states have oriented and implemented their educational policies basically in accordance with the principles and requirements of neoliberal ideology. The impact on education fields has brought some changes in favor of the hegemonic power, subordinating the own rules to the logic of capitalist market. These policies reveal themselves in a concrete way through two central dimensions, which will be treated in the present chapter: *educational institutions* and *curricular development*.

Educational Institutions

All educational institutions have their own cultural feature, which makes them similar and at the same time different from one another due to the existent peculiarities. There are plenty of cultural aspects that interact and come to light in educational institutions. They are related to their historical processes as well as to certain deeds coming from elsewhere, from the game rules of economic, social and political fields. We believe that the analysis and collective reflection on these aspects can be the starting point of concrete actions, in such a way that educational institutions contribute to carrying out social changes.

We believe there are uncountable constituent aspects of institutional cultures, and they all compose a complex whole. To thoroughly understand the phenomenon, it is essential to see these aspects as structural interconnected components, so the interrelation plays a decisive role. If they are dealt with separately, as unconnected fragments or just a partial sum of independent elements, it will be absolutely impossible to reach the goal.

Taking this into account and considering the current context – a deep social, political and economic crisis that accentuates even more the own crisis of educational systems – we think there must be concrete proposals. When treating different aspects related to the cultures of educational institutions, it is vital not only to analyze the current situation but

also to move forwards throughout a process of change into a united, plural and responsible world.

Knowledge, as well as its forms of production, distribution and access, is deeply influenced by technological rationality and the unidirectional analysis of neoliberalism. Technicians and specialists draw up uniform resolutions to be applied under any context, regardless of the characteristics of each place or situation and without any participation or contribution of the social subjects involved in the process. Under this situation, discipline seems imposed by only one model of knowledge and only one methodology, reinforced by publishing houses and textbooks.

This modus operandi is based on the belief that there is a unique thought able to solve the system crisis and all contradictions, able to conceive the only truth the hegemonic model needs.

The **power relations**, the watch and control that are present in educational institutions get different levels of concretion. Nonetheless, we are well aware that many institutions just seem to exercise democracy, although as a matter of fact they encourage a participation that carries along the same mechanisms of domination and repression prevailing in the middle of this widespread social crisis. In these educational institutions, decisions are taken within a vertical structure, and an intricate normative scheme prevents social subjects from getting really involved. Meanwhile, the promoters of a certain kind of globalization, under the guideline of neoliberal ideology, give legitimacy to a typical speech that suits institutions to market demands and business logic.

The pedagogical work and therefore the praxis that feeds institutional life depend on the different ways their members get in touch with objects of institutional culture. There is a great influence of what subjects feel, do and think throughout a process of constant

change. Given that under the current situation the idea of work itself is at stake, it is important to rethink it, so that work can be considered as the activity that constitutes the subject and allows it to integrate with dignity into the society. This concept of work is well-hidden, and power relations tend to conceal the phenomenon – it goes without saying that our proposals should emphasize that these relations are basically working relations.

The current socio-economic model represents an obstacle for educational institutions. It prevents them from incorporating substantive processes like research, production of knowledge, relation with the community, exchange as regards values and social and anthropological projects. Nowadays the teaching work appears to be just an employment relation, subject and limited to the fulfillment of the regulation in force.

With regard to the other constituent aspect in the culture of educational institutions, that is *social imaginary*, it is necessary to say that there is a parallel social imaginary. It comprises players' concepts related to school problems and ways of intervention, and sometimes lacks the scientific support and the required objectivity to solve the problems. Instead of trying a serious approach to institutional conflicts, instead of making a collective and democratic analysis of the causes, the only thing we do very often is to put the blame and responsibility on someone else. However, that social imaginary can stir people into resistance, given the inherent contradictions of any system and the improvised and whimsical changes educational institutions are expected to undergo to adapt themselves quickly and so fulfill market demands. This is why we find it vital to make a concrete contribution to the knowledge of institutional imaginaries, in order to change it through the exercise of substantive democracy. The educational change does not require repression, but persuasive strategies.

