

Popular educators in the post-2015 processes

How is the post-2015 process regarding the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the succession of the Education for All (EFA) goals developing? What are the new development paradigms with which we project our post-2015 goals? What have popular educators contributed to this process? What is the purpose of education: to produce labor force or to produce citizens? These are some of the questions this article seeks to address; but it also sets out to invigorate and collect the richness of tradition from the perspective of “Good Living”.

NÉLIDA CÉSPEDES ROSSEL

Secretary-General of the Board of Popular Education of Latin America and the Caribbean (CEAAL)

Since 2012, following the Conference on Sustainable Development (Río+20) regarding the new development goals, a debate at international level has been taking place, in such a way that said goals would replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). At the same time, the succession of the Education for All (EFA) goals is being discussed, taking into account that both the MDGs and the EFA goals expire in 2015. Both processes have been discussed within the framework of the United Nations, at the beginning through initiatives from the Secretary-General and, most recently, through discussions and

intergovernmental negotiations at the United Nations (UN) headquarters in New York.

Regarding the Education for All goals, these were also promoted by the Special Initiative on Education of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, entitled “Education Above All”, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which launched the assessment and review processes, and the suggestions of new post-2015 goals through the EFA coordination mechanisms (the Steering Committee, the Global EFA Meeting and the NGOs – non-governmental organizations).

The United Nations Member States, civil society organizations, academic and research institutions, among other social partners, have deployed several strategies in order to identify priorities for the development agenda



TAREA

of the following period, and to highlight the priority of the right to education. It is important to emphasize the requests of the social movements which were expressed in the People's Summit and keep an agenda that fights for the democratization of our societies, as well as for social and environmental justice and the validity of all political, social, cultural and economic rights for each and every one.

Thus, the post-2015 process still remains a critical process and has led to a discussion about the new development paradigms. In said discussion, the Board of Popular Education of Latin America and the Caribbean (CEAAL), together with other Latin American networks,¹ we have outlined the disastrous consequences of a capitalist model of development that has aggravated social, economic and environmental gaps, which is reflected on greater injustice, exclusion and inequality of millions of people.

Regarding the Education for All goals, these were supposed to be a global commitment to ensure quality education for boys, girls, youth and adults. The efforts in Jomtien (1990), as well as the Dakar framework for strategic action (2000), outlined six strategic goals including: a) education and early childhood care, b) universal primary education, c) youth and adult

education, d) literacy, e) gender parity and f) quality in education.

Have these goals been achieved? On the whole, they have not. Due to this debt to the population, several discussions promoted by UNESCO were laid out in regards to the "Education beyond 2015".

WHAT CAN BE SAID ABOUT THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE POST-2015 GOALS?

The *UNESCO Report for Latin America and the Caribbean*² suggests there have been improvements mainly in: a) The basic survival, health and wellbeing conditions of early childhood and a moderate increase in education, b) by 2000, primary education showed a high level of access (net enrolment rate of 94% as an average).

HOWEVER, WHAT GOALS PROGRESSED SLOWLY?

Said Report stated that: a) by 2000, around one out of ten (and, in some countries, one out of three) youth aged 15–19 failed to finish primary school; b) nearly half the young population aged 20–24 did not complete high school; c) about one third of primary school students and nearly half of high school students do not achieve basic reading and mathematics learning; d) teachers have poor working conditions, early education is of low quality and professional development opportunities are limited; and, e) a no less serious problem, even if the percentage of

1 The Global Campaign for the Right to Education, the International Council for Adult Education (ICAIE), the Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE), the Board of Popular Education of Latin America and the Caribbean (CEAAL), the Network of Women: the Popular Education Network among Women (REPEM), the World Social Forum on Education (WSFE), the Latin American Social Sciences Institute (FLACSO) and the Planetary Network of environmental law are all distinctly involved in these processes.

2 *Situación educativa de América Latina y el Caribe: Hacia la educación de calidad para todos al 2015*. Published in 2013 by the Regional Bureau of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALC/ UNESCO, Santiago).

the public expenditure of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), rose from 4,5% in 2000 to 5,2% in 2010, there remain marked disparities among the countries.

This data from UNESCO presents us with a serious exclusion problem, especially for youth and adults, and, at the same time, with other social gaps based on age, gender, ethnic group, social and economic status, and geographical condition, and the aggravating factor of the privileges of urban areas over rural ones. Rhetoric has prevailed over action. This is also confirmed by the existence of about 73 million functionally illiterate persons, of which 36 to 40 million are uneducated and the rest have low educational level. Most of this people live in illiterate sectors in Brazil, Mexico and Central America, and the majority of them were born between the 1960s and the 1970s, prior the educational expansion in the continent.³ This point represents a major challenge and an ethical commitment.

