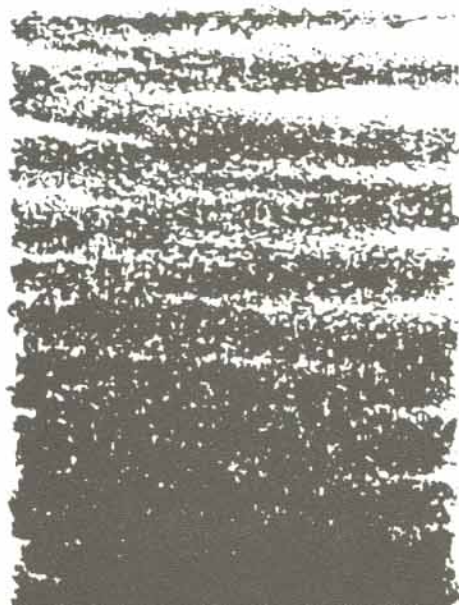




BULLETIN

THE MAJOR
PROJECT
OF EDUCATION

In Latin America
and the Caribbean



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REGIONAL OFFICE
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IN LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN

OREALC

36

THE MAJOR PROJECT OF EDUCATION

in Latin America and the Caribbean

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BULLETIN 36

Santiago, Chile, April 1995

Presentation

Poverty, unequal income and knowledge distribution constitute the historical legacy of multiracial Latin America and the Caribbean. Despite the economic transformation undergone by the region in the second half of the century, in the eighties the population of Latin America saw its poverty index rise from 35 to 45 per cent. But, that is not all: as the nineties unfold, the spread of this social blight is reaching formerly non-poor groups; the “new poor”.

The strategies developed to confront this situation, are a clear indication that most countries agree that restoring macroeconomic balance and stability are hardly sufficient. The so called Asian miracle, has driven home the point that development depends as much on economic growth, and on greater and more equitable social integration, as does on strengthening democratic principles.

In the specific cases of Latin America and the Caribbean, it is evident that their development can no longer be based on exporting raw materials produced by cheap labour. The strategy to be followed calls for building up human resources and enlisting the participation of the population at large, in politics and government affairs. This is where enhancing the educational supply, becomes essential.

Against this backdrop, UNESCO along with representatives of every country in the globe, participated in the recent Social Development Summit sponsored by the United Nations. This issue of the Bulletin presents UNESCO's contribution to the promotion of international efforts leading towards poverty eradication.

These efforts, however, must also respond to the demands posed by economic activity. Cecilia Montero analyzes the educational demands prompted by the new management styles that are gradually becoming necessary in the region, while highlighting the need to generate novel approaches to the complex collaboration processes among economic agents, social actors, and politicians.

Innovating initiatives devised to face today's challenges seem ubiquitous in every field of education. Various experiences along these lines are contained in this issue. Thus, Cecilia Braslavsky presents us with a progress report on initiatives to standardize common basic contents in argentinean education, and Leyland Maison contributes with a study on Subject Committees in Guyana, as a spring board for achieving systematic changes in the educational sector.

In every required change, the teacher must assume greater responsibilities and higher levels of participation. In this connection, Argar Alexander examines how the role of the teacher evolves as he/she strives to produce quality basic education in Grenada; Joanna Pincetti offers us a bird's eye view of the topics addressed in teacher union magazines and of the protagonism displayed in their production by the teachers themselves. Gerardo Echeita, Cynthia Duk and Rosa Blanco expound on teacher training in a context of school integration and special classroom needs.

As is customary, sections containing activities of the various OREALC networks and our latest publications, are included in the present issue.

THE LEAST-DEVELOPED COUNTRIES AND THE CHALLENGE OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

UNESCO*

"It is for the poorest people, those most exposed to despair, those who are most deprived as regards access to knowledge and those who are the most vulnerable, the UNESCO has duty to work".¹

Immediately after the Second World War at the time when the Marshall Plan was assisting in the reconstruction of Europe, the international community became aware of the importance of world co-operation to enable the developing countries to overcome their backwardness. This international movement, initially carried along with the economic euphoria of "30 glorious years", suffered a setback with the sudden rise in oil prices of 1973-1975. This world crisis brought out glaring inequalities among the Third World countries with regard to development; and a need was felt to construct a New International Economic Order. The major international aid organizations established the satisfaction of basic human needs as the immediate priority objective (Geneva, 1976).

At the beginning of the 1980s, attention was drawn to the situation of the least-developed countries (LDCs) which were seen as the most vulnerable and as unable to set a process of development in motion without a specific strategy.

The first United Nations Conference on LDCs was held in 1981, under the auspices of UNCTAD. In order to deal with structural and temporal problems, it adopted a Substantial New Programme of Action for the 1980s for the Least-Developed Countries (SNPA). Ten years later, in 1990, UNCTAD convened in Paris, in collaboration with UNESCO, the second Conference, which adopted a "Paris Declaration" and a "Programme of Action for the Least-Developed Countries for the 1990s".

Its results are to be assessed, at mid-term, on the occasion of the fiftieth session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, in September 1995.

It was already widely recognized, however, that the results of the first Decade (1980-1990) covered by SNPA had been disappointing.

In March 1990, the World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien on the initiative of UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF and the World Bank, sounded the alarm, and gave priority to Human resource development, the foundation of all development.

The more ground a country has to make up to achieve its development, the more priority must be given to increasing the potential of the men and women of whom it is formed.

An assessment of this shortfall in terms of social development has to consider three fundamental questions relating to LDCs:

- Looking at the obstacles to social development in LDCs.
- Developing appropriate means to overcome the obstacles.

* Paper prepared by UNESCO on the occasion of the World Summit on Social Development, Copenhagen, Denmark, March 1995.

¹ Federico Mayor, Director General of UNESCO at the twenty-fifth session of the General Conference 1989.

– Constructing an internationally shared and sustainable future.

Looking at the obstacles to social development in LDC's

Social development lies at the heart of LDCs' problems: it is only by tackling this problem that the spiral of exclusion will be broken.

Diverting paths

The conditions in which peoples live involve increasing disparities between different groups of society separated by growing inequalities in wealth, access to education, welfare and human development.

In 1980, the average per capita GDP of the industrialized countries was 44 times the average for LDCs (US\$16.159 as against US\$ 369).

In 1991, the figure was roughly 59 times higher (US\$ 20.309 as against US\$ 349) (table 1).

In terms of human development, as evaluated by the UNDP indicators, LDCs are still towards the bottom of the table. They include countries that, far from seeking to build a culture of peace, are ravaged by conflict (Rwanda, Cambodia, Myanmar, Somalia, Liberia ...).

Clearly, the path of growth and development can no longer be seen as a single path for all on which the privileged are the front runners, moving ever further ahead of the disadvantaged. Rather, there has been a parting of the ways between the two groups which has made the merely disadvantaged become the rejected, the outcast.

We can now see the divisive systems of differentiation relegating disadvantaged social groups to the sidelines in the richest countries also applying to countries which have been marginalized in the international community.

The UNDP Human Development Report shows clearly, every year, that the gap is no longer just quantitative but qualitative too.

The implications of this are considerable. Deficiencies in economic performance cannot be explained simply in terms of particular combination of circumstances. They reflect structural problems of which they constitute a down-

stream effect. Looking upstream, it seems that the first requirement of the least-developed countries is the ability to establish a viable blueprint for society, ensuring for their inhabitants both men and women, a form of human development that matches their cultural identity. In that way, they would be able to satisfy their basic needs, as they themselves understand them, becoming the masters of their own development, in a culture of peace that would guarantee human rights and encourage democratic participation by citizens of local, regional and national responsibilities.

Social development is the main means whereby such blueprints are devised. Equitable economic growth must become the essential instrument of that process.

In order to give some impetus to the development of LDCs we must recognize social development as the frame of reference for economic development.

The spiral of exclusion

All the analyses point towards the same conclusion: the pressure of external constraints has combined with the weakness of endogenous development in a diabolical alliance to hold up genuine social development and thereby risk creating a spiral of social as well as economic recession.

This spiral eliminates those who are unable to produce and export to an external market that is foreign to their culture, except on highly disadvantageous terms (domination by an exogenous market culture). It also makes them increasingly vulnerable to imports from better endowed countries which carve themselves a share in the local market at the expense of local production.

The spiral of exclusion can only be broken by building up the endogenous capacity of LDCs to identify their own social objectives within the international community and to achieve them. This would require development of education and training as the foundations of a self-confidence rooted in a dynamic identity.

The relations of LDCs with their outside partners should, therefore, seek to ensure that their blueprints for society are acceptable to the latter,

Table 1
KEY INDICATORS FOR "LDCS"

	<i>LDC average</i>	<i>All developing countries</i>	<i>Developed countries</i>
Per capita GDP			
1980 (dollars 1991)	369	1 035	16 159
1991	349	1 118	20 309
Per capita GDP ^a			
1970-1980	-0.4	3.1	2.2
1980-1991	-0.5	0.7	2.1
Per capita agricultural production ^a			
1970-1980	-0.8	0.4	
1980-1991	-1.2	0.4	
Industrial production ^a			
1970-1980	6.4		
1980-1991	2.0		
Ratio of total debt/GDP (%)			
1982	55		
1991	63	45	
Population growth			
1985	2.8	2.3	
1991	2.8	2.4	0.6
Life expectancy at birth			
1985-1990 (average)	49	57	75
1990-1995 (average)	50	59	
Literacy rates for adults			
1990	48	61	99
Enrolment ratio in primary schools			
1980	65	87	100
1990	66	90	100
Gross enrolment ratio pre-primary			
1980	3.9	12.3	59.3
1990	12.5	19.2	71.5
Pupil/teacher ratio in formal education			
1980	40	26	17
1990	37	25	16

Source: UNCTAD "The Least-Developed Countries 1993-1994" Report. World Education Report. UNESCO.1993.

^a Average annual rate of increase.

thus helping to bring about a new chapter in international co-operation.

More than for all other groups of countries, development in this sense demands a "radically new approach" outlined by the Director-General of UNESCO in the Position Paper prepared for the World Summit for Social Development.

Trying to deal with the disparities between the rich and the poor through macro-economic structural adjustment, in a bid to bring the poorer countries' basic economic parameters into line with the optimum performance of the industrialized world's prosperous economies. This has, in many cases, helped to stifle both social potential

and human resources. One could say that, in a reversal of normal logic, downstream factors are being allowed to affect what goes on upstream.

It would be healthier and more productive if, reversing this counterflow, social adjustment with a human face, building up endogenous capabilities and creative potential, constituted the base to which the tools of economic readjustment were required to contribute.

The United Nations programmes of action for LDCs in the 1980s and 1990s took this course, but were unable to overcome all the obstacles. There is thus now a need to go the whole way by paying the price for development. Such is the view of UNESCO for LDCs.

Developing appropriate means to overcome the obstacles

The Paris Declaration and Programme of Action for the Least-Developed Countries for the 1990s adopted a set of basic principles and drew up a number of fundamental objectives.

Basic principles

Success depends on a shared responsibility and a strengthened partnership for the growth and development of LDCs.

LDCs have the primary responsibility for the formulation and effective implementation of appropriate policies and priorities for their growth and development.

The strengthened partnership for development necessitates adequate external support from LDCs' development partners.

Commitments undertaken should be measurable and sufficiently transparent to enable monitoring and assessment of the Programme of Action for the 1990s.

Within the field of competence of UNESCO, the basic goals included: the mobilization and development of human resources in LDCs.

Objectives of mobilization

The full involvement, integration and participation of all groups, especially women, in the development process.

The strengthening of human capital, in particular through access of the population to basic and adequate social services, with special priority for education.

Stress was laid, as a prerequisite, on "the creation of an environment conducive to releasing the full energies and potential of all men and women to contribute to the improvement of the societies of LDCs".

Actions of global scope

- The Jomtien Conference defined a strategy aimed at ensuring education for all and instituting a structure for action designed to meet basic learning needs, going beyond the division between formal and non-formal education, while also addressing problems of health, science and technology, and environment. Supported by the World Bank and UNDP, the "Jomtien Programmes" primarily concern LDCs.
- In 1992, UNESCO took active part in the Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro by contributing to the elaboration of Agenda 21 and by placing at the disposal of the international community, and in particular LDCs, the experience acquired by its programmes on environmental protection and development, with respect to science and technology, biotechnology, and renewable energies (Man and the Biosphere: MAB).
- In 1993 at the World Conference on Human Rights, UNESCO endeavoured to define and lay the groundwork for a Culture of Peace. UNESCO is also the lead agency for the United Nations Year for Tolerance (1995).

Actions specifically aimed at LDCs

In 1991, a special LDCs Unit was established in UNESCO. Functioning now as part of the Directorate, its purpose is to undertake "transverse" action to encourage the convergence of those components of the major sectoral programmes which most concern LDCs.

Support for LDCs brings into play the majority of UNESCO's commitments. By way of illustration, a number of significant examples may be mentioned.

Development of institutional capacities

Education

- Involvement of LDCs in the UNITWIN/ UNESCO chairs programme and the International Project on Technical and Vocational Education (UNEVOC) (Niger, Botswana, Mozambique, United Republic of Tanzania).
- Establishment of “UNESCO chairs” in Distance Education (United Republic of Tanzania), and Human Rights Education (Benin, Ethiopia).
- Equipment and buildings for schools and teacher-training centres (Ethiopia, Somalia, Yemen, Sudan, Mauritania, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal).
- Establishment of a unit for co-operation with donors in the Ministry of Education (Cambodia).

Science

- Establishment of “UNESCO chairs” to strengthen the potential of scientific training (Sudan, Uganda, Yemen, Mozambique, Malawi, Mauritania, Sierra Leone).
- Establishment of an International Fund for the Technological Development of Africa. The Fund has an initial endowment of US \$1 million.

Communication and information

- Assistance with the launching of a project on rural radio using solar energy (Haiti).

Development of human potential

Education

- Execution of a programme of human resources development (with UNDP) in Guinea.
- A consultation and support mission to the Government of Mali for basic education programming and the launching of development education centres (DECs).
- Support for the establishment of a network linking teacher-training centres in Cote d’Ivoire, Senegal, Togo and Niger, and creation of a “UNESCO chair” in educational sciences for French-speaking Africa.
- Various training workshops on themes related to education (Harare, Dhaka, Dakar).

Social Sciences

- Training seminar for the safeguarding and protection of the family (Haiti).

Communication and information

- Establishment of national press agencies in a number of countries, more particularly in Benin, Chad and Togo. In Haiti, assistance is given for the launching of a project on community radio using solar energy.
- Seminars on the role of the press in democratic societies (Malawi, Madagascar).

Assistance in the formulation of sectoral and global policies and in studies and analyses aimed at identifying the specific needs of LDCs

- This work is carried out in Cambodia (support for the elaboration of an education policy), Burkina Faso (a new human resources development policy), Burundi, Madagascar and Haiti (education planning).
- In Mali, a major project is under way which would provide support for the elaboration of a human resources programme.
- UNESCO is setting up a Young People’s Centre for the Culture of Peace in Burundi, which should pave the way for the establishment of similar centres in a number of other countries.

These different types of activity, which are all associated with one aspect of social development or another, converge on the achievement of the objectives set out in the Paris Declaration and the United Nations Programme of Action for the Least-Developed Countries for the 1990s.

These kinds of activity, essential for sustainable development, even if inadequate, could clearly be the points of departure for strategies requiring even more force and consistency in international action for LDCs.

Constructing an internationally shared and sustainable future

The broad lines of emphasis of a new convergence of forces to help LDCs advance along the road to social development – must focus on the

following types of activity—viewed as the key to people centered sustainable development.

Mobilizing knowledge and experience for the development of LDCs

The paradox is that as the most underprivileged do not have the means to analyse and deal with their situation and problems; they are influenced by external references and models and thus poorly equipped to find appropriate solutions.

In order to be able to construct a viable future they must have, within themselves and for themselves, the capacity to produce and manage basic knowledge and to capitalize on relevant experience so as to establish their own development programmes.

UNESCO would use its newly set up MOST Programme in social sciences for creating in LDCs Data Base and reference centres to record and analyse useful experience.

Strengthening capacity-building in LDCs through enhanced human resources development

If LDCs make the most of the impetus created by the Jomtien Conference on Education for All, they should be able to devise and implement human resources development plans involving society as a whole in a spirit of partnership, restoring the balance as necessary for deprived population groups (as with Mali's national charter for a new basic education, for example).

