

Extrait du School forging new paths

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Thematic Social Forum Rio+20, Rio+20 Thematic Group on Education

The education we need for the world we want

- English - Human and Educative aims -

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1. The current situation: complexity of crises, diversity of individuals and challenges of a strategic agenda

Rio+20 develops in a global situation of crisis. We are not only witnessing the economic, social and environmental impacts of the crisis of financial capitalism in its neoliberal phase, but a crisis of greater magnitude that evidences the problems intrinsic to the current system and that affect key areas of life and is expressed in various local, regional and global events. Although the eyes of analysts and public opinion have focused on Europe and the U.S., the situation shows signs of global exhaustion and demands for alternatives for humanity and the planet are increasingly appearing.

While multilateral financial organizations prioritize an economic analysis of the crisis, proposing the same policies of structural adjustment focused on reducing States' expenditure, civil society organizations and social movements have warned about the complexity of the crises we are going through.

The situation presents multifaceted problems, but one of the most important is the crisis of global political order, because there is no international democratic space for taking decisions on issues that are of global dimensions and differential effects at the local level; which has prevailed in traditional areas of discussion are the particular interests of some states, corporations and banks, under the interests of capital. This is a worrying situation, since it entails the weakening of multilateralism for collective decision-making on global issues.

In this context, we have witnessed the emergence of new processes of citizen mobilization and participation, with an explosion of social movements active in situations of violation of human rights and environmental disasters that are increasingly positioned as a factor of advocacy and change in some countries' policy. These new international actors are taking the debate on the institutional forms of the democratic system to priority places on national agendas. There are movements aimed at developing self-constituent processes, popular initiatives of law and the reestablishment of democratic systems to make them more inclusive and participatory.

What is unusual in this situation is precisely the mobilizing force of these citizens' movements, to the point that they are disputing the restructuring of the Public aspect and the global political agenda, energizing and politicizing the debate about the possibilities of moving toward sustainable societies in their environmental, social and economic dimensions, and with global responsibility.

Citizen movements have expressed in various ways, having a great impact on the rearrangement of policy in various countries and regions, either by the demands for human rights and democratization, the outrage over unemployment and the exclusion of important sectors of the population from basic social services, the discontent of citizens with the existing ways of organizing democratic politics, the student mobilization for universal free public education or environmental organizations fights against States and environment predatory corporations. As such, the global citizen movement faces challenges of short and medium term of great ethical and political scope.

Proposals and abstracts

2. The education we want and the complexity of the present time

The global crisis is also a crisis of education - assumed as lifelong education -, its content and meaning, as it has gradually ceased to be conceived as a human right and has become the preferred means to meet the markets' needs, which are demanding of labor force for production and consumption. We have not only given in the training of people capable of thinking about important political, environmental, economic and social issues of global order, but also education has been stripped of its deep political content and, in particular, its potential to train citizens able to think a different social and economic order in which it would be possible to overcome the deep and complex crises we are living, reflected in increasing inequality and discrimination and lack of dignity and justice. Rich approaches such as Popular Education have also contributed to this, thanks to their potential transformative of social individuals and organized groups.

It is essential to give a new meaning to the purposes and practices of education in the particular context of dispute of meanings, characterized also by the majority subordination of public policies to the paradigm of human capital, and in contradiction, the emergence -from the social movement- of alternative paradigms that seek to restore the character of right and of ethical and political project to educational practice.

If the purpose of education in the current context is to produce manpower for production and consumption, then who will train citizens? The human capital reduces human capacities to the function of producing more wealth in the existing social conditions, which involve great inequalities. The citizens, however, have a duty to challenge those conditions when they produce injustice, discrimination, vilification, and threaten life on Earth. In this sense, it is urgent to rescue the notion of education as a human right in its formal, non-formal and informal dimensions, to open the eyes to the democratization of societies to train critical citizenship, capable of establishing bonds with movements that claim a transformation of the social order, with a view to greater social and environmental justice, in order to understand and discuss solutions to the problems of planetary scale.

The issue of the development of a critical "subjectivity" is a central aspect in the construction of a civic pedagogy in the current situation. The aim is to restore an emancipatory sense of empowerment processes, understood as the development of community resources to get involved in politics, to build knowledge, to enhance knowledge and learning that occur in democratic struggles and that need inclusive leadership, participatory organizations, alliances with democratic organizations of civil society and the permanent and necessary "radical-pragmatic weighting" (unprecedented-possible, as Paulo Freire would say) in the definition of agreements, consensus and partnerships among the diverse actors involved in policies.

All this implies a policy and cognitive shift, a paradigmatic change in the way of understanding education, an openness to new perspectives on social goals, such as good-living, the commons, the ethics of care, among others, on which a great space for discussion and socialization must be open on the way to Rio +20 and beyond, and affirmed in the sense of education for change and personal and social transformation.

