

THE MAJOR PROJECT OF EDUCATION

in Latin America and the Caribbean

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Presentation

There is a growing conviction in the world today that the tremendous progress witnessed in the fields of science and technology has not gone hand in hand with comparable advances in the moral realm and that, in this area, we are still struggling against the very same problems that beleaguered us centuries ago. While these problems still darken our horizon, encouraging lights are beginning to sparkle here and there. Clearly, one of the major gains humankind can lay claim to, may be found in the area of human rights –those rights conferred upon an individual by his mere condition of human being– and in the modern ethical and philosophical current that advocates their inalienable nature, promotes their universal observance, and recommends that any violations be tracked down and punished, regardless of victimizer, place, or intervening circumstances. Historically, the long slog towards universal human rights can be said to span three generations. A first generation, towards the turn of the 18th century, established civil and political rights. The second generation, covered social, economic, and cultural rights while the last one, in the second half of the 20th century, has propounded the generalisation of rights to all human beings, irrespective of locality or condition.

This last requirement, entails building a transnational solidarity among all human beings so that rights, unbound by borders, political regimes, economic or human status, may truly become universal. Probably the major force behind this ineluctable movement for the promotion of human rights, is the growing awareness that they must be heeded simply because they belong to a higher order than any other man-made law.

However, we are still light-years away from the day these third-generation rights find their rightful place in our social structures.

This being the case, a value-oriented education represents a clear demand placed by society on the education system, as well as a ratification of the unique role education must play in laying the groundwork for a democratic and tolerant co-existence which may guarantee the construction of a productive and reproductive relationship in tune with our natural environment, and of a global society set free from the Damoclean threat of self-destruction.

On occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Human Rights Declaration, we would like to share with our readers some reflections on the responsibility that falls to education in their assimilation. We are deeply convinced that education will make possible a seamless integration of these rights in harmony with all peoples and our natural environment. Along these lines, Sylvia Schmelkes offers us an insight into human rights education based on the knowledge and practice found in Latin American. Her research deals essentially with formal education for boys and girls and adolescent although the authoress has also analysed adult and higher education documentation.

Pablo Salvat introduces us to the field of social rights and the right to an education underscoring that, while the interest elicited by the quest for human rights clearly represents a giant step in the right direction, it does not necessarily imply that we share a common view of how to interpret, enforce and promote them. Abraham Magendzo, proposes incorporating into the various human right education initiatives, a pedagogical and didactic dimension. How are human rights taught and learned? Which are the optimum methodological conditions for transmitting this knowledge? To what extent do social, economic, cultural, and political contexts determine the odds of acquiring a human rights education? These are some of the queries the author invites us to dispel.

Mindful of the importance of education –not only as an instrument for advancing human rights, but also as one of these rights– we have included in this issue of the Bulletin two important papers: José Rivero’s research on early childhood education in the 21st century, and the World Declaration and Action Framework for tertiary education in the coming century, adopted at the World Conference on higher education held in Paris by UNESCO during last October.

As a contribution to efforts aimed at fostering human rights education among civil service employees –and the armed forces– we have included the Amnesty International manual which contains a common methodological code. This common nomenclature should greatly facilitate the work undertaken by non-government organisations and scholars, in this field of endeavour.

As is customary, the latest publications by the Regional Office for Education have been included in this issue.

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION. REFLECTIONS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE LATIN AMERICAN KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE*

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In 1995, UNESCO's Regional Office for Education, commissioned me to carry out a fact - finding study on value-oriented education, as a preparatory step to the launching of a regional project on this area of education. The intended research had a twofold objective, namely, establishing the knowledge base of value-oriented education across the world, and its actual practice in Latin America. Considering that value-oriented education in the region has focused primarily on the human rights issue, the present paper has been approached from this perspective.

The study was exclusively documentary, and involved reviewing nearly one - hundred different documents, at least half of them containing theoretical considerations related to value-oriented education. A small portion of said documents, dwelling basically on education for international understanding, human rights, and, peace were prepared by international organisations. The remainder of the documents, authored by Latin Americans, dealt with theoretical formulations and the proposed experiences.

The study focuses primarily on the formal education process of adolescents of both sexes. While other documents on adult and higher education were also the subject of analyses, it should be noted that the available literature on these areas of education is considerably scarcer.

An education inspired in a value - building process, represents a clear demand by society on the education system. Even though it may manifest itself differently as a result of historical time and geographical context, this demand represents a corroboration of the unique role education must play in laying the groundwork

for a democratic and tolerant co-existence which, in turn, will guarantee the construction of a productive and reproductive relationship in tune with our natural environment, and of a global society liberated from the Damoclean threat of self-destruction.

In the particular case of Latin America, the education system is often invoked as a shield against human right violations, and an insurance that will prevent the re-enactment of the lamentable events that affected several countries in the region during the 70's and 80's. In the Latin American sub-continent, value-oriented education seeks essentially to form citizens versed on human rights and capable of defending and promoting the rights of citizens

* The present article contains an abridged version of my review on Latin American practice of human rights education published under the title *La Escuela y la Formación Valoral Autónoma*. Mexico: Castellanos. 1997.

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and nations alike. For their part, human rights have been credited with possessing the bases needed for developing a thorough and complete value-oriented education, and one which may simultaneously diminish the risks of indoctrination inherent to any such attempt.

Human rights education

There are manifold reasons that justify the need for a human rights education:

- Education has been regarded as a powerful weapon against sexual, racial, and religious discrimination, still a *de facto* presence in our societies, and the source of bitter strife in various parts of the world (UNESCO Institute for Education, 1991).
- Human rights must be regarded as the cornerstone of a universal ethic, and because of their transcendence, they should be known and respected by all. The education process has a duty to dwell on the ethical underpinnings of universal human rights instruments. Yet, most education systems have been designed on the basis of utilitarian or economic considerations which place insufficient emphasis on fostering among students their self-worth and dignity, their rights under democracy, and the duties to which these give rise (Savolainen, K. 1991).
- A strong argument, and one which has received the general approval of the world –and of Latin America in particular– draws inspiration from the preamble to UNESCO’s Constitution: “Because wars are born in the minds of men, it is precisely in the minds of men where the bastions of peace must be erected”. So too, while human rights violations are the result of desultory education processes conceived in the minds of the very men responsible for safeguarding them (Mosca and Pérez Aguirre, 1985), equally at fault are the individuals and nations that passively accept them, demonstrating our jaded capacity to react to shock, to criticise, and to denounce. In short, we are dealing here with a loss of values. In order to retrieve these values we must turn inwards to

the minds and hearts of men, and forge the values and principles that may guarantee a peaceful, just, and fraternal co-existence (Alba Olvera and Barba, 1989).

- The growing awareness that the world needs an education for international understanding, human rights, and peace, is the result – among other things– of outbreaks of xenophobia, intolerance and racism. More recently, we have witnessed a renewed attack on the universality of human rights that threatens to destroy all the work accomplished in the last decades, towards the construction of an international society based on common values (UNESCO, 1994).

In the international arena, the 1974 publication of the Recommendations on Education for International Understanding, Co-operation, and Peace, contributed greatly to the furtherance of human rights education. However, a decision to put into action a form of human rights education did not materialise until 1978, on occasion of UNESCO’s International Congress on Human Rights Education held in Vienna (Bolívar, 1986). Geneva’s recent World Conference on Education (1994), has bolstered these proposals while offering a perspective more in keeping with our modern times (UNESCO, 1994).

In Latin America, education for human rights makes a shy entrance in the 80s, amidst a climate of dictatorships characterised by the reiterated and consistent violations of these rights. Prior to this –starting in the mid-seventies– human rights denouncement and defence movements, particularly in the Southern Cone countries, begin gathering momentum to eventually escalate to a feverish pitch. Even after the process of transition to democracy is under way, these organisations do not simply vanish, but, quite the opposite; in fact, during this period concern for the promotion of initiatives involving human rights education appears to intensify. In the beginning, defence strategies, essentially educational in nature, are targeted at the population in general, and at the victims

of repression in particular. As repression fades and the opportunity for implementing educational programmes increases, the educational task is redefined. Basically, its first expressions have a non formal character, and concentrate in the more modest sectors of the population, those hardest hit by human rights violations (Früling and Waiser, 1986).

The need to go beyond mere denouncements, and adopt a sustainable and long-term strategy based on educating for the defence and protection of human rights, finds its first expressions in grass-roots movements. The permanent defence of human rights through a generalised type of education that promotes reflecting upon the factors that gave rise to these violations, is recommended as necessary. In short order, this concern extends to formal education modalities (Dueñas and Rodas, 1994; CEAAL, 1984, Sánchez F., 1984).

Educating for human rights, specially in the Southern Cone countries –but also in the Andean area– which were the victims of military dictatorship or *de facto* governments which in the 70s and 80s consistently violated these rights, is regarded as an ineluctable task of the school system, and seen as the only strategy for building awareness of and respect for these rights among the citizenry. Such flagrant violations to the fundamental rights of vast sectors of the population with the passive connivance of society, can not happen again. Thus, educating for human rights at the school is regarded not only as a preventive measure (a way of guaranteeing “never again”) but also as a reparation mission (Tirado K., 1994).

The violence that has permeated every social sphere, and the political repression that has blighted a large number of Latin American countries, largely explains this preoccupation with human rights. It is precisely this context of violence that raises the need to adopt education programmes for human rights, perceived as the first step towards building a just, participatory and democratic society (Früling and Waiser, 1986).

Objectives of an education on human rights

The objectives proposed for a human rights education are numerous, and variegated in nature: from the shaping of autonomous, rational, and participatory citizens well-adapted to living in democracy (Pérez and Mendoza, 1994), to imbuing the students with a sense of the value human life represents (Gil Cantero, 1994, Tirado K., 1994) culminating, as a long-term objective, in the development of a human rights culture that will prevent the reoccurrence of these violations. The short-term objective, is transforming these violent attitudes.

The idea is to generate an educational process which, centred on the individual as a moral being, aims at developing an autonomous conscience, and the responsible exercise of individual freedoms within an equitable education community where everyone is heard, respected, and valued as a thinking being. The formation of autonomous and self-controlled individuals capable of transforming their reality and promoting a life style based on respect for human dignity, has been deemed particularly important (Conde Flores, 1994). Education has been assigned a crucial role in the process of going from rhetoric to the actual everyday observance and practice of these rights (Magendzo and Dueñas, 1994). Human rights, for their part, have been accorded the capability of representing the foundation of a moral and ethical education (Gil Cantero, 1994).

Human rights education is expected to have an important social impact, namely, maximise compassion and minimise the tendency to resort to violence (Misgeld, undated) or, conversely, promote a culture of solidarity which starting from changes in our own personal attitudes, reaches out to change economic, legal, and political structures, rendering them truly subservient to the people (Archbishopric of Santiago, 1993).

It would appear that the objectives entrusted to human rights education are all quite ambitious. However, the mechanism for attaining

these goals through educational initiatives –specifically through the schooling system– is not always clear. On the other hand, the proposals being offered are all too general and fail to distinguish education stages or modalities.

The proposals, as such, represent a set of good –albeit ambitious– intentions. Thus, we perceive the need to devote our efforts to the formulation of theoretically sound, carefully graded and easily assessed objectives. When attempting to translate these type of objectives into educational proposals, however, the gaps between what one wishes to do and what is actually accomplished, and the sheer magnitude of the proposed task, become all too evident.

Education for human rights - theoretical underpinnings

We can not claim the existence of a body of theoretical knowledge specifically designed to support human rights education, for it is the very same one that underpins value-oriented education. Curiously, the theoretical principles underlying value-oriented formation appear to be much less developed than those associated with cognitive knowledge.

The pedagogical basis of value-oriented education –part of the new school movement– lack the appropriate evaluative mechanisms that can demonstrate that those who have benefited from these type of processes have, in fact, received a better value formation. The moral judgement theory, developed by Kohlberg *et al* (1971, 1980) based on Piaget's observations of the moral judgement process in children (1969), seems to provide the soundest rationale for this set of processes. In fact, serious attempts to present value-oriented formation, or education for peace and human rights programmes with a theoretically solid foundation, more often than not, resort to these bases. However, this approach is not exempt from criticism. Among them, the lack of conclusive empirical evidence regarding the outcome of educational processes

patterned after these theoretical formulations: the issue of ambiguity before the adoption –or rejection– of absolute values, or, if nothing else, their identification; the still unsettled problem concerning the alleged supra-cultural nature of these proposals, and the process of moral development in human beings. Still and all, the moral judgement theory is clearly the farthest advanced in our area of interest.

Our bibliographical search, failed to produce research studies “made in Latin America” that could help us further the theoretical basis of value-oriented education. There is an evident need to conduct basic research in this area, as a first step to building a more solid support to processes whose significance is shared by us all.

One thing this theory makes perfectly clear is that the value-oriented education process –as is the purely cognitive process– is obviously evolutionary. This being the case, the proposed educational objectives must –first and foremost– be closely related to cognitive objectives. Secondly, the objectives of value-oriented education, should be clearly graded and differentiated to reflect the evolutionary process undergone by the student.

As regards the historical basis of human rights education, the presence of an increasingly universalised definition of human ethics –which is becoming more complex and complete over time– along with a growing preoccupation for adopting this ethic essentially through educational mechanisms, is distinctly beginning to emerge. The question would seem to be, if the education system does not assume this responsibility, who else will?

Human rights evolve, going from the individual, to the cultural, and to the social planes, even venturing into the global dimension. By contrast, education appears to be stagnant, imprisoned, as it were, between individualistic formulations, strongly linked to the rallying cry that inspired the creation of UNESCO: that wars are built in the minds of men, and it is in the minds of men where the bastions of peace must be erected. Lately, a growing concern for

the communal and social aspects of education has been evidenced in the increasingly insistent and consensual views of the importance of the hidden curriculum, and of institutional school management in value-oriented education. However, this socially-oriented perspective of education still requires a more intense dissemination.

Virtually in every Latin American country, the responsibility that falls to the education systems in matters of human rights education, has been officially acknowledged. However, this recognition is relative new and the proposals set forth by the State in this sense, are light years away from being consolidated, let alone, put into action. The proposal, in all the cases reviewed, is based on a construction initiative. Those of us outside government spheres who have worked intensely in this area, are convinced that their incorporation seriously challenges the operational, structural, and organisational bases of the traditional Latin American school system. On the other hand, these experiences have brought forth the unavoidable complexity of the work a human rights education project involves. This raises the question as to what strategies will the State use to discharge this responsibility massively, but it also leads to the conviction that, if earnestly accepted, there will be no shortcuts or an easy way out. Indeed, a first step entails acknowledging and assuming the complexity inherent in processes involving human rights education.

Conceptual aspects of human rights education

The recent preoccupation with value-oriented education has given rise to an apparently paradoxical phenomenon.

On the one hand, given the diversity of currents underlying value-oriented education conceptualisations, there is the potential danger of giving completely different phenomena exactly the same name. Concern over the polysemia of the terms employed in this field

of education, was made evident at the 1994 World Conference on Education sponsored by UNESCO. This, however, does not constitute—in Latin America’s case—too serious a problem since, despite the existence of diverging currents in matters concerning value-oriented education and, specifically, human rights education, there is an overall predominating trend, known as the “holistic paradigm”. The term holistic means that every dimension of the man or child is taken into account, and that value-oriented education is considered not a single subject matter, but an integral part of the curriculum—both hidden and explicit—as well as a social organisation both within the classroom and the school.

On the other hand, we may be building differentiated conceptual schemes and giving different names to phenomena which are basically the same. Value-oriented education, education for international understanding, human rights, peace, democracy. . . All of these share exactly the same theoretical bases. Therefore, the largest portion of their pedagogical and methodological proposals happen to coincide. While it is true that each of these different approaches to value-oriented education has its specific informative contents, it has been clearly determined that these do not mark essential differences.

Therefore, selecting one of these options over the others should not be a matter of great concern. Nor should this condition be understood as one where the different approaches vie for a space in the curriculum or a slot in the schedule of classes. We are not dealing with additive demands here. Rather, it would seem that any access to a value-oriented education will lead, through any of these approaches, to the attainment of the essential objectives of all of them.

If it came down to selecting the approach that would ensure the long-term sustainability of a value-oriented formation, at least in Latin America’s case—considering the historical trajectory and vigorous proposals that have spurred human rights education—, we would

hardly hesitate to propose human rights as the most suitable.

Pedagogical aspects of human rights education

Analysis of the pedagogical formulations underpinning value-oriented education, education for international understanding, peace, human rights, and democracy, confirmed the conceptual relationship previously mentioned. The strictly pedagogical basis of the different approaches to value-oriented education, are clearly the same. Value-oriented education, human rights education, education for peace, in fact, any one of them, as long as it is solemnly undertaken, will be deeply committed to teaching modalities, interpersonal relations within the school, and the very school structure and organisation. The reason this has got to be so, is that none of these approaches can represent mere additions to the curriculum, for if they were, the cognitive objectives might be achieved, but value-oriented education would not take place. This type of education presupposes the opportunity to experience through the school's daily grind, the values around which the educational process revolves. The essential principle underlying every pedagogical proposal, is the need to rely on methodologies that may prove consistent and consequent with what is being taught. If value-oriented education is the goal, reasoning with the students will always be insufficient: teachers must live these values, and let their students do likewise. This implies rethinking both school organisation and classroom practices, in order to galvanise dialogue, and affective interpersonal relationships.

Space limitations, make it impossible to cover in detail the pedagogical elements set forth in each approach. By way of example, we will mention a few of the main proposals:

– On value-oriented education in general. At the root of pedagogical proposals, there often lies a scathing criticism of the instrumental rationality of education that leads to a partial and

fragmented perception of life – as opposed to a global view. From this perspective, the regular operations that characterise traditional schools, are also objects of criticism. Consequently, proposals revolve around ways of evading these two restrictions.

- On human rights education. Respect for the individual – the learner – lies at the basis of human rights education. From an educational standpoint, this means encouraging the comprehensive development of the student, appreciating his capabilities, and reinforcing his self-esteem. Also, it would require a classroom conducive to freedom of thought and expression, where debate on conflictive issues associated with the daily manifestations of human rights, are actively promoted. The fundamental values of democracy must always be put into practice, for human rights are not learned by rote, they are lived. Human rights education also implies the application of new methodologies and work strategies that promote greater participation in the classroom. The learning process must be understood as a knowledge building - process. Discipline, for its part, must be differently viewed, no longer equated to silence or immobility, but to a behaviour based on respect and understanding.
- On education for peace. Because the point is not to teach about peace but teach for peace, the pedagogical strategy employed should stimulate and incorporate action, dialogue, commitment, co-operation, and participation. Pedagogy for peace peremptorily rejects verbal and symbolic violence. As with human rights education, education for peace sees in conflict one of its main objects of study, since in conflict resolution lie the seeds of peace. Similarly, education must be capable of providing the tools to adequately settle conflictive issues. Along these lines, assertion, self-esteem, and appreciation for others represent the basic attributes leading to the solution of conflicts.
- On education for democracy. An education designed for a multicultural society, contains

the essential knowledge and skills required in a democratic society. The aim of education for democracy is producing a critical student. Because democracy must be lived on a day to day basis, there should be spaces that allow students to express themselves, organise, and develop their own activities.

A swift review of these proposals for value-oriented education, however, reveals the enormous complexity implicit in the task, and its no less intense demands imposed on both schools and teachers. The gaping abyss that separates what pedagogy and school practice should be like in order to offer an atmosphere conducive to value-oriented education, from the way our schools actually operate, is yet to be bridged. Evidently, when alluding to value-oriented education we are envisaging radical changes on both sides of the gap: pedagogical practice and school organisation. Needless to say, this change can not be accomplished overnight. It must be gradual, and thoroughly prepared starting from training initiatives involving teaching and administrative staff. For all these reasons, value-oriented education can only propose long-term objectives.

Human rights education - curricular formulations and experiences

There is general consensus that, in terms of value-oriented education, the so called “hidden curriculum” has proven more effective than the explicit curriculum. The hidden curriculum conceals itself under the institutional structures and the daily interpersonal relations of school life. Hence, any curricular reform that does not plan on revamping current school structures and interpersonal relations, will be doomed to fail. Therefore, particular attention must be paid to the very critical hidden curriculum.

Until that day comes, however, there is agreement that our actions should focus on the explicit curriculum and that we must abide by its rules. In terms of the explicit curriculum, mul-

iple proposals have been made: starting from those that demand the teaching of values and related topics as instructional content, to those bent on basing the whole curriculum on them. In general, however, ordinary curricular subject matters are considered valuable as vehicles for value-oriented education –and human rights education, as well–, while the convenience of introducing a specific subject has also been suggested.

Actually, it is precisely in curricular formulations where we find the greatest number of proposals on human rights education at work. As mentioned earlier, these formulations and the concrete attempts at implementing them, must provide the framework to evaluate the ambitious abstract objectives of value-oriented education.

Overall, it is interesting to note the high degree of coincidence observed among the various proposals. While there are a number of currents that advance various mechanisms for introducing the objectives of value-oriented education into the curriculum, in Latin America’s case, one is clearly predominant and widely accepted. The strategy involves bolstering the hidden curriculum and permeating the existing curriculum with the value dimension.

A great number of curricular proposals have congealed into concrete experiences. Few, however, have been properly systematised or evaluated, a fact which points to a grave shortcoming that must be urgently rectified. Be that as it may, those experiences that have been subjected to a certain degree of systematisation reveal that –while educating for human rights is indeed a difficult task, which demands the staunch commitment of the educator, and the intense support of the promoter– it is feasible to do, and does yield good results.

Every successful experience ever recorded relies heavily on the work of the teacher. The important role of the educators has been widely acknowledged, as has the need to train them –even as subjects of rights–, to provide them with opportunities to upgrade their practices, and to experience new methods of interactive

work in the classroom. These appear as essential conditions to become successfully involved with their students, in a process of value-oriented education.

Recent experiences have yielded an extremely important finding: teachers who work in isolation will have to struggle to meet the instructional goals set forth in these proposals. In order to provide support structures, and favourable conditions for their realisation, the school as a whole must get involved, and through a concerted effort change its daily institutional routine.

We have noted the lack of material, experiences, and insight regarding the involvement of universities and other higher education institutions in the area of teaching, research and dissemination of value-oriented education. The same claim may be made in connection with the systematisation of adult education experiences, except that in this area of education practice is substantially richer. Perhaps a search directed at uncovering more material in these two fields may yield more information than that we were able to retrieve. Nonetheless, an inescapable conclusion is that these two spaces for value-oriented and human rights education, must be the targets of greater investigation and systematisation.

Strengthening human rights education - some reflections

The education system *in toto* –formal and non formal modalities, every level and every age group– has an undeniable responsibility to provide its users with an education inspired in values, ethics and sound moral principles. In so doing, it also contributes to building a society where all its citizens may live with dignity, in harmonious co-existence and respectful of individual, gender, cultural, racial, and religious differences; where there is a permanent opportunity to participate actively in the decision - making process, and in the daily vicissitudes of civic and political life; a society capable of guaranteeing sustainable and

long-term improvement of the planet's quality of life.

This claim is predicated on the fact that, while the school system is not the only agent –not perhaps the most efficient, at least for now – of value-oriented socialisation, it is nonetheless the one institution that, if so determined, could bring about profound and lasting results.

The implicit complexity of value-oriented education, demands uncompromising intensity, continuity, and systematisation. Based on the solidest theoretical formulation, systematisation becomes essential in the attainment of cognitive development which is, in turn, a precondition of moral development. According to this theory, educational systematisation becomes indispensable for advancing through the higher levels of moral judgement to achieve, in due time, an autonomous and principled moral.

On the other hand, schools are seemingly the only socialising institutions that can deliberately curb the indoctrinating impetus characteristic of some players in the field of value-oriented education. If we accept that the true ethical personality is comprised of autonomous, critical, and self-controlled people, we must also accept that the school must be the main actor in this process of value-oriented education.

In consequence, if the education system fails to assume responsibility in the ethical shaping of its beneficiaries, and the task is left to the vagaries of informal education, we can hardly envisage an ethically forged population in our future.

We have already observed how the various approaches to value-oriented education have a common theoretical foundation, share an identical pedagogical orientation, and a large portion of their objectives. In Latin America's case, we feel that access to value-oriented education should be secured through education on and for human rights.

Human rights education has been assumed by the school system –although only recently– as an educational imperative. Within our regional context, human rights education is cer-

tainly the most prolific orientation, having been the object of theoretical formulations, proposals, experiences, systematisation initiatives, and evaluations. A great deal of material has been produced, along with teacher training programme proposals. From this approach, the terrain that will nurture the seeds of value-oriented education, appears to be much more fertile.

Future obstacles

An earnest proposal designed to reinforce value-oriented education, and led by our education systems, would necessarily entail acknowledging the difficulties it has encountered in terms of development and implementation, as a first step to solving them. Some of the major obstacles are the following:

- The first difficulty, constitutes the need to deliberately prevent efforts aimed at value-oriented education from becoming indoctrinating processes. Owing precisely to the theoretical and pedagogical precariousness of value-oriented education formulations, the boundaries between the process that produces individuals who autonomously build their own value system, and the process that gives rise to indoctrination, are still ill-defined. It is imperative that these are identified, and the necessary measures are taken in order to counter the temptation of taking the easy way out, for value-oriented education will always be the moralising influence.
- A second difficulty relates to teacher training. Teachers must be trained if they are to become value-oriented educators. This concept is new. They have never before received this kind of training, nor have they ever had the chance to experiment with alternative teaching modalities, more in line with these objectives. The task at hand is far from easy. First, the education system must observe the human rights of the teachers engaged to do the work. This also implies treating the teacher as a subject of value-oriented and human rights education, reviewing his/her teaching practice, and the likely possibility of having to train him/her to

adopt different teaching techniques. Then, too, it means a relatively long slog as an apprentice until such time that the new practices are well consolidated, and the teacher is effectively in a position to put together a human rights education programme, cued to the daily happenings of the school and local community. A value-oriented education that dispenses with teachers, is simply unthinkable.