UNESCO would put the experience acquired by some at the disposal of others, through "networking".

Creating an organized reserve of scientific and technical references to break the vicious circle created by the lack of resources for the development of LDCs

Insufficient consideration has been given to the potential of contemporary science and technology, used in the first instance to promote the development of the advanced industrial and

post-industrial societies, to respond to the problems of the most deprived. In fact, LDCs will only be able to escape from stagnation and exclusion if they are enabled to take a short cut to development by tapping into this ready-made potential and then use their own originality and creativity to find ways of rejoining the world community. Special, strongly resourced programmes shall be implemented immediately in priority sectors, such as renewable energy, biotechnology, information technology and remote processing in a response to the needs of LDCs.

Supporting the development of strategies and practices to encourage democratic participation, respect for human rights and a culture of peace in LDCs

It is generally acknowledged that there can be no development without the responsible participation of all the citizens, and one of the strengths of social development is that it provides the tools for effective participation.

Looking to the future in LDCs, international action must be taken to support them in co-ordinated attempts to encourage both a decentralization of responsibility (local and regional democracy) and eradication of illiteracy and universalization of education.

UNESCO should encourage the establishment of, and provide direct support for, networks that would assist in devising and extending education strategies aimed at collective participation in the management of LDCs.

Promoting the creation of development partnerships in regional groups to enhance their synergy

Regional synergies between groups of countries at different levels of development have an essential role to play in the emergence of LDCs, which would then be able to adopt a more active stance, and express their own potential within an equitable system of international exchange.

EDUCATIONAL DEMANDS PROMPTED BY THE NEW MANAGEMENT STYLES

Cecilia Montero*

Latin American economy has shifted gears. However, the feeling that something is amiss, hangs in the air. Countries strain to improve their performances while entrepreneurs strive to “make the most out of the day”. Ministers and high government officials define productivity goals for the public sector. Yet, we realize our achievements have been partial, and that we are still a long ways from crossing the Third World threshold, and into the First. Entrepreneurs and community leaders brandish state of the art terminology (systemic competitiveness, country-image, growth with equity, sustainable development, though no one knows exactly how to bring this about.

This void should not be surprising. Development strategy took a back seat to efforts aimed at correcting the foibles of the market, made evident during the substitution model regime. Latin American elites concentrated on securing the macro balances rather than reflecting on the social and political order that would best fit the new model. Meanwhile the world, along with new ways of thinking, continued to change at a rapid pace.

It is not just our institutions that have fallen into obsolence. The theories and concepts with which we interpret economic and social events have also fallen short of the mark. The industrializing State and its counterview, the “free interplay of market forces”, are hardly enough. There is an urgent need for a new approach that shows us how to navigate amidst complex collaboration processes between economic agents and social and political actors. A compromised view of things is badly needed; a new common sense that links macro-economic goals to the daily activities of corporations and public institutions.

Fortunately we are not starting from square one. The last ten years have seen a healthy accumulation of evidence involving key factors responsible for the success of the newly industrialized countries. New schools of thought, like socioeconomy, networking, and modern management, are hard at work designing concepts and tools to help us understand the forms of regulation a competitive market regime calls for. This work shares a systematic interest in economic governance: institutions, social relationships, cultural mores and values, and coordination mechanisms between agents with various interests. All indications are, that development is the end result of a complicated web of links between industry and society as a whole. At stake, is the capacity to collectively create a model for social, industrial, and technological organization consistent with a strategy for national insertion into the world market.

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The new industrial era

The learning corporation

Drawing from what has been written lately on the subject of industrial economy, it would be safe to maintain that we are in the presence of a novel view of industrialization. History has shown us who lagged behind and what were the basis for modern competitiveness. The United States stripped England of its first industrial power status, and then Japan turned the tables on North America. It has been claimed that England's floundering was the result of macro-economic factors (exchange rates, monetary supply, tariffs), entrepreneurial strategies, and the bargaining power of trade unions. Today, another key factor explains sputtering competitiveness: how production is organized. The American System of Manufacture based on big businesses and centralized management, proved more competitive than the British system, although it was soon to be replaced by a new organizational concept; flexible production. Japan, Germany, Sweden, and the countries of South East Asia, owe their competitiveness to a new business concept: the corporation that learns and flows with change thanks to a commitment made by the workers as a whole, to ongoing improvement.

When Matsushita's founder observed "You will lose and we will win", he was not alluding to the superiority of Japanese entrepreneurs nor to the country's macroeconomic policy, but to the fact that the Japanese industry based its competitiveness on a particular way of organizing work and production. He further stated: "We are aware that the intelligence of a few technocrats has become insufficient to cope with all the risks, uncertainty and competitiveness. Only the collective intellect of all employees will allow an enterprise to survive".

Cooperation among enterprises

Organization is an issue that transcends any individual company. The emergence of local production systems capable of competing at a global level, the so-called industrial districts,

has sparked interest for developing a variety of production, trading, and technological transfer business associations. The idea is to implement business networks to mobilize local social and cultural resources in an effort to enhance market access and increase collective efficiency. The "Italian style" industrialization scheme draws inspiration from the specialization/complementariness of a coordinated group of PYMES. Small businesses, despite their size, can be competitive if they tap into the synergy generated by nation-wide production links.

This concept is beautifully illustrated by the following example taken from Italy's Mezzogiorno, one of the country's least-developed regions. In less than ten years Murgia became an export centre and Italy Europe's number one manufacturer of leather furniture. Its beginnings can be attributed to the insight of Pasquale Natuzzi, an entrepreneur who found a potential market in the captive audience provided by television: leather furniture for the family room, the most frequented room in the home. Flow-line production soon made leather sofas—at first targeted for upper income families—available to middle level consumers. A number of small businesses in a 30 kilometer radius became specialized in the design, tanning, and polyurethane padding that went into their manufacture, following a production system based on specialization and complementation. Subsequently, through the Divani & Divani chain stores - which were very opportune to implement a manufacturing and shipping setup - they carved a niche for their product in the North American market. "Italian style" and "American quality", were the key ingredients that launched them to success.

All these features, small scale production, priority to demand (client), commitment by workers, cooperation among entrepreneurs, etc., reveal that competitiveness does have a social dimension. Success in this "from the bottom up" type of industrialization, is associated with its local base and the intertwining of economic, social and cultural relationships. The question is, what kind of orientation should public policy have, if it is to spur local synergy and cooperation among corporations? Is it possible to create

a culture that advances “cooperative competitiveness?”

Social networks

Contractual relations are commonly perceived as operating either competitively through the market or following the hierarchic logic imposed by organizations. However, from a practical viewpoint, entrepreneurs and managers behave quite differently. The firm presents itself like a nexus of contracts with multiple arms. In the business world, not all behaviour is prompted by self interest in a market populated by faceless and rational actors. Granted, production, innovation and business transactions do occur within organized markets and among instrumental agents, but, communication still plays an important part. Companies vie at a distance through the market, yet they still interact, learn from each other, and embark on joint ventures.

There are multiple coordination mechanisms that have an economic impact; mergers, cross-participation in the capital and management posts, transfer of technology, etc. The number of strategic alliances has increased as large companies come up with new ways of decentralizing and reorganizing themselves so that they may be brought closer to their suppliers. Japanese economy is viewed as a vast network of long term dealings between suppliers and clients, firms and banks, banks and their clients, Government and industry.

A great deal of the economic activity takes place in a non-economic setting. Personal relations may well provide a sound foundation on which to build a more efficient and stable business. “Networking” is regarded as an investment towards securing stronger ties with clients and suppliers and preventing opportunistic behaviour. These are essential elements if a structure which is both flexible and quick to respond to market fluctuations is to be maintained.

Along these lines, interactive learning is an area worth looking into. Innovation economy ascribes much importance to learning spaces which –untainted by the instrumental logic of the market place– make creative interaction

possible. A case in point is the experience of the Technological Transfer Groups involving agricultural sector business men. The entrepreneur who lived this experience was changed, merely by the fact that he interacted and communicated with his peers. Seminars and meetings of this kind offer this type of benefit, among several others.

Chilean researchers have contributed importantly to management theories, when remarking on the significance of “conversational networks”. From the linguistics perspective, an approach developed by Fernando Flores *et. al.*, business transactions are the result of the insertion of individual economic agents into a recurrent web of promises. Business opportunities emerge from conversations. A new business demands a fresh network of articulated commitments. For any entrepreneur, the greater the number of interactions, the wider his business horizon.

The isolated entrepreneur differs vastly from the network entrepreneur. Interaction with other entrepreneurs in like situations translates into an irreversible and accumulative reshaping of his horizon. Interactive learning is occurring here, a fact which warrants investing in a public good; associativeness. Some of the economic benefits that may be reaped from participating in associative experiences involving development programmes for entrepreneurs, are the following; participation in joint bids, specialization and division of labour among competing industries, technological transfer through emulation, a better negotiating platform for subcontractors of large businesses, opening of new foreign markets, etc.

Relationships based on trust

No business is transacted in a social vacuum. Entrepreneurs (and consumers) must face the problems derived from non-compliance. Competitiveness also has a lot to do with the setting where contracts are signed and transactions carried out (social values and mores), and the quality of the relationship (trust and commitment). The efficiency of a firm depends not only on its strategy to lower costs and maximize profit, but also on its ability to maintain sound business

relations with clients and suppliers. A talented entrepreneur is one who, besides developing skills to identify business opportunities, has a knack for making good deals and enforcing their compliance.

Contractual relations may exist across the miles, among rational agents trying to obtain the best quality and prices (cost-benefit analysis); however, they may also be present among counterparts who have established a solid relationship based on trust. A company looking for a supplier may be inclined to do business with someone already known. In-depth analysis of the existing relationship among Japanese and English corporations (suppliers and clients, producers and purchasers), reveals that the former not always sought to conduct business anonymously and competitively but favoured long term relationships instead.

Trust, begins to emerge as a competitiveness factor. Trust is a mood, an expectation harboured by one of the parties with respect to the other who is expected to respond predictably and in a mutually acceptable manner. As a result, behaviour becomes more predictable, compliance strengthens, and transaction costs diminish.

Let us illustrate the way the variable "trust" operates. If you are a "rational" individual, and make suppliers vie with each other before making a decision, if you negotiate prices and quality, if you always draw contracts which contain a maximum number of provisos, if you withhold payment until the acquired goods or services have been satisfactorily delivered, then you are following an economics textbook "to a tee": maximizing your profits while minimizing your dependency on clients and suppliers. If, on the other hand, you rely on one (or just a few) suppliers, never request estimates from another ten every time you wish to make a purchase, see no need to sign written contracts with that particular supplier, and forgo quality control checks on recently bought merchandise, you are acting on good faith and favouring the "trust" factor. Trust is then an intangible asset shared by the contracting parties.

Not all markets nor all transactions lend themselves to this type of gamble. In a society such as

Japan's where business trust prevails, uncertainty does not come into the picture. However, in Latin America, the opposite is true since distrust is a cultural trait of our nations.

Social and moral norms

The new competitiveness theories acknowledge that markets do not operate spontaneously. Economic order does need a moral foundation. An economic decision encompasses both individual interest and potential profit expectations as well as social norms characterized by their inertia.

Max Weber claims that market mechanisms can only operate effectively in a suitable social structure. In economic terms, this means a society that observes the rules of the game, albeit minimally, to make business transactions workable.

Honesty, fulfillment of pledges, observance of the law are all obligations that society imposes upon us in order to guarantee the smooth materialization of contracts. Social norms are characteristic of each social group and historical period. Lying may be socially chastised, but withholding information or divulging confidential matters, may not. I will always remember a most displeasing incident we protagonized in Rome. It was extremely hot that day and we had just arrived in the city. A man on a motor-scooter appeared from out of nowhere and snatched my purse. A passer-by, seeing our clear intentions of going to the police approaches us and tells me: "Let the thieves know that you have friends in the neighborhood". What this person was trying to tell us is that there are rules and rules ... depending on whether you are part of the community or an outsider.

The key issue here, is to acknowledge that neither the market nor institutional controls are mechanisms powerful enough to regulate, set, and impose upon society basic regulations designed to preserve a climate of business reliability. Russia's economic reforms, seem to indicate that the free market formula is not quite applicable in societies where private property, and freedom of enterprise are not traditions; where legal frameworks that regulate competition and, above all, a sufficient degree of honesty to allow

market regulations to operate, are conspicuously absent.

In a consumer society such as ours, where urban life becomes more and more anonymous and impersonal, social controls are bound to shrink. Social institutions take on the role of surrogate enforcers, but the solidity of the systems come from social and cultural values and regulations. The educational system must face up to the fact that no institutional system, regardless of how much it motivates and castigates, will be enough to guarantee the ethical dimension that a market economy requires to function smoothly.

Practical consequences

Recent progress on competitiveness research leads to the formulation of unconventional questions. How much flexibility can be demanded of a business, before undermining the commitment made by the workers? What steps must the State take, in order to promote business networks? How are trust relationships generated? How are social rules and business ethics modified or strengthened?

These issues are yet to be incorporated into a debate marked by controversy over the role of the State. We have seen that international competitiveness is neither achieved by allowing the market to operate freely nor by intense public intervention "from the top". It is no longer the job of the State to impose a resource allocation scheme keyed to politically defined priorities. The difficulty lies not only in the uncertainty surrounding the outcome of an industrial policy, but, rather, in acknowledging the social, collective, and contingent nature of the economic process.

Businesses and trade unions of the private sector stand to benefit substantially from exploring new associativity strategies. Rather than turning to the State, these organizations would do well to channel their supports towards PYME, reinforce local production flows, and transfer organizational technology.

Many of the principles we have just reviewed, have already been incorporated into the functioning of corporations and public agencies.

However, every day evidence also points to the contrary. Programmes designed to decentralize and foster local business initiatives, are controlled with a bureaucratic criterion. Production goals are imposed with Draconian vigour. Public service officials assume the role of inspectors rather than that of partners or promoters of client-oriented actions. In the private sector, individualism outshines the virtues of cooperation. A successful entrepreneur is one who makes a fortune in record time, shows cunning in securing new markets, excels in social or sport activities rather than one who invests in networking and building confidence among his workers and suppliers.

This final remark is not a criticism to what we have attained but, it is meant to point to a void: we have yet to produce a new common sense about how to build relationships among ourselves in order to become a developed country. If we are to make the best out of the day, let us do things right: let us generate networks, commitments, and trust.

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STANDARDIZATION OF COMMON BASIC CONTENTS IN ARGENTINA

Cecilia Braslavsky *

On November 29, 1994, Argentina's top educational authorities unanimously adopted the Common Basic Contents (CBC) for Elementary and Basic General Education, to be implemented throughout the schools of the Republic.

Said decision, adopted by a specially convened Assembly of the Federal Council of Culture and Education, reflects the contribution of curricular transformation and pedagogical innovation movements, currently unfolding in numerous institutions and provinces across the country.

The pedagogical transformation and innovation movement, has been conceived as part of a longer term process which involves various aspects of the argentinean educational reality. Particularly, restructuring the educational system following federal guidelines, pursuant to tenets set forth in the National Constitution.

In effect, the Constitution of 1857, establishes the obligation on the part of argentinean provinces, to provide access to general education to the population as a whole. Subsequent constitutional reforms, left this principle untouched.

In actual fact, however, the educational system expanded owing chiefly to the initiatives of the provincial and National States, as well as to the mediation of private actors whose intervention was safeguarded by the "freedom of teaching" principle. As a result, the emerging system turned out to be an ill-defined juxtaposition of federalism and unitarianism on the one hand, and State logic and market logic, on the other.

The supernumerary amount of purveyors of educational services, led to a coexistence of institutions supported by various actors and dependent on several authorities –the National State and the Provincial States– each of which

operated with its own political education guidelines, plans, programmes and norms, in the total absence of effective convergence, planning and cooperation mechanisms.

Such educational system struggled along until the fiscal crisis caught up with it. One of the rescue strategies attempted, which lasted from 1978 to 1993, entailed transferring all National State schools - regardless of level or type - to the Provincial States and to the Municipality of the city of Buenos Aires. At the same time, a space for the convergence of educational policy was being constructed: the Federal Council of Culture and Education, constituted by the top educational authorities of the Provinces, and of the Municipality of Buenos Aires. It was presided by the Nation's Minister of Education.

In terms of providing a space for the convergence of educational policy, the school transfer strategy, advanced at a faster pace than did the Federal Council of Culture and Education. Within this context, the various authorities from the provinces and the capital's Municipality, for-

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mulated their own policies and norms. The elaboration of provincial curricular designs, under the responsibility of local technical teams, was one of the main tasks undertaken by a significant number of provinces and the capital's Municipality.

