

# Community-based education or the memory of the future

A reflection on the transcendence of community-based education, the role of the State and society, this paper suggests we need to research evolving pedagogies in community-based education, and how it can contribute to a new dialogue between society and the State, communities and the official school system, and to inter/trans/cultural learning.

## La educación comunitaria o la memoria de futuro

Reflexiona sobre la trascendencia de la educación comunitaria, el rol del Estado y de la sociedad y sugiere la necesidad de investigar las pedagogías que se van desarrollando en la educación comunitaria y cómo ésta puede contribuir a renovar el diálogo entre sociedad y Estado, comunidad y sistema educativo oficial. Afirma que la educación comunitaria favorece los aprendizajes intertransculturales.

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Education cannot be understood, as it often is, as a process to acquire skills and competencies that establishes the conditions to create producers meeting the requirements of dominant societies, and trains them certain soft skills, which are nothing but the assimilation of what the dominant system requires to express, through the so called “third world of servitude”, the much vaunted labor market flexibility. No: education is a matter of the spirit. It implies the person’s permanent evolution to become a producer of life, meaning and learning about the human condition, and to inspire thereby the lifestyles that will assure the material, social, cultural and substantively ethical conditions that make them sustainable. Therefore, education cannot be limited to the school experience or its insertion in an institutional setting, and even less so in a richly diverse country.

In Law 28044, the State recognized community-based education as part of its duties as rights-guarantor. By doing so, it not only meets its duty to manage with justice, but has opened a wide agenda of practical issues of epistemological and conceptual dimension, and also posed challenges concerning the relationship between society and State, community and collectivities, communities and education, communities and the school system, education as a manifestation of inter-culturality, and traditional wisdom and knowledge, the urbanity-rurality pair, the production of labor, science and beliefs, community-based and popular education, an educating society and a community that educates, community educators and cooperators, community-based and lifelong education, community-based and indigenous education, diversity and inequality, development and good living, exclusion and inclusion, modern and ancestral technologies, modern and experiential epistemology, anthropocentrism and biocentrism, context and territory, etc.

Certainly, the significant *community-based education* (Torres 2014) carries multiple and contradictory meanings. Moreover, we can witness along and across the nation experiences of community-based education in the fields of production, food, art, communications, gender, human rights, regulations, medicine, water and environmental stewardships, technology, by multiple types of organizations and schemes from a bottom-up approach, as explained by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2010).

We propose to present some considerations about community-based education in three areas:

- Community-based education: is it coopted by the dominant civilizing model?

- Dialogue of traditional wisdoms: needs and conditions.
- Why community-based education as a memory of the future?

### COMMUNITY-BASED EDUCATION: COOPTED BY THE DOMINANT CIVILIZING MODEL?

Although community-based education is a component of the educational system in its widest sense since it was included in Law 28044, it is not actually part of the school system’s service offering, although the State effectively regulates and sponsors it. A question arises in this sense: is being a community-based initiative equivalent to being a private undertaking towards which the State has no financial obligations but only those of a regulator and sponsor? This would be equivalent to asking whether community-based education is regarded as a public good that commits society and the State society has created for itself.

The capitalist and neo-liberal hegemonic civilizing model (Puello-Socarrás n.d.) inspires to a large extent the present discourse on education. This is a model that recreates a discourse on civilization and barbarism but under the self-exclusionary guise of modernity, the society-market whose players appear as free individuals, clients and consumers... we are in fact a resilient model, capable of recomposing itself and fine-tuning its proposals without significantly altering its deep-rooted mercantilist, authoritarian and colonizing spirit. This is not a matter of pure economics, simple reforms or social policies. We are before a model that requires, to become rooted, flexibility and, accomplishing by all the means offered nowadays by technology, to occupy the conscious and functional subjectivities in the so called third wave of servitude. Consequently, the scope of education is at the same time proclaimed as the indispensable condition for success and the ground from where the State must retrench while financing private initiatives to adapt the educational system to the criteria and language of business. This gradually erodes not only the education workers’ organizations, but also the sense and role of the teaching and related professions themselves including education, social work, communications, statistics, etc. All this, in turn, linked to the trending emergence of new types of hyper individualistic elites fostered by the civilizing model, and the cult to talent and professional narcissism.

Education, seen from the standpoint of policymaking marked by private management of the public sphere,



not only becomes an appetizing booty as a merchandise but also takes the shape of the pseudo-education offered to the new generations. This is a context that requires community based education to remain watchful, critical and propostive, to avoid any trends to allow itself being coopted under the pretext of becoming larger and sustainable over time.

### **DIALOGUE AMONG TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE: NEEDS AND REQUIREMENTS**

A dialogue is needed between narratives or stories that sustain and express the epistemic density and strength of the categories found in the various originary languages, on the one hand, and their eventual equivalents in other semantic or symbolic fields on the other. A dialogue of knowledges (Ishizawa 2012) is inevitably the meeting of subjectivities and so education expresses and produces an emotional, affective impact. Community-based education, *a fortiori*, revitalizes *speech*, the individual and collectivity's image of self; challenges all pretense of sublimating what is local, own and owned, or to idealize and assume as valid what is actually sold as universal and significant because it is modern, because it guarantees status in the show-biz and window-dressing market society.

Nevertheless, this dialogue of knowledge does not cancel, as if by magic, the characteristics of the social imaginary, because this is a dialogue among unequals, among

those who over time will see many of their views as well as many of their presumed knowledges canceled, or as if this dialogue meant the system's inexorable hegemonic dominance. And this is so because the dialogue between knowledges must be part of a necessary and permanent search for the transformation of the social division of power, the democratic system itself, and the features and reflections of colonialism (Quijano 2014) that live in the nation's consciousness and actions.