WHAT HAVE WE, THE POPULAR EDUCATORS, CONTRIBUTED TO THIS PROCESS?

Regarding the form, which is part of the substance, it should be noted that this process involves “mingling”, that is, acting in cooperation with other networks and movements committed to the right of having a transformative education, as a component of the democratization of our countries.

The aforementioned cooperation is essential when it comes to arranging the agenda towards the right of education, specifically of youth and adults, an experience we have been working on since the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI), held in Brazil in 2009. It entailed the creation of a common agenda that has as the main purpose, the validity of education as a fundamental human right, in order to ensure education for boys, girls, youth and adults, and especially for those who suffer from discrimination based on race, ethnic group, economic status, geographical condition and gender.

This agenda included plans regarding the basic conditions for exercising the right to education throughout life, as well as financing policies consistent with the existing social gaps, the substantial improvement in the quality and relevance of education and the training of educators.

3 <<http://peru21.pe/2011/12/15/mundo/73-millones-analfabetos-frenan-desarrollo-america-latina-2003302>>.

We also envisage the need of renewed approaches, such as the recovery of Popular Education for its transforming role amongst people and contexts, and for contributing to the development of citizenship, both of which are fundamental issues for those responsible of designing and implementing public policies.

In this matter, some major education networks, such as the Global Campaign for the Right to Education, the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), the Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE), the Board of Popular Education of Latin America and the Caribbean (CEAAL), the Network of Women: the Popular Education Network among Women (REPEM), the World Social Forum on Education (WSFE), the Latin American Social Sciences Institute (FLACSO) and the Planetary Network of environmental law, are all distinctly involved, with different roles each, but underpinning the same processes.

THE EDUCATION WE NEED FOR THE WORLD WE WANT⁴ IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE DISCUSSION ON DEVELOPMENT

In order to contribute to the discussion on sustainable development, we started our process in Río+20: “The education we need for the world we want” is the title of the positioning devised by the aforementioned networks. In this document we will set out, through the capitalist model of development and its responsibility, the generation of multiplicity of crises we are experiencing. We contemplated a mobilization that emphasizes in the new paradigms for a new humanity with social and environmental justice, capable of meeting the needs of human beings and their communities, inhabiting the planet in harmoniously with the logic of life on planet Earth (our common home) and producing a new way to understand coexistence, diversity and solidarity, regarding political and ethical conditions for achieving a truly democratic order.

We point out the importance of resignifying the aims and practices of education, specifically in the context of dispute of senses, characterized at the same time by the majority subordination of public policies regarding the paradigm of human capital and, in contravention, the emergency from the social movement of alternative paradigms that seeks to restore the status of a right

4 <<http://fmejsa.forummundialeducacao.org/?p=1040&lang=es>>. This text was taken from the plans presented in that document.



and an ethical and political project to the educational practice.

In this context, if the purpose of education is to produce labor force for production and consumption, who will produce citizens then? The human capital reduces human capacities with the aim to generate greater wealth in the existing social conditions, which implies large inequalities. On the contrary, the citizens have a duty to question said conditions when they produce injustice, discrimination and degradation, and also when they put at risk life on Earth.

It should be stressed that this process has been a battlefield, because there is conflict among the development models of the organizations and committees where the proposals must be submitted, and also due to the lack of understanding of certain sectors about the right of education in the development agenda.

The role of the Global Campaign for Education has been important, for it succeeded in participating in determined areas of incidence and in conducting the suggestions of the civil society, not only from Latin America but also from other parts of the world, together with APSBAE from Asia (Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education), ICAE at international level, where CEAAL is part of both networks. In this respect, together with the networks we have implemented various strategies to pass on our suggestions to the United Nations High-Level Panel, as well as the process of the Sustainable Development goals.

It has been imperative to perform various actions in the countries where the educators, along with other

partners, have called out on people by discussing the meaning and the development hopes, and among these, the importance of the right to a transformative education. In said agenda, our suggestions were summarized as follows:

- The right to education throughout life must be an integral part when determining a new development paradigm.
- We urge the governments to go beyond the primary education goals and to consider fundamental all forms of education, including popular and non-formal education.
- The post-2015 development framework and goals must be based on the existing instruments and agreements on human rights.
- We ratify that the right to education, as set out by article no. 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, is crucial: “[...]education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.”
- The experience of working with the right to education in the development agenda suggests that a post-2015 framework must take into consideration a clear articulation of EFA and the MDGs.
- The post-2015 goals must guarantee equal say, representation, acknowledgment and empowerment as autonomous citizens.