Working singlemindedly, approximately ten out of the existing twenty-four educational jurisdictions nation-wide, brought about the curricular transformation movement mentioned earlier.

One of the characteristic traits of this movement is that changes have not always pointed in the same direction nor have they been homogeneous. For example, some provinces stress the upgrading of contents. Others, focus on changing the work methodology or renewing the schools' institutional structure. In some cases, the proposals advanced were better defined in specific areas, levels or modalities, than others; or certain proposals stressed priorities more strongly than others which all but ignored them. Whereas a particular provincial curricular design favoured instruction in language and expression for the community, another rebuilt ethical and civic education, structuring it about the human rights axis, or incorporated technology as an interdisciplinary subject of compulsory education.

Besides the significant motivating and mobilizing impact this movement had—and continues to have—it led to other effects not quite anticipated. Both teachers and students experienced greater difficulties when transferring from the educational system of one province, to that of the next. The smaller, more innovating provinces, which did not comprise an alluring publisher's market, faced increasing difficulties to obtain adequate textbooks. Alternatively, confirmation of the less than optimum utilization of technical teams which were made available at the various provinces, carried a potential threat in terms of how much was education contributing to national unity.

Awareness of these unforeseen effects, and demands for assistance to collaborate in the

curricular transformation and pedagogical innovation movement, emanating from those spaces least capable of promoting it, determined the need to design common curricular elements for the whole country. Said elements, were not supposed to hobble the creative efforts being currently expressed, but had to allow for the various orientations that characterize a Nation which, despite harbouring important cultural differences, aims to reinforce manifold shared values such as solidarity, democracy, and the will to promote a progressive economy.

This perceived need, was materialized through the enactment of the Federal Education Act of 1993. It was contained in article 66, which establishes that the Federal Council of Culture and Education shall discharge the function of general harmonizer of educational policy, and assigns top priority to the implementation of common basic contents throughout the country. Setting this priority is tantamount to proclaiming that there will be a first level of curricular specification¹ in the Republic of Argentina—jointly agreed upon by the national and provincial authorities—which will focus on what subject matters should be taught.

The Federal Education Act, was the result of widespread debates on strategies to restructure the educational system along federal lines. Two different trends were readily observed. The first such trend, favoured restricting the standardization and coordination of educational policies, casting education to the winds of market logic. From this "laissez-faire" type of perspective, common basic contents or any equivalent agreement, were obviously superfluous. The opposing trend, conferred upon the National and Pro-

¹ In Argentina the term "specification" is favoured over the expression "concretion", to indicate greater freedom to adapt the curriculum to educational levels other than the central system's. The idea is that decisions stemming from higher spaces are not blindly adopted, but, contents are reformulated and rethought based on provincial/local assessments.

vincial States, an important coordination and standardization role in matters concerning "what to teach" in the nation's schools. This was the stance finally adopted by legislators, amidst the mobilization of parents, students, and teachers who demanded that education be made a public issue, while supported by the clear legal definition of the role of the State as a guarantor of quality education for all.

The Federal Education Act, finally adopted in April 1993, grants the National State a mayor role as convocator of consensuses, evaluator, planner, and buffering agent. Among other things, it determines the duplication of the educational budget within 5 years, a restructuring of the educational system through the creation of a compulsory nine-year Basic General Education programme, preceded by a last year of elementary level education, also compulsory, and followed by a three-year non-compulsory level of polimodal education.

Even before completion of parliamentary proceedings, the victorious proposal that infused the State with a new protagonism in educational affairs, had led to a change of Minister of Education, and to the nomination of the President of the Education Committee of the House of Representatives –its greatest advocate– to the vacated ministerial position.

Under new management, the Ministry of Education took on the challenge of guaranteeing the standardization of common basic contents, through a process designed to advance and disseminate the existing curricular transformation and pedagogical innovation movements, while strengthening the bonds between the educational system and society, the working world, and the world responsible for generating new knowledge.

The task for designing such a process, fell to an advisory technical committee empowered to intervene in curricular and teacher-training matters. The technical committee, started by acknowledging the attendant difficulties, which characterize today's Argentina, in terms of reach-

ing agreements on issues bearing a strong ideological content, within a historical setting marked by the adoption of dilemmatic logic following which, for example, scientific training and spiritual development seemed unreconcilable. The committee also attempted to do away with the large-sized committees that had traditionally proven awkward and apathetic, in a political atmosphere which demanded swift solutions to problems that had been dragging on for decades. A decision was made in favour of a three-person committee which represented three clearly distinct views, but shared an identical commitment to act.

Additionally, in a period of three months, a new ministerial management team was created. This team had to fulfill a fundamental condition: it had to be homogeneous in terms of educational proposals, but, heterogeneous as far as the political preferences of its members, the institutions they represented, and their home communities.

The advisory technical committee and the executive team of the Educational Programming and Evaluating Secretariat proposed, as a strategy to eliminate what was deemed a chronic failure to reach agreements on curricular matters, that prior to attempting a definition of basic contents per se, a number of assumptions, selection and work criteria, be adopted by the Federal Council of Culture and Education, along with a methodology to elaborate curricular designs that prove compatible throughout the country.

Standardization agreements

1993 was devoted to the elaboration, discussion, and adoption of the work criteria and methodology to be used in determining common basic contents for argentinean education. The Nation's Ministry of Culture and Education was made responsible for submitting the project's first draft to the Federal Council of Culture and Education. Subsequently, the drafts were analyzed and improved at seminars attended by

technical teams from every province, and from Buenos Aires' Municipality.

Both assemblies of the Federal Council of Culture and Education approved the documents which became agreements N° 6 and 7 respectively, for the enactment of the Federal Culture and Education Act. The first agreement and second agreements contained assumptions, criteria, and the work methodology respectively.

Assumptions and criteria used in selecting and organizing common basic contents

The assumptions adopted for use in selecting and organizing common basic contents for Argentina, are two. A third non-explicit assumption –although contained in the spirit of the law and in earlier documents of the Federal Council of Culture and Education– should be added to the original two.

- The selected contents must encourage the furtherance of competence, understood as such, the aggregated and complex skills that imply knowledgeable and conscientious know-how. Agreement N° 6, assumes a concept of competence distinct from that of being competitive. To be competent does not mean being better or more than others, but displaying a capability to solve problems –conscious of what one knows, and applies, and of the consequences this knowledge may bring, based on shared and rationally assumed values– in a world where natural, social, technological, and symbolic aspects are intertwined with knowledge.
- For contents to contribute to skill building, their very essence must be reappraised. Contributions from several countries, England in particular, disseminated in Argentina through spanish production, went into this reappraisal. It was concluded that contents should take on various cultural forms, but essentially that of concepts, procedures, norms, values and attitudes. Information –no desire to undermine its value was intended– was to be selected, structured, and ranked keyed to es-

sential teaching and learning concepts, procedures –which must also be learned and can be taught–, with the purposeful intervention of teachers, and of the values and attitudes that need to be learned within the framework of systematic pedagogical processes.

- Within the teaching and learning processes, teacher, student, and knowledge, are three equally important elements which interact dynamically.

For a long time, traditional pedagogy placed the educator at the core of its universe, and although knowledge was claimed to share this locus, recent research has shown this assertion not to be quite true. The new pedagogy, focused on the student but occasionally underestimated the role of knowledge and teachers. In the process of elaborating common basic contents, the prevailing view was that, in order to ensure the quality and globality of the pedagogical process, all three elements had to be incorporated into a single unit.

The criteria adopted by the Federal Council of Culture and Education for use in selecting and organizing common basic contents, are eight.

- Common basic contents must be socially significant, in terms of their contributions towards enhancing the quality of living of the population as a whole. The search for contents significance should aim at incorporating –with minimal personal, social, and cultural damage– whatever contents are needed to meet present and future demands associated to the technological revolution, as well as those rooted in the past which the community holds as valuable and representative of its cultural identity.
- Common basic contents should be open-ended. The selected contents should be applicable to diverse situations, pliant enough to combine creatively, and capable of becoming efficient tools in the solution of real and simulated problems. Openness should facilitate –within a setting marked by a distinct personal, familiar, local, regional, and national identity– a

knowledge, which being free from prejudice and respectful of other life styles, is also applicable to problem solving situations, even if they depart from the daily activities familiar to all students.

In selecting common basic contents, it is essential to fight the urge to encompass everything, and concentrate on defining their educational scope.

Agreement N° 6 of the Federal Council of Culture and Education, assumes that the fast-evolving knowledge and procedures of the various scientific disciplines, has permanently changed the illusory aspiration to “teach everything to everybody”, while the tendency to constantly incorporate new contents was one of the reasons that led educational systems to implement a shallow style of teaching, through the simplified transmission of partial and out of context cultural by-products. Consequently, it assumed that the selection of optimum contents should be the end result of a classification process; discrimination between contents that can only be learned in school, from those that living in a highly technological world can provide the students on a daily basis, outside the school walls.

- Potential common basic contents should facilitate an integral and all-encompassing classroom work.

Common basic contents should link theory to practice, that which is conceptual to that which is applied, the transfer of universal truths to concrete contexts, and the evaluation of real situations, to serve as a launching pad for developing theoretical concepts.

- The common basic contents structure should include a built-in ranking mechanism.

The selected contents should be better organized than in the original study programmes where they appeared listed on an equal footing, regardless of their importance.

- Common basic contents should be updated out of a desire to incorporate “ways of constructing new knowledge”, rather than for the sake of adding new information parcels.

Agreement N° 6 of the Federal Council of

Culture and Education understood that the updating criterion had generally been applied to the incorporation of knowledge, and not to the inclusion of procedures. It assumed that in order to genuinely assess the orientation updating should have, contents had to be presented as unfinished products of a process unfolding in time, through the elaboration, presentation and differentiation of multiple perspectives.

- Common basic contents should be coordinated horizontally and vertically.

Keeping both types of coordination in mind, should allow for a more efficient use of the instructional powers inherent in the contents, prevent unnecessary and superfluous repetitions, and voids in comprehension whenever contents are presented in succession.

- Common basic contents should be drafted clearly and simply.

The common basic contents, constitute a set of guidelines intended for officials, managers, teachers, and for parents and students as well. Therefore, in their elaboration, technicisms that are not essential should be avoided.

This last criterion was considered fundamentally important. Teachers, specially in elementary and basic grades, are required to be excellent “generalists”; they are expected to be conversant with physics, linguistics, mathematics, literature, chemistry, social sciences, and several other disciplines. The proposals they receive, produced with the collaboration of specialists and technical staff, should not make use of pedantic language; be correctly written, harmonious, and austere.

Once the criteria for selecting and organizing contents had been adopted, it was time to design a work methodology to implement them.

Work methodology

The work methodology developed to standardize the common basic contents assumed four challenges, the combination of which was expected to produce a proposal that would “unsettle without unhinging”.

Challenge number one, was to contribute to destroy the system's endogamy. The term "endogamy" may be defined as the tendency for self-structuring, that is, based on the exclusive participation of educators within the educational system, barring all exchange and feedback channels with society.

A second challenge, consisted of developing a work process that would guarantee conceptual, political, and ideological pluralism and, yet, ensure an efficient and effective work plan. Previous meetings called to elaborate curricular proposals, had opted for nominating work commissions. These commissions had proven extremely hard to coordinate, and shown little capacity to materialize effective content renewal agreements. This was due to the fact that eminent members from various locations and exalted positions, were reluctant to compromise their positions and sign as co-authors.

Another challenge called for guaranteeing a genuine and workable participation by those who experienced the daily educational routine. In effect, one thing was to propose the need to do away with the endogamy that threatened the system, but, renouncing to the contribution of "sound teaching practices", the accumulated experience of the educational system, and classroom innovations undertaken by scores of educators and institutions, was quite a different story.

A last challenge went beyond agreeing on common basic contents. It entailed adopting criteria that would take provincial and Municipal curricular designs to a second level of curricular specification. Reaching a consensus with regard to these criteria was vital, since they showed how to steer the presentation of basic contents in a way such that the constitutional authority of the provinces was not severed. Since the restructuring of the educational system had been accomplished following federal lines, the provinces had lost much of their confidence in the National State and, consequently, in the likelihood of coming to an eventual "meeting of the minds" in educational matters.

Two fronts were attacked simultaneously:

reaching an agreement on criteria for the design of compatible curricular designs; and, selecting and structuring common basic contents.

The work plan to be implemented consisted of three loci and two stages. Broadly speaking, the process of selecting and structuring common basic contents was carried out following the adopted methodology and within the scheduled time (1 year).

Three loci were defined –"technical", "federal", and "national"– for selecting and structuring common basic contents.

The Ministry of Culture and Education comprised the technical locus. It was responsible for organizing work activities, formulating proposals, and guaranteeing that all changes proposed at the federal and national loci, were duly processed.

The federal locus resided in the educational jurisdictions. Its duty was to disseminate and discuss didactic materials with the technical teams, teachers, and all consultants to the provincial governments and the Municipality of Buenos Aires.

The federal locus ensured that all material produced was known and evaluated by prestigious national institutions: universities, national academies, teacher organizations, private education institutions, etc.

The two stages, which borrowed their names from the Dominican Republic's curricular reform process, were called "necessary divergence" and "essential convergence".

The first, or criteria building stage, analyzed compatible curricular designs in force in Argentina and other foreign countries. During a second stage, first drafts were discussed at the federal locus, that is, with provincial technical teams; and at the national locus, that is, with institutions operating at the national level. The Federal Council of Culture and Education adopted the criteria that would be used in the elaboration of compatible curricular designs, under Agreement N° 8. This task, which was undertaken concurrently with the common basic contents selection process, took about six months for completion.

The two most salient aspects of the process were; the need to determine, the percentage of content contained at each of the curricular specification levels, and to match the structure and presentation of common basic contents with that of curricular designs.

In terms of the former question, it was unanimously decided that each and every content has a high level of abstraction that must be national in nature; a second, and lesser level of abstraction should have a regional or provincial nature; and lastly, a high level of specification that ought to be local. Therefore, assigning percentages was not in order.

As far as the second item was concerned, it was agreed that the common basic contents presentation structure, should not prescribe a teaching structure, since it is feasible to learn the same procedural and attitudinal contents more effectively through different bits of information –a point related to the preceding– structured along various pedagogical axes and work schemes.

Selection and organization

The process involving selection and organization of common basic contents, proved to be much more complex.

The first stage, “necessary divergence”, received contributions from four sources:

- Curricular designs from the provinces, the Municipality of the city of Buenos Aires, and other official contributions.
- Contributions gathered through five consultations: a national public opinion poll, conducted on a stratified sample of over 1.500 cases, representative of the national population; a second survey “The families speak out”, produced over 48.000 answers; in-depth interviews with thirty entrepreneurs from the three economic sectors; surveys conducted via youth’s radio and television shows which generated more than 5.000 answers; interviews with roughly 200 non-government organizations which engage in educational programmes as a supplement to those of the formal educational system.

- Official documents contributed by foreign countries and NGO’s, among them, Spain, Chile, the United States, France, Great Britain, Italy, and the Federal Republic of Germany.

- Contributions from consultants on disciplines selected by the Federal Council of Culture and Education. Each consultant was to enlist the participation of ten colleagues.

When selecting disciplines, the Federal Council was careful to strike a balance between those with a long trajectory in the educational system, for example, history and geography, and others such as sociology and economy, less likely to be included in the design of educational programmes. Some disciplines not originally considered –anthropology and geology– were picked up along the way.

The advisory technical committee, entrusted the Secretariat of Educational Programming and Evaluation with the selection of consultants. The screening process made sure that: candidates responded to different theoretical schools; had worked in a variety of institutions; came from different geographical areas; in addition to academic excellence, had acquired experience in terms of transferring knowledge to industrial, political, and social groups and/or to the educational system; several generations were represented.

These consultants were asked to sign the documents submitted, for future publication in an anthology which would be used as a source of information and support material, for the provincial teams responsible for determining the basic contents of curricular designs. In turn, it was expressively agreed that the common basic contents themselves would be drafted by and discussed with the coordinating team; however, they would not be signed by individuals, but bear the institutional seal.