These new paradigms and viewpoints should be not only maps to move in new contexts, but also content sheets consistent with the purposes that we as citizens' movement seek, capable of involving different actors of the educational process, as education workers, students, parents, and more broadly all citizens who need and struggle for a profound change in education, to generate a radical change in society towards greater social and environmental justice. All this is consistent with the liberating conception of popular education that feeds on multiple pedagogical experiences to train another citizenship.

The paradigmatic change in education as a condition to advance towards sustainable societies with social and environmental justice, where the economy is a means and not an end in itself, should entail a change in technicistic

and economic approaches of the education policies in force. It is necessary to claim the right to "lifelong" learning, a slogan that should not be understood as the expression of a kind of continuing training to meet the market needs and the requirements of the old and new industries.

This approach on the education we want starts from building multiple "educations" in their formal, informal and non-formal dimensions in order to develop human capabilities, including cognitive, empowerment and social participation skills, of living with others in diversity and difference, of caring and planning one own life, of living among humans in harmony with the environment.

Relevant, transformative, critical education must seek to the promotion of human dignity and social and environmental justice. Education, a human right that promotes the other rights, must consider children, youth and adults as subjects of the right, must promote interculturality, equality, gender equity, the link between citizenship and democracy, care and respect of nature, the elimination of all forms of discrimination, the promotion of justice and the construction of a culture of peace and nonviolent resolution of conflicts.

The education we want requires a strategic promotion of an education that contributes to social redistribution of knowledge and power (taking into account gender, race-ethnicity, age, sexual orientation), which enhances the sense of autonomy, solidarity and diversity expressed by the new social movements.

The aim is to promote critical and transformative education that respects human rights and those of the whole community of life to which human being belongs, that specifically promotes the right to citizen participation in decision-making spaces, such as Rio +20 Conference.

3. Facing Rio + 20

Rio + 20 cannot become a forum for promoting economic development at the expense of human rights and life rights. The education movement will be present there along with other social movements to raise the banner of social and environmental justice and of the dignity of the human being and of life. It will be present also defending education as a fundamental human right which aim is to transform the patterns of production, consumption and distribution of the current system, in order to achieve greater social and environmental justice.

For some sectors, Rio +20 is an opportunity to "greening" the capitalist exit of the crisis, trying to humanize it, and to appeal to social and environmental responsibility from companies. The purpose, then, is to establish agreements "as far as possible" given the climate change and other crises, to promote adjustments without questioning or putting at risk the paradigm that holds the status quo.

In the preparatory process for this World Summit, we have seen many expressions of these trends that deny the central value of human rights and erase the responsibility of the capitalist mode of development in the generation of the multiple crises we live in. From a critical and qualitatively different perspective we understand that Rio +20 should be a process that amplifies the neo-paradigmatic mobilization in order to move towards fully sustainable societies with social and environmental justice, capable of responding to the needs of human beings and their communities, living in the planet in harmony with the logics of life on Earth (our common house) and generating a new way of understanding coexistence, diversity and solidarity as regards political and ethical conditions for a truly democratic social order.

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This requires advancing in a critical way and establishing alternate coordinates, such as understanding the social processes from a viewpoint of complexity in which various matrices of human needs combine, as well as the development of skills both cognitive, affective and organizational, co-experiential and of "care", and a wide repertoire of ways of organizing collective actions. It is also necessary to conceive Politics as a practice expressed in collective and democratic actions, from the development of which emerge knowledge that spread among citizens' organizations and movements of all kinds, and particularly among their bases, creating a citizen empowerment faced to the political order, and a re-politicization of Public aspects. It is also necessary to develop a political theory that resizes democracy as a deliberative human space, of proximity, egalitarian in its gender-race-ethnicity-generations, sexual orientation, "de-patriarchalization" and "de-colonization" relations, enriched by the practice of recognition, reciprocity and respect for the different ways of being-with-others, of living sexuality and living in the "world of life".

To develop political-pedagogical itineraries depending on the unmet needs of populations and the sustainability requirements of specific territories, from each one's own cultures, local economies and a more just relationship with global markets, each one's own structures of employment, the carrying capacities of their ecosystems, allowing to build the human well-being in harmony with life and mother earth.

For these reasons, the social movements that are demanding a profound change in order to build societies that be more just and more able to coexist with life on the planet, shall express categorically in the Rio + 20 Conference and the People's Summit carrying, among others, the message that the affirmation and realization of the right to education, as well as the more comprehensive and broad core of rights, is a precondition to build a world in which dignity of life becomes real, a world worth living in, and also, where it will be possible to live in.

The Working Group on Education with a view to UN Conference on Sustainable Development Rio+20 is formed by: The International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), the World Education Forum (FME), the Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE), the Latin American Council of Adult Education (CEAAL), the Journey on Environmental Education for Sustainable Societies and Global Responsibility, the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), the International of Education, the Popular Education Network of Women from Latin America and the Caribbean (REPEM).