With regard to **language** and its characteristics, in the last years the spheres of power have been exercising an evident symbolic violence. This has caused not only the

expropriation of categories traditionally used with a critical sense but also the appearance of certain business-related meanings and the consequent rise of a new hegemonic educational speech. In this context, those who do not use the new technical language are underestimated, as if they were "outsiders", and even their knowledge is put in doubt since they refuse to fit into the dominant terminology. The culture of educational institutions must discuss the meanings and foster a critical review of the speeches that come from the spheres of power and become guidelines for our everyday actions.

When we think about educational institutions in a wide sense, we basically include schools, but also teaching structures in trade unions, social movements, public libraries, community radio stations and all organizations in which social education represents one of the major goals. Within this framework, we introduce several proposals related to the culture of such institutions as a starting point toward emancipatory actions and social change – that is to say, an education able to change the current society. The objective is to understand that, in the future, educational institutions will not be a place of transit anymore. As educational needs keep on growing, school turns into a place of permanence with a transcendent role of social cohesion, a huge potential to make changes and good chances to foster the participation of the people involved there, basically the students.

Curricular development

The current social world shows that new cultural identities arise, whereas the old ones fade away or suffer a transformation. Neoliberal policies offer and encourage hegemonic identities of the subject, in such an optimizing way that it tries to fulfill as many market

demands as possible. Teachers are harassed by these policies of cultural subordination, the growing poverty and the fundamental role of neoliberal policies regarding knowledge.

These policies of knowledge are given the necessary legitimacy by the prevailing social power relations. This phenomenon comes up through hegemonic curricular organizations, it also has a big influence on ideological, epistemological and pedagogical battles.

Steady curricular structures (subjects, areas, workshops) have emerged to this battle held on a historical and social scale, and at the same time the curriculum has been divided into certain time intervals: one-year period, four-month period, different cycles, levels, etc.

From this point of view, the curriculum is a historical and social product, with a big influence of cultural and class conflicts. The hegemony lies in the knowledge that applies to and is useful for the cultural reproduction of social structures within Capitalist State.

Nevertheless, the exercise of social domination goes far beyond the state. It includes institutional processes of civil society, supported by the neoliberal ideology and based on discriminatory concepts regarding race, ethnic group, sex, age or nation.

The action of social movements and the debate on power relations between the different socio-cultural identities arisen throughout the struggle urge to review the power relations in school organizations and educational processes, because they are the origin of socio-cultural identities. In view of the current situation, social movements are meant to make a major contribution.

Therefore we find it necessary to keep on seeing school as a place where two contradictory processes take place. On the one hand, the task of social and cultural homogenization; on the other hand, an emancipatory project on the basis of general access to knowledge.

Within modern educational projects, the concept of subjectivity was based on the assumption of a rational, centered and unified conscience, able to build its autonomy and independence in relation with society. The conscience is rational because its actions lean upon a conscious consideration of hypotheses and alternative courses of action. Besides, it has a centrality that triggers off all its actions and is unitary, neither fragmented nor incomplete. This concept of subject is a construction of the society project coming from the Illuminism. Taking the sociology of Modern Education into account, the problem in the concept of subjectivity is highly related to a process of transition from the state of alienated subject to the state of conscious or lucid subject regarding social destiny.

The development of identity is a historical construction that incorporates uncertainty and refers to the process of alterity. Furthermore, since alterity relations are power relations, cultural identities – used by different social groups to define themselves and to be defined by other groups – are not established in a separate way. The difference is mainly a hierarchy, an appraisal, a categorization that depends on processes of exclusion, border watch, division strategies.

This hierarchy comes from power positions. But the relations of difference are never symmetrical, they are from the very beginning power relations, built within representation processes. Rather than an essence, identity is a relation and a type of positioning. In brief, social power relations constitute cultural identities.