The first stage was carried out entirely within the technical locus. This first stage, that lasted six months, included as part of its strategy the setting up of working seminars in an effort to incorporate a fifth source of contributions, the so called “sound classroom practices”. These semi-

nars were attended by teachers, and addressed the nature of the materials that would go into the production of common basic contents. The respective provincial governments were asked to include in the delegations, when feasible, at least one teacher with work experience in the private sector, and another who enjoyed the sympathies of the trade union. In numerous cases, the delegations were constituted following these criteria.

Contributions by teachers soon turned the “materials...” into “first drafts of common basic contents”, which were subsequently discussed both at the federal and national loci. These, along with the accumulated contributions, were reviewed and submitted to the approval of the Federal Council’s Ministry Assembly. This second stage also lasted six months.

The process which involved gathering contributions, academic coordination of events, drawing up of “materials”, “first drafts”, and approved common basic contents, as well as interaction with public opinion - an extremely important aspect - was coordinated by a team of fourteen specialists. This team combined pedagogical excellence - as opposed to the academic excellence demanded from consultants - with personal flexibility and an inclination towards materializing agreements, the capacity for engaging in interdisciplinary work, creativity, boldness, and work experience in more than one province or a staff representing various geographical areas.

The methodology implemented guaranteed an open -albeit- workable process, which enlisted the participation of over 2 000 individuals all of whom registered names and surnames, and included teachers from every argentinean province, illustrious persons from every walk of political life; various church and lay groups; entrepreneurs, syndicalists, etc.

Adopted common basic contents

The adopted common basic contents are structured in different chapters according to the level. Basic general education, for instance, consists

of eight chapters; language, mathematics, social science, natural science, technology, physical education, artistic education, ethics, and civic duties.

Internally, each chapter contains an introduction which explains the reasons for and the purpose behind compulsory teaching of the selected contents. This introduction is followed by a presentation of contents in block form. Each block goes over two or all three of the 3-year cycles that comprise basic general education. The blocks contained in each chapter are subsequently characterized. A summary, included by way of explanation, outlines the common features of the work strategy adopted for schools, expectations on students’ achievement in terms of content mastery, suggested links to content blocks of other chapters, and the proposed scope for each of the three basic general education cycles.

The explanatory synthesis and achievement expectations appearing in most blocks, present a coordinated account of conceptual contents of procedures and attitude. The last two, summarize general procedural contents and proposed attitudes. The procedural scope for each block per cycle, is then proposed.

Although it is extremely difficult to describe in a few lines the most innovating aspects of the adopted contents, the impossible will be attempted in the next paragraphs.

Language common basic contents settle the dichotomy between attempting to teach how to communicate and teaching idiomatic rules; they take into account the communication function of the language, its relationship with thinking, knowledge, and emotions. They teach not only language, but its social uses. Linguistic comprehension and production procedures, are stressed as contents.

Starting from the second cycle of basic general education, probability and statistics are assumed within the mathematic CBC’s. Also, communication through reading; interpretation and construction of tables and graphs; the use of calculators and computers to process demographic, economic, and health information -

among other topics - is expressively introduced. Problem solving and mathematical reasoning contents are emphasized.

Social science CBC's, have been structured bearing in mind that type of knowledge that is essential to understand, interpret, and explain social situations and processes, and to creatively participate in the search for solutions to mayor world problems. The idea is to start with what is closest, but to incorporate from the very beginning, comparisons with far away time and spaces, thus disrupting a certain trend that was taking hold in Argentina, to be satisfied with studying exclusively nearby spaces. Emphasis is placed on teaching procedures designed to compile, organize, analyze and communicate information - horizontally coordinated - with the contents proposal, and procedures pertaining to the language and mathematics chapters.

The same aforementioned procedures are emphasized as contents in the natural science chapter, where they are structured about the "school research" proposal and enriched with experimentation. Three approaches, previously confronted in connection with the "scientific literacy" concept, converge in this chapter: the teaching of natural science given its formative value, its role in promoting health, and in the preservation and enhancement of our natural environment.

One of the most innovative aspects of the adopted CBC's, involves the use of technology from elementary level to the last year of basic general education. This proposal seeks to develop in students, skills connected with the utilization and intelligent manipulation of technological products, from a perspective of respect for life and the environment, appreciation for individual and team work, and permanent updating in the face of the swift pace that characterizes the technological field. The contents included in the technology chapter stress the teaching of informatics but are not subsumed in it. Among other things, these contents also give priority to the teaching of two general proce-

dures: "product analysis" and "technological projects".

The chapter on ethics and citizens education simultaneously highlights personal contents, their psychic processes and socializing domain, norms and values, proceeding from an emphasis on daily living during the first cycle of education, to culminate in the shaping of a citizen. Contents include reasoning procedures, creativity, and analysis of the moral dimension of facts. Emphasis is given to the need to develop values and attitudes such as justice, solidarity, and equity; respect, tolerance, and appreciation of that which is different; creativity and critical thinking; a sense of duty, adequate use of leisure time and appreciation for the aesthetic dimension of life.

The artistic education chapter, contains CBC's for curricular design of areas dealing with musical, plastic/visual, and theatrical languages, as well as body expression. The idea is to teach codes and techniques that facilitate a greater familiarity with diverse art forms and an appreciation for our cultural heritage.

The CBC's of the physical education chapter, propose working in schools with games, gym, sports, and outdoor living in natural settings. The concept of physical education association is strongly linked to that of an active citizen deeply involved in the democratic processes of society, suitable motor development, capability to interact with others through motion, the ability to acknowledge individual skills and those of others, and the insight to develop them to promote personal growth. These proposals eradicate militaristic views on sports and a sense of competitiveness, still present in some educational spaces in Argentina.

Towards an interpretation of success factors in the achievement of common basic contents

Common basic contents were unanimously approved by the nation's educational authorities,

an accomplishment, considering the heterogeneous political composition of their ranks which even include representatives of the principal government opposition party.

Furthermore, the common basic contents agreement was highlighted by the press to the point of meriting the first page of the greater national circulation newspaper and appearing in the interior pages of practically every other argentinean newspaper. Various institutions, which traditionally have not seen eye to eye in terms of what to teach, expressed their general approval pointing out, however, that there was room for improvement.

What prompted such an unprecedented consensus? Clearly, some of the contributing success factors may be among those already discussed; the adoption of assumptions, criteria, and a work methodology which proved adequate, at least for a theoretical model. However, other factors undoubtedly played an equal or greater role in the process.

First, it would seem that argentinean society and its political system are searching for democratic consolidation mechanisms characterized by a willingness to compromise. It is probably no coincidence, that common basic contents were adopted the very same year that substantial reforms - granting constitutional statute to international agreements on Human Rights and other issues traditionally regarded as having a controversial nature - were unanimously approved by a National Constituent Assembly.

It seems certain that the management style exhibited by the educational sector during the elaboration of common basic contents, has taken a qualitative leap as compared to the process started in 1984, in terms of a reduction of patronage and sectarianism which characterized the functioning of the argentinean State, a new mix of professional profiles, and a smidgeon of administrative heterodoxy.

Patronage and sectarianism have been permanent features of the argentinean public sector, and are still pretty much alive. In the specific

case of the educational sector, they prevented the incorporation of highly qualified technical personnel not aligned with the ruling parties or not having links -other than professional - with leading political figures, or obstructed their participation with the State.

Diminished patronage and sectarianism facilitated the coordinated execution, between political officials with technical sensitivity and technical officials with political sensitivity, of important educational management decisions. Together, and endowed with a new awareness, they launched a process intended to make management skills more efficient and effective, placing importance on issues that turned out to be symbolic of new opportunities: provision of information, meeting deadlines, and public accountability on conflictive issues. Their impact also filtered down to the provincial administrations, stirring them into adopting a more professional management style.

Additionally, this newfound management style, was accompanied by important efforts to make its implementation more dynamic while freeing it from bureaucratic deadwood. As a result, heterodox administration mechanisms could be brought into play, such as the execution of tasks through short term direct contracts rather than through an over-loaded bureaucratic system.

Third, there was a decision to invest in some of the perceived needs of the educational sector, decision that gathered momentum thanks to the various initiatives that conferred credibility to its management. Notably, compensatory support programmes for the poorest schools across the country, and the announcement of a large investment in terms of equipment, infrastructure and in-service training. The materialization of these investments and of various work initiatives that focused on assorted educational problems simultaneously, promoted a strong climate of confidence and favourable expectations with respect to common basic contents.

Fourth and last, a permanent reflection

—through reading, travelling and the recruitment of foreign advisors— on similar processes unfolding in other countries, gave perspective to the local processes and made possible a compromising attitude between opposing positions, based on solutions to identical problems encountered in different contexts.

The implementation of common basic contents is expected to begin in 1995. Said implementation, however, should be understood as a more dynamic and open process, although less bureaucratic than those reforms characteristic of past decades. Massive distribution of the adopted common basic contents started early in the school year and, simultaneously, two convergent courses also made their appearance.

A first course, calls for the incorporation into the classroom of all material teachers consider worth using, without reference to provincial curricular designs. Booklets that promote reflection on the individual practice of each teacher in the classroom, guide the reading of approved contents, and open possibilities for supplementary reading, are in the production stages.

A second such course, consists of a revision of the curricular designs of all Provinces. To further this end, the nation's Ministry of Culture and Education has offered its support within the scope of an Annual Cooperative Seminar on Curricular Design, which will be attended by technical teams from all provinces wishing to participate.

The fact that successful agreements have been reached, does not guarantee that the processes designed to transform these agreements into a new daily reality for schools, will necessarily have the same measure of success. In this respect, it is important to note that there are several risk factors that may prevent the materialization of this second, and much more transcendent course.

One of them could be the discontinuance of

the new management style that is beginning to sprout its wings within the educational sector, depending on the outcome of the presidential elections of May 1995. Another, the failure to incorporate into the harmonization process, themes such as the new educational institutions, or the labour conditions that would be required to guarantee a pedagogical reform.

There are still other risk factors that ought to be mentioned, but even then, past events warrant a more optimistic than pessimistic view. If in less than two years—at least during this stage and in connection with this particular endeavor—, what loomed as unsurmountable contradictions, such as the struggle for educational leadership between the National State and the Provinces, or a considerable amount of the ideological disputes between religious and lay groups, or even the theoretical discrepancies between structuralists and semeiologists could be bridged, why not indulge in a bit of optimism?

There is hope that pedagogical policies may be elaborated that guarantee the globalization of CBC's to all educational institutions, along with the recognition that they will become an essential foundation for:

- the cooperative and coordinated action of the National State, the Provincial States, and the Municipality of Buenos Aires, each and every educational institution, the Universities, publishing houses, in short, of all those interested in improving the quality of education;
- the renewal of teacher training processes;
- institutional reform, since everybody is well aware that a new set of contents that truly incorporates work methodologies and procedures that reflect a modern perspective and manipulation of the world, does require a different set of schools; and
- evaluating education, both in terms of students' learning achievements and all the constituent elements of the educational process.

SUBJECT COMMITTEES IN GUYANA

Leyland Maison*

During the 1987-1988 academic year the Ministry of Education in Guyana initiated a review of the principles and policies which guide the education sector. This action was taken with the expectation that it would provide an opportunity for systematic innovation to be done to meet the needs of, and the challenges facing, the sector, and that the policies and programmes that emerged from the review would form a basis for a medium term indicative sector plan.

In the course of the deliberations, four major areas of policy were addressed. These are "the maintenance and intensification of emphasis on the creation and preservation of equality of access to educational opportunity; an intensive and major overhaul of managerial practices within the system; the review and sequencing of curricula in all major disciplines for all levels of schooling, and a major overhaul of the approach to the management of human resources within the System" (Ministry of Education, 1989).

An outcome of this exercise was the formation of Subject Committees of practising teachers at the district, regional and national levels. The stated objectives of the policy governing this activity are: to define content that will be taught at particular levels of the school system; to recommend learning experiences that may be employed in teaching; to prepare materials that will support teaching and learning in the classroom; to develop test items and tests, on what has been taught, for the assessment of the performance of students and teachers; to review performance and recommend strategies to overcome observed weaknesses, and to prepare, when needed, lists of text books to be recommended for use in the school system (Ministry of Education, 1988).

This policy aims, generally, at the improvement of the instructional programme and is immediately recognized as a component of the

policy area dealing with the review and sequencing of curricula. However, it also subscribes to the conduct of professional development activities for teachers, and for enhanced supervision of programmes in the school. Thus, it relates as well to at least two other policy areas – the management of human resources, and the overhaul of managerial practices.

The Subject Committees that now exist are organized by class grade, subject, groups of subjects and type of school, at the national level. No formal review of the activities that have resulted from the formation of these committees has yet been undertaken. Nevertheless, the impression has already been gained that the ensuing arrangements permit teachers of varying exposure, experience, and skills to collaborate in making important decisions about the subjects and students they teach. The Committees appear to capture a diversity of perceptions which have the potential to contribute to the good quality of ideas and materials needed in the schools. They also seem to foster a similarity of views on, and approaches to, the solution of

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problems the teachers face. Herein, it seems, reposes an opportunity for providing positive reinforcement for worthwhile effort and for engendering confidence and enhancing professionalism among members of the teaching force.

The purpose of this paper is to attempt an analysis of the policy on the establishment of Subject Committees.

Policy analysis

Some definitions of and approaches

It does appear that a good deal of confounding and frustration have attended efforts made so far to precisely define the term "policy analysis". As a result there seems to be limited consensus evidenced in the related literature examined, with regard to what exactly is policy analysis and what a policy planning/information system is and can be.

Downey (1988) advises that the literature in the field of policy analysis in general and educational policy in particular, shows a lack of agreement as to what policy analysis is and what functions it can perform in the improvement of policy-making and policy advising. He adds that very few attempts have been made to superimpose the methods of policy analysis on the policy-making process in a manner that will discourage inadequate, irrelevant and excessive information being generated in the process.

A list of some of the principal meanings of policy analysis given by Holden and Dresang (1975), illustrates the variety of meaning attributed to the field. These include examinations of decisions-making and policy systems in order to appraise existing political theory or to generate new theory; evaluations of whether policies achieved the results they were planned or proposedly planned to achieve; studies of the impact of given policies, whether or not they served the manifest functions; and attempts to prescribe—what social choices ought to be (pp. 13-14).

Boyd (1988) supports the contention that it is not easy to define policy analysis clearly. He

states that some sense of the "extraordinary variety of the field" can be obtained by merely checking through the diverse contents of periodicals like the "Journal of Policy Analysis and Management", and "Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis". He reports that in a review conducted in 1984, Mitchell asserts that the field itself consists of an avalanche of citations from the related literature. Indeed, Mitchell (1984) observes that the extensive literature on the topic of educational policy has produced little agreement on the methods or goals of educational policy research, and few "classic" or exemplary studies exist for defining the area's central thrust or theoretical perspectives.

An examination of a few definitions seems to mirror the wide variety and the resulting confusion. Dye (1971) observes that policy analysis is the description and explanation of the causes and consequences of governmental activity. While refraining from using the word "analysis", Laswell (1971) points to two purposes of policy studies. He states that policy sciences are concerned with the knowledge of the decision processes of the public and civic order, as well as knowledge in these processes. Of note here are the mainly descriptive and problem-finding roles ascribed by these two writers to the policy analyst.

Whereas some activists in the field treat policy analysis and policy science as synonymous terms and use them interchangeably, Downey (1988) advises that there is a distinction between the two. He points out that in policy science, policy is seen as social phenomenon in which the aim is to know, understand and describe, and subsequently generalize about the phenomenon studied. In policy analysis, policy is viewed as an instrument for social direction. The analysis is expected to inform decisions, to help policy makers shape that instrument, and to assess the maximization of desired outcomes.

Quade (1975) views policy analysis as a set of activities that generate and present information in a way that improves the bases for policy makers to exercise their judgement. Implicit in this statement is the expectation that the policy

analyst will not be only descriptive. The analyst's role includes facilitation of judgement and incremental outcomes.

Wildavsky (1979) writes that throughout his teaching career, policy analysis has been viewed as something that could be learned but not explained; something that he, his colleagues, and their students could do sometimes, but never define. He suggests an operational, experimental approach to gaining useful insights into policy analysis. Wildavsky proposes that the best way to begin learning to analyze policy is to create strong criteria, apply the criteria to good data, discover alternatives, and after numerous trials, formulate a problem at the very end. It appears that Wildavsky advocates that formulating the problem is more the end than the beginning of analysis. This approach is suggestive of a cyclical aspect of policy analysis, and of the prosperity it has for creating problems while suggesting solutions to problems. The task of policy analysis is not to produce a decisive recommendation, but instead, to contribute toward consensual understanding of actualities, possibilities, and desirabilities (White, 1983). In his view it can be open-ended rather than complete.