- A third difficulty has to do with the school's structure and organisation and, by extension, with the school system as a whole. The way schools operate nowadays, and how they relate to the broader education system are, in several important aspects, at cross purposes with the type of relationship value-oriented education seeks to foster. Should these contradictions persist, the risk of generating undesirable education outcomes derived from internalising simulation, may become all too real.
- A fourth hurdle is exemplified by the gap that separates theoretical formulations that underscore the evolutionary aspects of value-oriented education processes, and the objectives proposed by the various approaches, which as a rule are general, abstract, too ambitious, and their results not amenable to evaluation. These objectives must be more accurately proposed, taking into account the age of the beneficiaries, and what is expected at each stage.
- Schools can not fend for themselves. This is why they must attempt to strengthen their bonds to every possible socialising agency within the community. However, this also implies the need for schools to systematically incorporate the events of the larger society –from the local to the international– and the problems it wishes to resolve collectively, as subjects of analysis. We are, once more, confronted with the need to rid the schools and classrooms of their present operating style, so as to transform the skills –and even the lack of communication– among socialising agencies, into useful synergism.

These are just a few of the problem areas we will have to tackle if the objective pursued,

that is, to educate individuals who autonomously decide to live by the principles and values that underpin human rights, is ever to leave the experimental and alternative niche it now occupies, to become a concrete objective of our education systems. Undoubtedly, a daunting challenge. However, there are distinct signs that, as a region, we are headed in the right direction, and that any progress materialised in a near future will depend to a large extent on those of us who have a stake in education, and the experience to see changes to their completion.

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SOCIAL RIGHTS AND THE RIGHT TO AN EDUCATION. A MODERN CONTEXT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Pablo Salvat B*

Prior to addressing some aspects of the social rights issue, which include the right to an education, allow me to introduce some relevant structural and contextual elements I feel may help orient the reader.

When speaking of social rights and of the need to vindicate them, it would seem appropriate to approach these discussion from a more generic perspective.

The appeal to human rights, has become a rallying cry for institutions, social actors, and politicians at the national and international levels. This has been particularly evident in the aftermath of the authoritarian regimes that have marred our historical traditions, and in the foundering of some of the major reform models.

While from the standpoint of human rights, this clearly represents a step in the desired direction, we must not be deluded into thinking that the world shares a common view of how to interpret, enforce and promote them. Moreover, it is just possible that behind their reiterated use and convocation, there may lurk a desire to convert them into something banal or “in vogue”, that is to say, into something of relatively fleeting importance.

The multiple readings human rights are often subjected to, tend to be skewed and unilateral, a clear indication that they are the product of specific and segmenting interests which either place undue priority on some at the expense of others, or leave out certain type of rights. Furthermore, they have been put to various uses; from giving support to specific ideological or political positions, to making statements in favour of neutrality.

As a result of this built-in bias, the historical impact and social symbolism of human rights, to the extent that they represent a sort of col-

lective manifestation which structures social integration from without, becomes increasingly weaker.

In the case of human rights, this would involve a symbolism born out of the desire to render social invisibility visible or, differently put, to expose existing asymmetries. Readings that introduce biases preclude a comprehensive analysis, that is, the demand that calls for the coherent articulation and promotion of what has been aptly termed the three generations of human rights.

For this reason, a comprehensive conceptualisation of human rights could be used both as a referent and as a symbol to be promoted at the different social orders. Human rights operate as critical parameters that shepherd the various actions and practices –educational, social, political and so forth– we are immersed

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in. And, this is valid not only in places where human rights are but a thin crust which fails to cover the most fundamental aspects of civil and political rights, but also in those countries where a relatively stable democratic system has ossified.

The analysis of the different types of rights and how they interrelate to each other, is particularly applicable in Latin and Central America since we have experienced –in the flesh– the insufficiency of proclaiming civic and political rights formally and constitutionally. Persisting inequalities, glaring injustices, and an assortment of discriminatory practices, make the promotion of human rights and their access by the various social sectors, a hopeless proposition. In the presence of cultural or political exclusion, and economic want, democracy becomes brittle, restricted, and an easy target for authoritarian or messianic “solutions”.

Consequently, the idea is to find –in an interpretation of the condition of man at the close of the century– the education and awareness-building processes associated with human rights, and approach them from a different perspective. From such a perspective we could visualise these rights –and fight for them if need be– as the keystone of a brand new breed of citizen who, at the various social strata, would be able to peacefully promote an active and bold participation in decision-making initiatives for the furtherance of the desirable social order.

Reform and the new problems

A second element related to the rekindling of the human rights discourse –specially in connection with social rights– has to do with current world-wide reforms, and the problems they have given rise to. In this context, a marked cultural and political disenchantment with present strategies for co-existence, the type of democracy that is really at work in the various countries, and the preponderance of an all pervading economy-driven rationale, seems to have occupied centre stage. This state of af-

fairs is directly linked to cultural restructuring, the globalisation phenomenon induced by the financial/entrepreneurial current, and the vast changes introduced by the technological and communications revolution.

The expansion of economic neo-liberalism, the lack of alternative options, along with the crisis undergone by utopian paradigms would, over time, determine the undisputed triumph of capitalism, the culmination of historic evolution, and the solution for the world’s major problems.

With the benefit of hindsight, we can observe that the actual turn of historical events has not seemed to favour this interpretation. Quite the opposite in fact. The seemingly erratic course taken by modern reforms, has not prevented the emergence of newfangled conflicts inspired in issues such as environmental protection, quality of life problems, the demand for equal rights and greater citizen participation, drug addiction, corruption, new and more violent forms of discrimination, and the increment of poverty belts (recent additions to the Northern hemisphere; business as usual in the Southern hemisphere).

This rearranged conflict geography –which is equally present at the national and international levels–, the imposition of modernisation strategies inspired in the tenets of capitalism, and the dearth of utopian alternatives, have nurtured a deeply felt and fast spreading ethical disaffection. Hence, new parameters are being sought that may guide present discontentment as well as future actions.

A new democratic proposal

A third factor in the Latin American and Central American context, concerns the need to retrieve and formulate a broader concept of democracy. This implies engineering a democratic proposal that transcends a purely formal-representative expression and, particularly, one that is not determined solely on the basis of voter preferences.

In this respect, our countries find themselves at different stages of development. Thus, while some have firmly established their democratic institutionalisation –albeit with occasional interruptions– others are still struggling for unencumbered political participation, and the right to vote freely. All in all, however, the region has seen remarkable and generalised progress in terms of returning to democracy. Despite its restrictions and weaknesses, the region's massive return to the democratic fold is permanently exerting pressure on those governments and states that still restrict the political prerogatives of their citizens.

In this sense, linking the construction of democracy to a comprehensive view of human rights, as outlined above, constitutes a major challenge of our times. However, a caveat is in order. We must not be deluded into thinking that by adopting voting and civic participation strategies we have exhausted democracy's arsenal. Therefore, perhaps our first line of action in this area, would be to elaborate a critical x-ray of our democratic systems –not infrequently thought of as limited–, build awareness of the need to rethink our democratic institutions, and the will to see it through. Change must be launched from within our democracy, not with the intention of suppressing or negating it, but in an effort to examine how it can best reflect the spirit embodied in human rights.

Seen in this light, the role and place of civil society –and within it that of education– become essential. We are cognisant of the fact that, once upon a time, the subjects and protagonists of change were objects of heatedly debated issues. Today, we have come to realise that no one place or individual has the monopoly on ethical quality or substance. The contribution of every individual concerned with the implementation of new social expressions and formal institutions, provided they are consistent with the human rights paradigm, is both welcomed and desirable.

A grander mission, overarching the issues dealing with politicians and citizens, involves

defining a mechanism capable of linking current economic reforms to human rights objectives. Such a mechanism should be congruous with the type of development under way, international economic reforms, and the consequences it could have on existing democracies. However, there is a widespread notion that neither human rights nor democracy have a significant role to play in this area. Assuming this to be the case, the greatest challenge would lie in opening a space for dialogue wherein economic reforms, and the respect and promotion of social rights, find a common platform. Failure to do so, could project the image of democracy as a feeble option, unable to take on a number of long overdue measures, thus giving rise to a spiral of frustrations.

These are the components of the new context that must be taken into account when advocating social rights, the right to an education, and the actions that should be undertaken towards their promotion. In other words, our interpretation of social rights today, differs vastly from that in vogue in the 50s or 60s. In fact, in the face of present reforms, the question remains whether we should adopt new ways of proposing and articulating the validity and currency of the rights sanctioned in the various international instruments.

Perfecting justice and redefining the armed institutions

A fourth point of importance in our proposal on social rights, has to do with violence, impunity, the much needed revamping of the judicial system, and the redefinition of armed institutions and security forces.

In this respect, in many of our countries the inalienable right to life has been scarred by unexplained deaths, missing persons, and extra-judicial executions. These occurrences, are provoked by the intervention of armed groups either in collusion with powerful sectors or regular police forces or, in some cases, the result of guerrilla-led confrontations.

The problem lies in the inability to make justice, and thus provide a measure of relief to the victims of such crimes. Most of these crimes go unpunished, and because the truth is never known, justice or reparation become elusive or impossible to materialise.

Regrettably, many of our societies –those unable to make justice prevail– factor in the impunity parameter. This state of affairs obeys to powerful and specific reasons, among them, the inefficiency and incapacity of the legal apparatus. Quite often, either owing to neglect, fear or corruption –and not infrequently to the pressure exerted by armed institutions which in some countries retain important quotas of influence and advocate a concept of national security that antecedes the fall of the Berlin wall– due process of law is not followed.

If our societies wish to consolidate their democratic processes, these security issues will have to be addressed, along with a redefinition at the national level of the role played by the armed forces in a democratic society that longs for justice and peace, and where their help and collaboration is welcomed. Until that happens, it will be important to advance, from within the classrooms –both from within and without–, proposals that may lead to peaceful and negotiated solutions to existing conflicts.

What human rights are we talking about or the “generation” issue

The recurrence of the human rights issue in modern dialectic (political, legal, social), does pose certain problems and difficulties in terms of their recognition and implementation. An often debated issue is associated with the historical emergence of new rights, and with the degree of philosophical, political and legal consensus they elicit. Hence, the concept of human rights “generations”. The generation issue has to do with the following notion: is it feasible to contemplate stunting the growth of the human rights’ genealogical tree established by the Universal Declaration of 1948?

We know that human rights date back to prehistoric times, and are deeply rooted in the past. We also know that in modern times they have evolved significantly. Keeping these facts in mind, to think that its unfolding could be, once and for all, frozen in the present, borders on the absurd.

From the perspective of their historic evolution, human rights have undergone different moments or stages. A “first generation” involved political or civil rights, also known as individual rights or rights of the people. In synthesis, during this generation an attempt is made to secure the rights to

- protect the physical integrity of the individual (right to life),
- protect the freedom of the individual,
- guarantee due process of law without discrimination,
- protect an individual’s political and syndical activity.

Also included here are the rights to participate in public affairs, vote, elect or be elected, and the rights to freedom of expression, association, worship, et cetera. To a large extent, these rights rest on the philosophical tenets of liberalism, in its various nuances. The underlying issue, is the freedom of the individual and of the prerogatives he is entitled to, when confronted with the powers that be.

The history of this first generation can be traced to the 1789 French Declaration, and the 1776 American Declaration, two relevant watershed events. However, not all the rights sanctioned in the International Covenant on Civic/Political Rights (1966) formed part of the 18th century declarations which inspired it. As is well known, these rights protect the physical integrity of these individuals, and their freedom, when confronted with possible acts of aggression from others or from the State itself.

The International Covenant on Civic/Political Rights is based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights drafted after World War II (1948), which proclaims that the right to freedom and equality is an innate and inalienable right of all men; and, that human beings,

men and women alike, owing to their rational and moral nature, differ from other living beings which inhabit the earth and, therefore, have certain exclusive rights and privileges.

Second human rights generation: economic, social, and cultural rights

As with civic and political rights, the metamorphosis of certain social demands into potential rights, has been the result of historical events. This relatively recent process, has not been –nor is, as we speak– exempt from conflictive interpretations arising from power struggles or the social and historical context characteristic of a particular period.

The pivotal point of the conflict generated by social rights has to do with their level of recognition and exigency. We will see why later on.

For now, let us say that, according to experts, well into the 19th century the needs embodied in these rights were to a large extent met within the family locus or, in the case of the underprivileged, through the good will of private individuals, which later on became the public and private welfare services. Both modalities made use of alms or voluntary contributions, and assistance in the form of food, education, health or clothing, targeted at needy groups or individuals. Not all of them, obviously, nor in the required amounts.

Later, during the course of the 19th century, this assistance took the form of an institutionalised social security structure, an attempt by society to offset the repercussions of economic and technical progress, through public and private charity initiatives.

Up to now, this assistance had been viewed as charitable deeds, and expressions of the bonhomie of individuals and institutions bent on helping the victims of adversity. Gradually, however, these needs no longer regarded as objects of charity or altruism, metamorphosed into rights granted to all people on the sole strength of their belonging to a social group. Indeed, the industrial revolution helped to se-

cure some rights –placing limits on the number of hours worked and its intensity–, as did the first manifestations of social insurance –health and accident– which the industrialists committed themselves to abide by.

Over time, this type of insurance would become public and compulsory, and would be made up of state funds as well as employees' contributions. In the labour sector, these vindications were materialised by the creation of entities such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 1919, intended to act as a regulatory labour relations mechanism, and defend specific social rights (mostly economic in nature).

Another important instance of recognition and legitimisation of social rights, can be found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, although it was not officially adopted until the 50s.

Articles 22 through 27 contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, constitute a sort of acknowledgement of the validity of certain social demands, now presented under the form of rights. Article 22 states that “every person, as a member of society, is entitled to social security, and to exercise, through national and international initiatives, and contingent on the organisation and resources available to each State, the economic, social, and cultural rights that are essential to the dignified and free development of his personality”.

Article 23 of this Declaration, addresses the right to gainful employment and satisfactory working conditions. Article 25, for its part, upholds the right every individual has to “an adequate standard of living which ensures his well - being as well as that of his family, particularly with respect to food, clothing, housing, medical assistance, and the necessary social services”.

Articles 26 and 27 refer to educational and cultural rights. Article 26, sanctions the right every person has to an education. A right, however, may have two faces: on the one hand, from the standpoint of equal opportunities and discrimination based on economic status, it is

liable to be exacted from the State. However, that is not all. This right also delimits the regulatory guidelines that must govern the contents of educational action. On the one hand, it promotes the development of liberties, tolerance and human rights. On the other, it also preserves –at the public/state level– the right parents have to choose the type of education they want for their children.

Social rights

The Declaration of Social Rights, contains an important breakthrough in terms of characterising certain social demands as a set of rights equally relevant to all members of society. The Declaration exhibits a clear tendency to broaden and universalise human rights, to include all men and women, not just the working population.

Heretofore, the vindication of social rights had been fought on behalf of the workers, and did not have the hierarchy of “human rights”.

With the legitimisation of these social demands as rights, two relevant issues were settled: first, it was established beyond a doubt that these rights are applicable to men not owing to their condition of workers, but to their condition of citizens, and members of a given social group. Second, the reference to the condition of human dignity and the conditions that are required to achieve it, were advocated as *sine qua non*. From this perspective, its contemplation is not merely perfunctory, but warrants the treatment of a “human right”.

Seen under this light, social rights become the possession of society as a whole and become, once acknowledged, regulatory criteria to determine when and to what extent a State that calls itself social, is in fact one.

This point continues to be valid today, at a time when the social State –particularly the Welfare State– has become the target of widespread criticism, to the point of obscuring the fact that some social demands constitute rights that each citizen is entitled to exact from the ruling powers. Particularly so, when the problems connected with the funding of social

spending, usually claim their first victims precisely from among the dispossessed and disadvantaged, that is, those who are least capable of opposing such measures.

While the presence of both human rights “generations” in the Universal Declaration may seem out of balance, these two sets of rights appear to recover their equilibrium as part of the International Covenants (1966, International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights). In this connection, the Preamble to the International Covenant states that “(...) in the absence of conditions that allow each individual to exercise his/her economic, social, and cultural rights, as well as his/her civic and political rights, our goal of a free human being delivered from fear and misery, will be unattainable”.

Social rights - problems and difficulties

The discrepancies between both sets of rights have given rise to numerous discussions and debates relative to their meaning, scope, and level of exigency.

A first debate issue has to do with the factual contradiction, on the part of the States, between the international legal recognition of civil and political rights, and the recognition that has been granted to social rights.

In relation to this, a sort of double standard with respect to both sets of rights and covenants, would seem to be at play. On the one hand, an ideological or philosophical difference depending on how human rights are perceived by the individual; on the other, a difference of a practical/legal and political nature, derived from the exigency and enforceability formulas of these rights.

As regards the first point, political/ideological differences coincide in making the distinction between both sets of rights, giving a higher priority to some, while establishing at the same time their odds for concretion. From the more liberal Western hemisphere, emphasis was placed on individual civic and political rights; from the Eastern side of the socialist world, social rights were favoured.

The fact that, based on political and ideological considerations, the set of rights was divided into two covenants, has not gone unnoticed. First, it has contributed to disseminate the notion that the differences between the two covenants are not due to contingent reasons, but to substantive philosophical alternatives. Second, it had an effect on the drafting of the covenants themselves, whose wording made it clear that the only enforceable rights are those associated with civic and political matters, adding that social rights –better described as occupying the locus of things that are owed– can not be vindicated until the various States feel confident enough to tackle the task.

This division has reinforced a theoretical/practical distinction which, along with a recent stream of reforms, has influenced the conceptualisation of human rights unity, and the degree of exigency to which the citizens are entitled.

This view has led to challenge the role played by the State and, hence, its participation as potential guarantor of the social rights set forth in the International Covenant. If the social role of the State is consistently weakened, who will process and represent the general interests of the population in this area? Could issues such as health, education, housing, or old age be addressed from a purely commercial perspective?

As mentioned earlier, during the first generation, political rights were defined as the rights/liberties possessed by each individual –by virtue of his dignity or nature– relative to power structures, whether represented by the State or other groups. Liberalism, its philosophical backbone, advocates –through its diverse nuances– a minimal intervention of the State in the social and personal affairs of individuals, while remitting the attainment of basic social welfare services, to the generosity of private persons or to public or private assistance.

In contrast, the second generation focuses on the rights that society and the State would owe their members or citizens. While in the

first generation the objective was to protect the individual from the undue intervention of the State in his private affairs, in the second generation the idea is to mobilise the power of the State, and place it at the service of the social actor.

Social rights draw their inspiration from the philosophy espoused by Socialism and Christianity, which holds that there could be no legitimate development of freedom if accompanied by misery, poverty or extreme levels of inequality.

Therefore, the two generations described are differently linked to the individual, society, and the State. Freedom rights, claim as their protection the existence of a buffer zone, off-limits to the State or other power groups, where the individual can give vent to his own private initiative, and autonomous thinking. Under these conditions, the State must refrain from interfering, and must observe an attitude of abstinence and dispensability. Conversely, in social rights there is an explicit appeal to the active participation of the State which, through the implementation of a number of policies, undertakes to guarantee or enforce these rights (to education and health, for instance).

In the last twenty years this approach, which places the burden of social rights on the shoulders of the State or other public powers, has been the object of bitter criticism. In fact, some defenders of individual rights –who claim these to be the “only” rights– have impugned the validity of social rights as a “human right” and, therefore, do not share the interdependency and indivisibility thesis propounded by them. In their view, rights would only be conferred by and on individuals susceptible of being typified, sanctioned, and held accountable for their acts.

The existence of diverse theories for conceiving and implementing social rights –as rights owed the citizenship–, raises a question as to which sort of State and procedures would best lend themselves to their concretion. From this perspective, social rights are seen as rights inspired in the quest for justice. This is also where public and social policies are scrutinised and their promotional potential weighed.

Degrees of exigency

Another axis of debate unfolds along the issue of the degree of exigency these rights have for the various states and governments. When a state tramples on an individual's civic or political right, the law provides elements for defining the crime, establishes the mechanisms he/she has recourse to, and outlines the protocol to be followed before the courts. Social rights, however, have yet to adopt a standardised criterion for settling any such violation, or determining the eventual responsibility of the states.

While the Social Rights Covenant calls upon states and governments to include these rights as desirable objectives of their policies and initiatives, it also cautions that their concretion should be attained progressively –a logical and reasonable request–, and leaves their implementation to the discretion of said states and governments. Hence, it would be up to them to “know” when the time is right.

Perhaps this is why, for a number of years now, the United Nations has been putting together an organised plan to address this issue, precisely at a time when all indications are that, across the world, privatisations and the market are “the” essential mechanisms that will catalyse the development and enforcement of these rights.

The group responsible for this joint effort –launched by the Human Rights Commission, and in particular, by the Sub-Committee for the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities–, has been tasked with the drafting of criteria designed to:

- determine when social rights are being observed or violated;
- facilitate the celebration of a public debate with the participation of the various actors involved;
- assign national and international responsibilities and determine the reparation mechanisms applicable to the transgressing parties.¹ This

¹ Report to the Sub-Committee for the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities, on “The realisation of economic, social, and cultural rights” prepared by José Bengoa, Geneva, July 1995.

is viewed as an essential task in the countering of anti social rights allegations generated by those who oppose state intervention or advocate market-based orientations.

Lastly, we are left with the sensation that this is not something resolvable through the use of technical measures and criteria. This tendency to dichotomise these sets of rights and pit one against the other, will probably require their reformulation, keeping in mind, however, the mutations they are exposed to, and their relations of interdependence.

Because both generations (those represented by liberty and equality) have modernity as a common ancestor –as do human rights as we know them today–, their reformulation must critically assess the modern context in which they are inserted. That is to say, in this light the extent to which their articulation, recognition, and implementation problems may originate in the basic model underlying them (legal, epistemological, ethical/political), becomes a most valid question.

Is it our opinion that this issue could be addressed from an integrating perspective which preserving the specificities of both sets of rights, facilitates an articulation and interpretation from a different locus and / or category. This locus or category would be represented by the solidarity concept. From this platform of solidarity, it is feasible to articulate dignity, liberty, and equality –through a reformulation–, as qualities that belong to all persons, by virtue of their human nature.

Thus, solidarity could lay the groundwork for a reformulated definition of what the relationships between people, society, and State should be like, avoiding at the same time the pitfalls of tunnel –vision neo-liberalism, statism, and relativism. This could yield a new, open and dynamic synthesis. This initiative would help visualise human rights as the ethical foundation of solidary responsibility. We feel that the fostering of an ethical foundation of solidary responsibility based on human rights constitutes –at least for the time being– the best launching pad for a global civic society

built on mutual respect, concern for the environment, social justice, and democratic ideals.

Respect for education in general, and education on and for human rights in particular, contribute importantly to the concept of a solidary responsibility.

The right to an education and human rights education

Education turned a right, is one of the social demands adopted by both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (article 26), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (article 13). This right is intended, on the one hand, to guarantee equal access to all levels of education, in other words, to expand the scope and coverage of the education system in every country and, on the other, to involve the member States in the promotion of a sort of education based on respect for the person's dignity, mutual tolerance and understanding.

This right safeguards equal access to a quality education –equality that must be guaranteed by the public authorities– and encourages and fosters an education based on the acknowledgement of human rights –on the part of both teachers and students. Respect for and the promotion of human rights within the education system, will ensure that this right is observed and implemented as part of the citizen - building process.²

While this right concerns itself with education as a right which is demandable from society and the State, it also underscores those attitudinal and value contents the States should promote at every level of the education system. For example, article 13 states that “education must train all persons to participate effectively in a free society, and promote under-

standing, tolerance and friendship among nations (...)”. Along with practical recommendations, it contributes an element that on occasions is distinctively displayed: the freedom all parents are entitled to, when it comes to selecting their children's school, the only condition being that the institution observes minimal standards in terms of methodology and contents. At the same time, the article acknowledges the right of private individuals to own and run educational institutions, so long as they abide by basic regulation prescribed by the State.

Our America's history

With regard to our beloved America, it is interesting to recall that from its beginnings as an independent continent, there was an evident preoccupation with ascribing education the character of a national, public service institution. This view strengthened the responsibility of the State, and gave rise to the concept of the “teaching State”, which to different degrees still prevails.

The influence of liberalism and positivism also contributed to delimit the education areas, establishing the distinction between public, lay, State - run schools, and private institutions either autonomous or affiliated to various church groups. The distinction also involved financial aspects, and assigned the State the role of central organiser and main funding agency of an education system which showed evidence of increased differentiation in its primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

As one would expect, the speed at which these processes were implemented in Latin America differed markedly, as a reflection of the political stability, the consolidation of a middle class, economic development, and the existing levels of social and ethnic integration exhibited by the various countries.

Starting in the 50s, education begins to expand steadily. For example, the rate of absolute illiteracy which in the 50s represented 43 per cent of the 15 or older age group, had dropped to 27 per cent by 1970, and to 17 per

² Resolution 1997/7 of the Sub-Committee for the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities of the United Nations Human Rights Commission in which is stated that it is not possible a real respect of the right to education without a human rights education.

cent fifteen years later. Remarkable progress was also evidenced in middle and higher education which by 1985 covered 52 per cent of the corresponding student population.

Of course, this increased education coverage has never been equally distributed in Latin America or in the Caribbean and, in fact, in many cases it deepened existing gaps. Under these circumstances, it could be affirmed that massive education has yet to work out grave problems associated with quality and distribution.