By the same reasons, the identity is not shaped in connection with a core of authenticity, neither is it rooted in a primordial cultural experience which could define the different cultures. The concept of identity itself is historical. The cultural identity has a background, it is what it turned out to be so far, it evolves nowadays in national, regional or domestic contexts of marginalization and exploitation, though they may be changed in the future.

The issue of social identity has a growing importance due to the appearance and behavior of different groups and movements struggling for voice and participation in the game of Identity Policy. The Identity Policy is in the middle of the fight for representation and distribution of symbolic and material resources. What is at stake now is the localization of the hegemonic identity, focused on the subject of modernity: male, white... The curriculum is a space of signification that not only produces and organizes divided social identities – the divisions of antagonistic classes according to the critical view – but also produces and organizes ethnic, gender, racial and national identities.

Finally, the disciplinary feature in the modern organization of knowledge (discipline regarding intellectual activity, with methods and rules to approach the different fields of knowledge) and the disciplinary nature of school (in a political sense of control and regulation) shape a signification influenced by the practices of resistance. According to the educational critical tradition this is one of the major problems. The issue of knowledge, power and identity is a symbolic production that musters the different meanings about social and political aspects. Curricular policies become an important symbolic element within the social projects drawn up by hegemonic groups, because they can articulate the practices of domination:

▪ acknowledging or underestimating certain groups of specialists, searching mainstreams and institutions.

▪ producing objects of knowledge related to didactic categories (blocks, competencies, basic contents and so on) that provide meaning and functionality. This mechanism, that institutionalizes and forms the "real", can be used to adopt certain epistemological concepts and neutralize others.

▪ granting specific activities and functions to men and women at different levels of institutionalization: functionaries, technicians, supervisors, directors, teachers and

professors who work in accordance with curricular norms, prescriptions, guidelines, documents and recommendations from national evaluation systems.

▪ defining the relations between teachers and students, between functions of authority and initiative in the classroom; prescribing the valid knowledge and the valid ways of acquirement and setting up the conditions for success and failure; accomplishing a process of inclusion with a certain knowledge and encouraging the production of two kinds of subjects: the successful one, a market-optimizer, and the desperate one, who will not be able to get a job in the future. As this process evolves, teachers lose qualification (less autonomy, routine practices, etc.).

▪ imposing monoculturality, part of a curricular model that matches the cultural practices of certain social groups, as if the assumed success could be reproduced under any ideological context and any cultural conditions.

Critical educators take into account new social movements, changes to social theorization, cultural research, postmodern and poststructural epistemological issues, putting the emphasis on curricular construction as cultural practice, as practice of signification. In so doing, they reformulate curricular analyses and practices. This is how the current cultural research and language centrality impact on the speech and social fields. At this point, culture represents a battle field – we struggle to construct and transfer senses to the social world.

According to traditional and technocratic approaches, culture is something reificated. It is separated from its historical production process, as though ignoring that the fields of culture and knowledge are the result of social relations, and social relations are hierarchical, asymmetrical – in short, as though ignoring that they are definitely social power relations.

From our point of view, the curricular work implies unswerving productivity, both in learning processes and in teaching tasks. It carries along work with didactic material, critical analysis of the sources where the knowledge to be taught comes from, and the recreation of situations in order to reconstruct them. We are convinced that these practices contribute to producing social and cultural identities, turning education into a relevant experience.

Within this context, we include herewith several principles to think, understand and change society.