Boyd (1988) states that the view of policy analysis as essentially problem solving or yielding data for decision-making is a simplistic one. It also signifies that analysis has a more direct and powerful consequence than is explicitly stated. Such is an opinion that ignores the potential in the field for rethinking policy problems or enlightening our understanding of complicated policy questions. He suggests that policy analysis must aim at empowering humans to undertake more effective collective action to solve or at least reduce significant policy problems. In his view there are two central concepts of policy analysis—evaluation and choice—and, generally speaking the analytical paradigm which supports the rational perspective warrants a methodical comparison of alternative policies to permit choice of the most advantageous course of action. He writes that studies employing the classical paradigm often combine the techniques of evaluation, and economic analysis to assess

alternative policies and provide a systematic, data-based foundation for policy choice (Boyd, 1988, 504).

It appears that in Boyd's assessment of the field, rationality is assumed to dominate the policy process. There seems to be a strong continuing commitment to the rational, positivistic perspective of policy analysis by scholars and practitioners who use the dominant classical paradigm which supports the utilization of techniques and assumptions of the natural sciences in the study of human affairs. Bosetti, Landry and Miklos (1989) state that the rational model is adequate for dealing with technical problems, for collecting the facts and for developing "how to" solutions. This model turns possibilities for choice into situations for regulation by replacing citizens and a concern for values with officials who operate in an instrumental fashion. It promotes the adoption of a hierarchical stance, and results in centralized authority and decision-making. It also excludes ethical and political considerations.

Some policy analysts utilize a decentralized, bottom-up approach dealing with diversified preferences, and not the centralized top-down preferences of a single decision-maker. According to Behn (1981) this involves a field-oriented approach to gathering data and placing a least equal emphasis on qualitative methods as with quantitative ones. This method sees policy analysis as more an art or craft rather than a science. The art/craft view presumes a more complete analysis which will recommend not only the best possible alternative to decision makers, but will suggest the best political strategy for the acceptance and utilization of the alternative.

Although there is a growing consensus in favour of the craft approach to analysis, there is still within the field of policy analysis a strong devotion to at least the spirit and concepts of the analytical, rational model. Alexander (1984) confirms that there is a continuing substantial commitment to the rational perspective on the part of both theoreticians and practitioners. It therefore appears that there are likely to be few approaches to policy analysis which prevail

over a characteristically technical and limited viewpoint.

On the other hand, Prunty (1985) examines the Critical Theory approach to policy analysis. He suggests that the critical policy analyst would adopt an advocacy stance steeped in a commitment to a vision of moral order in which values such as justice, equality and individual freedom are untainted by the greed of a handful of persons. He would attempt to expose the sources of domination, repression and exploitation that are firmly established in, and legitimated by, educational policy. The analyst would pay keen attention to how curriculum content, instructional practices and evaluation procedures are ratified, and would serve as an initiator of action which derives from the critical analysis. Generally, he would attempt to serve those whose interests were formerly deemed to be of lesser importance, and to work toward developing more equitable policies.

Some of the shortcomings of Critical Theory have been addressed. Alexander (1984) advises that the approach represents the application of a faith and of a specific set of expectations of what the world will become in the future. These are anticipations about which there is no certainty and which cannot be verified empirically. The theory sets itself, at the extreme socialist end of the political continuum, views the existing dominant order as being at the opposite end, and assumes and asserts that socialism and equality are unconditional states to which society must subscribe. It also proposes that if dominated and oppressed people were made aware of their circumstances, then steps would be taken to bring about their emancipation. However, as Lane (1983) argues, the consciousness of the sources of domination does not necessarily result in triumph; it may mean only knowing why one loses. The fundamental problem with Critical Theory is that it offers a very limited range of practical choices for redressing apparently poor social conditions, except by revolutionary change.

A framework of analysis

An examination of the related literature has given the impression that the existing state in educational administration is that few theoreticians and practitioners are prepared to forsake the rational, positivistic paradigm. While it still exercises dominance in the areas of policy-making and policy analysis, there are indications that there are moves away from the use of some of its constraining elements. Criticisms of the model suggest that there would be some advantages to be gained in developing a familiarity with alternative perspectives that are here in the interpretive and critical approaches. Indeed this trend points to a greater concern with values, particularly with "equity" which has become a familiar term in educational administration. Critical theory avoids the separation of fact from value, but also has its limitations. Some of these shortcomings have been identified above.

In this attempt at classification of educational policies, Kogan (1975) note that those policies directly relate to, and are influenced by, the basic values and instrumental concepts held by dominant groups within organizations and in the society in which those organizations function. It is the view here that an analysis of the policy on Subject Committees must undertake an eclectic approach, that is, drawing upon the strengths of the rational, interpretive and critical methods of policy analysis. Thus, the effort to follow will attempt as far as is possible in the circumstances to be objective, systematic and logical, as well as to take into consideration the intra- and extra-organizational values which undergrid the policy under consideration.

Policy-making process

According to Downey (1988) there are six major stages or sets of activities in the policy-making process. These are initiation, creation, analysis, choice, installation and review.

Initiation and creation

Identification of Need for the Policy

Among the reasons that may be adduced to the decision to introduce such a policy are:

- the need to respond to criticisms from the general public that the Ministry does not have any organized systematic way of creating and executing policies and programmes capable of producing the results the Ministry itself and extra –Ministry interest groups within the Guyanese society expect;
- the needs to respond positively to allegations by teachers' representative groups that there is inadequate consultation on professional issues;
- the need to satisfy an obvious expectation of the teaching force (as seen in their voluntary involvement in Subject Associations) to be given greater decision-making responsibility in regard to curriculum matters;
- the wish to be abreast of the current trend in educational jurisdictions to devolve greater authority and responsibility for decision-making to teachers who have been, traditionally, mere implementors of policy.

Establishment of a meta-policy

The Senior Policy Making Group (SPMG) then proceeded to establish guidelines as to how the policy-making process was to unfold. The general intention of the SPMG was to give clear directions to the Chief Education Officer whose Education System Committee was mandated to design and implement the specific policy on Subject Committees.

The meta-policy indicated how the process was to evolve, the steps through which it was to develop, and who had a right to be involved, when, and how. It stated that the policy should facilitate teacher collaboration, collegiality and professionalism, and should allow teachers to play in particular, a pivotal role in the curriculum development process. These goals would be achieved through the regular, active involvement of teachers in district, regional and national committees which would concentrate on

the stabilization of curricula and the sequencing of instruction.

The teachers should also participate in the development of achievement tests to be used locally and nationally to assess the performance of students in the school system. Additionally they should be involved in the compilation of lists of text books (as the circumstances should warrant) which would be recommended for use at the various class grade levels in the nation's schools (Ministry of Education, 1989). The document also stated that while teacher participation would be a main ingredient of the policy, the final responsibility (to the Senior Policy Making Group) for its establishment and implementation would be that of the Chief Education Officer.

Downey (1988) states that meta-policies help to reduce or eliminate some persistent problems in governance at the local level. According to this dictum of Downey's the meta-policy was intended to decrease if not altogether remove hindering factors such as lack of continuity by establishing procedures that would endure, divisions and difficult role relationships among management and technical staff directly concerned with the establishment of the specific policy, and procedural inconsistencies that might occur in the framing and implementation of the policy. It was also meant to help establish the order of importance of the activities that would be undertaken during these stages of the policy-making process. While the meta-policy provided a framework within which the activities of the Education system Committee would concentrate, it did not allow for community involvement in the initial states. The lack of mention of this kind of wider participation is suggestive of a reliance on the technical expertise of officers from within the Ministry and on the views of interest groups representative of teachers.

Replacing Subject Associations

It is worth noting, at this point, that these existed before in the system, voluntary, loosely organized groups in the form of national Subject

Associations with objectives somewhat similar to those formulated for the Subject Committees. Their goals included the establishment and maintenance of communication among teachers of particular subjects on a country-wide scale, the clarification of problem areas in curriculum and improvement of teaching skills of their members. Some of these bodies had achieved significant success at their work and such positive attainments were contributed to, in no small measure, by good leadership and an interesting variety of programmes which caught and sustained the interest of their members. Others touched few members, achieving very limited success in the time they lasted.

The collaborative work relationships which existed in those voluntary, spontaneous Subject Associations arose according to Hargreaves (undated), from the commonly perceived value among teachers that working together is productive as well as enjoyable. Collaboration promotes collegiality which is reputed to take teacher development beyond individual and personal reflection to a plane in which teachers learn from each other and share and develop their expertise together (Lieberman and Miller, 1986). There is also evidence from the related literature that supports the thinking that collegial sharing breeds confidence and a greater readiness to experiment and take risks, and promotes a commitment to continuous improvement among teachers as a recognized component of their professional obligation. The creation of fruitful and supportive collegial relationships among teachers has for some time been viewed as an antecedent to effective school-based curriculum improvement (Campbell, 1984).

The introduction of a policy on Subject Committees sought to derive for the system and for teachers, most, if not all, of the positive effects outlined in the preceding paragraph. However, due consideration must be given to the fact that the setting up of these Committees has been a Central Ministry initiative, is administratively regulated, is compulsory (even if indirectly, so), and is an external mandate which is closely bound up with "administrative co-optation".

Hargreaves (undated), in exploring the concept of "contrived collegiality" in some areas of teacher collaboration has observed that such behaviour in educational administrative systems indicates that administrators are not as serious, as their rhetorical commitment proclaims, to teachers and holding them accountable for the collective, shared responsibility for implementation, "while holding for themselves increasingly centralized responsibility for the development and imposition of educational purposes through curriculum and assessment mandates". He adds that these systems are state regulated and controlled and they increasingly separate conception and planning from technical execution.

Hargreaves states that there is an inflexibility in mandated or imposed collegiality which makes it difficult for programmes to be adapted to the purposes and peculiarities of particular school and classroom settings and warns that it disregards teachers' professionalism and their exercise of discretion in circumstances and with children they know best. Contrary to Hargreaves's theory is the notion held and expressed by administrators in the Guyanese educational system that the implementation of the policy on Subject Committees would result in greater decision-making powers being acquired by members of the teaching profession. It remains to be ascertained, the extent to which this objective is being achieved.

It must be stated here that this innovation was conceived and implemented in a system that has a history centralized administration. One can safely assume that the values, norms and philosophy which determined the thought processes, feelings and behaviour of administrators (and teachers) in the Guyanese educational system would be those that supported an organizational culture in which power and authority were mainly the prerogative of centrally based administrators.

This mode of organizational conduct is a function of the system's view that its methods of coping with problems of external adaptation and internal integration are valid and have contrib-

uted to its perceived stability over the years (Schein, 1990). It can also be assumed that the decision to introduce the policy on Subject Committees rather than authoritatively provide the resources that would enhance the functioning of the Subject Associations, which the former replaced, was a reaction to a perceived threat to the system's existing power and authority structure and to its stability. It can be considered an anxiety-reduction activity since the Ministry's lack of control over the functioning of the now defunct Subject Associations was perhaps interpreted to mean its inability to fully understand or predict events occurring in the name of the Associations.

Estimation and choice

The need for a new policy had been established and its creation begun. The Chief Education Officer appointed an ad hoc committee whose membership comprised agents who were considered representative of the main interest groups to be involved in the making of the policy. The committee consisted of members of his own Education System Committee, technical officers from relevant departments—curriculum, test development, examinations administration and materials production,— and representatives of the teachers' union and the Subject Associations. They proceeded with the tasks of generating alternatives, analyzing them and selecting the most suitable.

Since the decision had already been made at the SPMG level that the Ministry was committed to the formation of Subject Committees, and guidelines for further working relating to this establishment were issued, the committee's task was limited in scope. Its focus was on the establishment of objectives and the determination of operational procedures and intended outcomes. These were the areas under which competing, sometimes conflicting interests were displayed and compromises reached, so that a document containing decisions agreeable to all the groups involved could be produced.

Of extreme importance here were the relation-

ships among the groups represented; who impacted upon whom and with what result; and who had greater influence on the decisions arrived at (Kogan, 1975). In the reactions between agents of the Ministry and the teachers it was that the values held by each group of participants were brought to the fore. Whereas there was ready agreement on, for example, objectives and outcomes pertaining to student performance and equity of treatment of students, consensus was not easily obtained on matters concerning the degree of control the administration should exercise over teachers and on the disposal of human and material resources. Again, although both Ministry personnel and teachers' representatives promoted an instrumental value like 'participation' there were differences observed in each group's interpretation of the term. Teacher agents tended to equate 'participation' with the autonomy they had enjoyed in the conducting the business of Subject Associations while Ministry representatives could not agree to granting them such 'excessive freedoms'. The teacher group was also against the use of examinations results as an indicator of the level of success they were achieving in the implementation of the policy, although they agreed to effect changes in aspects of the curriculum to meet local needs, and to construct test items and examinations for measurement of student performance. Whereas it can be stated that policies may be underpinned by more than one value, it is extremely difficult to identify the value(s) which prevailed in the processes utilized during these stages. The objectives listed on page 1 are an indication of the decisions reached with regard to the tasks undertaken.

The strategy of iteration utilized during the sets of activities which constituted the examination of alternative goals, procedures and outcomes and the selection of the most suitable of them allowed for some fine-tuning of those goals, procedures and expected outcomes. The decisions of the ad hoc committee were submitted to the SPMG for review and tentative approval. They were then circulated to individual Regional Education Officers for further review

at the next monthly caucus of these officers and then, for final approval, to the Senior Policy Making Group. It was only after the document had been examined and commented upon at three different levels of the system that it was deemed acceptable and ready for implementation in the educational system.

Legitimation of the policy

The determination of the SPMG to seek wider involvement in the establishment of the policy through the creation of an ad hoc committee is an attempt to ensure representatives and legitimacy in the policy-making process. Rein (1970) states that four (4) kinds of authority have been relied upon to justify intervention of a policy to affect social change. The authority of expertise emphasizes a dependence upon technical, scientific knowledge; the authority of bureaucrats stresses the vital role assigned to administrators who are public employees; the authority of consumers is obtained through consideration of preferences, needs and desires of the consuming population; and the authority of professionals is sought for the different values and opinions they can express in important issues.

The composition of the ad hoc committee allowed for the views of teachers to be represented from at least two standpoints. Participation by union officials appears to equate with representation on behalf of teachers as consumers or clients of the policy while the inclusion of teachers from Subject Associations can be construed as the incorporation of the teachers' professional stance on the policy. Downey (1988) posits that practically all policy processes are begun and all proposed policies crafted by executive officers. This view is given practical support by the appointment of several technical officers from various units within the ministry to the ad hoc committee. Their participation with the other groups in the establishment of the policy on Subject Committee signifies the intention of the SPMG to adopt a complementary approach to the legitimation process. The Senior Policy Making Group apparently did not envi-

sion the need for even wider representation by including community based groups, such as the Parent Teachers Associations, at this early stage.

Installation

During this stage the selected policy was installed and implemented. Before implementation, however, serious thought should be given to possible problems that might be faced and how they could be overcome. Downey (1988) states that many policies of commendable intent have been altered or aborted at this stage of the policy-making process. Some of the contributing, hindering factors to this state of affairs must be considered and steps taken to avoid them. Among these factors which apply to the policy on Subject Committees are: Educational institutions tend to be tradition oriented and change resistant; internal politics and power displays can delay the process of implementation; new commitments of resources and extra expenditure of effort are needed (p. 98).

In order to avoid these pitfalls the Education System Committee had undertaken some planning before the policy was ready for implementation. The following approaches were taken:

- Holding discussions with teachers, on a country-wide basis, to inform them of the initiative being undertaken and the roles that were expected of them in its implementation and review stages. Clarifying goals and promoting a sense of ownership of the policy among teachers.
- Decentralizing the management of the Subject Committees to teachers in the educational regions and districts.
- Deciding, with the assistance of regional officers and Committee members, on a schedule of implementation. This included start-up time in pilot regions and districts and an end date by which the Subject Committees would be set up in all educational regions and districts across the country.
- Emphasizing to the personnel involved –regional educational officers and teachers– that supervision of the Committees would be ex-

ecuted more in terms of guiding and offering expert assistance where needed than by directing the affairs of the Committees.