In the 70s and early 80s, the persistence of authoritarian governments gives rise to a totally new scenario. Both the development model implemented, and the concept of a social State come under fire, while the neo-liberal approach begins to gather momentum. The time has come –and persist to this day– to privatise, favour market - oriented initiatives, rely on a more aggressive participation of the private sector, become part of the world economy, and apply adjustment policies. The crises, economic political, and technological changes, are not without influence on the education system, to the point of challenging the truth behind the assertion that education is a human right guaranteed by the social order.

Equal opportunity and the quality of education, are some of the issues that surface during this period. Neo-liberal policies appear to have contributed to exacerbating existing gaps in terms of access to the different educational levels, particularly at the secondary and tertiary levels. But, this is not all. Under neo-liberalism, education is not envisioned as a tool for political and social change, but as an instrument subordinated to an economic rationale.

Consequently, we are confronted with the daunting challenge of formulating public and social policies capable of closing the gap that excludes so many from the education system. Thus, we would also contribute importantly to giving education the true meaning of a human right. With reference to the social distribution of accountability, the proliferation of democratic regimes in the continent, has tended to

make things more complex, and to introduce new demands to the field of education, both in terms of redefining decision-making procedures, and calling for a more active participation of the community.

On the defence of human rights education

Lastly –and most significantly–, based on the continent's historical record, it seems crystal clear that an education supported by technical skills and subservient to economic considerations, will be utterly insufficient. In fact, even guaranteeing universal and equal access to education –although of paramount importance– will also fall short of the mark.

Neither diversified technological instruction, nor equal and universal access to education, will guarantee that this knowledge has a human rights orientation, a point that can not be overemphasised. Nor will they give us any assurance that our culture will be conceived in democracy, or that our citizenry will regard tolerance, rational thinking, debating, respect for that which is different, freedom of speech, and solidarity, as the pillars of the learning and socialisation process.

This is precisely where educating for human rights can play its most ambitious role. We claim that education bears an enormous responsibility in preventing the re-enactment of past tragedies in our continent, where so many innocent people have paid with their lives. A German thinker once asked: How will we educate after Auschwitz? Shouldn't we be asking ourselves the same question in view of our own national tragedies?

Therein lies the importance of a human rights education for our citizens. It will help us create a participatory political order, where critical thinking, knowledge and decision-making abilities will be encouraged, along with the capacity to solidarise, and feel compassion. Absent these, the equitable delivery of knowledge and skills will not help us prevent a type of co-existence marred by exclusion and the potential to harm our fellow man.

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION: REFLECTIONS AND CHALLENGES BEFORE THE NEW CENTURY

Abraham Magendzo K*

This paper constitutes an attempt to critically analyse human rights education from the platform it is most likely to be debated on, and within a context that could accurately be defined as a “situational crisis”. Human rights education must face this crisis unreservedly and from lofty standards of judgement. For, human rights education is shaped by a context which it gradually proceeds to transform according to factual reality. From this standpoint, the word “crisis”, more than just a transitory unbalance, should be understood as a permanent state of transformation and mutation characterised by a unique feature of our times; its presence in each and every plane of social reality.

The men and women living the last days of this 20th century, have been confronted with a reformulated image of themselves manifested as a crisis of identity; a reformulated relationship with that which is transcendental, expressed as a crisis of faith; with their ethical relation to society represented as a value crisis; and, with an epistemological crisis stemming from their relationship with knowledge.

Similarly, human rights education must rise as an ethical referent before the increasing tendency to forget; a knight, if you will, at the service of memory.

The brief historical trajectory that marks human rights education, demands reflecting upon the number of challenges it must confront. For example, its massive dissemination; its insertion in the curricula; its results becoming part of public debate; and, the need to promote research in this area of education.

The crisis of identity

In modern times, the *crisis of identity* is perceived as a loss of a sense of belonging, the

blurring of boundaries, and the lack of a common project; however, not a project defined in the daily, familiar, organisational, communal or macrosocial planes, but one that may successfully cohere the wills. The absence of or exclusion from a cultural niche, the ability to break through the barriers that confine us, the inability to build joint proposals that may chart a pathway to a consentaneous future linked to our past and our present, are all important contributors to the identity crisis. The loss of identity leads to the fading of the self as a link in the human web. As such, it represents the maximum expression of isolation, disaffection, frustration, and alienation in man. Consequently, the identity crisis becomes a crisis of personal and social development, which culminates in an indistinct man immersed in a borderless society.

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The crisis of faith

The *crisis of faith*, defined as the inability to believe that change and transformation are possible, is inextricably bound to the crisis of identity. It represents the powerlessness to believe in transcendental or non-transcendental utopias. It is a crisis of the spirit, of assuming challenges, of freeing oneself from the “here and now”. It is a crisis marked by scepticism about the future, about the odds of building a more humane society, about formulating models that help man advance, and may ultimately deliver him. It is a crisis that beclouds the knowledge that all things “are there, available to us, at our finger tips”. It is a crisis that prevents us from taking risks, weighing possibilities and alternatives. It is a return to non believing, to the void.

The value crisis

The *value crisis* goes back in time, and is associated with modernising views and its post-modern criticism. It is linked to the disruption, loss and relativisation of values. It is also manifested through a “disenchantment” with traditional values, as exemplified by modernity’s historical events. These, which include numerous universal, western values associated with the religion and the family, are dismissed as old-fashioned, retrogressive, too rigid to conform to modern times and changing cultural spaces. The disenchantment with modernity values stem from an overemphasis on materialism, consumerism, and hedonism. The means do justify the end. There are no ethical principles loftier than those underlying the ethics of manipulation, power and control. However, the seeds of a broader crisis lie in the impossibility of offering consensual ethical or value alternatives. There is an urgent need to reconstruct an “accepted scale”. But, while some advocate communications, debates on polarising issues, and democratic participation,

there are others who, in an attempt to impose –not infrequently by forceful means– totalitarian and sacrosanct values, view value-building as detached from communication, dialogue, and participation. The crisis is the result of the supremacy of the latter, despite countervailing winds of reform. Fundamentalists, integrationists, and zealots of diverse nature seem to thrive even when the walls are tumbling down around us.

The epistemological crisis

The *epistemological crisis* relates to the aetiology, generation, distribution, and legitimisation of knowledge. Furthermore, it is associated with the prevalence of a instrumental-administrative-economic rationale that seems to permeate every cognitive plane.

The epistemological crisis, is yet another evidence of the monopoly that the world centres exert on the production and distribution of knowledge. Despite globalisation and internationalisation efforts, the social division of knowledge remains unequal and unbalanced, giving rise to dependencies, inequities, subjugation, and strong feelings of frustration. Knowledge, while it endows the individual with the ability to control and command, does not seek power. Another unique feature of this crisis is the devaluation of culture in everyday living, of self-identity, of knowledge circumscribed to a specific space and time. Any knowledge that does not conform to a positivistic rationality, or can not be quantified, or readily categorised, is simply stripped of any legitimacy. Above everything else, however, the type of knowledge derived from personal experience which does not have a universal transcendence, is automatically under rated.

As a result of the epistemological crisis, feelings of alienation along with a tendency to negate that which is legitimate, and to reject our own heritage, seem to erupt forcefully. That which is foreign must become part of us; room

must be made for a “borrowed” culture; unfamiliar values must be internalised.

The loss of identity, the disruption of values, and the inability to believe in change, represent but conspicuously visible expressions of the epistemological crisis. The cycle has been completed. We are convinced –albeit naively, but strongly– that human rights education is the factor invoked to undo the cycle.

Straddling between oblivion and memory

The temptation to turn our backs to the ebbing century before the presence of the 21st century, is indeed immense. There is a tendency to fix our sights on the future with little regard for the past. We wish to leave the 20th century behind, sunken in oblivion. A century that promised to deliver us from obscurantism, and to make utopias a reality. It did, however, give us two world wars, it allowed the rise and fall of despotic totalitarian forms of government, and –during its darkest hours– it violated human dignity and rights. There is an existential need to do an about face, to breathe new airs, create innovating projects; however, it is laced with an obsessive desire to forget, disregard, and disdain.

The desire to move on to a new period of amnesia is also present within us. As we begin the new millennium, Latin America evidences a strong inclination to turn a blind eye on reality, to invoke a fresh start, to call for the reconciliatory balm of forgetfulness. Let us leave behind recent episodes of violations, torture, violence, transgressions, trodden dignity... the missing.

Those in favour of blocking the past tend to ask: is insisting on memories not an overwhelming, oppressive, paralysing mission? We, human rights educators, have staunchly responded that forgetfulness means opening the gateways that will allow history to be relived; changing the dream back to a nightmare, real-

ity into martyrdom, doing the unthinkable. Today, racism, xenophobia, hatred and discrimination are bursting out with renewed malevolence. The defenders of oblivion are mistaken if they equate it to calmness, peace, and tranquility. Oblivion breeds storms of unimaginable proportions. Time and again, history has been a witness to their power of destruction. For, the wall yielded not to the impact of social proposals, but to the forces of unuttered cries. Some of the finest efforts went to keeping the silence from being heard. The result was collapse. Post-war Germany stifles its history, but it turns on her. Xenophobia rises again with apocalyptic fury. In Argentina, army generals after choking on their own silence finally break down. In Chile, we straddle between a furtive glance to our own traumas and a future built on distrust. No one dares to turn the page.

A brief but fruitful history

From the attic of my memories, I intend to paint –stroke by stroke– a brief history that despite spanning a short 15 years, it seems to me most intense. It is the sort of history one takes pride in. Its protagonists are teachers, social scientists, government institutions (and particularly NGOs), agencies, and national and international foundations.

A long stretch of road has certainly been covered.

In Latin America, human rights education was the product of a grass-roots movement. The type of education Paulo Freire defined as liberating and anti-oppression, could not advance anything less than an education capable of instilling in students the morals and civic conscience required to bring about a more just and solidary society. This education simply aims to maintain human rights current. Latin America was the birthplace of a number of NGOs, social movements, educational programmes and activities –launched under the yoke of brutish military dictatorships, and

amidst civil wars, rampant violence, and criminal acts protected by the halo of impunity—, which contributed significantly to furthering human rights education.

Within the formal schooling system—up until 15 years ago—, human rights education used to be taboo. Teachers had fallen innocent victims to persecutions, humiliations, tortures and death. Human rights education was off-limits; one might even say, their promotion was equivalent to courting suicide. In some Latin American countries, notably Chile and Paraguay, military dictatorships still reigned supreme. Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay had recently emerged from oppressive rights-violating regimes. Other countries, specially in Central America, were still blighted by internecine wars where the violations of people's rights represented a corollary of institutionalised chaos and arbitrariness.

The first steps were taken slowly and ditheringly. There was a dearth of teaching materials, and literature was scant, at best. The first teacher training workshops were organised by Uruguay's Serpaj. Gradually, the movement began snowballing: workshops mushroomed; organised groups bloomed in practically every country; experimental experiences were launched; texts were produced; congresses held; networks created. International Organisations and Foundations lend ample support to human rights education initiatives. Costa Rica's International Human Rights Institute (IIDH) created the Education Department. Human rights education had finally become a part of public policies.

If we go back to those early attempts and compare them to today's, we can justifiably claim great accomplishments in this area. Human rights education has been widely acknowledged in Latin America. As in Costa Rica's case, human rights education is now part and parcel of the educational public policies of all the region's countries. The topic is no longer a marginal issue.

However, this progress has been fraught with multiple and variegated tensions, problems, and difficulties. Many of these tensions were addressed in an article I published in the journal *Revista del Instituto Interamericano* (1991). In it, I analysed the tension between the rationality inherent in the technocratic-entrepreneurial-competitive objective, and the axiological rationality of human rights; the tension between continuity and educational change; the tension between atomisation and integration; the tension between acquiescence-concurrence-condescension, and assertion-dissention-denunciation. Many of these tensions are still among us, while some have become increasingly malignant.

Undoubtedly, important progress has been made; however, we must admit that there is still much that to be done, and the task at hand will require individuals who are more assertive, determined, and—why not come up and say it— bolder and demanding. We can proclaim openly and straightforwardly that human rights education means implementing the historical project of modernity and democracy; envisioning a more equitable and just society where injustice and discrimination—so characteristic of cultures incapable of accepting “others” as legitimate “others”—, will finally be eradicated.

Challenge-Establishing priorities: the day to day proposal

Without ignoring the fact that human rights are universal, unforfeitable, inalienable, and indivisible we can establish, from our basic concept of human beings and their dignity, certain priority rights for specific contexts.

Extrapolating this notion to the field of education, I believe the time has come to make an earnest effort to identify the various planes and situations where human rights education should be given a high priority. The idea is not to produce a listing of such situations, but per-

haps to establish a criterion to be used as a guideline. Broadly speaking, education has been entrusted with “elucidating”, “clarifying”, “illustrating” and “delivering competencies” that will empower the individual to deal with the world. Human rights education must do precisely this, but with reference to daily situations and problems where the students’ rights have been violated. While a human rights programme can not *per se* change unjust situations involving violations of rights, it must at least be in a position to “clarify” –at the student’s level of understanding– and deliver the skills that will bring about the transformations that will revert these occurrences on a daily basis. For example, human rights education should be able to explain why –if education is in fact a right–, there are millions of children that work under sub-human conditions; why gender discrimination is still evident in his/her family and local environment; and, why, despite what Human Rights declaration has established, these rights continue to be violated... at home, in my neighbourhood, in my country.

Challenge - massive - scale initiatives: the dissemination proposal

We have already acknowledged the great progress accomplished in Latin America in the area of human rights education. This is an undeniable fact. However, we must not grow complacent but ask ourselves instead what is the numeric impact of our actions.

We must admit that the number of teachers we have trained and upgraded in this area of education is meager, specially if compared to the hundreds of thousands of professionals we have yet to reach. True, we have produced enormous quantities of teaching materials, but, how many schools have received them? How many, among these, actually use them? Human rights education chairs, and post-graduate courses have been implemented in numerous

countries, yet the goal of massive coverage remains as distant as ever.

If the impact of human rights education is to be significant, it is imperative that we go massive. Along these lines, we need to broaden the dissemination of our results. We must use our creativity in order to reap the benefits of modern technology, the multimedia, the mass media.

In my opinion, this responsibility should not fall to the NGO’s, but to the State, which, in turn, should rely on resources set aside for this purpose in the national budget. The challenge is, precisely, to make human rights education an integral part of public educational policies.

Challenge - the curriculum: human rights at the “heart” of the curriculum

A great number of our countries are currently carrying out important educational and curricular reforms. The fact that knowledge and education are inextricably linked to sustainable growth, has been explicitly acknowledged by all. Quality enhancement and a fairer distribution of education are still sources of concern, as is the need to train individuals to be competitive in the international arena, as well as solid citizens. To this end, transversal topics, contents, and objectives, are being introduced into the curriculum.

The fundamental transversal objectives are associated with the overall goals of education, that is, the knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and behaviour expected from students in the personal, intellectual, moral, and social planes. The fundamental transversal objectives transcend a specific discipline, and should be wholly assimilated by the school and its study programme.

In an effort to contribute to “lifelong education”, the fundamental transversal objectives blend intellectual development and the ethical-social formation of students, in one uniform and integrated whole.

Thus, the artificial –in addition to spurious and misguided– distinction between the “formative” and “instructional” nature of education has tended to vanish.

The challenge consists of incorporating the human rights issue as a transversal theme into the very “heart” of the curriculum, that is to say, into the various subject matters, into teaching practices, and into the school culture.

This task is far from easy. It means borrowing time and space from the different disciplines, so they may methodically, naturally, and seamlessly blend with their contents under a new perspective: that of human rights. Oftentimes teachers object, blaming the heavy workload they must bear, and their lack of training in this area. Therefore, one of the major challenges is to elicit their interest by pointing out that their teaching will be enriched importantly by the human rights dimension, a social and ethical view of the world. Once this is done, they will be amenable to training.

Challenge - going public: the evaluation proposal

Whether we like it or not, we are part of a numeric-mesurable culture. It is the culture of the observable and the verifiable. Moreover, it is taking giant strides –for the better, in my opinion– towards becoming an “accounting rendering” culture, where we assume responsibility for our acts and our promises.

In education, measuring is a time-honoured tradition. What is new, however, is being held publicly accountable for educational results. Many countries have adopted national –some even international– tests that measure and compare the level of academic achievement materialised by students and schools, particularly in the areas of language, mathematics, and science. These outcomes are subsequently made public through the press. Thus, it is claimed, parents will enjoy greater freedom to select the best education for their children.

Additionally, where results are sub-standard, enhancement measures are rapidly implemented.

This poses the question of whether human rights education should be subjected to this line of reasoning. Certainly our first reaction as “enlightened” educators is to forthrightly reject a scheme that compels us to measure civic virtues against quantitative parameters. However, on reconsidering, we may ask ourselves whether or not human rights education is accountable for *its* results. Should we not at least compare the results obtained in this area of education by the different countries and schools? What would be the impact of disclosing through the media the low results obtained by some countries in human rights education? The ultimate challenge is to demand of the schooling system that its results reflect not only academic achievement, but also attainments in the area of transversal objectives.

Challenge - knowledge accumulation: the research proposal

These days have been marked throughout the continent, by a propagation of educational activities associated with human rights, to wit, the extensive number of courses, workshops, seminars, symposia, meetings, exhibitions, and diverse experiences involving teachers, students, parents, and members of the community. I do not believe I am wrong when pointing to the lack of systematisation that have typified these activities. Activism is intense and keeps on growing, and its good that it is. However, an objective assessment must be made in order to sort out successful experiences from those which were not, and determine the causes of successes as well as failures.

Likewise, a pedagogical and didactic framework must be gradually built to sustain the manifold human rights education initiatives. Teaching practice in human rights education may eventually comprise an area of research

capable of shedding light on its own pedagogical strategies. This knowledge is *sine qua non* for progress. To find answers to questions such as: how are human rights taught and learned? What meaning do students extract from this knowledge? Which are the optimum methodological conditions under which this knowledge must be transferred? To what extent will the social, economic, cultural, and political context determine the acquisition of this knowledge? How is this knowledge evaluated? et cetera. We could add a number of other research queries linked to teacher train-

ing, curricular organisation, management of human rights programmes, and so forth.

The ultimate challenge, is to face the task of teaching human rights as a knowledge accumulating experience. The proposal entails setting up a systematisation and research blueprint keeping in mind that, on the one hand, every educational experience involving human rights must have a systematisation component and, on the other, adopting a research project matrix that facilitates the elaboration of a body of theoretical knowledge based on actual practice experiences.

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**MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF UNESCO
ON THE OCCASION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DAY
(10 December 1998)**

"This year, Human Rights Day marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For half a century, untold numbers of men and women who have striven to keep alive the light of justice, peace and freedom, have turned to this United Nations document as a reference and an inspiration. In it, they have found a set of principles whose enduring relevance comes from the fact that the human rights which they set out are truly universal, not belonging to any one system of thought, or to any one civilisation, nation or organization, but are deeply embedded in the spirit of each member of the human family and find expression in every tongue.

Our thoughts go, on this Human Rights Day, to the millions of people who, generation after generation, have struggled and suffered in order to lay claim to these rights and freedoms, for themselves and for others, over the past fifty years. By pitting the strength of their aspiration to freedom, peace and justice against brute force, intimidation and exploitation, they have won many victories for human rights. Looking back at their efforts, we take the full measure of the difficulty involved in gaining ground and in holding onto those gains. Many of the fights for human freedom are fought over and over again. Yet, there is progress and the human rights agenda does move forward.

Today, on this anniversary, it is clear that no-one –no regime, group or individual– who has committed outrages against human dignity, can hope for impunity. The fact that impunity is becoming a thing of the past is one of the great achievements of recent times. Slowly, a universal standard of justice, together with universal measures and structures, is emerging. This can greatly help the recognition and observance of human rights.

But we must face up to the many obstacles that still prevent many people from enjoying their rights today. For the 1.5 billion people who live in abject poverty, this anniversary gives little cause for celebration. Today, the struggle for human rights entails an absolutely imperative duty of development. This is a global imperative for which we all bear responsibility and to which we can all renew our commitment on this anniversary.

Political and economic rights go hand in hand; both are supported by the full and active exercise of the right to freedom of expression. The protection and promotion of the free flow of ideas, information and opinion are central to UNESCO's mission. I call once again for the release of all prisoners of conscience as a gesture to mark Human Rights Day. On this fiftieth anniversary, it is shameful that so many should be behind bars because they have exercised their freedom of expression. I also call on all those who do enjoy unfettered freedom of expression to use that freedom to combat injustice and to fight for a more equal world. Freedom of expression is a right, but its use in the defense of other freedoms and other rights is a duty.

Decision-makers and parliamentarians have a duty to ensure that all human beings enjoy their full rights and freedoms. This cannot be achieved without peace and democracy.

Today, let us commit ourselves to a new departure and work to make the dream of human rights a reality for present and future generations."

Federico Mayor

TWELVE-POINT GUIDE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

Amnesty International*

This document is intended to outline the basic elements required for the implementation of an efficient human rights training programme.

The methodological scheme presented here, sets forth the principles that will be used to monitor and evaluate human rights education programmes designed for public employees.

The number of institutions, including government and inter-government organisations (IGO), participating in human rights education initiatives, continues to grow. However, Amnesty International has pointed out that some of these programmes have failed to conduct a prior analysis of their particular situation, use obsolete methodological approaches to teaching, are weakly integrated to reform efforts or offer little long-term support –if any–to guarantee substantial gains in terms of human rights.

Amnesty International wishes to contribute to the efforts towards educating in human rights made by the various governments and inter-government organisations, with a user-friendly guide designed for public employees and security forces.

This guide has also been intended for use by non-government organisations (NGOs), and scholars, making available a common methodological code that must be applied to every educational level, and which needs to be permanently upgraded.

Amnesty International is indebted to the numerous human rights advocates of diverse origins who have lent their help and support to the elaboration of this *twelve-point guide for human rights education and training of public employees*, and welcomes any suggestions that may serve to improve it.

Defining human rights education and training

In order for a human rights education and training programme to be coherent with the principles embodied in human rights, it must provide knowledge and information on these rights, and seek to promote attitudes and behaviours that promote them.

If a meaningful impact is sought, such an educational programme must be extended over a period of time, involve a direct and permanent interaction between educators and students, and make use of a pragmatic approach to learning.

Both in - service formation and field operations must be based on a commitment to human rights, and measured against human rights standards. In other words, the application of objectives and professional ethics must be consistent with human rights principles and theoretical guidelines.

* Amnesty International. February 1998.

An educational programme in tune with human rights principles, should also include the development of basic skills such as critical thinking, the art of communicating, problem solving, and negotiating, essential abilities for the efficient application of human rights standards.

In some cases, it will be necessary to implement specific courses on human rights to compensate for a deficient supply in this area of education. In general, however, human rights concepts and values should be an integral part of every discipline and teaching practice.

Twelve-point guide for human rights education and training of public employees

1. A prior evaluation of the human rights situation is absolutely essential

Before launching any human rights educational programme, its feasibility should be ascertained through prior analysis of the country's existing human rights situation.

Local needs should also be evaluated, in order to identify primary objectives, set the scope of the programme, and determine the approach it is likely to use. The human rights problems confronted by civil society will become an important factor in determining the type of instruction that will be imparted, and the public schools that will participate.

In some cases, this previous evaluation may lead to conclude that formation as a first step makes little sense owing to the serious nature of the human rights violations detected. For example, is it plausible that there is a pervading climate of impunity in the country, or that violations are being carried out by military or paramilitary groups impervious to a human rights-oriented education. Or, perhaps, the degree of disorganisation at the ministries' level is such that other measures are called for before introducing human rights considerations into the curriculum.

This being the case, providing instruction to civil servants may prove ill-advised, until such

time that the laws in defiance of minimal regional or international regulations are abrogated, jail conditions are improved or certain types of security forces (for example, paramilitary groups), are terminated.

During an early stage, garnering support, including instruction on the way to bring about legislative reforms, may prove much more constructive than a general type of education on human rights, not to mention the possibility of its backfiring if circumstances are not right.

Even under the worst possible scenario, the above mentioned considerations do not exclude the need to launch human rights sensitisation campaigns through, say, seminars or public round tables where the need to develop and enforce human rights regulations is assertively stressed.

2. Human rights education should constitute a further step towards greater accountability

Human rights education will flourish where the authorities are committed to defend human rights regulations, and public officials can be subjected to scrutiny.

In countries where violations have become systematic, human rights education runs the risk of representing a spoonful dropped in the middle of the ocean, unless government authorities implement general policy reform initiatives in the area of human rights. Several governments take pride in their educational curriculum, although these programmes do not appear to have improved the general circumstances surrounding human rights in their respective countries. The provision of quality educational programmes, along with adequate support, teaching materials, and follow-up schemes, remains fundamentally the responsibility of local authorities.

Human rights education implemented as an isolated strategy, will always fall short of the mark. Therefore, it should be regarded as a further means towards the attainment of a greater degree of accountability. Public offi-

cials must be made aware, in no uncertain terms, that their performance will not be exempted from scrutiny just because they have agreed to implement training programmes.

The authorities, for their part, must clearly show their commitment to human rights education by supporting legislative reforms, allowing freedom of expression and association, launching activities for the promotion of human rights or supporting those initiated by others, and implementing national campaigns for public education on human rights.

In certain cases conferences and seminars on human rights education, targeted at carefully chosen groups, could perform a vital reform-spawning function. For instance, both jurists as well as politicians enjoy high visibility before the public eye, while additionally participating actively in the decision-making processes that will affect the application of human rights.

Training and education must form part of a more comprehensive human rights strategy, and fit in a broader framework of human rights-oriented reforms.