Proposals:

Considering what was explained in the chapter referred to *Educational Institutions*, we believe that it is necessary to promote and develop the following reflections and actions:

- *Regarding the production and distribution of knowledge in the culture of educational institutions, the players involved must be qualified for the creation of appropriate spaces, for the development of knowledge. They have to understand the social and cultural reality belonging to the subjects to be educated.*

- *It is also fundamental to promote different ways to discuss without concessions what this hegemonic model shows as something "natural". Furthermore, educational institutions should strengthen these spaces, getting the knowledge produced in the general scientific field with a critical spirit.*

- *The relation with the community should also be given priority in educational institutions by means of concrete actions, exchange of values and socio-anthropological projects.*

- *In relation with the typical language of culture in educational institutions, we should encourage a collective reflection and discussion on the meaning of specific terms and develop a critical reading of those hegemonic speeches that are intended to rule our everyday life.*

- *We propose the organization of new institutional spheres, so that social subjects begin to express themselves in a different way, with participation, discussion and collective self-reflection as priorities. For this objective to be met, there must be a strong commitment of the state by means of cultural policies respecting the points of view of popular sectors.*

- *Regarding power relations, it is necessary to promote institutional models based on a more active role of teachers and other players within educational communities. They have to turn from mere executors of technical resolutions in a uniform model into the real makers of change.*

- *Another important thing is to underline that the different models of knowledge transmission are historical social constructions, institutionally legitimated and subject to criticism and change. We must foster didactic models with a different structure, so that it democratizes the process of decision making.*

- *Regarding institutional direction, we must encourage a democratic concept based on the coordination and implementation of collective projects within the different spheres of educational institutions.*

- *It is necessary to promote the defense of public education, avoiding improvisation and market discipline. If educational institutions play a more dynamic role and so develop reflection processes, plural and participatory*

strategies, we will be able to stem prejudices that schematize and immobilize the fundamental dynamics of change.

- *It is necessary to visualize the power relations that rule the cultural dynamics of institutions, in order to criticize, change and enrich them with a democratic spirit. The ultimate objective is to build another institutional culture with discussion and participatory public spaces as its main priorities.*

According to the considerations referred to *Curricular Development*, we introduce several suggestions and guidelines in relation with curricular praxis, so as to:

- *Lead action and thought toward a new society whose priority is the fulfillment of vital, social and historical needs.*

- *Think education as a public space for the recreation of signification practices in a critical and propositional way, taking always into account that the knowledge produced by humankind must be distributed within a framework of equal rights.*

- *Conceive the curriculum from a double perspective, as a space to acquire knowledge and meanings from – producer and organizer of social identities – and also as a space of confrontation where social and cultural positions with different characteristics face each other.*

- *Suit pedagogical potential of knowledge to understand and change reality, to encourage concrete action.*

- *Strengthen education with democratic values, equality and solidarity, against any kind of discrimination, whatever it may be: class, race or gender.*

- *Strengthen a national, intercultural and internationalist education.*

- *Shape an education for work and cooperation – work as content that gives sense to the taught knowledge, work as one of the principles that organize the space of pedagogical practices.*

- ***Build a new kind of education where differences can be dealt with in accordance with democratic principles, solidarity and equal rights.***

- ***Promote ways of education to articulate the various dimensions of social action:***

  political, ideological and economic training;

  organizational, technical, professional and academic training;

  cultural and esthetic training.

- ***Develop an education based on humanist values, in order to build and properly channel a feeling of ethical outrage due to the sweeping injustice; encourage the organization of students, so that they defend the rights for children, youth, pupils, women, men and citizens.***

- ***Foster the participation of educators within political, social and union organizations, throughout a process in which education is closely related to social change. If educators are excluded from the process of collective decision and remain outside, they will not be able to make an appropriate teaching work.***

CHAPTER V: WORK METHODOLOGY

To draw up this *Proposal File,* the Education Working Group and the Socio-professional Network of Teachers organized several activities and tasks within the framework of the "Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World". All these events were coordinated by the Confederation of Education Workers of the Argentine Republic (CTERA). The editing staff was composed by members of the Executive Committee, directors and teachers of the School of Pedagogical Teaching and Union Training "Marina Vilte" and university professors.