- Deciding in the financial year prior to implementation what budgetary resources would be required and seeking, then, the necessary approval for expenditures to be undertaken, and
- Deciding on the type and frequency of review sessions and with whom they would be undertaken. It was agreed that regular reports would be given at the monthly meetings of the Regional Education Officers when assessment of progress would be attempted. Additionally, members of the Subject Committees would visit the Regions and Districts, attending working sessions of the Committees, and meeting with teachers generally, to examine problems and identify solutions to them.
- Organizing district meetings of regional educational officials and the ad hoc committee personnel, with school principals to discuss the proposed policy demands to be made on the resources of their schools, and how they could re-organize their schools to meet those demands.

Here again it was interesting for the writer to observe the interplays between actual members of teaching staffs and Ministry officials. Every group of teachers met during this stage advocated greater teacher autonomy in an area – curriculum – in which they were certain they had more experience and expertise, as a group, than did any other group at every level of operation within the Ministry. They were certain that they needed fewer directives from Ministry officials, both centrally and regionally based. It is to be noted that in this expression of the values of “teacher freedom and “professional autonomy” there appeared to be a great deal of similarity and consistency with the views put forward earlier by representatives of teacher groups – the Subject Associations and the Teachers’ Union.

Several groups suggested that teachers who participated in the business of conducting the Subject Committees should receive some sort of incentive/reward for their efforts. It was agreed

with groups of teachers that any rewards or incentives given should be tied to performance and should be distributed on an equitable basis. Theories studied have shown that motivation is greatest when obtaining the reward depends on performance and that performance will be improved when payment for work done is equitably made (Dessler, 1982). The issue of rewards was considered very important, indeed crucial to the motivation of teachers to accomplish the additional tasks they were set through the Subject Committees, and was represented to the Education System Committee. This committee then recommended and obtained approval from the Senior Policy Making Group for the following: Teachers to be paid the travelling and subsistence costs incurred when attending Subject Committee meetings; performance of teachers on the Committees should be recorded and reported and should be taken into consideration when the annual incentive payments to teachers are made, and teachers should be given time-off to attend Subject Committee meetings. School principals must ensure that substitute teachers are found to attend to their classes in their absence.

Review

Here, analysis is limited in at least two senses. First, there has been no systematic collection and analysis of data as part of a formal review process of policy-making. Hence, the limited information that is available does not allow sensible enough judgemental decisions to be made on several aspects of the implementation process. Secondly, the writer was an active participant (on behalf of the Ministry of Education) during several stages of the making of this policy. Thus, an interpretation informed by predominantly institutional values may bias thinking on the issues being analyzed. What follows (as was a great deal of what preceded) are personal impressions gained from observations made at reporting and feedback sessions, meetings and conferences where discussions pertaining to the policy were conducted.

Policy Goals

The policy goals as set out on page 1 are elaborated in clear, unambiguous terms. They appear to establish general standards or targets which are relevant and fair, and attainable by teachers. An important point to note is that a participative approach is to be preferred in setting them though they were later scrutinized and approved by teacher representatives, the consumers-teachers-or their agents did not initially contribute to their formulation. Dessler (1982) advises that employees who participate in setting their standards tend to develop an ownership of those standards and are motivated to achieve them.

They specify the current domain or focus of the policy and define "what business we are in" (Dessler, 1982, p. 36) with the establishment of the Subject Committees. Heinrich and Taylor (1972) state that goals and objectives should express what the policy and the programme(s) it spawns are trying to accomplish. These policy goals clearly indicate what are desired end results of the policy.

The great majority of the goals (except the second perhaps) are stated solely in measurable terms. This tends to give the impression that the policy emphasizes mainly the quantitative aspects of teacher activity, and that qualitative issues which can address human and social development are largely ignored. It is generally accepted that the broader aims of education should include not only cognitive areas of learning and the mastery of skills and subject matter which are areas that are more readily quantifiable and measurable. They should also stress the importance of qualitative, affective areas such as feelings, motivation, attitudes and values. Values, for example, are deemed irreducible absolutes of quality which assist in defining goals and in determining policies as methods of working towards those goals. They also help to identify implementable mechanisms to give the goals and policies socially acceptable forms. They are the monitor which gives the process positive direction and without them consistency

cannot be assured (Banghart and Trull, 1973). Since values are often implicit in goal statements they may become vague and even forgotten with the passage of time. Their expression allows them to take their rightful place as the foundation of goal and policies and the programmes which are derived from the goals and policies.

Some factors hindering fuller attainment of goals

Several constraining factors have limited the achievement of the policy goal as they are set out. Foremost among these are the inadequate human and material resources within the educational system itself. There is, currently, a shortage of qualified, experienced teachers and technical experts officials a difficult proposition. Classes have been known to be left unsupervised and untaught in some schools where the shortage has been severe. Also, some visits by technical personnel from the Central Ministry to assist in the conduct of workshops for teachers (in areas such as test construction, curriculum development and examinations administration) have been curtailed because of their heavy workload and the demand within specific units for their services.

Closely allied to these two factors mentioned above are administrative constraints. Heads of schools and of the technical units experience difficulty and frustration in making arrangements for substitute personnel when teachers and officers must leave their own units to conduct the business of Subject Committees. There has been some resistance, because of these annoying experiences, to release teachers and technical officers must leave their own units to conduct the business of Subject Committees.

Physical and distributional hindrances also impact adversely. Some regions and districts are remote and, in addition, the topography of some areas restricts movement. Limited and sometimes unavailable communication and transport facilities militate against teachers and officials making ready contact with one another or mov-

ing to central locations within and outside these regions and districts. Inadequate or unavailable transportation also prevents important materials being sent on time to locations where they would greatly assist in furthering the work of the committees. Very often, set targets are not met because of these problems.

Financial constraints have also been imposing restrictions on the scope of the programmes of Subject Committees. Reductions in the purchasing power of recent annual budgets have progressively limited the amount of resource that have been made available for the conduct of those programmes. As is the case with schools, and with technical units within the Central Ministry, the Committees have been forced to cut-back on some useful activities not given high priority, and seek to maximize benefits within the resource allocations they receive.

Outputs

Despite the constraints listed above, implementation of the policy has produced the following services: revised curricula in various stages of completion for various subjects at the primary (elementary) and secondary levels; lists of text books for the various subjects for primary and secondary schools; local tests for assessment purposes in primary and secondary schools; national examinations for fourth year students at the secondary level.

A significant achievement in terms of output due to the policy has been the creation of the National Fourth Form Achievement Test (NFFAT). There has been so far three annual administrations of this test during which students have been examined in more than twenty-six (26) subjects.

Inputs

Some indication of the inputs has already been given in the earlier discussion on constraints affecting the achievement of policy goals. Inputs into the establishment and implementation

of Subject Committees may be categorized as: human resources which refer to the knowledge, skill and expertise, attitudes and values brought to the policy making process by teachers and technical officers and all other contributors to the process; material resources which include various relevant print and non-print materials, facilities, and equipment utilized in the development of execution of the policy.

The observation needs to be made that all materials and services utilized were provided at considerable cost to the educational system at a time when there is a growing inadequacy of financial resources and in the face of stiff competition from programmes produced by other policies for the limited finance available to the educational sector.

Outcomes

Listed below are some outcomes that have been observed since the implementation of the policy.

- Subject Committees have been established in each subject in every district and region at the secondary level. Work at the primary level is continuing in this regard and is at varying stages of completion in the districts and regions.
- National Subject Committees for each subject or for subject groupings have been established.
- Heads of Subject Departments have been appointed ex-officio members of their area Subject Committees.
- Linkages have been established between district, regional, and national Committees. Teachers of a given subject area and the relevant technical officers have been meeting in clusters to discuss content, teaching strategies, use of teaching aids, and evaluative procedures aimed at improving the quality of teaching.
- The lesser endowed regions –those in remote areas of the country and which have few trained personnel– have been given valuable assistance by the National Subject Commit-

- tees in setting up their local Subject Committees and in the establishment of guidelines for the programmes being taught in their schools,
- Subject specialists from the central Ministry are monitoring the functioning, the range of operations, and the quality of performance of the Committees. This is now one of the major tasks included in their job description,
 - Teachers have acquired new skills in curriculum development, test construction, and administration. They have gained new insights into marking and grading scripts and reporting on student performance.
 - Teachers active in Subject Committees have taught their colleagues in their schools some of the new skills they have acquired.
 - Teachers have been able to compare the performance of their own students with those in other schools, districts and regions and across the country.

Some comments and suggestions

An analysis of the policy on Subject Committees should be a serious attempt to gather information in a systematic, ordered manner and to help decision-makers make better-informed, sensible decisions about its future. The analysis attempted here is somewhat inadequate, due to the fact that limited resources and information were at the disposal of the writer at the time the job was undertaken. It is suggested a more comprehensive effort be made and that the following ideas be incorporated in that attempt.

The collection of data on every aspect of the policy-making process and of the consequences of the implementation of the policy should be done. This is very crucial to the success of the exercise since it will determine to a large extent the scope and quality of the effort.

The decision-makers in the Ministry of Education (members of the Senior Policy Making Group) should decide what aspects should be analyzed. They must, from the outset define the problem(s) to be looked at by the analyst and should spend enough time with that official/

consultant to explain the form the analysis should take. They need to be of practical value to them and to the Ministry.

In addition to the general issues touched on above particular attention must be paid to the following:

- measures of the resources employed in the process and of the outputs produced must be made. A comparison of the results of these two measures should indicate the degree of efficiency with which programmes emanating from the policy are being implemented;
- the effectiveness of the policy needs to be ascertained. This can be done by analyzing the degree to which each of the objectives of the policy is being achieved;
- the benefits of the policy should be clearly known and understood. These will give some indication of the value of the policy to the organization and to the teachers who are the implementers. An idea of the knowledge and skills gained and of the attitudes developed to the policy will be important for future consideration of an action on the policy;
- the goals of the policy should be more explicitly reflective of the interests and needs of the teachers. They ought to give some indications of the values teachers hold as a professional group and of desired end products in the teachers themselves;
- surveys and interviews with teachers, administrators and other personnel in the education system can be used not only to collect hard facts and figures, but also to capture feelings and attitudes of individuals and groups toward the policy.
- once a comprehensive analysis is decided upon the views of the important groups in the communities should be solicited. The policy will have been in operation for a number of years and should by then have some impact which can bring about reactions from the public. This action may widen the legitimacy of the policy if it receives support from the communities.

The overall impression the writer has gained

is that the policy on Subject Committees is a worthwhile intervention. Its continued implementation should result in beneficial outcomes

to the Ministry of Education, the teachers and their students.

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QUALITY BASIC EDUCATION: THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE TEACHER

Argar Alexander*

Professor Tim Brighouse stated in the 1994 TES Greenwich Lecture that "Unless we start in the classroom and the school there is no hope for our cities and our society".¹ Though he was making reference to the British system of things the sentiments he expressed are very apt for our Grenadian society.¹

Our schools, by and large, are the main vehicles for the education of our young people. Thus, the future of our society depends to a large extent on what we do or fail to do within our classrooms.

There is a need to understand and face up to the reality that failure to expose our students to certain basic tenets of academic and moral education can seriously handicap them in their quest for personal development in today's and tomorrow's world. And we must ever be mindful that we are not providing them with yesterday's tools for the situations they are going to be facing tomorrow.

The task ahead is to endeavour to provide all our citizens with basic education so that they are in a position to deal consciously and confidently with the issues that can enhance or hold back the development of our country.

In attempts at harmonising the Education Systems in the OECS region a reform strategy was adopted. Use has been made of the term "quality education" in its documentation as some eight parameters refer to schooling up to the end of the secondary cycle.

In an activity involving senior education officials of the OECS a document entitled Draft Standards in Education was produced. Among a number of output standards identified was one of which stated that "Schools should enable students to acquire essential learning tools - literacy, fluent oral expression, numeracy and problem-solving".²

This is the identical position adopted by UNESCO during the World Conference on Education for all (Jomtien 1990). In addition, the main content areas: "knowledge, skills, values, attitudes as being required by human beings to ... improve their quality of life"³ were identified.

Be it considered then that for our purposes there would be no paradigm shift between "basic education" and "quality education."

Any system of Human Resource Development has at its basis - quality basic education; it is the main vehicle for any serious move towards national development.

Basic literacy programmes are not bad, in fact, necessary, but they are rather limited and limiting. The point is that we cannot afford to continue to "putting plaster on festering sores". And

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¹ Brighouse, Tim, "Magicians of the Inner City", *Times Educational Supplement* - 4060: 22 April 1974.

² OECS (1993) Draft Standards in Education, OECS Secretariat, St. Lucia.

³ World Conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs, 5-9 March 1990, Jomtien, Thailand.

we must understand that the illiterate parent was very likely at one time or another a student in one of our schools.

It cannot be wholly unfair to say that the school failed to provide that person with those important tools which would have helped to free him/her from the oppression of illiteracy and ignorance.

And unfortunately, the country pays dearly for this in ways which many have not consciously and seriously considered.

Of course, it is important to understand clearly that when certain preconditions are not met then the whole question of schooling and learning becomes of little import. For example, serious nutrition deficiencies can cause a host of problems - apathy, shortened span of attention, some neurological damage. And, too, the question of "low" morality can hamper and dampen efforts at providing good, sound "basic" education.

But within classrooms themselves there are certain outlooks which sadly influence the sorts of lives that our students (and later adults) act out in the society at large. Rist (1970) in an ethnographic study in a ghetto classroom noted that "there emerge (from classrooms) patterns of behaviour, expectations of performance and a mutually accepted stratification system delineating those doing well from those doing badly (poorly)".⁴

Sadly, the Pymalion Effect or Syndrome is existent in all our classrooms. This self-fulfilling prophecy is a very powerful idea and we could do well to make use of it in novel, positive ways so that inexorably we are helping to develop the individual's self-esteem.

But what of self-esteem and the child who comes from a rather depressed environment in which there is a near absence of stimulating materials or enlightening and uplifting conversation.

Quality basic education rests on the obvious assumption that a child is able to read first and foremost. That is the "sine qua non" of any serious attempts at education. Why would you want to clutter up the young infant child's brain with so many different notions of science. For example when he/she is not able to decipher the written word?

A child's academic performance is individual. Sometimes he/she is compared to other students and found seriously wanting. We consciously make use over and over of norm-referencing in our testing situations. The child from the depressed environment always seems to fall about two or more standard deviations below the mean and most times is considered to be a miserable failure, not serious about work.

Rather, shouldn't there be concern about ensuring that each individual can better his performance by competing against his previous score? This type of referencing called Ipsative⁵ by Professor Tim Brighouse can probably help in the development of positive self-esteem.

There is an argument that the home and the church should be providing the child with aspects of moral education. This, of course, has to be seen as ideal. When the child comes from a rather depressed environment where there is constant abuse—verbal as well as physical; where there is little time or urge or even willingness to discuss those non-academic issues; where the question of church-going does not surface into the consciousness of the mother; where do we expect the child to be exposed to those crucial aspects of moral education?

If the school, then, fails to do so, are we willing to accept the possible consequences?

In most of our classrooms today it is not uncommon to experience all or most of the following situations; situations which teachers must consciously make efforts at alleviating if the idea of "quality basic education" is to mean anything:

⁴ Rist, R.C. "Student social class and teacher expectations: The self-fulfilling prophecy in ghetto education", In M. Hammersley (ed) *Case studies in classroom research*: London, Open University Press, 1986.

⁵ Brighouse, Tim, *op. cit.*

- Emphasis on norm-referenced test situations and the obsession with ranking of students to the detriment of the slower ones.
- Creating permanent groupings in these classrooms. In effect a kind of segregation since these are by large ability groupings.
- Overly subjective interpretation of the capabilities of students as evidenced by statements like "I don't know what to do with these backward children."
- Obvious differentiation in terms of how children are treated - a perception which is invariably based on social class.
- Acceptance of mediocre standards of academic and moral behaviour - failure to challenge.
- Stark presence of ridicule and hostility.
- Very limited teaching time given to students in the "slow" group(s).
- A preference for a sitting arrangement where the sharper students are upfront.⁶

Quality basic education demands then that the foregoing must be untenable if the idea is to develop an individual who is fluent, numerate, literate, mensurate, has basic problem-solving skills and can deal morally with his fellow men.

What are the consequences of a sound basic education policy and action plan?

- If most of our students successfully complete the first cycle of education (i.e. end of primary school) it means that the country would have a more educated work force.
- With most persons coming through this cycle successfully there would be less wastage eventually at both first and second cycle(s) education.
- An educated work force suggests there would be greater productivity in the economic sectors of the country.
- It has always suggested that a consequence of quality basic education is lower fertility which manifests itself in slower population growth.