3. Public officials must commit themselves to implementing education programmes as an essential professional requirement

Broadly speaking, the responsibility for providing adequate training programmes, and for incorporating human rights concerns into the curriculum, rests with the government. The application of human rights regulations should be a crucial factor at the time of promoting or assigning tasks.

The general management of human rights programmes should fall to qualified individuals who will assume their responsibility with the unconditional backing of top directives. Perhaps, in some cases it would be wiser to begin by changing the local legislation in order to crystallise support by authorities, and guarantee the long-term durability of the human rights programmes.

4. The education programme must be articulated with other human rights activities, both at the public institutions and community levels

Human rights education programmes should not take the form of isolated courses for selected employees, but should comprise a solid national education structure capable of contributing to the creation of a national culture based on respect for human rights which, transcending the public sector, spreads out to the very segments of society it is supposed to serve. For example, in countries where street children are a problem, both policeman and social workers alike should be encouraged to engage in dialogue with these minors in order to better understand their needs and the difficulties they confront, while simultaneously resolving the prejudices that tend to underlie most acts of violence.

5. Non government organisations must play a key role at every stage of the education programme

When defining the country's suitability for participating in a human rights education initiative, holding consultations with local NGOs on matters concerning programme design, objectives, management, follow-up and assessment, is of paramount importance. Enlisting the participation of the NGO officials responsible for these programmes may prove enormously valuable, since this would facilitate an open dialogue with authorities, a vitally important thing. This will contribute to promote a new style of collaboration, different perhaps to the heretofore relationship characterised by aggression and distrust.

In the event that NGOs can not—or will not—participate in human rights education activities, they should be invited to attend the courses imparted, and thus guarantee their openness while inviting constructive comments on how to introduce improvements. This could oper-

ate as a reminder that the government is responsible for guaranteeing

that education programmes will have an impact on the daily performance of public officials, and on the lives of the community members they have vowed to serve.

It is also important to ensure the impartiality and professional nature of the participating NGOs and, when called for, offer them an opportunity to enhance their competence in this field.

6. Targeted groups and course objectives must be thoroughly selected

There are several approaches possible, and the one selected will be contingent on the context within which the planned education initiatives will unfold: the seriousness of the violations, the concrete characteristics of the country, and other key factors.

Some examples are given below:

- One approach would entail providing education to whole units or divisions at a time. This is one way of ensuring that the course will be taken seriously, and avoiding negative pressures among co-workers when the programme recipient returns to his/her unit. Furthermore, imparting education to an entire unit facilitates follow-up activities and simplifies evaluating the performance of the unit and the division head. This record will also be useful when determining promotions and relocations.
- A second approach, consists of providing training exclusively to the persons responsible for educating (that is, to military or police academy instructors or law professors), so that they may take charge of the formation of the rest of the unit or department. In both cases, it is extremely important for human rights education to be well on its way to becoming—if it hasn't already become – a permanent and integrated part of the curriculum of the segment in question (with the backing of the required legislative changes).
- A third approach would imply reaching a point of equilibrium between educating whole

units and educating a representative group of employees responsible for instructing. This mixed approach is based on the fact that a representative group of trained employees, will soon spread their knowledge to others through the bond of solidarity. A plausible format for this approach could involve combining national and regional seminars.

During instruction, it is very likely that specific issues will have to be selected in order to address concrete human rights violations the trainees themselves are guilty of having perpetrated.

7. Personnel responsible for instructing must somehow be related to the selected group

It is only logical that those in charge of instructing others should have some kind of relationship with the group undergoing training. For example, one would expect a police instructor to be acquainted with police procedures, or that those in charge of educating civil servants are familiar with the public sector. This does not only guarantee the proper amount of respect for the instructor, but it also ensures that the he/she fully understands the difficulties confronted by the students.

Much care should go into the selection of the teaching staff which must be fair but authoritative. The absence of pedagogical abilities and of a solid knowledge of human rights, should be sufficient to eliminate a prospective candidate from the list. Mistakes along these lines may jeopardise the credibility of the entire educational programme, and undermine the trust it may have inspired in the vindication of public opinion.

In order to guarantee the participation of a vast team of professionals, it is important to draft instructors from the various selected sectors and NGOs. On occasions it will be necessary to engage in preliminary efforts intended to spur their desire to collaborate, and develop their pedagogical abilities and human rights knowledge base.

8. The teaching methods used must observe local cultural and religious traditions, and reflect human rights education objectives

Teaching methods must be adapted to the particular country, group and specific type of human right crimes perpetrated in it, if a re-enactment of these violations is to be prevented. Such methods must be respectful of cultural and religious expressions but, yet, comply with human rights regulations. Also, if they are to be efficient, they should be accessible to the audience.

9. Training efforts must have a practical orientation and make use of participatory learning techniques

The judges will be asked to decide on hypothetical cases in mock trials or appeals, as expediency dictates. The police force, for its part, will be asked to carry out crowd control drills, conduct sham arrests, interrogate “tough” individuals, and react before acts of brutality or other violations at the hands of fellow-police-men, observed during these simulated manifestations .

When addressing the subject of torture, instructors must *avoid* illustrating the diverse torture techniques used in different parts of the world before cautioning their students not to adopt them. A much more *desirable* approach consists of discussing the fact that human rights violations are international, regional, and national crimes, all of which are punishable by law.

10. Teaching material must be essentially practical in nature

The material for instruction must be made available to participants as soon as possible and always before the first session. Each set will consist of the complete texts of relevant international, regional and national regulations (subject to modification as determined by the selected group) in the native language. In a

large number of countries most of the population, including members of the security groups, is illiterate, in which case a different material will be required which guarantees that the essence of the principles is successfully conveyed.

When called for, literacy learning programmes must be adopted as the long-term objective of any professional training initiatives, and provide a solid framework for any human rights education initiative.

11. Educational programmes must incorporate from the very beginning a follow-up scheme

No programme should be without an efficient follow-up strategy, since it can provide support and –when needed–, serve as a source of technical assistance to those responsible for training and to local educational policy-makers, while guaranteeing continuity and a constant standard of quality.

Meetings held by people who have already undergone training in this area, the publication of a bulletin on applications of educational programmes (experience exchange), in-progress or evaluation reports, and contact with former students so as to determine the progress made in term of implementing this knowledge, are some of the various follow-up techniques recommended.

12. Permanent impact evaluation mechanisms must be implemented, along with a continuous reformulation of strategies in the light of detected deficiencies and new opportunities

The criteria which will govern programme evaluation, and the persons responsible for such evaluation must be part of the programme since its very beginning.

Its evaluation should be carried out by an *independent organisation* (such as a NGO or an academic institution), and should go beyond the level of instructors, students, and

heads of units, in order to produce an objective assessment of the programme and formulate relevant recommendations. For its part, the application of such recommendations needs to be supervised both by the government organisation involved, by civil society, as well as by international agencies.

Each participant must make a commitment to adopt practical ways of implementing education measures. For example, prosecutors must disclose the nature of the steps taken to investigate each and every accusation, case of torture or unnecessary violence, and explain the

consistency of these measures with the training programme. This will be vitally important if the programme is to make concrete inroads towards a human rights-conscious society, and towards a culture respectful of these rights and their development.

Furthermore, it will be the duty of the authorities to evaluate the students' work performance, in order to ascertain whether human rights regulations are being observed, and, accordingly, reward those who do and chastise those who do not. Human rights education must not remain a theoretical proposition.

Out of UNESCO's Constitution ...

"That since wars are born in the minds of men, it is precisely in the minds of men where the bastions of peace must be erected ..."

"That the broad dissemination of culture and an education for justice, freedom and peace are indispensable elements to man's dignity, and represent a sacred duty that all nations must discharge with a sense of responsibility and reciprocal help; ..."

"That a peace base exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world, and that peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind."

"For all these reasons, the States taking part in this Constitution, convinced of the need to guarantee equal access to education for all, the opportunity to freely seek objective truths and the free exchange of ideas and knowledge, do hereby resolve to develop and intensify the relationships among their peoples, so that they may gain a better mutual understanding and acquire a more accurate and genuine knowledge of their respective lives ...".

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

José Rivero*

The 21st century is strongly linked to myriad changes, some of them quite unthinkable. However, several of these transformations are currently under way and have been integrated to our daily lives. Thus, rather than stressing the momentousness of the coming century, perhaps it would be wiser to recognise the fact that we have already been caught in the vortex created by its proximity. In fact, there are some who claim – not without some justification – that the 20th century came to a rather abrupt end in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall. There is some truth to this assertion, as the event not only brought along a profound reshuffling of the prevailing political parameters, but it also helped to consolidate a new model of production based on the growing globalisation of world markets, and the astonishing advance of the sciences and the communication technology. In a powerful work on what he has called “the short 20th century”, Eric Hosbawn reminds us that we are living in an epoch which has profoundly altered –perhaps as never before– the fate of mankind and society, in a relatively brief period of time. In his book, the author describes three major changes:

- First, the unprecedented urbanisation phenomenon affecting the entire planet. Up until World War II, history records a predominant number of human beings living off the land and the animals it sustained. Nowadays, farmers comprise a minority; between 1950 and 1975, the swift urbanisation process caused the farming population in Spain, Portugal, Colombia and Mexico to drop by 50 per cent in less than 20 years. In the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Iraq and Algeria, the reduction was even more severe. These migrations towards urban centres can be associated with the huge demographic explosion responsible for augmenting 2.5 times the world population, and nearly quadrupling that of Latin America.
- A second major change, is the exceptional output of scholars as part of a large-scale demographic phenomenon. Prior to World War II, the combined population of Germany, France, and Great Britain, totalled some 150 millions, out of which barely one tenth of a per cent (150 000), pursued higher education studies. In the 80s, Ecuador alone could easily double this figure. This explosive expansion of the student population at the university level is certainly a sign of the times. In addition to Hosbawn’s data, it would be interesting to note that the Northern Hemisphere countries have nine times more scientists, 5 times more university students, and allocate 24 times as much to technological research, than their Southern Hemisphere counterparts.
- A final contributing element, is the improved condition of women across the world. In 1940,

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barely 14 per cent of married American women had occupations outside the home. Forty years later, this figure had exceeded the 50 per cent mark. Such remarkable strides for woman-kind are exemplified by the various countries where women hold positions as Presidents or Prime Ministers, a proposition surely to have been scorned back in the fifties.

Another transformation-contributing element

To the above mentioned factors, we must add a pivotal development:

In the last twenty years, man's habitat has undergone change at a historically unprecedented rate. Today, we find ourselves in the midst of a second technological revolution –far removed from the steam engine and industrial production techniques– mediated by the computer, information technology and micro-electronics, all of which have profoundly affected the way we communicate, live, and organise our social and economic structures.

Three facts illustrate the impact technology has had on our daily lives:

- communicating with the world's intellectual, financial, and business community makes mandatory the use of global networks such as Internet; in the coming decades, the fastest growing market will be Internet, not China;
- plastic money transactions move larger fortunes physical money ever could;
- the use of cybernetic currency and codified personal accounts in banking operations are increasingly frustrating tax assessment efforts by nations, and the scrutiny or follow-up of these currency flows by financial institutions.

A view has prevailed in the sense that these radical transformations will translate into immediate gains in terms of collective well-being and peace. Currently, that view is being revised, and its optimistic overtones have dimmed considerably. Thus far, the quality of life of mankind as a whole, has not necessarily improved as a result of these profound changes.

There are at least three major global issues that demand reflection and counter action:

- the growing gap between the rich and the poor countries, catalysed by the disproportionate demographic growth in developing societies, is probably the single most important evidence of global deterioration. Today, twenty-six countries accounting for almost 15 per cent of the world population, boast a *per capita* GDP in excess of US \$ 18 000, while over half of humankind –32 billion persons– survive on a per capita GDP equivalent to about US \$ 330. In other words, 82.7 per cent of the planet's income concentrates in mankind's richest fifth, whereas its poorest fifth share scarcely 1.4 per cent of the GNP.¹
- the unrestricted economic growth of industrialised countries made possible by scientific and productive cutting-edge technology, and the unregulated use of cyber space, represent an ecological disaster² –that could well render our planet uninhabitable–, as well as a real danger posed by unchecked libertinism and moral degradation.³
- foundering state-run, centralised economic systems have yielded to neo-liberal schemes that tend to minimise the role of the state and to maximise the action of capitalist markets, unregulated by public scrutiny. By the same token, the global view which advocated a

1 A recent UNDP report on Human Development and Consumption, puts the personal fortunes of Bill Gates, the sultan of Brunei, and Kansas' billionaire Philip E. Anschutz, at a figure that exceeds the GDP of the world's 48 poorest countries (*El Mundo*, newspaper, Madrid, 10/09/98).

2 The industrialised countries themselves, prime beneficiaries of modernity, have acknowledged that material comfort *per se* can not ensure well-being. To wit, the alarming statistics associated with drug addiction, suicide rates and high indexes of depression.

3 Pornography has proven one of the most successful and profitable Internet-mediated businesses. September last, the world was horrified to learn about a worldwide child pornography network. According to the media, the police operation included 14 countries, while some 100 thousand pornographic pictures, part of the arsenal exchanged among network users –depicting lewd scenes ranging from various acts involving child molestation to explicit rape–, were confiscated and destroyed.

monadic explanation of reality, has succumbed to the notion that knowledge will always be incomplete, and that we must keep a constant vigil for its new and different expressions.

All these considerations invite a reflection in the sense that human societies –and within them, interpersonal relationships– have undergone, an economic, technological, and social cataclysm that affects all our lives. Today’s children will be the youths and adults of a 21st century which they have already begun to prematurely experience during the last decade of this millennium.

Prospective scenarios in the 21st century

The multiple characteristics of the millennium looming ever closer, will affect the actions and strategies of early childhood education –and of the education system as a whole– in ways difficult to predict.

According to the forecasts of a selected group of scholars concerned with future developments, the 21st century will demand educational responses and interpretations that differ markedly from the ones currently being used. Some of their most relevant hypotheses are given below:

The triumph of capitalism - its repercussions

The 21st century will reaffirm the presence of an incipient end-of-century phenomenon known as the era of lucid pragmatism, defined as the tendency to divest modern economy and politics from any form of regulatory measures. As the economy becomes more and more convoluted the need for government regulations simultaneously waxes and wanes.

So, too, the triumph of capitalism is responsible for the emergence of a new type of social profile marked –both at its centre and periphery– by increasing dispersion and polarisation. Not contented with overhauling the social order, the Gargantuan capitalistic machine will unleash upon itself “its formidable creative and destructive energies: its automatism and

rationalisation processes which first streamlined the rank and file of the common worker, then moved on to the administrative levels, and are known infiltrating the managerial spheres” (Tulio Halperin Donghi, 1995).

Globalisation as a promoter of inequality

Associated with the preceding notions, the question arises of whether or not the values that were –more or less successfully– espoused by the institutional order of industrial democracies, will outlive the disintegration of the nation-state as the socioeconomic unit, the inevitable outcome of economic globalisation. All indications are that the globalisation of markets far from filling the blatant discrepancies in quality of life observed among the inhabitants of countries such as Nicaragua and Canada will –if anything–, only make it worse. The conflict between justice and loyalty, and the compulsion to uphold the ideals of a utopian global democracy, will have a profound impact on planetary relationships. Universal claims for equal dignity among men and women, could conceivably crowd out any feelings of allegiance the beneficiaries of said globalisation may have nurtured toward their particular culture, life-style and historical traditions (Richard Rorty, 1995).

This is why J. Kenneth Galbraith (1995) underscores the need for increased efforts aimed at providing all individuals with equal labour opportunities, as well as social and economic advancement. Additionally, a safety net should be established for those attaining these goals. In keeping with this premise, a solid education becomes a decisive factor.

North and South relationship and migratory pressures

While there are exceptions to self-development, such as China, in order for most of the Southern Hemisphere countries –which will account for 80 per cent of the world population by the year 2050– to overcome their condition of

underdevelopment, international schemes and, in particular, national schemes will have to undergo an extensive revamping.

On the other hand, the political vacuum left by communism and the present social democracy crisis, could be filled by movements fuelled by xenophobic nationalism and religious intolerance (Eric Hobsbawm, 1995).

According to Helio Jaguaribe (1995), the dissolution of the current perverse relationship between North and South, hinges on three elements:

- “a rapid and large-scale expansion of popular education and training, with the accompanying enhancement of national productivity”;
- an elitist discipline which diminishes, in return for civic compensations, its appropriating action;
- and, an international initiative which, along with fostering these two efforts, increases the country’s production capabilities and the profits derived from export operations.

Failure to implement these proposals, could force First World countries to adopt much tougher and more brutal immigration containment and disciplinary measures. This would entail amendments to the United Nations Charter granting the Organisation greater regulatory powers in favour of humanity’s largest collective interests –in the areas of health, education, economy, transportation, communications, international safety, development and environmental protection– thus establishing a more stable sense of balance and equity across the world. Our options are clear: either a modern social-humanism, or barbaric anarchy both within and around us.

Labour precariousness and shifting employment

Employment issues are certain to be given top billing in the social agenda of the future. If the prevailing trend continues, by the 21st century the figures for the unemployed will probably exceed those for the gainfully employed. To further complicate things, the new occupations

will be increasingly contingent on the ability to amass and handle information.

State of the art technology and automation techniques, will have a critical impact on employment practices; with emphasis being placed on improved service profitability and productivity, technological progress will focus not on saving manpower, but capital. A key determinant of workers’ wages will no longer be their *manual skills* but their *intellectual abilities*. The worker will not be expected to sell his craftsmanship, but the franchise to make use of the electronic gadgets he has produced; the analogy to the *copyright* industry that typifies today’s film-making and music production industries, inescapably comes to mind.

The major industries will be manned by a permanent skeleton crew consisting of highly qualified technicians who will receive the technical assistance of various contractor and advisory firms working exclusively for them, and only eventually for third parties. There will be large numbers of part-time workers which will devote some of their time to labour obligations, and use the remaining hours of the day to look after young children, rest, or study as in the case of parents, retired persons and students, respectively (León Trahtemberg, 1995). Another foreseeable characteristic of future workers will be the constant turnover and job-shifting in heterogeneous areas.

Cybernetic textbooks and the multimedia

The evolution from the printed word to electronic pixels and screen-supported reading, a revolution claimed to surpass Gutenberg’s –since it represents not just a technological revolution, but one that will change the nature of reading, for the reader has now become one of the multiple contributors to his reading material and has evolved the ability to create new texts– will require the implementation of creative educational and institutional strategies and conceptualisations.

Editorial policies will have to be reformulated on the basis of a novel context profoundly influenced by the expansion of cybernetic space. Library science will be required to promptly retrieve, save, and censor past written accounts, “down to the humblest attempts” (Roger Chartier, 1995).

In like manner, the dissemination of electronic newspapers and the multimedia will demand the adoption of interactive communication and learning strategies, which provide reception and broadcasting capabilities to students and participants. “As with newspapers, the multimedia of the future will be neither good nor bad; it will all depend on how they are used. Depending on the different degrees of access to the information, they may either bring us closer to the utopian dream of a more humanitarian and equitable democracy, or widen the social gap” (Roberto Pablo Guareschi, 1995).

Education’s new institutional environment

Among the highly industrialised nations and within the up-scale sectors of developing countries the school –as a backdrop for the learning process– will be gradually replaced by learning achieved primarily through interactive, audio visual, and television-supported means.

Even though these systems may retain their original designations –schools, universities, institutions– they will function through television-supported courses where the site, the distance or the attendance, will be irrelevant. From a technological standpoint, schools will not be associated with a specific facility but with television franchises through which the various instructional services will be accessed; therefore, students will be capable of changing educational centres or services, with the greatest of ease.

Modern integrated learning, relying essentially on discovery, will be totally different from the compulsory teaching techniques cur-

rently in use. Its spontaneous, independent, and co-operative nature, is characterised by hyper-learning⁴ that takes place irrespective of setting and permeates every known instructional modality. Needless to say, evaluation and accreditation systems will have to be modified accordingly, favouring those that certify, upon request, the provision of specific skills. These modern education institutions will bear little resemblance to the schools and classrooms we are all familiar with. The new arrangement calls for multiple entertainment alternatives, libraries, health centres, movie theatres, game and television-supported programmes parlours, all available under a single roof (León Trahtemberg, 1995).

Despite these trappings of modernity, there will always be a need for methods and strategies that guarantee an adequate and permanent human bond between teachers and their charges. Children –independent of nationality and social condition and, particularly, in the early years– will continue to need the reassuring surroundings of a school where teachers provide the care and stimuli that are still regarded as essential.

Education in the new millennium

In terms of the education that will prevail in the third millennium, two international events are particularly noteworthy: the World Conference on Education for All, held at Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, which brought together the major United Nation agencies concerned with education; UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, the World Bank, and the report prepared by the International Commission on Education for the 21st century. This report, the result of a decision adopted by UNESCO’s General Conference, was entrusted to an international com-

⁴ “A connection between knowledge experience, audio visual aids, and brains” (León Trahtemberg).

mission consisting of renowned specialists and chaired by Jacques Delors.⁵

The World Declaration on Education for All

Jomtien's World Conference coined the concept of "basic learning needs" to mean one that includes "both essential learning tools (such as reading, writing, oral expression, arithmetic, problem solving) as well as the basic learning contents (theoretical and practical knowledge, values and attitudes) that empower individuals to survive, fully develop their potential, work and live with dignity, participate actively in development efforts, raise their quality of life, make informed decisions, and continue to learn".

Implicit in this concept, is the notion of a universal school which offers a common body of knowledge and values for all, and imparts knowledge-thirsty students the necessary skills to further their degree of understanding and analysis.

To this end, the early school years –including pre-school or nursery– must guarantee the acquisition of precisely this type of basic skills. This fact justifies the high social priority granted to basic education across the world.

As set forth in Jomtien's Declaration, the grand mission of basic education institutions for children and adolescents is to impart the sort of knowledge that will enable the individual to interpret the available information, and acquire the ethical values, principles, as well as the skills and abilities that will ensure his/her successful performance in every field of endeavour: in the labour market, within the family unit, and in the political world.

The "expanded view" of basic education advanced at Jomtien, includes the following points:

- achieve universal access to education and promote equity
- focus on the learning process
- expand the scope and resources of basic education
- improve the learning environment
- provide reinforcement to concerted initiatives.

Across the world, early childhood education has benefited greatly from the fact that Jomtien acknowledged and included as an essential element of the future expansion of the scope and resources of basic education, the following statement:

"Learning begins at birth. This demands that special attention be paid to early child care and education, an objective attainable through measures targeted at the family, the community, or the schools, as the case may be".

Along the same lines, the action framework emerging from this seminal conference recommended: "The expansion of early childhood care and developmental activities to involve the active participation of family and community, particularly in the case of poor, underprivileged and disabled children".

In June 1996, the article "Education, the best possible investment", endorsed by top officials of UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, and the United Nations Population Fund,⁶ and widely publicised in major newspapers around the world, reaffirmed the message of the World Declaration. The article commented on the inconsistency of a world that allocates some 800 billion dollars per year to the purchase of weapons, but fails to procure 6 billion dollars towards the goal of universal education by the year 2000.

⁵ While not strictly concerned with education, the Convention on the Rights of Children (United Nations, 1989), and the World Declaration and Action Plan adopted at the World Summit in favour of Young Children (sponsored by UNICEF), contributed importantly to commitments in support of infancy signed by a large majority of countries.

⁶ Federico Mayor, Director General, UNESCO, Carol Bellamy, Chief Executive, UNICEF, James Wolfeson, Chairman, World Bank, James G. Speth, Administrator, UNDP, and Nafis Sadik, Director, UNFPA.

“Learning; the treasure within” –report prepared by the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century

The report submitted to UNESCO in 1996, attempted to resolve an issue which subsumes all others: what kind of education will be required in the future, and what kind of society will it be designed to serve? The report strives to respond other questions as well: how to guide future generations through the maze of human development in a world burdened with tensions and strife? Will the old paradigms suffice, or will the education of the future require restructuring its very foundations?

The Delors’ report recognises that the present stage of evolution of the relations of interdependence, has uncovered profound gaps and inequalities among the “haves” and the “have nots”, within the countries themselves, and between rich and poor countries. The report asserts that: “One of the essential tasks confronting education, is its contribution to turning a *de facto* interdependence into a desirable solidarity”.

The report cautions that our children and adolescents have inherited a number of tensions: the tension between global and local components; between universal and singular conceptualisations; tradition and modernity; the short and the long terms; qualifications and equal opportunities; knowledge development and assimilation capacity; the spiritual and the material realms.

Furthermore, education must reflect the painful birth of a global society wherein millions of human beings experience the heady sensation brought along by of swiftly changing world. Globalisation and planetary interdependence, essential features of our times, threaten to divide us into a minority capable of navigating the seas of an evolving world, and a majority that drifts aimlessly feeling excluded from world events and impotent to make decisions involving the collective fate.

The establishment of new educational objectives –which, consequently, entails chang-

ing our concept of its utility– is the *sine qua non* of the 21st century, and the challenges the new millennium poses. The idea is to transcend the purely instrumental view of education, seen as the only road that leads to specific results (practical experience, acquisition of various skills, attainment of economic goals), in favour of a much broader outlook which aims at the fulfilment of every dimension of the human being. “Education –the reports goes on to say– represents a collective good that can not be regulated by simple market dynamics”.

“Education’s main objective is to facilitate man’s full development as a social entity”. However, this objective is not merely associated with the initial stages of life or even with the school years. Far from it, the right to an education should be enjoyed throughout the life of the individual while –as the Delors’ Commission explicitly stated– the need to advance toward an “education-oriented society” constitute a key requirement for successful insertion into the 21st century.

Not to take the importance of schooling lightly, –inasmuch as it is consistent with this view of education–, the mission and challenge confronting education in the 21st century is to “humanise” the web of relations between man and the institutions he has created. This will only be possible to the extent that education is regarded as a permanent, life-long process that permeates every aspect of living, includes all human beings, all their institutions, and all their structures.