The decision of developing these dynamics (Education Working Group and Socio-professional Network of Teachers) simultaneously is based on a concept that tries to reverse system restrictions regarding the educator's role as a mere transmitter of knowledge coming from somewhere else. This program also avoids the typical reductionism of reflections circumscribed to pedagogical and didactic aspects. Needless to say, the elaboration of a world-wide document on education must include the real makers of everyday facts. We thought the text would be very important and significant, provided that it searches the specific field and includes the educator's voice, one of the main protagonists throughout this process.

Here too, the arguments and educational proposals took into account that the professionals not only are specialists in their field, but at the same time they are well aware of educational realities, combining the existent theory with their own concrete experiences.

Another priority was the contribution of all subjects involved and interested in educational issues on a global scale. As a logic result, we obtained the representation and participation of various social sectors.

Before describing the gradual steps of this process, it is important to point out that the present File remains provisional and subject to change or amendment. It does not claim to be a rigid and absolute production, but just a lever to keep on reflecting and discussing educational problems.

During the elaboration of this File, there were several highlights:

Activities

The starting point was a working plan, where CTERA organized and coorganized different activities as source for the first rough drafts. These activities were held before and during the process of writing:

- Meeting "Youth and Education", organized by CTERA on 25th, 26th and 27th May 2001 in the city of Buenos Aires.

- "A future kit. Democracy, citizenship and education in Latin America", Meeting of the Working Group: Education, Work and Exclusion, CLACSO – Latin American Council of Social Sciences. Organized by CLACSO, FLACSO and School "Marina Vilte" of CTERA, on 14th, 15th and 16th November 2000 in Buenos Aires.

- National Meeting of the DHIE Network (Teachers Doing Educational Research), organized by the School of Pedagogical Teaching and Union Training "Marina Vilte", CTERA. 10th and 11th November 2000, Buenos Aires

- Meeting "Education and Development", held in Comodoro Rivadavia, province of Chubut, from 1st to 3rd November 2000.

- National Meeting of Educators for Peace "For peace not to be just absence of war...", organized by CTERA and AMSAFE on the 28th October 2000 in Rosario.

- "First national meeting of youth for the construction of a new society", organized by CTERA, AMSAFE Villa Constitución and CTA Villa Constitución. 21st and 22nd October 2000, Villa Constitución, province of Santa Fe.

- "First Regional Meeting of the SEPA Network Southern Cone", organized by CTERA and SEPA Network – Social Network for Public Education in the Americas. Held in Buenos Aires from 4th to 6th October 2000.

- Meeting "Education, Labor Environment and Teaching Work". 5th and 6th October 2000, Buenos Aires.

Meetings

The second stage of this process consisted of several meetings as a platform to discuss the different versions of the document. They were organized with two complementary structures: national and international *enlarged Meetings* of the editing staff, to discuss different aspects of the Proposal File, and also an *E-Forum of discussion*.

With regard to the enlarged meetings, they include the following ones:

- First Meeting of the Education Working Group, organized by the Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World. December 2000, Buenos Aires.

- Second Meeting of the Education Working Group, organized by the Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World. April 2001, Buenos Aires.

- International Meeting "Education for a Responsible, Plural and United World", 12th and 13th June 2001, Buenos Aires.

Meanwhile, the educational e-forum of discussion was available from the 5th of January to the 5th of June 2001. Enriched by allies and non-allies from different parts of the world, it made a positive contribution by introducing new ideas and questioning the draft proposals.

The number of participants totaled 25, distributed as follows:

11 women and 14 men;

18 players from formal education (3 basic education, 4 secondary, 2 tertiary, 9 university) and 7 players from non-formal education;

10 inhabitants from Argentina, 6 from Brazil, 2 from Guatemala and 1 from each of the following countries: Cameroon, Canada, Ecuador, France, Paraguay, Benin and India.

Redaction

The editing staff participated in all these activities. Afterwards, during the months of July and August 2001, it integrated the different contributions and drew up the present Proposal File.