- An obvious off-shoot, too, is that of lower infant mortality.⁷

The foregoing ideals are crucial for national development and as such one needs to conscientiously study ways and means of making these become reality.

The way forward

Traditionally, the cassava has been used for physical sustenance and at one time was a staple in our countryside. There is probably a need to rediscover the cassava. I submit then the Cassava Metaphor—a signpost for serious teachers; for academic and moral sustenance.

Cassava as an acronym spells, Concepts, abilities, skills, self-esteem, attitudes, values, aesthetics.

The above suggests that the teachers of quality basic education must concentrate on aspects of academic, moral and physical (aesthetic) education in attempting to create persons who are useful to themselves and society.

It is instructive to recognise that the entire term Cassava is pivoted on the central letter "S" which spells self-esteem. Self-Esteem is what the child ought to develop in his interaction with people—teachers, peers, parents. The student ought to be made to feel good about him/herself. This is crucial if the other aspects of learning, both the "tools" and the "content" are to be realised.

The teacher if he/she is to provide quality basic education needs to understand that children with "low self-esteem" would have special needs and that these must be satisfied before any serious learning takes place. Thus some additional ideas that the teacher should consider are:

Peer responsibility: There is a need for students to be involved in helping each other to develop. Thus cooperative learning should be the focus in the classrooms. Competitions should

⁶ Rist R.C. *op. cit.*

⁷ Chesterfield, Ray, Basic Education, LAC Education and Human Resources Technical Services Project, Washington (1992).

be very restricted and not used in serious learning situations.

Self-improvement: The focus should be on the individual student. Let the child compete against his/her previous score so that the emphasis is on "Ipsative" competition and criterion-referenced test situations.

Operationalisation of teaching: Students come from varying backgrounds and as such are at different levels of cognitive development. There is an urgent need to spend more time with less able students and to concentrate more effort on the lower end of the Brunerian learning continuum (more Enactive and Iconic type learning activities).

Conscientiousness: The teacher has to have seriousness of purpose, believing that what he/she is doing is so important to students. Thus, that urges him/her to always challenge pupils, daring them to be different and making them conscientious also.

Attempt to develop sportsmanship, fairness, truthfulness, generosity and above all empathy in your students. But you must first be an exemplar of these values.

Develop in your students aspects of critical consciousness:⁸ debating, criticising, dramatising, among others and as much as possible integrate these into your learning activities.

There need to be a Philosophical Shift: a movement towards teacher as a learner in the educative process so that there emerges an empowering of the student as she/he perceives that the teacher is a partner in the learning process.

The teacher if she/he is to have any credibility must develop a thirst for knowledge, always striving for self-development.

In the words of Paulo Friere, as he spoke with Jonathan Kozol, (the teacher as provider of quality basic education must become) "a young man (who) is going to have to die in certain ways in order to become the kind of man he needs to be".⁹

The greatest and noblest undertaking of the teacher in helping his/her students to believe in themselves, to engender confidence, letting them believe in possibilities, letting them know that they can do this then "quality basic education will indeed become a reality."

We may not be able to change those who have already left our classrooms but our brief is to positively influence those who are still there. If not, we shall have lost our villages, city and society (to ignorance, illiteracy, random casual violence, general malaise and we as failed teachers and educators shall have become victims of our uncaring.

⁸ Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*: Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1992.

⁹ Kozol, Jonathan, *The night is dark and I am far from home*. New York: Bantam Books Inc. 1977.

TEACHER UNION'S MAGAZINES: TOPICS ADDRESSED AND THE PROTAGONISM OF THE EDUCATOR

Joanna Pincetti*

This article reviews a group of magazines put out by the region's teacher unions. The idea is to determine which are the main themes covered by these publications, and the degree of teacher participation in their production. Likewise, and based on the written expressions of the teachers themselves, an effort will be made to detect their involvement in educational change.

To this end, a first consideration will be the basic objectives normally assigned to educational magazines viewed as intertwined with the objectives inherent to the syndical work of the educator.

In Danilo Sánchez'¹ opinion, pedagogical magazines "are a communication medium; they transfer, disseminate and promote the elements that will go into the elaboration of a model. They challenge, dare and stir; additionally, magazines also select and put to work a language, a code, that shape the profile of an epoch".

Upon examining the contents of teacher unions' magazines, it becomes clear that they are part and parcel of the historical and political processes undergone by the countries of the region. A review of the most recurring themes published, reinforces this perspective, and justifies attempts at outlining the educational proposal they advance.

Magazines act on the culture of society, depicting the attitudes, behaviours, and values exhibited by the various groups.

From this standpoint, it is important to analyze to what extent teachers support cultural change, and whether this backing is based on the socialization of their pedagogical experiences.

Alternatively, if magazines attempt to socialize scientific and technical contributions in specific fields, then, what is the degree of participation of research or teachers' knowledge in this socialization process? Is its presence significant? Who proposes, analyzes, and debates educational guidelines, questioning, supporting or countering the powers that be? Who writes arti-

cles on innovations, new conceptions or experiences that reaffirm or modify the way we implement or reflect upon reality?

Briefly, this article attempts to examine which themes teacher unions' magazines touch on, how they rank in importance, and the extent to which teachers participate in their production. This last aspect could well constitute one of the likely paths towards stimulating the professionalization of the educator, based on the creation and redesign of classroom knowledge.

The magazines reviewed and their characteristics, are included in the Annex.

A tale of five countries

The survey included recent issues (years 93 and 94), laboriously collected, since publishing houses are not greatly concerned about the international dissemination of these magazines or their inclusion in conventional distribution networks. Publications from Argentina, Colombia,

* Joanna Pincetti. Proyecto con las organizaciones de trabajadores de la educación. UNESCO/OREALC

¹ Sánchez, D. (1994) "Las revistas pedagógicas", *Palabra de Maestro* N° 16, Year 5, August-September, 1994. Ed. Derrama Magisterial, Peru.

Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay, are among those selected.

Serie Movimiento Pedagógico (Argentina)

The Educational Workers Federation of the Republic of Argentina, CTERA, seeks to turn teachers into protagonists of the educational debate, through its Pedagogical and Syndical Training school, "Marina Vilte". One of its mayor objectives is to "generate an atmosphere wherein pedagogical reflection and educational experience may dovetail", "rescuing for teaching institutions their rightful place as producers of knowledge".

This is the ideological stance behind the publication of debates emanating from a training Seminar for union leaders and the Closing Sessions of SUTEBA's Third Pedagogical Congress of September 1993, (where the future regulation and implementation of the Federal Education Act was extensively discussed), attended by one-hundred CTERA's base representatives. CTERA promotes a pedagogical movement aimed at building "an opportunity for all educational workers to start debating, along with the population at large, a pedagogical proposal that synthesizes our interests".

Within this pedagogical movement, knowledge begins to emerge as a political strategy and instrument that calls for "recovering those spaces devoted to research, fostering the analysis and exchange of our own pedagogical practice and experience, and of the knowledge that will help us decipher reality".²

Educación y Cultura (Colombia)

The magazine consists of three sections, one of which deals with educational policy. Contingent issues, such as law projects, autonomy for universities, and privatization, are included here.

A second section addresses mayor educational topics, namely, quality of education, edu-

cation for the future, education and educational strategies in Latin America, education and society, etc.

The section having to do with pedagogy, varies from one issue to the next. On occasions, it is featured as the main report and expounds on topics such as school textbooks, or curricular development, while in others it takes the form of articles on "didactics and pedagogical experience".

The magazine illustrates an instance where vindication transcends the purely economic or working dimension. In fact, based on guidelines set forth by the Colombian Federation of Educators (FECODE), "main vindications are assumed to be, its participation in pedagogical management, curricular production, and other pedagogical and technological matters".³

The publication focuses on the analysis and debate of its educational and cultural activities and aspirations. The Colombian Federation of Educators, aspires to tie its political, economic, and labour vindications, to the conquest of a new education and culture. Hence, the pedagogical movement, seeks to recover pedagogy as a theoretical principle that guides the actions of schools and teachers.

The project unfolds along two fronts: before the State (for democracy, freedom to teach, respect for teachers' autonomy, defense of public education), and one looking inwardly, at the work of the teacher and the school.

Básica (Mexico)

The SNTE foundation for the advancement of the mexican teacher, emerges, in their own expressive words "as a space for expression, designed to help basic teachers redeem the dignity and creativeness of their profession, reaffirming its value".

The first feature that draws one's attention, is the quality of its illustrations, design and format, all of which adds up to beautifully elaborated images. In terms of content, each issue is struc-

² "Lectura crítica de la Ley 24.195 o Ley Federal de la Educación", in *Serie Movimiento Pedagógico*, N° 2, special issue.

³ Interview with José Rivero, UNESCO/OREALC specialist. *Educando* magazine.

tured about a central theme. The topics of future issues, such as "Evaluation", "Science Teaching" and "Educational Management", are also presented as a preview.

The central themes –also the longest articles– of the first and second issues were, "Teacher Trainers" and "Teacher Evaluation and the Curriculum", respectively.

Escuela Pública (Peru)

This magazine is divided in six sections. Section one examines overall political contingent events, touching on topics such as social security, government structures, and salary distributions. Section two focuses on analysis and debate, dealing primordially with the defense of public schools, the fight against the neoliberal model and constitutional reforms geared towards the privatization of teaching.

A third section incorporates pedagogical matters. Here, topics may range from an analysis of pedagogical and educational concepts or a debate on curricular concepts, to the professional profile of teachers, public schools, quality of education, reflections on values or ecology.

There follows a fourth section called "Syndicalism", which contains information on scheduled events, assemblies, messages to members of educational workers' organizations. In this section, specific issues are analyzed and proposals are suggested, from the syndicalist's perspective.

This magazine addresses issues that are worth looking into, given their innovative nature and the historical impact they may have in the degree of organization and professionalization of the teaching profession. Basically, it comprises a synthesis of the themes debate at the "Pedagogical Seminars".⁴

⁴ These Seminars constitute a space made possible by law, since May 28, 1990. They provide an opportunity to promote organically and collectively the issues of self-training and political and syndical formation. The seminars, analyze educational and daily living experiences, in an effort to find solutions to local and national problems. Held at least once a month at every educational centre, they are also attended by parents. The idea is to achieve

An issue of particular concern: involvement and participation of female teachers in educational workers' organizations, considering their majority in the profession.⁵

The magazine includes two more sections. One, where experiences from foreign countries in connection with main issues such as privatization, decentralization, and the impact of the neoliberal model on the countries of the region, are discussed; and, a cultural space which makes room for poetry and general literary comments.

In 1992, one-hundred urban peruvian teachers with rural experience, selected from ninety classrooms in Lima and several other regions, were asked to fill out a questionnaire. Some of the questions had to do with self-training. The importance of education magazines in the area of teacher's training and professionalization, is a salient component of the answers given. "As regards self-training activities, 43% of teachers claim to have read books or documents regularly in the past five years; 48% observe that they usually read education magazines or bulletins".

Quehacer Educativo (Uruguay)

The magazine's stated objective, is the organization of permanent reflection and professional advancement spaces, with a view to redressing the professionalization of the teacher.

The participation of classroom teachers who gave gained methodological experience in various areas, in addition to the space given pedagogy students, deserve special mention.

Areas of concern for teachers' unions

Among the recurring themes –judged by the frequency with which they appear in teachers unions' magazines– the economic and labour issue takes precedence.

a permanent mobilization that will permit combining vindicative-labour matters with political-pedagogical issues.

⁵ Extracted from an article dealing with the Women Syndicalists' Congress, in *Escuela Pública* magazine, Year 1, No. 1, July 1993.

Table 1
AREAS OF CONCERN FOR TEACHERS' UNIONS
(Percentage of articles written by topic)

Magazines	Topics	
	Political-Social ^a	Educational
Educación y cultura	28.6	71.4
Serie movimiento pedagógico	58.8	41.2
Escuela pública	56.1	43.9
Quehacer educativo	20.0	80.0
Básica	19.3	80.6

^a Includes vindictive aspects and economic/labour topics.

The topics presented here allude to improved standards of living in terms of earning power and working conditions. Particular emphasis is given to teachers' working conditions, the lack of officially established resting periods for the personnel, and of suitable places designed for this purpose, scheduling problems, diseases typical of the profession, such as dysphonia, etc.⁶

Another area of concern lies in the political and social arena. In this case, all looks are turned to viable social change which fosters democratization and, in the educational realm, one that promotes change and/or the improvement of the school system keyed to democratizing processes.⁷

A brief look at the contents of surveyed magazines show how intensely were these themes felt by teachers' unions in 1993/1994 (table 1).

Presence of teachers and other specialists

Whether these magazines are, in fact, meeting the challenge of opening spaces so that teachers may produce knowledge, was a key question posed at the beginning of this paper. A measure

of the relative presence of teachers as authors of articles published by these magazines, could provide a partial answer. The aim is not to ascribe exclusivism to teachers before other professions or social activities, since the educational task involves society as a whole, and, certainly, knowledge production is not purported to be the exclusive province of the educator. The objective is to detect the effective degree of participation in their own syndical medium of expression, teachers do have.

Research reveals that a high percentage of non-teacher specialists publish their reflections and findings in magazines owned by educational workers' organizations.

The presence in these magazines of psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, journalists, as well as university or higher education researchers, is quite significant. They vie with union leaders in terms of number of articles published, while teachers' contributions lag far behind.

In order to convey a clearer picture, we will divide professionals and specialists into four groups (table 2):

1. psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, journalists, and social workers;
 2. higher education and/or NGOs researchers, and consultants in the field of education;
 3. syndicalists holding posts in teacher organizations;
 4. classroom teachers and pedagogy students.
- Poor teacher participation is striking. In this respect, the magazine "Quehacer Educativo"

⁶ Examples given on a study of the educational situation in Argentina, published by *Cadernos Andes*, No. 12, National Syndicate of Higher Education Teachers. Brazil, 1994.

⁷ For further details, please refer to: R. Vera (1988), *Cuaderno N° 1 de Talleres de Educación Democrática*, PIIE. Santiago, Chile.

Table 2
PUBLICATIONS ITEMIZED BY AUTHOR'S PROFESSION^a
 (Percentage of total number of articles by magazine)

Magazines	Professional groups			
	1	2	3	4
Educación y cultura ^b	29.0	58.1	9.7	3.2
Serie movimiento pedagógico ^c	–	47.1	52.9	–
Escuela pública ^b	9.5	28.6	52.4	9.5
Quehacer educativo ^c	10.7	25.0	25.0	39.3
Básica ^d	3.4	51.7	41.4	3.4

^a Information for some issues is incomplete, lacking author's data. ^b 1993. ^c 1993-1994. ^d 1994.

constitutes an exception, since article writing by teachers accounts for 40% of the total. For the other surveyed magazines, this percentage does not exceed 10%.

Main themes covered by teacher magazines

Themes addressed by teachers holding posts in syndicates: of vital concern to this kind of teachers, are vindication and mayor public policy issues, such as educational reforms, privatization, the defense of public education, as well as the debate on neoliberalism, modernization, and their impact on the quality of education.

Teachers unions' leaders, place emphasis on analyzing, discussing, and proposing educational guidelines. At the national level, this orientation is reinforced by seminars or pedagogical movements, where union leaders interact with the basis they represent. Any restiveness detected, may thus be poured into articles that seek to disseminate and socialize such perceptions. In this regard, this type of articles may be said to generate pedagogical proposals.

Themes addressed by classroom teachers: among the scant articles published by teachers, one may find pedagogical experiences which incorporate novel methodologies into disciplines such as philosophy, mathematics, physical education, and literature.

These teachers write about innovations they have implemented in their classrooms or experiences that reaffirm or modify ways of handling

reality or reflecting upon it. They comprise attempts at promoting cultural change, based on the socialization of their pedagogical experiences.

Themes addressed by other professionals: these specialists are concerned with methodological themes such as teacher training, learning theory and practice as well as others, of a cultural nature.

Some of these specialists' work is devoted to changing the concepts of learning, behaviour, and values that underpin the curricular models, from a cultural perspective.

Themes addressed by researchers and consultants: some of the topics of interest among this subgroup are; quality of education, teacher training, evaluation of the educator, research on teacher's identity, and the educator's role/profile. Other areas include the reformulation of theoretical models from various perspectives, and reflections on overall educational issues.