Life-long education is not a distant ideal; rather, it is a democratic imperative. It is designed to endow every individual with the capacity to master his own destiny in a world where swift changes and globalisation tend to alter the relationship between men and women over time and space.

One of the report’s major contribution, is its characterisation of the four fundamental learning skills or pillars of knowledge, key elements for the type of education the new millennium requires:

- *Learning to know*. Given the swiftness of the changes brought about by scientific progress and the new patterns of economic and social activity, the combination of a broad-based general culture with the possibility of permanent specialisation in a selected number of skills, has become indispensable. In terms of education, this broad general culture will continue to preserve its importance since it represents a gateway to permanent education, laying the groundwork and providing the incentives to tap the possibilities education has to offer, and develop its different expressions throughout life.
- *Learning to do*. Beyond acquiring a skill or pursuing a career, other competencies will be required in order to promote team work –an aspect often overlooked in current instructional systems–, and prepare the individual to tackle new situations. The idea is to provide students with an opportunity for self-evaluation and for perfecting their skills within the context of various social or labour experiences, while attending school. This justifies the growing importance that should be ascribed to the various mechanisms for alternating between school and work.
- *Learning to be*.⁷ This pillar relates directly to the establishment of legitimate democracies built on a conscientious and solidary citizenry. The 21st century will demand individuals with increased autonomy and judgement capabilities, who take a more personal responsibility in the collective destiny. The purpose is to explore –through talents such as memory, reasoning ability– the sense of aesthetics, physical capabilities, communication skills, personal charisma, etc., of every child, adolescent and adult across the world.
- *Learning to live together*. A crucial condition for building peace and a tolerant world. New educational systems will be needed, capable of developing a deeper understanding of oth-

ers, their history, traditions and customs, their language and spirituality. A peaceful coexistence, will serve as an incentive to formulate common projects, and rational, non-violent plans to solve conflicts between people and countries.

The Commission regards basic education as a “passport for life”, underscoring the transcendental role of education in early childhood.

In terms of early childhood education, it states:

“Aside from the incipient socialisation its programmes and centres make possible, there is ample evidence that children who are given the benefit of an early childhood education, seem more willing to accept school life, while the dropout rate among this group is lower than among students who have not had this opportunity. An early start, by contributing to offset poverty or a wanting social or economic environment, may help equalise opportunities, and greatly facilitate the integration of children who belong to migrant, cultural or linguistic minorities. Furthermore, the existence of educational institutions that cater to preschool children, encourages women to participate in the social and economic life of the community”.

Having established the importance of early childhood education, the Delors Report laments its weak presence in most countries, and the fact that even in highly industrialised nations much remains to be done in this area. As a palliative measure –particularly in the least developed countries– it suggests the implementation of low-cost, community service programmes with strong parent participation.

Aware of the need to have long-term educational policies and mechanisms capable of guaranteeing stable and long-lasting programmes, the members of the Delors Commission stress the ineluctable role of the State in education –understood as a collective good that must be “accessible to all” and escapes simple market regulations– but observe, in turn, that the responsibility for strengthening civil society so that it can rise to the challenge of formulating,

⁷ This was the key issue of Edgard Faure’s Report, an undertaking endorsed by UNESCO in 1972.

enforcing and implementing educational strategies, must fall to the political powers.

The essential national agreements over educational matters require holding permanent dialogues with political parties, professional and trade associations, and the business community. The reform of education's political structure will have important repercussions on schools: greater pedagogical and administrative autonomy, and strengthened links to their community and other institutions, both public and private.

While the International Commission's report to UNESCO opens a window to all sorts of new education possibilities and opportunities it does, nonetheless, present some shortcomings. Thus, the observation is made that despite capturing a generalised feeling in terms of the new demands confronting education in the 21st century, the issues associated with educational levels and modalities are treated rather shallowly and, on occasions, are heavily biased by the traditional parameters and influences of western civilisation. Also, in the view of some analysts, the section on educational policy and the decision making capabilities of government structures, is not as emphatic as it should be.

This type of research and the recommendations it gives rise to, should not be gauged in terms of how closely it can predict the future. Rather, mention should be made of the effort that each of the illustrious members of the International Commission put forth, when striving to construct a future on the basis of a solid analysis of the state of the world, and define education as the primary vehicle for individual and social advancement, and as a "necessary and essential utopia" to the building of such a future.⁸

In synthesis, the analysis contained in the Delors Report goes well beyond a strictly educational dimension, since in its discussion it has included politicians, scholars and professionals involved in various disciplines. The Report focuses on mutual understanding, the acceptance of differences, and social, political, and human issues. Its position reflects the transition that will characterise the close of the century, with an increasingly shrinking and crowded world, and an economy relying more and more on knowledge. Finally, it presents a humanistic vision of the world, as opposed to other documents that deal exclusively with the demands of a globalised economy.

Importance and main features of early childhood education

Its essentialness

Every human endeavour relies on highly complex physiological, psychological and social mechanisms in order to satisfy biological, social, cultural, productive or spiritual needs. What this means is that every individual has a specific way of dealing with the world, with reality, with others, and with the space and objects around him.

This scheme blooms and grows particularly fast during the first six years of life. It could be said that the child begins learning during his first week of life, feeding information from his surroundings back into his own inner world.

Several research studies have found that intelligence, social behaviour, and personality, develop extremely fast during the early years, as do most neuronal connections and brain cells. While in brain activity –essential to the growth of learning potential–, health and nutritional aspects of the infant play a large role, the type of social interaction and environment that surrounds him is no less important. Children who have suffered extreme anxiety when very young, may sustain permanent impairment

⁸ The Commission was active from 1993 to 1996. It was chaired by Jacques Delors, at the time acting Chairman of the European Commission, and consisted of 14 members and renowned specialists in various fields of human endeavour selected from the five continents.

of brain functions, learning capabilities and memory.

Young children who have benefited from stimulating interactions with playthings and other children –and from nutritious food– show an increased development of brain functions at age 15, than those suffering from malnourishment and lack of early stimuli. According to a leading study in this area, impacts may be cumulative.⁹

For a unique research study conducted in the United States,¹⁰ a group of 3 to 4 year olds from a ghetto was divided randomly into two smaller groups. The first group attended a first-tier pre-school, the second did not. Each group member was periodically evaluated through age twenty-seven. Research findings concluded that those who benefited from a solid pre-school programme had: a significantly higher school level; substantially higher salaries; a greater probability of owning a home; and, less dependency on the social security services.

Other studies make these findings extensive to the so called “Third World” countries. A systematisation of 15 studies in 9 different countries, which compared children who had received an early education with those who had not,¹¹ points to several advantages of initial education, among them:

- access to early interventions tends to have a positive effect on academic progress and achievement, and reduce significantly repetition and dropout rates;
- children from lower income families, can derive a greater benefit from multiphasic

programmes than their more fortunate peers; and,

- run-down school facilities, and a low quality education can dampen the potential effects pre-school education can have on the child’s future academic performance (R. Myers, 1998).

All these reasons, argue for the importance of early childhood education, specially so in the case of children from deprived homes, since it has the potential to offset educationally barren home environments, and contribute importantly to breaking the vicious cycle of poverty.

So, where do we stand?

Before embarking on any global evaluation, it is important to observe that early education is a relatively new path fairly untrodden by pedagogical science. While its origins can be traced to the 17th century, the first “nursery schools” –assistance-oriented for the most part– made their official appearance in the 18th and 19th centuries (A. Legaspi, 1997).¹²

The five-year evaluation following Jomtien, shows that starting 1990 early childhood education represents one of the areas of steadiest growth. Enrolment in developing countries has risen by 20 per cent, embracing some 56 million children; this means that one out of five children is now enrolled in school, with nearly half the enrolments representing girls. Also as of 1990, the number of pre-school institutions expanded almost 30 per cent and employment in the teaching profession rose to 2.1 million, roughly a 12 per cent increment.

⁹ Study conducted by New York’s Carnegie Corporation in 1994: “*Starting point: Meeting the needs of Our Youngest Children*” (See: Aparna Mehrotra, 1998).

¹⁰ L. Schwenhart et al. “*Significant Benefits: The High/Scope Perry Pre-school Study Through age 27*”, High/Scope Press, Ypsilanti, Michigan, 1993 (See: R. Myers, 1998).

¹¹ Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, the Philippines, India, Morocco, Peru, Turkey.

¹² Alicia Legaspi stresses the fact that in 1948, Prague hosted the preparatory congress that launched the World Organisation Foundation for Pre-School Education (OMEP) which “ever since then has been devoted to define and hierarchise the service” See: “*Pedagogía preescolar*”, page 47.

Table 1PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION. NUMBER OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS
Years 1980, 1990, 1995

	1980		1990		1995	
	Total (thousands)	% Women	Total (thousands)	% Women	Total (thousands)	% Women
Number of students						
World total	58 324	48.1	85 273	4.80	95 269	47.6
Developed countries	33 230	48.8	37 394	4.84	34 430	48.0
Developing countries	25 094	47.1	47 879	47.8	60 837	47.5
Latin America and the Caribbean	4 738	49.7	11 912	48.7	14 238	49.5
Number of teachers						
World total	2 992	94.3	4 613	94.6	4 729	94.0
Developed countries	2 097	98.4	2 722	97.2	2 438	96.8
Developing countries	895	84.6	1 891	90.7	2 291	90.9
Latin America and the Caribbean	177	98.3	518	97.3	652	96.8

Source: UNESCO. Statistical Yearbook 1997. Paris, 1997.

Table 1 shows that during the 1980-1995 period, pre-school education across the world increased by some 37 million students, while in the same fifteen years the number of teachers was incremented by one million 737 thousand. The immense majority of pre-school teachers are women, while world wide, Latin America and the Caribbean have the highest proportion (96.8%).

Lately, governments and international organisations seem more inclined to support early childhood education and invest in their programmes. Additionally, further to the aforementioned quantitative expansion, new trends in early childhood education have been evidenced since 1990. The expansion and approach of its programmes have been broadened and, as a result, many of these programmes actually go beyond preparing children for primary school, providing community-based services according to the these children's basic needs. Local programmes, relying heavily on participation by parents, communities, and other players, have also targeted children at risk.

Table 2 shows a steady increase in enrolments and in the number of teachers who have joined the labour force in the last ten years. The first half of the decade exhibits negative growth curves for industrialised countries, most likely the result of declining birth rates. Latin America and the Caribbean stand out with higher percentages than those observed for developed countries and for developing countries as a whole.

This remarkable growth should not obscure the fact that in most countries the supply of early childhood education is extremely low, and only covers a very small portion of the population, particularly in the segment under age three. Urban children and children born to well-to-do families, are the major beneficiaries of this growth. Furthermore, up to the mid nineties, scarcely 4 per cent of government resources were earmarked for early childhood education initiatives. For most countries, large-scale programmes in this area of education still represent a challenge.

This evaluation can not overlook other shocking components of our reality.

Table 2

PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION. ANNUAL AVERAGE RATE OF GROWTH OF ENROLMENT AND TEACHING STAFF
Periods 1980-1990 and 1990-1995

	1980-1990		1990-1995	
	Total	Women	Total	Women
Enrolment				
World total	3.9	3.9	2.2	2.1
Developed countries	1.2	1.1	-1.6	-1.8
Developing countries	6.7	6.8	4.9	4.8
Latin America and the Caribbean	9.7	9.4	3.6	4.0
Teaching staff				
World total	4.4	4.5	0.5	0.4
Developed countries	2.6	2.5	-2.2	-2.3
Developing countries	7.8	8.5	3.9	3.9
Latin America and the Caribbean	11.3	11.2	4.7	4.6

Source. UNESCO. Statistical Yearbook 1997. Paris, 1997.

In spite of declining child mortality rates –towards the end of this century 19 out of 20 newborns will survive to age one– we can not ignore or “sweep under the rug” the fact that millions of those survivors will continue to live in poverty and squalor. For them, the dice are cast. Such an environment threatens their physical, mental, social, and affective development, already set back during their first months of life. By contrast, a child born in a industrialised nation consumes by him/herself an amount equivalent to the consumption of 50 Third World children.¹³

The search for a world not solely ruled by economic considerations or market forces, which is driven by the conviction that a more equitable distribution of wealth and opportunities constitute the only viable points of departure, and collectively recognises that childhood does not get a second chance, is still in the offing.

Characteristics of early childhood education in Latin America

Table 3 presents data for 7 Latin American countries. For 1995, Cuba exhibits the largest percentage –96 per cent– of enrolled pre-school children. Between 1990 and 1995, gross pre-school attendance rates rose in all 7 countries: 4% in Argentina, 20% in Brazil, 16% in Colombia, 18% in Costa Rica, and 15% in Mexico and Peru. Note the age discrepancies of the various national groups: Argentina, Colombia, and Peru report on their 3-5 year olds; Brazil on its 4-6 year olds; Mexico has selected children between the ages of 4 and 5, while Costa Rica and Cuba only include the five-year old group.

The various existing programmes are known by different names: thus there is an initial, pre-school, nursery, or pre-primary education, in addition to the generic “early childhood education”¹⁴

¹³ UNDP report on Human Development and Consumption (“El Mundo” newspaper, Madrid, September 10, 1998).

¹⁴ UNDP report on Human Development and Consumption (“El Mundo” newspaper, Madrid, September 10, 1998).

Table 3

PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION. GROSS ATTENDANCE RATES FOR SEVEN LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES
1985 and 1995 (percentages)

Countries	Year old group	Year 1985		Year 1995		
			Total	Men	Women	
Argentina	3-5	50	54	53	56	
Brazil	4-6	36	56	
Colombia	3-5	12	28	
Costa Rica	5	52	70	70	70	
Cuba	5	79	92	105	79	
Mexico	4-5	56	71	70	72	
Peru	3-5	21	36	36	37	

Source. UNESCO. Statistical Yearbook 1997. Paris. 1997.

All these programmes have been formally institutionalised through pre-school centres, nurseries, and kindergartens ran by the State or government bonded private parties. They are also available through non formal services which include early child care and adult training programmes, aimed at improving the individuals' abilities as parents or caretakers, or their psychosocial development. These programmes are normally autonomous operating outside the education system.

Both formal and informal modalities offer child care services from ages 0 to 6. The various modalities focus primarily on the older children who are about ready to enter primary education. For their part, health and early stimulation programmes have been designed mostly for the population under three. Community development, mother and family-oriented programmes include all ages making up this particular level.

Informal programmes have gone beyond the pale of pedagogical science to become community action initiatives where parents play a pivotal role. The experience accumulated during thirty years of working with these programmes –many of which were initially experimental and became official national

programmes over time (in the cases of Colombia, Cuba, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, and Venezuela)– can certainly be said to constitute one of Latin America's major contributions to global education.¹⁵

The unprecedented expansion of the pre-school level of education in recent decades, represents one of the five most transcendental achievements materialised in Latin America and the Caribbean.¹⁶

In the region, coverage for the group aged 0 to 5, went from 7.8 per cent in 1980 to 14 per cent in 1989, an increase of nearly 10 per cent per year.

¹⁵ An analysis of a study conducted in twenty-two countries, summarises the implemented action modalities as follows: home to home coverage; attendance through parents, and basic integral services in urban and marginal urban areas; family attendance with emphasis on women; group and home attendance through the mass media (G. Fujimoto, 1998).

¹⁶ The other four are: the remarkable expansion of enrolment; the satisfactory rates of female integration to the school system; the development of national technical training systems; and, increased funding by the states. In some countries, the manifold pedagogical innovations represent yet another achievement.

Nonetheless, even in the face of such impressive gains, in terms of pre-school coverage, we still have a long way to go. A very small portion of the population is actually covered by this service; to wit, two thirds of the five-year old population, and a little over one fourth of the children among the ages of 3 and 4.

In 1991, pre-school coverage was anywhere 1.5 to 3 times lower than primary school coverage; in numerous countries, the rate of access to pre-school was equivalent to the rate of access to secondary school. Pre-school coverage peaked in the first half of the 80s, declining in the second half and continuing its downward trend into the 90s.

Pre-school coverage is biased in favour of the wealthier families. In Chile, only 19 per cent of children who belong in the poorer quintile have access to early education, whereas in the richer quintile this percentage rises to 43 per cent; in Uruguay the corresponding figures are 36 and 90 per cent, for the poor and the rich, respectively. In Argentina, only 42 per cent of the poorer five-year olds have access to early education, as opposed to 81 per cent of the non-poor children in the same age group. For its part, Mexico City covers 81 per cent of its young children while in the province of Chiapas—where the indigenous population is high—this figure barely reaches 38 per cent (UNDP, 1998).

The private sector has been instrumental in providing pre-school services to those sectors that can afford to pay for them. One fourth of the region's pre-school supply is in private hands. Private participation in rural areas is, on average, one eighth as large as in the urban sectors. The student/teacher ratio tends to be smaller in the private sector a trend not quite as distinctive in rural areas (Tedesco-Schiefelbein, 1995).

"Quality" seems to be a conflictive concept at the pre-school level. Some associate it with the infrastructure (physical environment) and the working materials; others, with the chil-

dren/teacher or children/adult ratios. Parent participation and teacher qualifications, are important factors that should also enter the picture.

The current tendency, which advocates expanding coverage while keeping spending within "reasonable" bounds, conspires against quality-enhancement solutions. However, the quality issue would be seen in a completely different light if consideration is given to the fact that, in the absence of this service, numerous children would be totally bereft of social protection.

Early childhood education in the new millennium

The new millennium calls for the adoption of strategic priorities in the field of early education.

Two criteria have prevailed in the selection of these priorities: the long-term impact of present plans, and the immediate gains resulting from the multiplier effect.

The sequence in which these priorities are arranged, does not necessarily imply a greater or lesser degree of importance. In fact, the order may change to reflect the different national or regional realities. Every one of the priorities proposed in this paper are considered indispensable.

First priority

Consolidating a new infancy culture with early education programmes for all children, stressing "positive discrimination" strategies, particularly in the case of disadvantaged or highly vulnerable children

A new infancy culture should begin by enforcing the rights of all children without exceptions. This implies accepting the need to change the objective living conditions of all these children. Said change, in turn, entails modifying concrete social realities. Hence, the genera-

lisation of a new infancy culture will be closely tied to the revamping of the socioeconomic environment in which the child is inserted.

Education is specially valuable in the construction and consolidation of this new infancy culture. Furthermore, the role of education can not be restricted to that of a transmitter of social and cultural values but should, instead, offer the child every conceivable opportunity to realise his full potential. This is the context wherein early childhood education unfolds.

As pointed out earlier, findings yielded by research and the very pedagogical practice have defined pre-school education as an essential feature of the educational scenario proposed in the Delors Report: a good that must be sought and developed throughout life, within the context of a continuously shifting world. Today's children and tomorrow's youth and adults, demand having —or having had— as part of their educational scaffolding, a solid early education, beginning in the mother's womb and covering all their pre-school years.

Robert Myers (1990) observes: "the care and education provided during the early childhood years, improve physical as well as mental capacities, positively affecting enrolment rates, academic progress and achievement during school life. Schooling is associated with important gains in skills (such as obtaining and using knowledge) and insight (for example, the capacity to influence one's own future) which, in turn, affect the capacity to handle new technology, adapt to change, and upgrade the economic production in the industrial, agricultural and service sectors".

Despite a growing awareness of the high social and educational costs of failing to invest in early childhood development programmes, we are fully aware that all the efforts made so far have simply not been enough.

Two factors that conspire against quality of education and equitable access —inalienable rights of all individuals— seem to co-exist in modern society:

- global poverty levels rise at such an alarming rate that failure to curb its spread threatens any

- national development initiatives, as well as the construction of democratic forms of government; and

- for a long time, global progress in the area of education has neglected a central problem; that of social inequality. This translates into the immense disadvantage borne by most children of humble origins, who enter first grade without the benefits of early stimulation or a pre-school education.

In effect, poverty is the *mal de la fin du siècle*. In the view of the United Nations Development Programme, "the world is becoming increasingly polarised while the gap between the rich and the poor continues to widen". ECLAC (1997) presents eloquent figures for Latin America and the Caribbean: in absolute terms, the number of poor reaches the 210 millions, out of which 94 millions are living under conditions of extreme poverty, an unprecedented historical fact. The Latin American Episcopal Conference assembly, gathered in Tegucigalpa (July 1998), denounced that 24 per cent of all Latin Americans live on a dollar a day... or less.

On the other hand, there is a strong belief that early education programmes do in fact contribute to alleviate poverty in various ways. If these programmes were to be combined and associated with other child care programmes, and made part of efforts geared towards securing higher levels of local and communal development, their potential would be greatly strengthened. Present —and critical— rates of absenteeism, repetition and desertion —which children from lower income families have the dubious honour of claiming mostly theirs— have a profoundly pernicious effect on the national resources destined to education.

There is sufficient evidence to support the claim that children who attend pre-school education programmes, are better emotionally, physically and mentally prepared for the exigencies of school life, a fact reflected in the greatly reduced rates of absenteeism, repetition and desertion, and in the higher academic achievement levels. The assertion can be made

that, among the national efforts intended to eradicate poverty, initial education should be accorded the highest priority.

Research conducted in Chile, reveals that the differences in psychomotor development detected during early childhood are clearly visible on 18 -month old infants, intensify thereafter, and are directly related to poverty conditions. Forty per cent of underprivileged children already show signs of stunted development at age one.¹⁷

The above mentioned systematisation of research initiatives conducted in 9 countries of several continents, places emphasis on the fact that the poor children population of antipodal countries such as Argentina, Colombia, Morocco and India, can derive more benefit from these early childhood education programmes, than their more fortunate peers (R. Myers, 1998).

This is why, at the onset of the new millennium, expanding initial education coverage to all disadvantaged children under five, will be one of the first and main concerns of the world's education systems. This substantial expansion of present coverage levels will have to take place at the speed and with the depth determined by the circumstances of each individual country. Policies designed to achieve and maintain acceptable standards of quality, should also be implemented as supplementary measures.

However, universal access to pre-school education will not be enough. Poverty will have to be attacked at various other fronts particularly those crucially important in determining learning capacity: nutrition, health, and psychosocial stimulation. Consequently, the concept of initial or early childhood education

should not be limited to the conventional concept of pre-school education, nor rely exclusively on formal modalities.

Countries which can not muster the needed resources, will have to settle for a combination of formal and non-formal programmes. Efforts will be made towards substantially incrementing the public funds allocated to initial education, while simultaneously promoting the participation of private and mixed modalities in schools where service, not profit, is the main motivation.

In the particular case of Latin American countries, the wealth of experience on non-formal or non-traditional initial education accumulated through the years, should pave the way for a joint regional initiative where the more advanced countries can provide bilateral or peer assistance. In order to work out flexible school schedules and calendars, explicit alliances between public and non-government organisations will be needed, along with the active involvement of non-teaching personnel, an educational climate divorced from traditional school guidelines or criteria, and the staunch participation and support of family and community both in child care initiatives as well as in health and nutritional programmes. The demands for a policy of "positive discrimination" are well justified. Social inequalities, the highly unlikely probability that people living under conditions of squalor may understand the importance of an early education, and their very limited access to a quality education, call for measures targeted preferentially at those sectors of the population hardest hit by poverty. Additionally, the number of children not incorporated into the education system is still much too large, while the supply is mostly concentrated in urban areas.

In the practice, "positive discrimination" constitutes the opposite of "equal opportunities for all", advanced in proposals and legal documents. What it seeks to do, is offer a differentiated education in order to obtain even results across the population. In the particular case of early childhood education, the increased allo-

¹⁷ In 50 per cent of these children, language development was found to be impaired; in 30 per cent, visual and motor development had been affected, while 17 per cent presented gross motor skill anomalies. Research conducted by M.E. Young, "Early Childhood Development: Investing in the Future" (World Bank, 1996). See: Aparna Mehrotra (1998).

cation of resources to formal and non-formal institutions and programmes catering to children between the ages of 0 and 6, or victims of social or ethnic bigotry, greatly improves these children's opportunities to be exposed to stimulating educational activities in their own environments. Besides being fair, this criterion is economically sound, since it prevents overspending lean resources, as is the case with policies that promote access with little –or no– regard for learning achievement (J.E. García Huidobro, 1996).

Second priority

To foster learning activities in environments conducive to emotional and motor development, through the acknowledgement and stimulation of young children's abilities

The vast experience accumulated by years of work and numerous research studies in this area of education, would seem to suggest that the communication and learning matrices built by young children, are organised around a psychomotor structure developed along four axes: links to the more significant adult(s); exploration; communication; and, balance.

It is correctly argued, that the interaction of these four organisational planes allows the child to construct the foundation of his/her initial and permanent education: mental representations, abstraction and, hence, language development, and the so called “operational thinking”.

As it will become clear in the following lines, initial education must proceed from the premise that the child brings along an already defined makeup, being able to contribute with his own contents and to process external ones. This requires the adoption of new instructional practices and a different approach to teacher-training programmes: a more carefree and egalitarian education that prioritises the child's interests, and a teacher who does not exclude children from the learning process, but makes them

protagonists of their own formation and development.

Emphasise the inner world of the child and his/ her psycho-emotional core

At the risk of oversimplifying the findings of many decades of teaching experience, the claim can be made that all learning is imparted in one of two ways: through pain, stressing compulsion, external demands, or through pleasure, motivation, and affection.

There are plenty of cases that illustrate the former, and the ensuing failures. In the words of A. Lapierre and B. Aucouturier (1958), “Anything forcibly memorised –at the cortex level– stripped of emotional overtones, does nothing but parasitize the memory. Under these circumstances, forgetting constitutes a sign of mental health”.