The information was organized and the productions were systematized, taking into account the axes introduced at the first phase of the debate. These axes are intended to comprise the most important dimensions and problems in the educational field: Education and Culture; Education, Democracy and Citizenship; Education and Development; State and Educational Policy.

There was one coordinator for each issue, responsible not only for the animation and redaction, but also for an appropriate argumentation within the current context and the systematization of proposals to overcome the existent obstacles. Due to this schedule, the subjective mark of each coordinator and the different ways they faced the process of synthesis and integration, the text may include some differences in the writing style and structure, as well as in the content related to argumentation and proposals.

On top of that, this *Proposal File* met additional and unavoidable problems during the whole process of debate and redaction. For instance, it was truly tough to undertake a collective redaction when the objective consisted in drawing up a homogeneous text and, at the same time, respecting the diversity.

Another problem was that there was not enough participation at the educational e-forum of discussion. Although lots of people had registered their names, this resource failed to reflect an effective participation, a wide debate and new experiences. On the other hand, the presential meetings turned out to be an important contribution, enriching the exchange and discussion throughout the entire process.

It is also necessary to recognize the difficulties, to realize how difficult it is to include every single opinion. Probably many sectors did not have any representation at all in the phase of discussion and redaction, and this is why this document should be properly analyzed, considering the partiality of the different instances.

Finally, we think that this process put the emphasis on the elaboration and discussion of the document. To continue and deepen the reflection and consequent actions, it would

be vital to propose and discuss concrete experiences, showing that the different social practices can get transformation processes started.

Among other things, this same process helped develop exchange networks of educational experiences and opinions. From the viewpoint of collective and cooperative work, there was a big progress regarding how to thoroughly discuss the role of education in this world. Moreover, this method allowed the educational prospect to reach a planetary level, doing away with any kind of reductionism or partial consideration.

Another positive aspects were the reflection and self-learning, exercised by the participants during the different stages of the process. And the importance of recognizing that rather than giving closed and complete answers, this process is to be the foundation for new questions about education and its possibilities to construct a responsible, plural and united world.

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSIONS

ARRIVAL AND STARTING POINT...

During the whole work governed the hypothesis that there is a world-wide prospect for educational problems, because they are influenced to a great extent by different social situations, cultural contexts and concrete realities.

This document deals basically with two major issues that vex any modern society.

The first one focuses its attention on the fact that since the '70s we are exposed to deeper globalization processes whose most distinctive features strongly impact on concrete educational experiences. We have already put a special emphasis to underline the ideological signs prevailing nowadays in the hegemonic globalization process, the so-called neoliberalism. We have further pointed out that the policy of central institutions, like the IMF and the World Bank, brings pressure to shape business-related educational models. They promote an unfair distribution of scientific knowledge and cultural stratification, with individualism as the most important value. If we follow this recipe, education fits perfectly well into the structure of this world order, where a few poles of power rule over a great majority, repressing people and ignoring their cultural identities.

The second axis assumes as a starting point that our world is going through a global crisis which can not be compared to any of the previous ones, basically because the existence of humankind itself and millenary cultural constructions are endangered. The two most evident and rapidly growing phenomena are: gradual depletion of the planetary resources, as long as we continue with the same production and consumption models, with developed countries as main exponents; and a growing exclusion regarding access to basic food requirements, health, knowledge and recognition of cultural identity. This global crisis affects a large part of humankind and brings out two dimensions that in the last years have been showing their transcendence: the role of scientific knowledge and the development of universal ethics. The concepts and proposals included along this document deal with these dimensions. This file tries to explain how they contribute to defining concrete educational processes and how this can change, provided that we shape

another globalization based on different ways of production and consumption both of material goods and culture.

Finally, we believe that this file of concepts and proposals opens a way of dialog for an educational change all over the world. From now on we do have a possibility to think of a different world, a responsible, plural and united world, and also have an important tool for the pursuit of our goals.