### **WHY COMMUNITY-BASED EDUCATION AS A MEMORY OF THE FUTURE**

Law 28044 does not include community-based education in the educational system. It rather describes its role in initial socialization, native language learning, building a personal and social identity, the gradual appropriation of culture and its symbolic universe, as expressed in the entire set of collective and personal dimensions and living spaces, all of which goes hand in hand with permanent learning in a critical dialogue with the global historical context.

Community-based education places us in the subject's standpoint, the central actor: that which we call generically the "community" and which includes the community's self, in other words, the family and the community to which it belongs.

Community based education is a permanent meeting of the legacy of prior generations and its necessary discern-

ment in a conversation with modernity. In other words, a necessary and complex relationship between memory and the future that will not cancel it, but rather turn it into a memory of the future. Because, community-based education as a memory of the future, shelters in its midst the vocation for a harmonious relationship and stewardship with the natural environment, the territory, and the body, in what we may even refer to as a biomemory of a bioethical, biopolitical, biocultural and bioeconomic future.

While the modalities of education acknowledged by Law 28044 define regular basic education (EBR is the Spanish acronym) as the prototype of education against which all other types of “doing” education must be compared, we may wonder if community-based education should be recognized by instances outside the community itself, in particular in the case of indigenous education, or education and ancestral knowledge. We may even wonder what is innovative in recognizing its equivalence with other types of education through the National Educational Quality Assessment, Accreditation and Certification System (Sineace), the National Basic Education Assessment, Accreditation and Quality Certification Institute (Ipeba) and other entities when the school system itself does not provide certification beyond the technical-productive educational level and fails to accept the value of foreign university level general studies or even master's degrees. We may therefore assume that evidently there is a regulatory gap which is an obstacle to gaining a better understanding of community education's complexity.

Community-based education, in the various ways it has been put into practice throughout our nation's history, was always an education that was able to bring together different types of knowledge and other cultural instruments and their relationships with various ethnic peoples or groups, including contributions recognized as socially valid by the dominant modern, homogenizing culture. It may therefore be held that community-based education favored inter/trans/cultural learning.

This type of education —community-based— emphasizes “doing” as the matrix for understanding, but there is no understanding without feeling. From that standpoint, we may encourage a notion conveyed by a recent neologism: getting *sensiknowledge* that turns us into *sensithinking beings*. Community-based experiences, both urban and rural, feed Andean-Amazonian thinking that makes the quality of the relationship the criterion for assessing rationality. Community-based education is possible from the standpoint of the meaning of the relationship, from the paradigm

of rationality (Estermann 2006) that is the source of synthetic thinking —as opposed to the overlapping of knowledges- of feelings of belonging and identity.

Another dimension cultivated in community-based education experiences, in their various m, is the cross-generational relationship as a component that assures such memory of the future. Here we find a rupture with the school as we know it, and where various generations meet, but which tends to maintain a hierarchical relationship, as a colonizer of childhoods that hinder the exercise to the right to participation in a non-fictitious way, in other words, without deliberately weight and the real ability to re-found a democratic culture. Here we could find a place to express the educational surplus value of community-based education.

Community-based education invites us, from the grassroots and collectives that are emerging in many regions around Peru, to think without the *State* and, we may add, without the *World Bank*. However, we must think from and with the State, which requires blazing a different social path that will create new viable conditions for the State to assume its role to regulate, recognize and contribute to promoting community-based education as a possible way to refresh the dialogue between society and State, and the community and the official school system. In other words, a national inter/trans/cultural project on education and citizenship issues that will open coming generations an additional horizon of sense.

Finally, we should delve into the pedagogies that evolve within community-based education. Some of its characteristics are pedagogies imbued with a profound sense and the experience of social usefulness of the learnings that are being created and which result in personal gratification; the pedagogy of pleasure and desire; the acceptance of feeling well, being well and living well; an essential and social pedagogy which builds, from a cultural standpoint, reciprocity, relationality, belonging, and identity. A pedagogy that turns subjects into a product of sense, a valid interlocutor of and with life as a whole, free of age and gender discrimination. A pedagogy of curiosity and of the ability to become amazed; a pedagogy of the body (Rengifo 2012), of vital corporality, where nothing is opaque and everything transcends. A pedagogy that appreciates what the western urban world knows as labor and what it values as rite and celebration. The school has much to learn from community-based education to emancipate itself. And for that reason, community education is the memory of the future. **T**



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## Ministry of Education recognized TAREA for its contribution to improved learnings



Ministry of Education (MINEDU) recognized Tarea Asociación de Publicaciones Educativas for its contribution to improved learnings in Peru. Throughout its 41 years, TAREA has contributed to transforming equality-based intercultural educational policies and practices.

Together with TAREA, another 39 private organizations were recognized by the Ministry of Education for their initiatives to benefit students throughout the country and the National School Reform, in the framework of the pro education alliance "Rumbo a la nota más alta" (Towards the highest scores) encouraged by the Ministry to involve the private sector in improving the quality of education.

"Thank you for your past and future work because we need to keep up with it. The support of private organizations is key to stay on a forward course and to universalize the Ministry's educational policies", said Jaime Saavedra Chanduví, Minister of Education, when highlighting the cooperation with private organizations.

The recognition ceremony took place December, 2, at the Lima Chamber of Commerce in Jesus María, a district of Lima.