In contrast, a child who is taught through pleasure and affection, is less likely to fragment this knowledge, and will be capable of harmonically developing his social, intellectual, emotional, corporal, and affective areas, as a whole.

The recreational alternative in early childhood education draws heavily on this asseveration. The rich baggage of knowledge each child brings to the educational institution or programme, can be tapped through the spontaneous manifestations present in a child's game, for they reflect everything he is experiencing, and how well he meshes with his peers.

On the other hand, it should be kept in mind that the challenges posed by the 21st century, focus much more intensely on mental than on intellectual health.

Thus, building self-esteem, personal security, trust in others, tolerance with those who are different than themselves, the capacity to assume risks and challenges, will all be forged during their first educational experiences with adults and with other children, through early education programmes. So, too, will inner peace, the response mechanism before difficult situations, and the first dithering steps, be

determined by those first educational encounters.

Initial education should first and foremost, seek to shape the child –through an atmosphere of loving care– into an adult capable of engaging in teamwork, co-operating with others, expressing himself, reasoning, solving new problems, and acting autonomously.

Discovering and fostering each child's potential

Various studies, particularly in the fields of Biology and Psychology, recognise the innate capability children possess of self-propelling their own development.¹⁸ As they become older, children reinforce their capacity to produce “self-generated learning” and, consequently, the quality and potential of the signals they give forth. This determines the need to make such an attribute the mandatory starting point of any educational scheme.

José Amar quotes the work of Gambler and Zingler (1986) who seek to demonstrate that even in the case of children exposed to extreme poverty conditions and unrelenting deprivations, of the various subsystems they use to function socially, intellectually, and emotionally, intelligence is the most resistant to environmental impact. It is likely that many of the cognitive skills these children possess can successfully weather protracted periods of dire need. However, this does not prevent them from losing their thirst for knowledge, their inchoate trust in adults, and their hope, factors considerably more pivotal than intelligence.

These data support the previously mentioned notion that early childhood education, along with sound health and good nutrition, should be at the basis of any solid future development. The quality of experiences with other children and adults that may benefit the infant learner, will be enhanced if keyed to the young child's own capabilities, and provided he is encouraged to apply his movements, intentions, intelligence and affections to modify his own environment, whether at home or in school.

Place special emphasis on the multicultural approach of language development

Language is acquired through social interchange. In its manifold expressions, language constitutes the indispensable tool to communicate with one another and to represent and fathom the world. Vigotsky asserts that the intellectual growth of a child depends on the mastery of the social mediators of thought, that is, on the mastery of language.¹⁹

Language elicits inner thinking, facilitates co-existence, and represents the main communication factor. It is appropriately said that, in the absence of language, we would be unable to either construct thoughts or even love.²⁰

Furthermore, in order to help a child build his ability to express himself, communicate with, and understand others through language, a first step should be to acknowledge his potential, creativity, and production capacity.

¹⁸ “Although wholly dependent on those responsible for looking after them, unweaned babies are endowed with a vast array of capabilities that facilitate their survival as well as a healthy development”, observes J. Dalais Cyril (1992). “We now know that children are actively involved in their own development from the very moment of their birth ... ten-day old babies, are already capable of mimicking facial expressions, and through them replicate the behaviour of their caretakers”. Nico van Oudenhoven, address delivered at the *Sexta Semana Monográfica* (quoted in José Amar's “Educación infantil y desarrollo social, 1998”).

¹⁹ Lev Vigotsky has stated in his book *Language and Thought*: “The development of thought is determined by the language, that is, by the linguistics tools of the thinking process and the child's social and cultural experiences”.

²⁰ Vigotsky emphasises that “when studying language and thought, understanding their functional relations, is one of the areas of psychology that must be carefully heeded. Until we have accounted for the existing interconnection between thought and speech, we are in no position to answer – or even correctly formulate – any of the specific issues here involved. In *Pensamiento y Lenguaje*. La Pléyade Publishers. Buenos Aires. 1981.

Alicia Legaspi (1997), states that “it is feasible to speak of creativity in children’s language, as equivalent to a rich, personal, and imaginative use of it. However, the concept of creative language among pre-schoolers, detached from language acquisition, is not in line with the contemporary formulations of linguistics or psycholinguistics”. This, must be taken into account by modern pedagogical science.

The concretion of such objectives in the forthcoming century, will still draw significantly on the seminal contributions of Vygotsky’s work and Emilia Ferreiro’s research studies.²¹ Most importantly, however, the prevailing notion –propounded by way too many educators– that children minds’ are empty of content, devoid of previous experiences, and willing repositories of the instructor’s wisdom, must be changed without delay.

The recurring question of whether pre-school children should be taught how to read and write, should be resolved on the basis of individual cases and environments. Nonetheless, children’s development processes should take into account their need to communicate, and their own willingness to learn reading and writing codes, even as part of their recreational needs. Everything seems to point to the fact that pre-school children must be put in situations such that they are compelled to use written language, not with the objective of acquiring reading and writing skills, but as part of discovering the social function of language. It is becoming increasingly difficult to advocate waiting for a “mature” stage, particularly when confronted with the knowledge that the development of language skills is strongly depen-

dent on the wealth of acquired experiences. Furthermore, as Emilia Ferreiro so aptly puts it children “do not ask for our permission as to when to begin learning”.

There is ample evidence to support a multicultural approach to early childhood education. Early education programmes or institutions –and the teachers comprising them– should keep in mind that the great majority of a child’s learning experience takes place outside the school. Thus, it is important that these centres and educators acknowledge and accept the existence of the symbolic world of the child, and refrain from making “adaptations” that restrict the child’s creativity; and, provide an atmosphere of loving care, security, and trust that encourages children to share their curiosity and doubts, and communicate themselves verbally and through bodily expressions. The language spoken at home is not the language used at school. Early education programmes, through permanent exposure to the school language used in an informal and recreational spirit that elicits experimentation, communication, learning and assimilation, can surmount possible obstacles that may arise from this reality.

Third priority

Initial education as part of the education system: greater harmonisation with and influence on the primary level

The education systems vis-à-vis the 21st century

Most developing countries will begin the 21st century still dragging unresolved 19th century issues. Insufficient coverage, and high repetition and dropout rates persist. The main challenges are, precisely, materialising the dream of a genuinely universal school, and preparing our societies to rise to the occasion in terms of successfully and equitably integrating all the third millennium’s demands, particularly those connected with productive processes that require creative information and intellects. The

²¹ Based on her field research findings, this renowned educator –who has had great influence on several Latin American countries, particularly Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico– suggests that children have four writing acquisition levels, each of which consists of specific sets of expressions; that young children interact with the surrounding objects of their written culture (books, posters, magazines), and through their growth associate markings with the user, establishing differences between drawing and writing.

idea is to provide all people with an education for the 21st century.

The education system²² –starting at initial education and through post-graduate school– plays a vital and ineluctable role in this mission. However, as mentioned earlier, educating also entails bringing into its fold new, as well as old players, such as the family, political parties, the church, labour unions, business associations, and the mass media. In order to be effective, the education process must galvanise the harmonic co-operation of the various social institutions, and make it not only a right for all, but also everybody's duty.

It is the responsibility of a basic comprehensive education to improve present academic performance levels, the product of a legally-imposed compulsory basic education. Achieving 100 per cent coverage is not enough – nor will it be enough in the future. The proximate causes of overage and failure have yet to be dealt with. The goal will be to achieve the minimal requirements the 21st century calls for: the mastery of bilingual skills; mathematical and reading ability equivalent to at least 8th or 9th grade; the capacity to engage in problem-solving activities as part of a team; understanding and enjoying science and technology; the ability to use information and communication technology; and, tolerance and respect for those who are different.

This is the future context where the importance of a quality early childhood education, and its relationship to the whole of the education system, will be inserted. In terms of classical education, initial education is a relative newcomer, while its main role is to accompany fledgling attempts at acquiring knowledge.

It is generally acknowledged that one of the main obstacles –if not the main obstacle– to

the grand objectives of the education systems is student repetition, a phenomenon blamed for transmitting poverty from one generation to the next. This is why we have pointed to the importance of targeting education programmes at the most vulnerable groups –dysfunctional homes, households run by mothers, and those of excluded ethnic groups–, and to covering the minimal health nutrition, and psychosocial needs of all pre-school children.

More and better articulation between initial and primary education

In addition to these factors, education systems are clearly wanting in terms of co-ordination mechanisms between levels and modalities. This lack of co-ordination is most evident between initial and primary education. While the recognition of initial education as an essential part of basic education represents an invaluable gain, the transition from one level to the other has not progressed at the same pace.

This also ties in with high primary grade repetition rates, specially in rural and marginal-urban areas. School failure is most prevalent among the poor children of poor areas, precisely the sectors where early education opportunities are conspicuously absent. Moreover, some evidence seems to put the blame for this high rate of repetition on the abrupt change experienced by children making the transition to first grade –despite the benefits of initial education.

Emilia Ferreiro (1993) observes that failure to pass first grade, means failure to grasp basic literacy contents, adding that the Latin American scenario is vastly different from other linguistic contexts such as, for example, Africa's.²³ The authoress goes on to say that recent studies show that the predominant mechanistic

²² In reference to education systems organised by teaching levels and modalities with various origins and historical trajectories which, over time, have acquired traits and identities of their own.

²³ Emilia Ferreiro emphasises that, with the exception of the Caribbean and indigenous populations, the greater part of Latin America speaks two closely related languages: Spanish and Portuguese.

view of literacy, rather than contributing to the learning process, tends to prove frustrating for precisely those children who are most dependent on schools to learn to read and write: children from the more disadvantaged sectors.²⁴

First grade is characterised by an extremely formal atmosphere, where the pressure to impart reading, writing, and arithmetic skills to the children permeates the air. Classrooms leave little room for group work or recreational activities; individual expression and creativity are not encouraged. Here, the teacher-student relationship is a distant cry from the caring, socially-oriented climate early education programmes endeavour to convey.

In countries where conditions are similar to those prevalent in Latin America, one of the many unresolved issues –apathetic participation by basic education teachers in educational reforms, low salaries, and lack of basic equipment– is a traditionally weak formation and training which favours the theoretical aspects of pedagogical science over a hands-on approach. A great many teacher training institutions should implement an up-dated approach to language construction, logical and mathematical reasoning, ethnic characteristics and ecology, so as to enrich and reinforce their teaching capacity. Furthermore, in an important number of countries, the responsibility for teaching the first two grades of primary school –a decision made, in most cases, by the rest of the teaching staff– falls mostly to newly graduated or less experienced teachers.

In order to improve the articulation between initial and primary levels, an operational and

individual perspective would have to be considered. As regards the former, each educational level has specific functions. What articulation does, is integrate these levels –as the larger units– into the educational system as a whole, but preserving the specificity of these functions in the process. The individual perspective has to do with the student. Each stage in the life of the child is different from the previous one, while both are articulated in a gradual and continuous process; however, the school organisation, viewing the process from outside, imposes “cuts” –educational levels– to the child’s trajectory. A smooth articulation between initial and primary levels, should ensure that the institutional logic will not be at cross-purposes with each child’s learning process.

This articulation implies that the child must always be regarded as an individual, a unique being, with different skills, knowledge, expectations and experiences. In terms of acquired knowledge, everyone completes pre-school somewhat differently. Regrettably, many have not had the opportunity to access any of the various early education modalities available. Upon entering first grade, an initial assessment intended to evaluate previously acquired knowledge in order to subsequently integrate it into an on-going knowledge construction process, is seen as an essential undertaking.

One of the needs a greater articulation would satisfy, is the bridging of the widening gap between an initial education underpinned by stimulating conceptualisations and effects, and an increasingly ossified primary education. To this end, such an articulation must be capable of allowing initial education methodologies, based on personalised attention, and the creation of recreational and stimulating learning environments, to percolate into primary education. The importance of affectivity and interpersonal relationships as potential points of influence, are indeed crucial.

A constant in any articulating attempt, is trying to decide how to adapt schools, programmes, and teachers to the children – not the

²⁴ “In the traditional approach to the acquisition of reading and writing skills, a code of oral units is transcribed to graphic units (writing) and graphic units to oral units (reading). The early stages of this learning are regarded as purely mechanical ... Children who after a few months of attendance fail to make the “correct associations” between letters (or sequence of at least 2 letters) and syllables, will be classified as underachievers or slow learners”. E. Ferreiro points to the absurdity of making these children repeat the grade, and start all over again from square one, as if they had learned nothing at all in the interim.

other way around. Such an effort demands a willingness on the part of both groups of teachers to discuss, work together, and reach agreements that facilitate a seamless continuity, in terms of curricular programmes, methodologies, and the emotional or affective climate that should exist between initial and primary education.

Primary education should focus closer on early childhood education, and incorporate many of the techniques and methods characteristic of this level of instruction, thus contributing to a more coherent, pro-active, and significant learning process. Sensitising primary first and second grade teachers to the advantages offered by children-oriented learning, and to the language the pre-school pedagogical models employ, remains a pending task.

For its part, initial education would have to overcome certain "anti-school" biases which characterise many pre-school teachers, and set about its task, acknowledging that its pedagogical action, although brimming with advantages, does have its share of shortcomings. A latent risk inherent in many early education programmes, is its gradual formalisation to become replicas of primary-school activities. The need to establish a clearer definition of the professional profile of pre-school educators, is yet another aspect that needs to be addressed.

From an organisational point of view, this presupposes the need to create channels, and exchange and co-ordination initiatives between pre-school institutions and primary schools, or between the teachers themselves, particularly when working under the same roof. In short, viewing initial education and primary education as complementary not competitive investments, would probably be much wiser and immensely more logical.

The need for intersectoral strategies

The comprehensive nature of early childhood development, and the strong influence that health and nutrition have on learning, demand that the responsibility of caring and educating

young children, does not fall exclusively on their teachers. New work strategies are needed to circumvent bureaucratic guidelines that often thwart initiatives aimed at combining educational programmes with health, nutritional, and social-welfare plans. Thus, by making these basic services available to all participating children, early childhood programmes can successfully expand their objectives. In countries rife with poverty where children demand not just education, but survival strategies and special care, this becomes particularly significant.

For this reason, the role of the educator whose duty it is to work with parents, various professionals, and community members and leaders, can be said to have a distinct social dimension.

In this sense, the link that must exist between initial and youth and adult education, should be underscored. In keeping with the comprehensive nature of the proposed approach, literacy programmes designed for low income parents should encourage them –along with mastering reading, writing and arithmetic– to familiarise themselves with their sons' learning needs, and with the importance of psychomotor stimulation during child development.

Education programmes for women who are mothers, will help improve their children's learning conditions, and raise their standard of living.²⁵

Fourth priority

Promote the participation of the family as an educating and socialising agent, promoting reflection and a clear understanding of its role in the developmental process of young children

The family represents the dynamic mediator between an individual and society. Its importance is so great, the claim has been made that

²⁵ In developing countries, the influence and effect of educated mothers in the areas of family planning, survival rates, and nutritional levels, are three times more important than those of educated men (J. Hallak, 1991).

–depending on whether it is strongly or weakly organised– it may help or hinder the development processes of its members. The efforts of a well established family will ultimately benefit society at large. The family unit is increasingly becoming the privileged space for public action measures, as well as the locus where these policies can have their greatest impact.

The family has several essential and widely acknowledged functions: *social*, inasmuch as it represents the basic mechanism that regulates the behaviour of the child and other family members; *economic*, for its constant concern with providing resources to satisfy the biological and social needs of its members; and, *affective*, in terms of representing the emotional exchange and communication medium for its members. The influence of the family environment is pre-eminent in development periods; for example, interpersonal communications help the child construct his response patterns when confronted with other people's experiences, thoughts and feelings.²⁶

When the school system makes room for parent participation, their role as mothers and fathers improves markedly, for they seem more inclined to promote their children's autonomy –reinforcing their own self-esteem in the process– thus contributing to enhance student academic achievement.²⁷

The educational function must, obviously, be added to these essential functions. The family, is the educational agent *par excellence*; imprinting (learning through imitation), a key factor in children education, is one of its by-products. To quote Glen Nimnicht: "After all, in most cases, the family is the only permanent educational influence in the child's life;

teachers come and go, the child may be transferred to a different school, however, the family persists".²⁸

The family provides the human being the first opportunity to become one. Hence, the presence and actions of the parents, or the mother, as first educators, and of the family – independent of the form it adopts– will become the child's lifeline and main reference point which, over time and through a process of identification and differentiation, will allow him to acquire his own identity.

For all these reasons, any child education programme that wishes to truly succeed, must include the family. Family-based programmes will yield higher academic results. A key issue in early education programmes, is getting parents to acquire more self-confidence, and to develop skills that may help them better interact with their children.

Regrettably, among the underprivileged, parents are usually denied the possibility of recognising their own potential as educators, while more often than not, their own unsuccessful school experience has been a determining factor of their apathy. Lately, however, early education programmes have tended to increasingly rely on parent participation.

A first axiom emerging from this bird's eye-view of the third millennium, is that the education of parents must be given strategic importance in the development of children and in their fleeting passage through pre-school.

The improved cultural environment of the family, the increased awareness by parents that this improvement will have a direct positive impact on their children's education, and on their academic achievement, and that the bond between adult teachers and children should have a mediatising nature, had been already assessed and made explicit by Lev Vigotsky back in 1932: "Through the mediation of others, through the mediation of adults, the child indulges in his activities. Absolutely everything

²⁶ Bernard Van Leer Foundation. "Sociedades multiculturales. Educación y atención infantil temprana. Síntesis". International Seminar in co-operation with the General Mediterranean Foundation (1984).

²⁷ See: J. Dalais Cyril. "La aportación de los adultos en los infantes durante la primera infancia". In: La educación infantil: una promesa de futuro. Madrid, Spain. 1992 (quoted by J. Amar Amar).

²⁸ See: J. Amar Amar; *op. cit.*, page 71.

the child does has a social root or motivation. Hence, the relationship a child has with reality are, from the onset, social in nature". According to Vigotsky, schools would not restrict their action to the systematic teaching of matters which are normally learned outside it even without the benefit of a pedagogical method. Home and school converge and interact bolstering the evolutionary process of young children's learning experiences, defined as the set of tasks the child is capable of performing with the help of a teacher, classmates, or parents. Thus, how the child solves a particular problem under the guidance of an adult or a more skilled classmate, will determine his potential level of development.²⁹

Recent research shows that the five family variables that contribute more strongly to school learning, can be classified in the following categories:³⁰

- Family working habits.
- Academic orientation and support to education.
- Encouragement to exploring and discovering.
- Language wealth of the family.
- Parents aspirations and expectations.

In order to secure education policy reforms, we must "invest" in parents. According to numerous studies, the educational level of the parents, particularly that of the mother, plays a key role in determining the health and academic success of their children; it will also have a direct bearing on whether the child will

receive a pre-school education, and whether he / she will drop out in the higher grades of primary or secondary school.³¹

A closer bond between initial and adult education programmes can ensure, through work initiatives involving pregnant mothers and the 0 to 3 year old children under their care, a greater influence on present and prospective educational efforts. This period of life, is decisive in terms of language development and the acquisition of skills that may lead to improved learning. By the same token, literacy acquisition, and the attainment of a higher academic level, will have a direct incidence on the self-esteem of poor or excluded parents, on their capacity to learn and act, while it will make them more aware and better prepared to stimulate and become part of their children's learning process.

The manifold initial non-formal education experiences have demonstrated, through community mothers and caretakers committed to these programmes –and responsible for their organisation–, the tremendous educational potential of poorly educated women, when given adequate training and a strong motivation.

There is evidence that this type of programme can have a greater pedagogical impact than those carried out by professional educators. One of the reasons put forward, is that in non-conventional programmes "mothers and caretakers establish harmonic relationships with the other mothers and fathers a fact that lends flu-

²⁹ For Vigotsky, only sound learning induces cognitive development. In the psychologist's opinion, man rather than just respond to stimuli, acts on them causing their transformation. Meaning stems from external sources – the social medium – and must be internalised by the individual, with education serving as a mediator between cognitive development and learning. The vigotskian *proximal development zone* is defined as "the difference (expressed in units of time) between the activities of a child abandoned to his own resources, and the activities of the same child when acting with the help or collaboration of an adult".

³⁰ See: *La contribución de la familia al aprendizaje escolar* (Thomas Kellaghan, Kathryn Sloane, Benjamin Alvarez, and Benjamin Bloom, UNDP, 1998).

³¹ "Basically, we are talking about a cycle: the adults who benefited from an education, have a greater influence on their children's education. The cycle continues: gains in early childhood education translate into better educated parents who, in turn, will provide their children with more educational opportunities" (See: Stich and McDonald, 1990. "Adult education may become the factor to set the cycle in motion"). As regards maternal influence, various studies – such as those conducted by ECLAC in Uruguay in the 80s – reveal explicitly that the higher educational level of the mother constitutes a guarantee of uninterrupted attendance, better academic performance and higher learning achievements, on the part of her children.

idity, coherence, and pertinence to the handling of communication and affective codes, and facilitates the interpretation of behaviour". The explanation can be found in the fact that the human resources involved, because they belong to the same community, share the same parameters, models, and social values.³²

Fifth priority

Furthering through research initiatives, scientific knowledge on infancy, family and community

If the desire to improve the quality of a comprehensive early childhood education is sincere, scientific research will be essential.

Such scientific research, while adhering to classical social science criteria, will attempt to steer the course of young children's education and guarantee the protection of infants, through the satisfaction of the following requirements:

- Providing reliable –not just statistical– data.
- Providing concepts and theories that may shed light on attending initial education phenomena, and reinforce comprehensive measures of childhood protection
- Providing models that facilitate the evaluation of educational and social practices, and of the impact comprehensive attention has on the child, relative to his / her family and community. Securing information on the multiple social functions of the family. Promoting and assessing gubernatorial policies and non government projects. Retrieving and disseminating educational innovations involving early childhood. Analysing social behaviour as it relates to infancy. Examining the effects of excessive children's dependency on electronic media.

- Facilitating the interaction of the main players involved in early childhood education efforts (teachers and parents mostly, in addition to researchers, administrators, and so forth).
- Providing patterns for the building of national projects and other "social engineering" plans associated with infancy.
- Providing inputs designed to sway public policy and opinion in the direction of infancy and initial education initiatives.

However, independent of the aforementioned general considerations, a priority of scientific research will be to accurately identify the type of child who is the real object of initial education, based on the experience of a real child living in a real world. Research should also help yield a clearer conceptual picture of the child as a denizen of a concrete environment.

The average child or the child portrayed by statistical data does not really exist.³³ Basic research focusing on the concrete individual could explain how a child of a given age learns and thinks, while providing valuable insight into how this information can be used in the design of teaching alternatives. It is hoped that these research findings, having established the diversity and heterogeneity found among young children, may discourage the tendency to standardise early childhood programmes.

Because isolating a child from his home environment is quite impractical –not to mention unrealistic– the only other option left is to analyse the multiple internal and external components impinging on his biological makeup, his socioeconomic circumstances, his surroundings, and his relationships with other children and adults.

In this regard, several authors supported by field studies and a review of existing scientific literature on children and childhood in backward and economically underdeveloped regions and nations across the world, conclude that

³² These conclusions are contained in Marielsa López's *El especialista en preescolar: el que tenemos y el que necesitamos*, page 10 (1995), and in the community experiences of Barranquilla, Colombia, quoted by José Amar, or in Peru's PRONOEI (Non Schooled Initial Education Programmes), produced by the educational reform of the 70s.

³³ "Real children are human beings who live, laugh, cry, wet themselves, jump, scream, suck their fingers and make questions, among other things" (José Amar, *op. cit.*, page 63).

the approach employed –albeit valuable– is neither adequate nor does it interpret the characteristics of disadvantaged children.³⁴

This being the case, the compilation of multiple first-hand experiences and field studies in order to obtain –in each continent– a new global perspective on the psychological profile of Asian, African, Latin American, or Arab children, different from the stereotypes produced in the industrialised Northern hemisphere, must be given top priority.

José Amar (1994) while acknowledging the important contribution Genetic Psychology has made to changing psychic conceptions, believes that “the fate of millions of children, their families and communities –who account for half the world’s population– mired in poverty, demands a different dimension capable of explaining not only child development, but also the cosmic view of the world”. He deems it indispensable, particularly in Latin America, to attain this “cosmic view” through a study of “the aetiology and evolution of psychism, which along with discovering the biological beginnings of psychic life, analyses the odds of individual variation as a function of diverse forms of interaction with the environment and of the differences found in the various natural settings”.³⁵

Sixth priority

Approaching new technology from a pedagogical perspective

The 20th century has witnessed the enthusiasm with which education has hailed the cinema, radio, and television, the video and, more recently, the computer, as potential instruction media. Each new medium, it would seem, promised to bring solutions to a backlog of educational problems. However, in terms of potential, time proved them all ephemeral, largely owing to an attempt to implement them without previous consideration of the objectives pursued.

The new technologies tend to elicit varied responses ranging from utopian (technology viewed as a panacea to resolve the major learning problems), to sceptical (television and computers may be harmful for children and promote irrelevant learning).

Both positions reflect a technical approach to the problem, disassociated from human, cultural, and contextual elements, and erroneously substituting the end for the means.

The crux of the matter is not, what can one do with a computer or a television set or, what can computers and televisions do to children, but, what can children, and their parents, do with computers or televisions. What can they build with them?

It is important to recognise that the new technology does not necessarily replace the old technology. The computer does not substitute for the typing machine, or the video, nor does the latter replace television, or television the radio. Each has its functions, potentials and limitations. The idea is to keep children informed about the different media, and to encourage their use with an open mind.