- It is necessary to guarantee the economic, social, cultural, sexual and reproductive rights of women. A precondition for a genuine sustainable development is to deploy an integrated, transformative and rights-based agenda.
- Equality and equity must be a major concern in the formulation of the post-2015 goals, with particular regard to gender and other aspects for which people are discriminated against.
- Universal literacy of youth and adults, as well as women and girls' equal access to quality education, must continue to be relevant objectives of the post-2015 education and development goals.
- The adequate financing must be guaranteed in order to ensure the achievement and implementation of the education and sustainable development goals.

REGARDING THE POST-2015 EDUCATION FOR ALL GOALS

What was—and still is—the major problem with the Post-2015 EFA goals? The fact they are not collected in their entirety within the Millennium Development Goals and remain as simple recommendations to the governments without being mandatory.

In this respect, the Global EFA Meeting (GEM), held in Muscat, Oman, from May 12 to 14, 2014, was a very important meeting since its main objective was to discuss the Post-2015 Education agenda and its consolidation in the World Education Forum held in Korea in May 2015. It should be emphasized that this process is still at risk and demands great mobilization and various strategies for EFA to survive.

The Muscat Agreement contemplated important objectives and, at the same time, it acknowledged the poor results of EFA. The agreement presented the following goals that have continued to improve, but not on a fundamental level:

POPULAR EDUCATION AND THE POPULAR EDUCATORS IN THIS PROCESS

To the popular educators of CEAAL, the right to education, the achievement of other rights, and the

development of fair and democratic societies, constitute a great scope and a political, ethical and pedagogical commitment.

The education we bet on aims at an education based on social transformation, with the following purposes: a) Critical thinking to analyze the political, social, cultural and economic reality, and to head for personal and social emancipation. b) A political and emancipating intention. c) The acknowledgement of the role of popular, diverse and intercultural individuals, as actors of their own emancipation. d) To connect a political education with the importance of knowledge as a source of power, and a methodology that works with power and knowledge as supportive processes. e) To understand individuals in their multiple dimensions: rational, emotional, ludic, and transcendent. f) Pedagogical processes that interact with such dimensions to achieve personal and social transformations. g) Work methodologies and strategies that help individuals become active and participative persons, social actors with rights, and citizens that contribute to the public good. h) A type of organization that promotes solidarity and cooperation,

in the form of learning, teaching, organizing the curriculum, that works in collaboration with the community, gathering the say of the social actors, facing individualism and rivalry, heading for a new organization that points toward democratization and, therefore, rejects authoritarianism and corruption.

In our role as popular educators, we are also faced with the challenge of coming to terms with a new conception of humanity. This means invigorating and collecting the greatest richness of our tradition: our ancestral cultures that teach us a way of living, being and existing in the world, a way of being one among many in the ecosystem. This way, the perspective of caring and looking after each other is comprehensive and holistic, and is expressed in the perception of the "Good Living", as a different way of seeing ourselves as humans in relation with nature, which even breaks with an anthropocentric vision and heads for a bio-centric one.

These grounds and these political, pedagogical, and ethical approaches guide our strategies of impact in the post-2015 processes; but, the most important thing is to consider them as a power strategy. **■**

ACTION AND COMMITMENT TO ACHIEVE THE 2030 TARGETS

Overarching Goal and Global Targets

We support **“Ensure equitable and inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030”** as the overarching goal of the post-2015 education agenda.

We further support the translation of this goal into the following global targets, for which minimum global benchmarks and relevant indicators will be identified and developed:

Target 1: Early childhood education and care prioritizing gender equality and marginalized persons

By 2030, at least x% of girls and boys are ready for primary school thanks to having quality care during their early childhood, as well as education, which includes at least one year of free preprimary compulsory education, prioritizing gender equality and marginalized persons.

Target 2: Free and compulsory basic education

By 2030, all girls and boys complete free and compulsory quality basic education of at least nine years, and achieve relevant learning outcomes, with particular attention to gender equality and the most marginalized.

Target 3: Education of youth and adults to achieve full participation in society

By 2030, all youth and at least x% of adults reach a proficiency level in literacy and numeracy sufficient to fully participate in society, with particular attention to girls and women and the most marginalized.

Target 4: Youth and adults with life and work skills with particular attention to gender equality and the most marginalized

By 2030, at least x% of youth and y% of adults have the knowledge and skills for decent work and life through technical and vocational, upper secondary and tertiary education and training, with particular attention to gender equality and the most marginalized.

Target 5: Education quality including citizenship education and education for sustainable development

By 2030, all learners acquire knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to establish sustainable and peaceful societies, including through global citizenship education and education for sustainable development.

Target 6: Education quality and better policies for teachers

By 2030, all governments ensure that all learners are taught by qualified, professionally-trained, motivated and well-supported teachers.

Target 7: more and better investment in Education

By 2030, all countries allocate at least 4%-6% of their GDP or at least 15%-20% of their public expenditure to education; and strengthen financial cooperation for education, prioritizing countries most in need.