Television has been increasingly described as an entertainment medium and a way to escape reality. This, however, is not true of the effects it has on children’s minds and on their outlook on life, or of the addiction it has cre-

³⁴ The most widely disseminated cosmic view of child development – in Latin America’s case – is known as mechanism, and is represented by the responsive model of human beings. “The latter envisages the human being in the likeness of a machine, responsive to forces which it merely transforms through other mechanisms which are also responsive”. (José Amar, *op. cit.*, page 46).

³⁵ José Amar, has completed more than 20 years doing research work in Colombia’s Atlantic Coast with underprivileged children. He observes that while the work of Piaget, Freud, and Skinner is certainly exceptional, after having been exposed to countless communities and children “we have yet to run across Skinner’s reactive child, Piaget’s intelligent child, or Freud’s erotic child” (*ibid*, page 46).

ated among children, or of the dissemination of comics laden with violence.

According to a study released by UNESCO in 1996, “Ninety-one per cent of all children who have access to home television, spend an average of 3 hours a day before the screen, and devote to it 50 per cent more time than to any other activity”. The survey on which this report was based on, revealed that one hour of programming averages 5 to 10 violent scenes presented mostly as appealing or rightful.³⁶

Still another approach, is to view television as a child socialising medium. Children use the codes television dispenses (violence, love, sexuality, comity, conflict) to relate to their peers. Television –and video– images should have no effect on the personality development of a child who feels loved and cared for. Life itself, with the special support of family and school, will help this child to discern the good and evil of these media.

On the other hand, a child who feels neglected, not integrated to a family or school, could fall easy prey to the media, and unable to counter their influence, would actively embrace them. Consequently, the point is not suppressing the image projected by television, but helping the child to face up to his own reality, through discipline and affection.

One of the unsettled problems of initial education is, precisely, having to define the attitude parents should take when confronted with their children’s use of television and with the addiction it gives rise to. Critical audiovisual sessions of children’s shows, bringing together teachers and parents, may provide a solution to this expression of collective inertia.

With respect to computers, we must recognise the fact that its characteristics are quite differ-

ent from those exhibited by other media, while some of them are narrowly linked to its teaching potential. In fact, several scholars have maintained that education has reached a historical point where radical reforms are feasible, and that computer science constitutes a likely medium to materialise these changes.

We may or may not agree with this view; however, an undeniable advantage offered by the computer is its potential to become an interactive medium, specially since it became “conversational”.³⁷ This feature, makes new ways of leaning possible through construction-oriented activities. The application of interactive and constructive learning strategies, the possibility of learning through technology, in collaboration with parents, teachers and children, may yield astounding results.

This far into the game, it would be extremely hard to disavow computers as part and parcel of a modernity which is becoming increasingly globalised reaching unsuspected corners of the planet. Hence, the importance of a pedagogical approach based on the child’s context, his culture and environment, and not on technology.

The introduction of computers into initial education, may seem unusual and somewhat ambitious. However, if we stop regarding it as a technology that could or could not yield benefits, but as a tool to help us do something better, we would be in a better frame of mind to accept it.

Thus, it will be necessary for parents and teachers to first decide how, to what end, when, and where to use them as an educational device. To guarantee the incorporation of humanising elements, prevent the medium from distorting the educational objectives sought,

³⁶ Based on work involving 5 thousand 12 year old children from 23 countries, action toys such as “Terminator” were known to 88 per cent of the interviewees, while 51 per cent expressed a desire to imitate them (cable news published in newspapers across the world on February 24, 1998).

³⁷ “Interactivity is the response to language by means of the language ... A medium can be said to be interactive when it has the capacity to actively involve the learner in the activity which is implicit in the design” (Jaime Sánchez, “Aprender interactivamente”, “El Mercurio” newspaper (Artes y Letras supplement), May 10, 1998, Santiago, Chile.

and insure the inclusion of all the child's potential in these learning processes, the presence of the teacher will be essential.

Perhaps, at least two other problematic issues should be added to the above:

- The educational software used are normally produced by computer technicians with little training on the learning process, rarely by teachers;
- The utilisation of computers as a teaching device will be different from country to country, depending on their economic status. In the richer countries, educational technology is generally used to enhance the quality of education, not to save resources. Poorer countries, before implementing computers in their classrooms, must consider the availability of traditionally scant resources: funds and qualified teachers.³⁸

Seventh priority

Seeking excellence in pre-school teachers

This priority could well be the first, while it is contingent on the fulfilment of the other sixth.

If we are willing to assume the pivotal importance of early education on human and personal development, we must acknowledge the need to adopt strategies designed to guarantee the thorough selection and training of these teachers, and the benefits of ongoing professional upgrading.

³⁸ It is estimated that for each lecture hour, the teacher invests another hour preparing it. The printed material used in the lecture may demand some 30 hours of work. By contrast, one hour of instruction using an interactive C.D. requires roughly 300 hours of preparation. In the poorer countries, the generalised use of computers is further complicated by some of the associated costs; the average life of a computer is 5 years, while its yearly maintenance should cost about US \$ 300. Considering one computer for every 10 students, "the use of this kind of technology would increase the sector's budget by 20 per cent, a wholly untenable position from the political standpoint" (C. De Moura Castro, 1998).

Considering the findings of studies based on reality, and the opinion of experts who have researched initial education specialisations, it could be claimed that the personal traits of an educator specialised in the instruction of pre-school children, are fundamental in this line of work.

These traits may be classified in categories as the following:³⁹

- *Her rapport with children.* This is *sine qua non*. The educator must be loving, affectionate, and patient, but, also dynamic, so as to follow the intense pace that characterises working with children. Hence, it is often –and correctly– argued, that it is preferable to hire a person who loves children, even if she is not a specialist, rather than a highly qualified individual who lacks this attribute.
- *Her relationship with work.* A specialist in early childhood education must feel a certain affinity with her chosen profession. Her vocation should also be reflected in her high sense responsibility, and her desire to further and perfect her knowledge, and thus render a better service.
- *Her relationship with others.* Her mastery of communications and adequate handling of human relations, will help her establish solid links to the community, parents, and colleagues, a vital requirement at this educational level. For this reason, the studies conducted recommend –if and when possible– that the specialist belongs to the community where the school is located.
- *Relationship with self.* Emotional balance, and sound physical and mental health, will be desirable traits when having to deal with numerous groups of different ages, and, too often, with unpredictable events which test the teacher's common sense and decision-making ability.

³⁹ Research conducted by Venezuela's CICE, has contributed importantly to the study of pre-school teacher labour profiles, and of what parents, communities, and specialists demand as their essential features (See: Marielsa López, *op. cit.*, pages 134 to 148).

With regard to the professional skills⁴⁰ and theoretical knowledge that would be required from such a professional, rather than referring to professional training manuals or to the valuable experience of teacher training institutions, allow me to turn this over to the consideration of the children themselves.

In 1996, UNESCO's Associated School Programme invited children from all over the world to answer the following question: what makes a good teacher? The children could ei-

ther submit a written answer or a carefully made drawing. One of the main reasons this survey was conducted, is that much has been said and written about the role of teachers in a changing world, but rarely have the voices and ideas of the children themselves been heard. Expressed in words and drawings are the numerous manifestations as to what they see – or wished they saw– in the 50 million teachers scattered across the planet.

What makes a good teacher?⁴¹

IN THE CHILDREN'S OWN WORDS

A good teacher is a good friend

"You must be nice, friendly and trust me ... you must listen and understand all of us ... and never lose your patience ..."
Rose, 9 years old, from New Zealand

"You treat us all alike, and understand the feelings, aspirations, and humour of each of us".
Le Nhy, 9 years old, from Viet Nam

A good teacher listens ...

"He encourages me to think and find answers on my own".
Tasha-Leigh, 12 years old, from Jamaica

"I like a teacher who encourages me to think and find answers on my own".
Bongani Sicelo, 9 years old, from Zimbabwe

A good teacher is a model we look up to ...

"A good teacher is someone who transmits to the future generation that which is most valuable: its culture and education".
Nawal, 12 years old, from Morocco

"Teachers must behave impeccably, because students emulate them".
Julietta, 12 years old, from Ghana

... help us to grow and develop

"He must be capable of making us autonomous students and help us mature"
Anabella, 12 years old, from Italy

"A good teacher is a guide that shows us the road that leads to our objectives".
Analia, 12 years old, from Mexico

⁴⁰ Based on these studies, professional skills at this educational level should centre on the following areas: motor and emotional development; pedagogy; health; nutrition and hygiene; habit formation and value building; community; administrative, and research.

⁴¹ "What makes a good teacher? The children have the floor". International children competition. UNESCO's Associated School Programme. Advisory Forum on Education for All. Paris, France, 1996.

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UNESCO

UNESCO is a United Nations organisation, whose mission is to "contribute to peace and security by promoting through education, science and culture, a closer participation among Nations, geared towards guaranteeing universal observance of justice, due process of law, human rights and fundamental freedom which the Charter of the United Nations recognises as an unalienable right of all the peoples of the World, irrespective of race, gender, language or religious beliefs".

Within the United Nations system, UNESCO has been assigned the task of contributing, essentially through education initiatives, to foster human development and to create a peace culture based on human rights, tolerance and democracy.

In addition to the Member States, over 600 non-government organisations (NGOs), foundations and similar institutions, maintain reciprocal and informal work and information relationships with UNESCO. Its activities and interests are varied, and encompass every sphere of competence, whether involving scientists or specialists or mass organisations (trade unions, co-operatives, associations or youth movements). These groups are involved in the formulation and implementation of UNESCO's programmes, and support the Organisation's efforts through a world-wide web of members.

WORLD DECLARATION ON HIGHER EDUCATION FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: VISION AND ACTION¹

UNESCO

On the eve of a new century, there is an unprecedented demand for and a great diversification in higher education, as well as an increased awareness of its vital importance for sociocultural and economic development, and for building the future, for which the younger generations will need to be equipped with new skills, knowledge and ideals.

Higher education includes 'all types of studies, training or training for research at the post-secondary level, provided by universities or other educational establishments that are approved as institutions of higher education by the competent State authorities'.²

Everywhere higher education is faced with great challenges and difficulties related to financing, equity of conditions at access into and during the course of studies, improved staff development, skills-based training, enhancement and preservation of quality in teaching, research and services, relevance of programmes, employability of graduates, establishment of efficient co-operation agreements and equitable access to the benefits of international co-operation.

At the same time, higher education is being challenged by new opportunities relating to technologies that are improving the ways in which knowledge can be produced, managed, disseminated, accessed and controlled. Equitable access to these technologies should be ensured at all levels of education systems.

The second half of this century will go down in the history of higher education as the period of its most spectacular expansion: an over six-fold increase in student enrolments worldwide, from 13 million in 1960 to 82 million in 1995.

But it is also the period which has seen the gap between industrially developed, the devel-

oping countries and in particular the least developed countries with regard to access and resources for higher learning and research, already enormous, becoming even wider. It has also been a period of increased socio-economic stratification and greater difference in educational opportunity within countries, including in some of the most developed and wealthiest nations. Without adequate higher education and research institutions providing a critical mass of skilled and educated people, no country can ensure genuine endogenous and sustainable development and, in particular, developing countries and least developed countries cannot reduce the gap separating them from the industrially developed ones. Sharing knowledge,

¹ The World Declaration and the Action Framework for Change and Development of World Education were approved by the World Conference on Higher Education, held in Paris 5-9 October 1998.

² Definition approved by the UNESCO General Conference in its 27th meeting (November 1993) in the Recommendation on higher education studies, degrees and diplomas convalidation.

international co-operation and new technologies can offer new opportunities to reduce this gap.

Higher education has given ample proof of its viability over the centuries and of its ability to change and to induce change and progress in society. Owing to the scope and pace of change, society has become increasingly knowledge-based so that higher learning and research now act as essential components of cultural, socio-economic and environmentally sustainable development of individuals, communities and nations. Higher education itself is confronted therefore with formidable challenges and must proceed to the most radical change and renewal it has ever been required to undertake, so that our society, which is currently undergoing a profound crisis of values, can transcend mere economic considerations and incorporate deeper dimensions of morality and spirituality.

It is with the aim of providing solutions to these challenges and of setting in motion a process of in-depth reform in higher education worldwide that UNESCO has convened a World Conference on Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action. In preparation for the Conference, UNESCO issued, in 1995, its *Policy Paper for Change and Development in Higher Education*. Five regional consultations (Havana, November 1996; Dakar, April 1997; Tokyo, July 1997; Palermo, September 1997; and Beirut, March 1998) were subsequently held.

The Declarations and Plans of Action adopted by them, each preserving its own specificity, are duly taken into account in the present Declaration – as is the whole process of reflection undertaken by the preparation of the World Conference – and are annexed to it.

We, participants in the World Conference on Higher Education, assembled at UNESCO

Headquarters in Paris, from 5 to 9 October 1998,

Recalling the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,

Recalling also the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states in Article 26, paragraph 1, that 'Everyone has the right to education' and that 'higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit', and endorsing the basic principles of the Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960), which, by Article 4, commits the States Parties to it to 'make higher education equally accessible to all on the basis of individual capacity',

Taking into account the recommendations concerning higher education of major commissions and conferences, inter alia, the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century, the World Commission on Culture and Development, the 44th and 45th sessions of the International Conference on Education (Geneva, 1994 and 1996), the decisions taken at the 27th and 29th sessions of UNESCO's General Conference, in particular regarding the Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel, the World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand, 1990), the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992), the Conference on Academic Freedom and University Autonomy (Sinaia, 1992), the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995), the fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), the International Congress on Education and Informatics (Moscow, 1996),

the World Congress on Higher Education and Human Resources Development for the Twenty-First Century (Manila, 1997), the fifth International Conference on Adult Education (Hamburg, 1997) and especially the Agenda for the Future under Theme 2 (Improving the conditions and quality of learning) stating: 'We commit ourselves to ... opening schools, colleges and universities to adult learners ... by calling upon the World Conference on Higher Education (Paris, 1998) to promote the transformation of post-secondary institutions into lifelong learning institutions and to define the role of universities accordingly',

Convinced that education is a fundamental pillar of human rights, democracy, sustainable development and peace, and shall therefore become accessible to all throughout life and that measures are required to ensure co-ordination and co-operation across and between the various sectors, particularly between general, technical and professional secondary and post-secondary education as well as between universities, colleges and technical institutions,

Believing that, in this context, the solution of the problems faced on the eve of the twenty-first century will be determined by the vision of the future society and by the role that is assigned to education in general and to higher education in particular,

Aware that on the threshold of a new millennium it is the duty of higher education to ensure that the values and ideals of a culture of peace prevail and that the intellectual community should be mobilized to that end,

Considering that a substantial change and development of higher education, the enhancement of its quality and relevance, and the solution to the major challenges it faces, require the strong involvement not only of governments and of higher education institutions, but also

of all stakeholders, including students and their families, teachers, business and industry, the public and private sectors of the economy, parliaments, the media, the community, professional associations and society as well as a greater responsibility of higher education institutions towards society and accountability in the use of public and private, national or international resources,

Emphasizing that higher education systems should enhance their capacity to live with uncertainty, to change and bring about change, and to address social needs and to promote solidarity and equity; should preserve and exercise scientific rigour and originality, in a spirit of impartiality, as a basic prerequisite for attaining and sustaining an indispensable level of quality; and should place students at the centre of their concerns, within a lifelong perspective, so as to allow their full integration into the global knowledge society of the coming century,

Also believing that international co-operation and exchange are major avenues for advancing higher education throughout the world,

Proclaim the following:

Missions and functions of higher education

Article 1. *Mission to educate, to train and to undertake research*

We affirm that the core missions and values of higher education, in particular the mission to contribute to the sustainable development and improvement of society as a whole, should be preserved, reinforced and further expanded, namely, to:

- a) educate highly qualified graduates and responsible citizens able to meet the needs of all sectors of human activity, by offering relevant qualifications, including professional

training, which combine high-level knowledge and skills, using courses and content continually tailored to the present and future needs of society;

- b) provide opportunities (espace ouvert) for higher learning and for learning throughout life, giving to learners an optimal range of choice and a flexibility of entry and exit points within the system, as well as an opportunity for individual development and social mobility in order to educate for citizenship and for active participation in society, with a worldwide vision, for endogenous capacity-building, and for the consolidation of human rights, sustainable development, democracy and peace, in a context of justice;
- c) advance, create and disseminate knowledge through research and provide, as part of its service to the community, relevant expertise to assist societies in cultural, social and economic development, promoting and developing scientific and technological research as well as research in the social sciences, the humanities and the creative arts;
- d) help understand, interpret, preserve, enhance, promote and disseminate national and regional, international and historic cultures, in a context of cultural pluralism and diversity;
- e) help protect and enhance societal values by training young people in the values which form the basis of democratic citizenship and by providing critical and detached perspectives to assist in the discussion of strategic options and the reinforcement of humanistic perspectives;
- f) contribute to the development and improvement of education at all levels, including through the training of teachers.

Article 2. *Ethical role, autonomy, responsibility and anticipatory function*

In accordance with the Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel approved by the General Con-

ference of UNESCO in November 1997, higher education institutions and their personnel and students should:

- a) preserve and develop their crucial functions, through the exercise of ethics and scientific and intellectual rigour in their various activities;
- b) be able to speak out on ethical, cultural and social problems completely independently and in full awareness of their responsibilities, exercising a kind of intellectual authority that society needs to help it to reflect, understand and act;
- c) enhance their critical and forward-looking functions, through continuing analysis of emerging social, economic, cultural and political trends, providing a focus for forecasting, warning and prevention;
- d) exercise their intellectual capacity and their moral prestige to defend and actively disseminate universally accepted values, including peace, justice, freedom, equality and solidarity, as enshrined in UNESCO's Constitution;
- e) enjoy full academic autonomy and freedom, conceived as a set of rights and duties, while being fully responsible and accountable to society;
- f) play a role in helping identify and address issues that affect the well-being of communities, nations and global society.

Shaping a new vision of higher education

Article 3. *Equity of access*

- a) In keeping with Article 26.1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, admission to higher education should be based on the merit, capacity, efforts, perseverance and devotion, showed by those seeking access to it, and can take place in a lifelong scheme, at any time, with due recognition of previously acquired skills. As a consequence, no discrimination can be accepted in granting access to higher

education on grounds of race, gender, language or religion, or economic, cultural or social distinctions, or physical disabilities.

- b) Equity of access to higher education should begin with the reinforcement and, if need be, the reordering of its links with all other levels of education, particularly with secondary education. Higher education institutions must be viewed as, and must also work within themselves to be a part of and encourage, a seamless system starting with early childhood and primary education and continuing through life. Higher education institutions must work in active partnership with parents, schools, students, socio-economic groups and communities. Secondary education should not only prepare qualified candidates for access to higher education by developing the capacity to learn on a broad basis but also open the way to active life by providing training on a wide range of jobs. However, access to higher education should remain open to those successfully completing secondary school, or its equivalent, or presenting entry qualifications, as far as possible, at any age and without any discrimination.
- c) As a consequence, the rapid and wide-reaching demand for higher education requires, where appropriate, all policies concerning access to higher education to give priority in the future to the approach based on the merit of the individual, as defined in Article 3(a) above.
- d) Access to higher education for members of some special target groups, such as indigenous peoples, cultural and linguistic minorities, disadvantaged groups, peoples living under occupation and those who suffer from disabilities, must be actively facilitated, since these groups as collectivities and as individuals may have both experience and talent that can be of great value for the development of societies and nations. Special material help and educational solutions can help overcome the obstacles that these groups face, both in

accessing and in continuing higher education.

Article 4. *Enhancing participation and promoting the role of women*

- a) Although significant progress has been achieved to enhance the access of women to higher education, various socio-economic, cultural and political obstacles continue in many places in the world to impede their full access and effective integration. To overcome them remains an urgent priority in the renewal process for ensuring an equitable and non-discriminatory system of higher education based on the principle of merit.
- b) Further efforts are required to eliminate all gender stereotyping in higher education, to consider gender aspects in different disciplines and to consolidate women's participation at all levels and in all disciplines, in which they are under-represented and, in particular, to enhance their active involvement in decision-making.
- c) Gender studies (women's studies) should be promoted as a field of knowledge, strategic for the transformation of higher education and society.
- d) Efforts should be made to eliminate political and social barriers whereby women are under-represented and in particular to enhance their active involvement at policy and decision-making levels within higher education and society.

Article 5. *Advancing knowledge through research in science, the arts and humanities and the dissemination of its results*

- a) The advancement of knowledge through research is an essential function of all systems of higher education, which should promote postgraduate studies. Innovation, interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity should be promoted and reinforced in programmes with

long-term orientations on social and cultural aims and needs. An appropriate balance should be established between basic and target-oriented research.

- b) Institutions should ensure that all members of the academic community engaged in research are provided with appropriate training, resources and support. The intellectual and cultural rights on the results of research should be used to the benefit of humanity and should be protected so that they cannot be abused.
- c) Research must be enhanced in all disciplines, including the social and human sciences, education (including higher education), engineering, natural sciences, mathematics, informatics and the arts within the framework of national, regional and international research and development policies. Of special importance is the enhancement of research capacities in higher education research institutions, as mutual enhancement of quality takes place when higher education and research are conducted at a high level within the same institution. These institutions should find the material and financial support required, from both public and private sources.

Article 6. *Long-term orientation based on relevance*

- a) Relevance in higher education should be assessed in terms of the fit between what society expects of institutions and what they do. This requires ethical standards, political impartiality, critical capacities and, at the same time, a better articulation with the problems of society and the world of work, basing long-term orientations on societal aims and needs, including respect for cultures and environmental protection. The concern is to provide access to both broad general education and targeted, career-specific education, often interdisciplinary, focusing on skills and aptitudes, both of which equip individuals to live
- in a variety of changing settings, and to be able to change occupations.
 - b) Higher education should reinforce its role of service to society, especially its activities aimed at eliminating poverty, intolerance, violence, illiteracy, hunger, environmental degradation and disease, mainly through an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach in the analysis of problems and issues.
 - c) Higher education should enhance its contribution to the development of the whole education system, notably through improved teacher education, curriculum development and educational research.
 - d) Ultimately, higher education should aim at the creation of a new society – non-violent and non-exploitative – consisting of highly cultivated, motivated and integrated individuals, inspired by love for humanity and guided by wisdom.

Article 7. *Strengthening co-operation with the world of work and analysing and anticipating societal needs*

- a) In economies characterized by changes and the emergence of new production paradigms based on knowledge and its application, and on the handling of information, the links between higher education, the world of work and other parts of society should be strengthened and renewed.
- b) Links with the world of work can be strengthened, through the participation of its representatives in the governance of institutions, the increased use of domestic and international apprenticeship/work-study opportunities for students and teachers, the exchange of personnel between the world of work and higher education institutions and revised curricula more closely aligned with working practices.
- c) As a lifelong source of professional training, updating and recycling, institutions of higher education should systematically take into

account trends in the world of work and in the scientific, technological and economic sectors. In order to respond to the work requirements, higher education systems and the world of work should jointly develop and assess learning processes, bridging programmes and prior learning assessment and recognition programmes, which integrate theory and training on the job. Within the framework of their anticipatory function, higher education institutions could contribute to the creation of new jobs, although that is not their only function.

- d) Developing entrepreneurial skills and initiative should become major concerns of higher education, in order to facilitate employability of graduates who will increasingly be called upon to be not only job seekers but also and above all to become job creators. Higher education institutions should give the opportunity to students to fully develop their own abilities with a sense of social responsibility, educating them to become full participants in democratic society and promoters of changes that will foster equity and justice.

Article 8. Diversification for enhanced equity of opportunity

- a) Diversifying higher education models and recruitment methods and criteria is essential both to meet increasing international demand and to provide access to various delivery modes and to extend access to an ever-wider public, in a lifelong perspective, based on flexible entry and exit points to and from the system of higher education.
- b) More diversified systems of higher education are characterized by new types of tertiary institutions: public, private and non-profit institutions, amongst others. Institutions should be able to offer a wide variety of education and training opportunities: traditional degrees, short courses, part-time study, flexible schedules, modularized courses, supported learning at a distance, etc.

Article 9. Innovative educational approaches: critical thinking and creativity

- a) In a world undergoing rapid changes, there is a perceived need for a new vision and paradigm of higher education, which should be student-oriented, calling in most countries for in-depth reforms and an open access policy so as to cater for ever more diversified categories of people, and of its contents, methods, practices and means of delivery, based on new types of links and partnerships with the community and with the broadest sectors of society.
- b) Higher education institutions should educate students to become well informed and deeply motivated citizens, who can think critically, analyse problems of society, look for solutions to the problems of society, apply them and accept social responsibilities.
- c) To achieve these goals, it may be necessary to recast curricula, using new and appropriate methods, so as to go beyond cognitive mastery of disciplines. New pedagogical and didactical approaches should be accessible and promoted in order to facilitate the acquisition of skills, competences and abilities for communication, creative and critical analysis, independent thinking and team work in multicultural contexts, where creativity also involves combining traditional or local knowledge and know-how with advanced science and technology. These recast curricula should take into account the gender dimension and the specific cultural, historic and economic context of each country. The teaching of human rights standards and education on the needs of communities in all parts of the world should be reflected in the curricula of all disciplines, particularly those preparing for entrepreneurship. Academic personnel should play a significant role in determining the curriculum.
- d) New methods of education will also imply new types of teaching-learning materials.

These have to be coupled with new methods of testing that will promote not only powers of memory but also powers of comprehension, skills for practical work and creativity.

Article 10. *Higher education personnel and students as major actors*

- a) A vigorous policy of staff development is an essential element for higher education institutions. Clear policies should be established concerning higher education teachers, who nowadays need to focus on teaching students how to learn and how to take initiatives rather than being exclusively founts of knowledge. Adequate provision should be made for research and for updating and improving pedagogical skills, through appropriate staff development programmes, encouraging constant innovation in curriculum, teaching and learning methods, and ensuring appropriate professional and financial status, and for excellence in research and teaching, reflecting the corresponding provisions of the Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel approved by the General Conference of UNESCO in November 1997. To this end, more importance should be attached to international experience. Furthermore, in view of the role of higher education for lifelong learning, experience outside the institutions ought to be considered as a relevant qualification for higher educational staff.
- b) Clear policies should be established by all higher education institutions preparing teachers of early childhood education and for primary and secondary schools, providing stimulus for constant innovation in curriculum, best practices in teaching methods and familiarity with diverse learning styles. It is vital to have appropriately trained administrative and technical personnel.
- c) National and institutional decision-makers should place students and their needs at the

centre of their concerns, and should consider them as major partners and responsible stakeholders in the renewal of higher education. This should include student involvement in issues that affect that level of education, in evaluation, the renovation of teaching methods and curricula and, in the institutional framework in force, in policy-formulation and institutional management. As students have the right to organize and represent themselves, students' involvement in these issues should be guaranteed.

- d) Guidance and counselling services should be developed, in co-operation with student organizations, in order to assist students in the transition to higher education at whatever age and to take account of the needs of ever more diversified categories of learners. Apart from those entering higher education from schools or further education colleges, they should also take account of the needs of those leaving and returning in a lifelong process. Such support is important in ensuring a good match between student and course, reducing drop-out. Students who do drop out should have suitable opportunities to return to higher education if and when appropriate.

From vision to action

Article 11. *Qualitative evaluation*

- a) Quality in higher education is a multidimensional concept, which should embrace all its functions, and activities: teaching and academic programmes, research and scholarship, staffing, students, buildings, facilities, equipment, services to the community and the academic environment. Internal self-evaluation and external review, conducted openly by independent specialists, if possible with international expertise, are vital for enhancing quality. Independent national bodies should be established and comparative standards of quality, recognized at international

level, should be defined. Due attention should be paid to specific institutional, national and regional contexts in order to take into account diversity and to avoid uniformity. Stakeholders should be an integral part of the institutional evaluation process.

- b) Quality also requires that higher education should be characterized by its international dimension: exchange of knowledge, interactive networking, mobility of teachers and students, and international research projects, while taking into account the national cultural values and circumstances.
- c) To attain and sustain national, regional or international quality, certain components are particularly relevant, notably careful selection of staff and continuous staff development, in particular through the promotion of appropriate programmes for academic staff development, including teaching/learning methodology and mobility between countries, between higher education institutions, and between higher education institutions and the world of work, as well as student mobility within and between countries. The new information technologies are an important tool in this process, owing to their impact on the acquisition of knowledge and know-how.

Article 12. *The potential and the challenge of technology*

The rapid breakthroughs in new information and communication technologies will further change the way knowledge is developed, acquired and delivered. It is also important to note that the new technologies offer opportunities to innovate on course content and teaching methods and to widen access to higher learning. However, it should be borne in mind that new information technology does not reduce the need for teachers but changes their role in relation to the learning process and that the continuous dialogue that converts informa-

tion into knowledge and understanding becomes fundamental. Higher education institutions should lead in drawing on the advantages and potential of new information and communication technologies, ensuring quality and maintaining high standards for education practices and outcomes in a spirit of openness, equity and international co-operation by:

- a) engaging in networks, technology transfer, capacity-building, developing teaching materials and sharing experience of their application in teaching, training and research, making knowledge accessible to all;
- b) creating new learning environments, ranging from distance education facilities to complete virtual higher education institutions and systems, capable of bridging distances and developing high-quality systems of education, thus serving social and economic advancement and democratization as well as other relevant priorities of society, while ensuring that these virtual education facilities, based on regional, continental or global networks, function in a way that respects cultural and social identities;
- c) noting that, in making full use of information and communication technology (ICT) for educational purposes, particular attention should be paid to removing the grave inequalities which exist among and also within the countries of the world with regard to access to new information and communication technologies and to the production of the corresponding resources;
- d) adapting ICT to national, regional and local needs and securing technical, educational, management and institutional systems to sustain it;
- e) facilitating, through international co-operation, the identification of the objectives and interests of all countries, particularly the developing countries, equitable access and the strengthening of infrastructures in this field and the dissemination of such technology throughout society;

- f) closely following the evolution of the ‘knowledge society’ in order to ensure high quality and equitable regulations for access to pre-vail;
- g) taking the new possibilities created by the use of ICTs into account, while realizing that it is, above all, institutions of higher education that are using ICTs in order to modernize their work, and not ICTs transforming institutions of higher education from real to virtual institutions.

Article 13. *Strengthening higher education management and financing*

- a) The management and financing of higher education require the development of appropriate planning and policy-analysis capacities and strategies, based on partnerships established between higher education institutions and state and national planning and co-ordination bodies, so as to secure appropriately streamlined management and the cost-effective use of resources. Higher education institutions should adopt forward-looking management practices that respond to the needs of their environments. Managers in higher education must be responsive, competent and able to evaluate regularly, by internal and external mechanisms, the effectiveness of procedures and administrative rules.
- b) Higher education institutions must be given autonomy to manage their internal affairs, but with this autonomy must come clear and transparent accountability to the government, parliament, students and the wider society.
- c) The ultimate goal of management should be to enhance the institutional mission by ensuring high-quality teaching, training and research, and services to the community. This objective requires governance that combines social vision, including understanding of global issues, with efficient managerial skills. Leadership in higher education is thus a major social responsibility and can be signifi-

cantly strengthened through dialogue with all stakeholders, especially teachers and students, in higher education. The participation of teaching faculty in the governing bodies of higher education institutions should be taken into account, within the framework of current institutional arrangements, bearing in mind the need to keep the size of these bodies within reasonable bounds.

- d) The promotion of North-South co-operation to ensure the necessary financing for strengthening higher education in the developing countries is essential.

Article 14. *Financing of higher education as a public service*

The funding of higher education requires both public and private resources. The role of the state remains essential in this regard.

- a) The diversification of funding sources reflects the support that society provides to higher education and must be further strengthened to ensure the development of higher education, increase its efficiency and maintain its quality and relevance. Public support for higher education and research remains essential to ensure a balanced achievement of educational and social missions.
- b) Society as a whole must support education at all levels, including higher education, given its role in promoting sustainable economic, social and cultural development. Mobilization for this purpose depends on public awareness and involvement of the public and private sectors of the economy, parliaments, the media, governmental and non-governmental organizations, students as well as institutions, families and all the social actors involved with higher education.

Article 15. *Sharing knowledge and know-how across borders and continents*

- a) The principle of solidarity and true partnership amongst higher education institutions

worldwide is crucial for education and training in all fields that encourage an understanding of global issues, the role of democratic governance and skilled human resources in their resolution, and the need for living together with different cultures and values. The practice of multilingualism, faculty and student exchange programmes and institutional linkage to promote intellectual and scientific co-operation should be an integral part of all higher education systems.

- b) The principles of international co-operation based on solidarity, recognition and mutual support, true partnership that equitably serves the interests of the partners and the value of sharing knowledge and know-how across borders should govern relationships among higher education institutions in both developed and developing countries and should benefit the least developed countries in particular. Consideration should be given to the need for safeguarding higher education institutional capacities in regions suffering from conflict or natural disasters. Consequently, an international dimension should permeate the curriculum, and the teaching and learning processes.
- c) Regional and international normative instruments for the recognition of studies should be ratified and implemented, including certification of the skills, competences and abilities of graduates, making it easier for students to change courses, in order to facilitate mobility within and between national systems.

Article 16. *From 'brain drain' to 'brain gain'*

The 'brain drain' has yet to be stemmed, since it continues to deprive the developing countries and those in transition, of the high-level expertise necessary to accelerate their socio-economic progress. International co-operation schemes should be based on long-term partnerships between institutions in the South and the North, and also promote South-South co-

operation. Priority should be given to training programmes in the developing countries, in centres of excellence forming regional and international networks, with short periods of specialized and intensive study abroad. Consideration should be given to creating an environment conducive to attracting and retaining skilled human capital, either through national policies or international arrangements to facilitate the return –permanent or temporary– of highly trained scholars and researchers to their countries of origin. At the same time, efforts must be directed towards a process of 'brain gain' through collaboration programmes that, by virtue of their international dimension, enhance the building and strengthening of institutions and facilitate full use of endogenous capacities. Experience gained through the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme and the principles enshrined in the regional conventions on the recognition of degrees and diplomas in higher education are of particular importance in this respect.

Article 17. *Partnership and alliances*

Partnership and alliances amongst stakeholders – national and institutional policy-makers, teaching and related staff, researchers and students, and administrative and technical personnel in institutions of higher education, the world of work, community groups – is a powerful force in managing change. Also, non-governmental organizations are key actors in this process. Henceforth, partnership, based on common interest, mutual respect and credibility, should be a prime matrix for renewal in higher education.

We, the participants in the World Conference on Higher Education, adopt this Declaration and reaffirm the right of all people to education and the right of access to higher education based on individual merit and capacity;

We pledge to act together within the frame of our individual and collective responsibilities, by taking all necessary measures in order to realize the principles concerning higher education contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the Convention against Discrimination in Education;

We solemnly reaffirm our commitment to peace. To that end, we are determined to accord high priority to education for peace and to participate in the celebration of the International Year for the Culture of Peace in the year 2000;

We adopt, therefore, this World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action. To achieve the goals set forth in this Declaration and, in particular, for immediate action, we agree on the following Framework for Priority Action for Change and Development of Higher Education.

FRAMEWORK FOR PRIORITY ACTION FOR CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

I. Priority actions at national level

1. States, including their governments, parliaments and other decision-makers, should:

- a) establish, where appropriate, the legislative, political and financial framework for the reform and further development of higher education, in keeping with the terms of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which establishes that higher education shall be 'accessible to all on the basis of merit'. No discrimination can be accepted, no one can be excluded from higher education or its study fields, degree levels and types of institutions on grounds of race, gender, language, religion, or age or because of any economic or social distinctions or physical disabilities;
- b) reinforce the links between higher education and research;
- c) consider and use higher education as a catalyst for the entire education system;
- d) develop higher education institutions to include lifelong learning approaches, giving learners an optimal range of choice and a flexibility of entry and exit points within the system, and redefine their role accordingly, which implies the development of open and continuous access to higher learning and the need for bridging programmes and prior learning assessment and recognition;
- e) make efforts, when necessary, to establish close links between higher education and research institutions, taking into account the fact that education and research are two closely related elements in the establishment of knowledge;
- f) develop innovative schemes of collaboration between institutions of higher education and different sectors of society to ensure that higher education and research programmes effectively contribute to local, regional and national development;
- g) fulfil their commitments to higher education and be accountable for the pledges adopted with their concurrence, at several forums, particularly over the past decade, with regard to human, material and financial resources, human development and education in general, and to higher education in particular;
- h) have a policy framework to ensure new partnerships and the involvement of all relevant stakeholders in all aspects of higher education: the evaluation process, including curriculum and pedagogical renewal, and guidance and counselling services; and, in the framework of existing institutional arrangements, policy-making and institutional governance;
- i) define and implement policies to eliminate all gender stereotyping in higher education and to consolidate women's participation at all levels and in all disciplines in which they are under-represented at present and, in particular, to enhance their active involvement in decision-making;

- j) establish clear policies concerning higher education teachers, as set out in the Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel approved by the General Conference of UNESCO in November 1997;
- k) recognize students as the centre of attention of higher education, and one of its stakeholders. They should be involved, by means of adequate institutional structures, in the renewal of their level of education (including curriculum and pedagogical reform), and policy decision, in the framework of existing institutional arrangements;
- l) recognize that students have the right to organize themselves autonomously;
- m) promote and facilitate national and international mobility of teaching staff and students as an essential part of the quality and relevance of higher education;
- n) provide and ensure those conditions necessary for the exercise of academic freedom and institutional autonomy so as to allow institutions of higher education, as well as those individuals engaged in higher education and research, to fulfil their obligations to society.

2. States in which enrolment in higher education is low by internationally accepted comparative standards should strive to ensure a level of higher education adequate for relevant needs in the public and private sectors of society and to establish plans for diversifying and expanding access, particularly benefiting all minorities and disadvantaged groups.

3. The interface with general, technical and professional secondary education should be reviewed in depth, in the context of lifelong learning. Access to higher education in whatever form must remain open to those successfully completing secondary education or its equivalent or meeting entry qualifications at any age, while creating gateways to higher edu-

cation, especially for older students without any formal secondary education certificates, by attaching more importance to their professional experience. However, preparation for higher education should not be the sole or primary purpose of secondary education, which should also prepare for the world of work, with complementary training whenever required, in order to provide knowledge, capacities and skills for a wide range of jobs. The concept of bridging programmes should be promoted to allow those entering the job market to return to studies at a later date.

4. Concrete steps should be taken to reduce the widening gap between industrially developed and developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, with regard to higher education and research. Concrete steps are also needed to encourage increased co-operation between countries at all levels of economic development with regard to higher education and research. Consideration should be given to making budgetary provisions for that purpose, and developing mutually beneficial agreements involving industry, national as well as international, in order to sustain co-operative activities and projects through appropriate incentives and funding in education, research and the development of high-level experts in these countries.

II. Priority actions at the level of systems and institutions

5. Each higher education institution should define its mission according to the present and future needs of society and base it on an awareness of the fact that higher education is essential for any country or region to reach the necessary level of sustainable and environmentally sound economic and social development, cultural creativity nourished by better knowledge and understanding of the cultural heritage, higher living standards, and internal and

international harmony and peace, based on human rights, democracy, tolerance and mutual respect. These missions should incorporate the concept of academic freedom set out in the Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel approved by the General Conference of UNESCO in November 1997.

6. In establishing priorities in their programmes and structures, higher education institutions should:

- a) take into account the need to abide by the rules of ethics and scientific and intellectual rigour, and the multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach;
- b) be primarily concerned to establish systems of access for the benefit of all persons who have the necessary abilities and motivations;
- c) use their autonomy and high academic standards to contribute to the sustainable development of society and to the resolution of the issues facing the society of the future. They should develop their capacity to give forewarning through the analysis of emerging social, cultural, economic and political trends, approached in a multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary manner, giving particular attention to:
 - high quality, a clear sense of the social pertinence of studies and their anticipatory function, based on scientific grounds;
 - knowledge of fundamental social questions, in particular related to the elimination of poverty, to sustainable development, to intercultural dialogue and to the shaping of a culture of peace;
 - the need for close connection with effective research organizations or institutions that perform well in the sphere of research;
 - the development of the whole education system in the perspective of the recommendations and the new goals for education as set out in the 1996 report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century;
- d) ensure, especially in universities and as far as possible, that faculty members participate in teaching, research, tutoring students and steering institutional affairs;
- e) take all necessary measures to reinforce their service to the community, especially their activities aimed at eliminating poverty, intolerance, violence, illiteracy, hunger and disease, through an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach in the analysis of challenges, problems and different subjects;
- f) set their relations with the world of work on a new basis involving effective partnerships with all social actors concerned, starting from a reciprocal harmonization of action and the search for solutions to pressing problems of humanity, all this within a framework of responsible autonomy and academic freedoms;
- g) ensure high quality of international standing, consider accountability and both internal and external evaluation, with due respect for autonomy and academic freedom, as being normal and inherent in their functioning, and institutionalize transparent systems, structures or mechanisms specific thereto;
- h) as lifelong education requires academic staff to update and improve their teaching skills and learning methods, even more than in the present systems mainly based on short periods of higher teaching, establish appropriate academic staff development structures and/or mechanisms and programmes;
- i) promote and develop research, which is a necessary feature of all higher education systems, in all disciplines, including the human and social sciences and arts, given their relevance for development. Also, research on higher education itself should be strengthened through mechanisms such as the

UNESCO/UNU Forum on Higher Education and the UNESCO Chairs in Higher Education. Objective, timely studies are needed to ensure continued progress towards such key national objectives as access, equity, quality, relevance and diversification;

- j) remove gender inequalities and biases in curricula and research, and take all appropriate measures to ensure balanced representation of both men and women among students and teachers, at all levels of management;
- k) provide, where appropriate, guidance and counselling, remedial courses, training in how to study and other forms of student support, including measures to improve student living conditions.

7. While the need for closer links between higher education and the world of work is important worldwide, it is particularly vital for the developing countries and especially the least developed countries, given their low level of economic development. Governments of these countries should take appropriate measures to reach this objective through appropriate measures such as strengthening institutions for higher/professional/vocational education. At the same time, international action is needed in order to help establish joint undertakings between higher education and industry in these countries. It will be necessary to give consideration to ways in which higher education graduates could be supported, through various schemes, following the positive experience of the micro-credit system and other incentives, in order to start small- and medium-size enterprises. At the institutional level, developing entrepreneurial skills and initiative should become a major concern of higher education, in order to facilitate employability of graduates who will increasingly be required not only to be job-seekers but to become job-creators.

8. The use of new technologies should be generalized to the greatest extent possible to help

higher education institutions, to reinforce academic development, to widen access, to attain universal scope and to extend knowledge, as well as to facilitate education throughout life. Governments, educational institutions and the private sector should ensure that informatics and communication network infrastructures, computer facilities and human resources training are adequately provided.

9. Institutions of higher education should be open to adult learners:

- a) by developing coherent mechanisms to recognize the outcomes of learning undertaken in different contexts, and to ensure that credit is transferable within and between institutions, sectors and states;
- b) by establishing joint higher education/community research and training partnerships, and by bringing the services of higher education institutions to outside groups;
- c) by carrying out interdisciplinary research in all aspects of adult education and learning with the participation of adult learners themselves;
- d) by creating opportunities for adult learning in flexible, open and creative ways.

III. Actions to be taken at international level and, in particular, to be initiated by UNESCO

10. Co-operation should be conceived of as an integral part of the institutional missions of higher education institutions and systems. Intergovernmental organizations, donor agencies and non-governmental organizations should extend their action in order to develop inter-university co-operation projects in particular through twinning institutions, based on solidarity and partnership, as a means of bridging the gap between rich and poor countries in the vital areas of knowledge production and application. Each institution of higher education should envisage the creation of an appropriate

structure and/or mechanism for promoting and managing international co-operation.

11. UNESCO, and other intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations active in higher education, the states through their bilateral and multilateral co-operation programmes, the academic community and all concerned partners in society should further promote international academic mobility as a means to advance knowledge and knowledge-sharing in order to bring about and promote solidarity as a main element of the global knowledge society of tomorrow, including through strong support for the joint work plan (1999-2005) of the six intergovernmental committees in charge of the application of the regional conventions on the recognition of studies, degrees and diplomas in higher education and through large-scale co-operative action involving, *inter alia*, the establishment of an educational credit transfer scheme, with particular emphasis on South-South co-operation, the needs of the least developed countries and of the small states with few higher education institutions or none at all.

12. Institutions of higher education in industrialized countries should strive to make arrangements for international co-operation with sister institutions in developing countries and in particular with those of poor countries. In their co-operation, the institutions should make efforts to ensure fair and just recognition of studies abroad. UNESCO should take initiatives to develop higher education throughout the world, setting itself clear-cut goals that could lead to tangible results. One method might be to implement projects in different regions renewing efforts towards creating and/or strengthening centres of excellence in developing countries, in particular through the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme, relying on networks of national, regional and international higher education institutions.

13. UNESCO, together with all concerned parts of society, should also undertake action in order to alleviate the negative effects of 'brain drain' and to shift to a dynamic process of 'brain gain'. An overall analysis is required in all regions of the world of the causes and effects of brain drain. A vigorous campaign should be launched through the concerted effort of the international community and on the basis of academic solidarity and should encourage the return to their home country of expatriate academics, as well as the involvement of university volunteers – newly retired academics or young academics at the beginning of their career – who wish to teach and undertake research at higher education institutions in developing countries. At the same time it is essential to support the developing countries in their efforts to build and strengthen their own educational capacities.

14. Within this framework, UNESCO should:

- a) promote better co-ordination among intergovernmental, supranational and non-governmental organizations, agencies and foundations that sponsor existing programmes and projects for international co-operation in higher education. Furthermore, co-ordination efforts should take place in the context of national priorities. This could be conducive to the pooling and sharing of resources, avoid overlapping and promote better identification of projects, greater impact of action and increased assurance of their validity through collective agreement and review. Programmes aiming at the rapid transfer of knowledge, supporting institutional development and establishing centres of excellence in all areas of knowledge, in particular for peace education, conflict resolution, human rights and democracy, should be supported by institutions and by public and private donors;
- b) jointly with the United Nations University and with National Commissions and various intergovernmental and non-governmental

organizations, become a forum of reflection on higher education issues aiming at:

- i) preparing update reports on the state of knowledge on higher education issues in all parts of the world;
 - ii) promoting innovative projects of training and research, intended to enhance the specific role of higher education in life-long education;
 - iii) reinforcing international co-operation and emphasizing the role of higher education for citizenship education, sustainable development and peace; and
 - iv) facilitating exchange of information and establishing, when appropriate, a database on successful experiences and innovations that can be consulted by institutions confronted with problems in their reforms of higher education;
- c) take specific action to support institutions of higher education in the least developed parts of the world and in regions suffering the effects of conflict or natural disasters;
- d) make renewed efforts towards creating or/and strengthening centres of excellence in developing countries;
- e) take the initiative to draw up an international instrument on academic freedom, autonomy and social responsibility in connection with the Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel;
- f) ensure follow-up to the World Declaration on Higher Education and the Framework for Priority Action, jointly with other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and with all higher education stakeholders, including the United Nations University, the NGO Collective Consultation on Higher Education and the UNESCO Student Forum. It should have a crucial role in promoting international co-operation in the field of higher education in implementing this follow-up. Consideration should be given to according priority to this in the development of UNESCO's next draft Programme and Budget.

UNESCO's role

UNESCO is neither a funding agency nor a research organisation.

Its mission is to transfer and share knowledge:

- knowledge of the means to surmount the main stumbling block on the road to development –illiteracy– and to improve education systems, at a time when intelligence, creativity, and adaptability, are perceived as essential attributes;
- knowledge designed to protect our environment, and to curb demographic explosion;
- knowledge to guarantee access to science and technology for all, and staunch the exodus of competent individuals;
- knowledge intended to strengthen communications and facilitate disseminating information that fosters mutual respect and tolerance, democratic participation, and a heightened awareness of human rights.

IN MEMORY OF SYLVAIN LOURIE

I was privileged to work alongside Sylvain Lourié at UNESCO for thirty years, during which time we shared tasks, professional and personal conversations and, something I value more than anything else, a deeply-felt friendship. His premature departure has filled us with a profound sense of sorrow and forlornness.

In addition to his creative intelligence, his insightful evaluation of problems and new scenarios, his professional excellence, the warmth and enthusiasm he projected –which all those around him acknowledged and profoundly admired–, two salient characteristics distinguished his actions and thoughts. One, his exemplary dedication to international service, a topic not much talked about in this era of globalisation. Regrettably, the written legacy of Sylvain Lourié is relatively small, since the greater part of his thoughts were transmitted orally, and are now part of watershed studies and programmatic documents that constitute landmarks in UNESCO's philosophical and operational evolution.

The second aspect of his personality, and one very close to our hearts, was his unconcealed love for Latin America, which he called "the Latin America of our dreams". This unwavering affection led him to resign his post and international responsibilities at UNESCO at the peak of his professional career and personal life, to make Central America his second home and devote several years to the creation of an innovative sub-regional co-operation Project in the field of education. The enlightening book *Educación y Desarrollo: Estrategias y Decisiones en América Central*, reflects some of the experiences lived by the author during this period. Sylvain returned to Paris, but not before he and his unforgettable wife Dominique had adopted two beautiful twin girls orphaned by the devastating 1976 Guatemalan earthquake. His daughters would grow as a blend of two ancestral cultures, France and Guatemala, and represent Sylvain's main reason for living and continuance in time. All of this, and much much more was the Sylvain Lourié his colleagues at UNESCO, disciples, and friends will remember with respect, admiration, gratitude and profound affection.

Simón Romero Lozano

SYLVAIN LOURIE

June 29 marks the passing away of Sylvain Lourié, assistant Director General of UNESCO, Director of IPE, author of numerous studies on education in the developing world and, above all else, a human being endowed with a prodigious capacity for emotional and professional commitment to social problems, particularly those afflicting Latin America.

Sylvain led an intense life and was an important player in momentous world events. He became well known to our region, not just remotely from the distant headquarters of UNESCO and IPE, but through his five-year stint as director of the Regional Project of Educational System Network for Development in Central America and Panama. Despite the crippling political authoritarianism that plagued his stay, Lourié managed to produce the book *Educación y Desarrollo: Estrategias y Decisiones en América Central*, which analyses succinctly the educational decision-making process under adverse economic conditions. His interpretational scheme is considered the forerunner of today's more complex conceptual frameworks that attempt to elucidate the dynamic forces at play in educational reforms.

Sylvain also witnessed the birth of the Major Project in the Field of Education, and collaborated in its follow-up activities. His contribution was decisive at crucial times, such as the drafting of the document presented at the 1986 Bogotá conference, where the impact on education of servicing the foreign debt was vehemently debated; or, during the 1989 PROMEDLAC meeting held in Guatemala, where a transcendental conceptual leap facilitated the shift from a position of self-pity triggered by lack of funding to a pro-active one in the face of crisis. This stance would be consolidated in Quito two years later.

In a larger sense, the bond between Sylvain and Latin America went well beyond the professional ambit. He felt at home here, while his home in Paris betrayed the Latin American presence through the various pieces of art he collected, the music he played, the books he read, but more importantly, through his two daughters born there.

His departure leaves behind an immense professional and affective void. However, I am certain that Sylvain does not wish to be remembered with the sadness that accompanies the passing on of a friend, but with the vitality, happiness and thirst for living that were his, until the very end.

Juan Carlos Tedesco

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