Conclusions

Having analyzed the themes published and the profession of the authors, it may be concluded that the teachers' real space of participation in this publications, is rather limited.

Evidently, magazines put out by teacher trade unions' organizations have the potential to catalyze the protagonist role of the educator in the formulation of his/her country's educational policies.

Teacher magazines, however, show a dearth of contributions –by teachers– in terms of re-

flections on new concepts, methodologies and the curriculum. At least when it comes to teacher trade unions' publications, other professions seem to predominate. This may either signal insufficient reflection on the part of teachers, or an inability by the magazine's staff to convey such meditations. Those connected with the teaching profession, know that even part-time teachers working in relative isolation, are capable of developing innovative and creative initiatives, although these may well be pigeonholed and never see the light of day.

Based on the study findings, it may be concluded that teacher trade unions' magazines, should make extra efforts to lure teachers into participating creatively, through competitions, national and regional awards, etc. The purpose is not just to rescue a lone innovation but, mainly, to strengthen the teacher's identity and partici-

pation in the educational reform movement, so that they may be perceived as the source of innovations and protagonists of such change. Incidentally, a greater alignment with the basis, would contribute to enhance the representativity of these publications, reinforcing their capacity to act as national interlocutors.

The participation of a wide variety of actors in educational reform or innovation, is absolutely essential. Teacher surveys reveal the importance of having the community - parents and guardians, a group consistently left out of teacher magazines - participate in educational policy making.

Teacher magazines that wish to open participation spaces for the community in order to facilitate interaction, shared efficiency, commitment, and responsibility in the education of our children, will be facing an additional challenge.

Annex. Surveyed magazines

1. *Serie Movimiento Pedagógico (Argentina)*. Pedagogical and Syndical Training school "Marina Vilte" (EMV). Magazine published by the Educational Workers Federation of the Republic of Argentina (CTERA).
2. *Educación y Cultura (Colombia)*. This magazine is published by the Colombian Educators Federation's (FECODE) Teaching Research and Study Centre (CEID). Its research, training, and dissemination functions, stem from agreements set forth at FECODE's Congress, held in Bucaramanga, in 1982. Twenty-thousand issues are published quarterly.
3. *Básica (Mexico)*. Published by the SNTE foundation for the advancement of the Mexican teacher. Although its beginnings can be traced to 1991, the first issue was not published until 1994. Issue No. 2, corresponding to November-December 1994, was released in early 1995. It plans to release six publications per year.
4. *Escuela Pública (Peru)*. Magazine devoted to pedagogical and syndical training. Departmental Executive Committee (SUTE-Lima). Published quarterly.
5. *Quehacer Educativo (Uruguay)*. Educational Technical Magazine. Uruguayan Teacher Federation - Primary Education Workers (FUM-TEP).
6. *Línea (Uruguay)*. Published as "Línea" since 1990. Published for Latin America, its contents are edu-

cational and syndical. Until August 1993 (N° 14), it was published by the World Federation of Professional Teaching Organizations (CMOPE), sponsored by Norway's Teachers' Union (NL-Norsk Laererlag).

Since September 1993 (N° 15), it has become the representative of Educational International. The birth of this organization marks a period of historical importance for teacher trade unions, since soon it would be joined by the World Federation of Professional Teaching Organizations (CMOPE), and the International Professional Education Secretariat (SPIE). Educational International is associated with the International Federation of Free Trade Unions (CIOSL).

It concerns itself with disseminating the mayor undertakings and contributions of teacher organizations, materialized within their respective regions.

Other publications

- *Cadernos Andes (Brazil)*. Published by the National Syndicate of Higher Education Teachers (ANDES-SN), affiliated to CUT.
- *Universidade e Sociedade (Brazil)*. Magazine published by the National Syndicate of Higher Education Teachers (ANDES-SN).
- *Horizonte Sindical (Mexico)*. Published by IESA (Syndical Studies Institute of America) and SNTE. Issued quarterly.

SPECIAL CLASSROOM NEEDS. TEACHER TRAINING IN A CONTEXT OF SCHOOL INTEGRATION

Gerardo Echeita
Cynthia Duk
Rosa Blanco*

For some time now, a clamor of relatively new voices emerging from both inside and outside the realm of special education, have agreed on the urgent need for reforming it. Critical analysis of the attitude that prevails in this particular field of education, reveals that, far from helping students with special learning needs to obtain an education, it has driven this objective farther away, and contributed to keep special education as an isolated working environment which has little to offer to general education.

The task advanced by these authors, could well be defined as “rethinking special education”, in order to understand it not merely as an education imparted to a group of students made “special” by personal features or shortcomings, but as a contribution to developing teaching forms that respond to a heterogeneous student population within a context of education for all, which assumes that the need to individualize teaching is not only worthwhile but professionally desirable.

Special education thus understood, would contribute to the objectives of all educational reform –enhancing the quality of education for all – for which purpose it will also alter its needs and concerns. The hiring of specialists or the utilization of sophisticated instruments are no longer its prime preoccupation. What matters now is increasing access and curricular flexibil-

ity, achieving more efficient evaluations or diversifying educational organization so that it responds to the learning needs of all students, and ultimately, leads to the creation of improved educational centres.

To this end, pre-service and in-service training activities must be scaled up, since the key to that profound transformation that will translate into education for all, is in the hands of the educator. The Special Classroom Needs (NEA) Project emerges as a means to contribute to the training and further education of teachers, from a perspective of integrating students with special needs into regular schools.

The purpose of this article, is to present the background information, goals and principles underpinning this project, describe its main content characteristics, and synthesize the initiatives and mayor achievements materialized to date. However, we would like to pause, if only briefly, to analyze the perspective that needs changing, and the basic features and challenges of the new proposal.

Rethinking special education

As mentioned earlier, when it comes to discussing the integration of students with “special

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learning needs”, we have been particularly careful to include a group of relatively new voices that demand, quite rationally, revamping the present system. Although not all of them entertain identical views, they all coincide in adopting a critical approach to the attitude that permeates this particular field of special education.

One of the preoccupations shared by these authors (interested readers are referred to Ainscow, 1991, for a more detailed account), is concern about the implications of the tag “special” given to these students in schools. Behind this apparently neutral practice –perhaps even positive in the opinion of many– there is a preconceived notion which explains each and every educational inadequacy in terms of individual traits (deficits), without duly considering or challenging the role the environment and political, social, and educational practices play in creating and perpetuating said inadequacies.

Hence, our goal is to help teachers and their trainers to abandon this vision Fulcher (1989) has dubbed “individualistic optics”.

Focusing on a specific student from an individualistic perspective leads to dismembering the student population into student “types” all requiring different teaching strategies delivered by different teacher “types”, and in different environments, to boot. Its net effect is to draw attention away from the pivotal theme of education, which in our estimation should be no other than: how to adapt teaching methodologies to the myriad needs of the students?

When viewed under this focus, special needs are defined as technical issues which require custom made strategies and extraordinary personal and physical resources. From this perspective, preparing teachers to cope with special learning needs demands training the educator in the use of mechanisms employed for solving individual student’s problems. Furthermore, all too often the resulting educational response is so limited that it underestimates the importance of social interaction as predicator of the learning process (Echeita and Martin, 1990).

However, this approach to learning difficulties and to educating students with intellectual,

sensorial or motor disability is not only wrong, but it additionally encourages unfairness and hinders progress in this field. Differently put, it contributes to maintaining the status quo that currently characterizes special education.

Critical analysis of the prevailing view has spurred us, within the NEA Project, to reconstruct the task that falls to special education. The basic premise for rethinking special education, is rooted in the notion that the chances of advancing towards a schooling system that takes into consideration the heterogeneity of the student population, will depend on whether we acknowledge that the inadequacies that afflict some of these students have, in fact, been the result of the way we have organized our schools, and the styles and forms of education they have received. In the words of Skrtic (1991), a good portion of the students with special learning needs, are the result of our traditional study programmes. Therefore, if we wish to advance special education –even if a complete overhaul of schools is called for– we should concentrate on developing a teaching strategy that will be responsive to diversity and will regard the need to individualize education as something worthwhile and professionally desirable.

Increasingly, it is being recognized that this type of approach is more likely to be found in contexts where respect for the individual is observed and, basically, within collaboration cultures that encourage and support analyses of school issues from a critical perspective much like what is known as “problem solving”. This has been sufficiently illustrated (Rosenholtz, 1989), and the point that must be made now is that schools that more readily incorporate new responses to students with learning disabilities, are those where teachers share a consensus of opinion. In such places, teachers show a constant preoccupation for the progress of all their students, and rather than feeling frustrated by the learning problems of some, are motivated to improve their teaching methods.

Although the project’s main concern are students with special learning needs, it is important to acknowledge that organizational cultures that

encourage collaboration as a foundation for problem solving, would more than likely facilitate the learning of all their students and, for good measure, the professional development of the teaching staff (Ainscow, 1991; Fullan, 1991; Marchesi and Martin, 1990).

Lastly, the central argument that underpins the rethinking of special education advanced by this project, is that the quest for equity in schools (strive to meet the needs of all students, whatever they might be) is a necessary condition (although insufficient) to enhance the quality of education (for all students).

This change in perspective is not easily accomplished. Teaching is an extremely active and complex activity that leaves little time for reflection. Besides, teachers' thinking and acting patterns are firmly entrenched as a result of the professional socialization process they underwent during pre-service training and, perhaps more significantly, during their professional performance (Pérez, 1993). That is why this UNESCO project attempts to reach not only teachers, but teacher trainers as well.

Teacher training: misadventures and challenges

The main idea is to help teachers and their trainers consider alternatives to the individualistic approach, and to take the learning inadequacies experienced by their students as a source of knowledge upon which they may build better teaching methods and improved classroom conditions.

When developing the rationality (internal coherence, logic) of recommended teaching materials and strategies, the work of Donald Schon (1987), who stresses the significance of what he terms the artistic dimension of the profession, has been tremendously helpful. His analysis leads to a caustic criticism of professional training in several areas, including that of teaching. The main problem, he observes, lies in the doctrine of technical rationality which permeates most professional thinking. Professional competence, according to this theory, consti-

tutes the skillful application of theoretical knowledge to the instrumental problems encountered in professional practice, leaving little room for creativity.

Schon claims that this view of knowledge and professional practice is insufficient from several standpoints. In terms of what concerns us, the author indicates that although technical rationality may equate professional competence with technical problem solving skills, in actual practice problems do not present themselves as given. Rather, they appear disguised as confusing, troubling, and ill-defined events which often result from a conflict of values. Hence, problems cannot be resolved through the application of techniques borrowed from theoretical research, but, through the use of what Schon has described as "artistic competence". In other words, through a process that helps untangle the event and trains the educator to redefine the problem, both in terms of the results to be achieved, and the means to be employed in their attainment.

In conclusion, Schon asserts that the technical rationality model should be replaced by what he describes as reflexive questioning. He emphasizes the search for a professional development strategy that stimulates reflecting on the given assumptions implicit in their actions.

It should be noted that in work involving students with special needs, the individual approach seems to be consistent with the technical rationality model. Consequently, when searching for new teaching strategies based on reflexive questioning, we are attempting to topple that particular view that also seems to permeate special education. That is to say, we hope that by helping teachers build up confidence in their capacity to learn from their own experiences, we are also helping them to break away from the individualistic view.

Social interaction as a means to facilitate learning and professional development, is another area the project wishes to stress. As mentioned earlier, one of the traits that characterize efficient schools seems to be the existence of a collaboration culture that subsequently leads to a shared consensus (Pérez, 1993). Although the

project seldom operates at every school level, it does place emphasis on collaboration at the various levels of the school system, as a means to facilitate problem solving and learning, true to the belief that—as Handy and Aitkin would put it—“the group allows individuals to step out of themselves, to become part of something nobody could have done on his own, and discover mutually beneficial ways of working with each other”.

In summary, the Special Classroom Needs Project, is intended to help teachers and teacher trainers gain greater confidence and skills for developing their professional practice further. It does so, encouraging them to use others (including their own students) as a means of focusing their reflections on the problems that arise in the very classrooms. If successful, this approach is expected to buttress teachers' reliance on their own abilities to cater to a variety of students. In the light of these considerations, the special needs task is hereby redefined as a strategy formulated to enhance school efficiency and teacher training.

Project background

UNESCO's Special Classroom Needs Project, has been conceived in line with efforts intended to help and stir member countries into developing strategies that facilitate integrating handicapped students into regular schools (Hegarty, 1990; UNESCO, 1993).

The Project is an attempt to satisfy the need—detected in a series of regional studies and workshops—for suitable materials and strategies to develop national teacher training policies in the area of school integration.

The production of teacher training material that was relevant in a wide range of national and cultural contexts—particularly in developing countries—was clearly a daunting challenge. Thus, during the project's preparatory stages, a number of coordinated measures devised to generate material and a training strategy pliable enough to be put to use in many different corners of the world, got under way.

With Mel Ainscow of Cambridge's Educational Institute (England) at the helm, the project unfolded through several stages, all of which involved the participation of teachers, teacher trainers, and numerous specialists from far and wide:

- Production of trial programme material: consultation teams from various countries contributed observations, documents and ideas that were incorporated into the final material.
- Material validation in various contexts: training was provided to an international team made up by pairs representing eight countries (Canada, Chile, Spain, India, Jordan, Kenya, Malta, and Zimbabwe). Their mission was to conduct the experimental implementation of the instructional material in their respective countries.
- Final publication: based on findings obtained from the field work carried out in the aforementioned countries, the material was reviewed and published. The original material was enriched with a series of supplementary videos and a guide designed for project coordinators.

The project is currently at the dissemination stage in the various regions of the world. Large-scale distribution of the material has been advised against, since it may prove irrelevant if not accompanied by the training methodology and strategies the project entails. The idea is to disseminate this material, with the collaboration of national and regional coordinators, through demonstration training activities (courses or seminars).

Project design

Bearing in mind the proposed arguments, the project design was based on five learning promoting strategies, deemed equally valid both for teacher training and pedagogical work with students in the classroom.

Active learning. An active approach to problem solving, placing special emphasis on cooperative learning groups as opposed to the lecturing method so prevalent in teacher training pro-

grammes. The objective is to stir individuals into participating, encourage the formulation of alternative views, and help neutralize the anxiety that comes with change.

Objectives negotiation. The involvement of participants in the negotiation of their own learning objectives either within the general structure of the course, or through a number of workshops, is a device to keep track of their great diversity in terms of interests and needs. This encourages them to assume responsibility for their own learning, and to commit themselves to participating in the development of ideas or approaches under discussion.

Demonstration, practice and feedback. The implementation of new ideas or working methods is more likely to take, if these three elements are used in combination. Demonstration offers a view of what is possible; practice encourages risk taking (provided support from colleagues is present); and, feedback—preferably coming from trustworthy fellow students—furnishes added stimulus and guidance. This strategy, which implies two teacher working together, is sometimes called training by pairs (Joyce and Showers, 1988).

Continuous evaluation. The active involvement of participants in the follow-up and monitoring of their own learning progress, is intended to increase motivation. The idea here, is to spur reflection and, once again, emphasize the fact that participants should assume responsibility for their own learning. Various strategies may be used, including learning notebooks where individuals log their progress, reflections, etc. Continuous evaluation is also helpful as a means of influencing the class' activities and priorities, and of satisfying individual interests.

Support. Lastly, course meetings highlight the importance of giving support to those who are learning. Great efforts are also made to induce teachers to establish collaborative relationships with colleagues, as a way of securing long term support in preparation of the day they will attempt to introduce changes in their classroom practices. We deem this support essential, if we are to encourage teachers to take the risks that

must be assumed when developing new teaching methods.

In terms of design, the material has been produced to allow for flexible utilization, depending on its implementation level (pre-service, post-graduate, workshops or advanced education courses for teachers or teacher trainers, etc.), as well as the needs and interests of the target group. In this regard, the more significant elements of the resource package are the following:

Student material. Includes four learning modules:

- Module 1: Introduction to Special Needs.
- Module 2: Special needs - Definitions and Answers.
- Module 3: Towards efficient schools for all.
- Module 4: Help and support.

Each module contains a central document or "Study material", along with a number of Units (between 5 and 10) that constitute the basic learning activities for the work sessions. Neither the modules nor the Units set a predetermined sequence, in fact, quite the opposite is true; they have been conceived so that their contents may be adapted to the needs and expectations of those participating in the formative activity. They could be said to facilitate a sort of "à la carte" mechanism. Each unit refers to the objective it pursues, includes basic instructions to develop the described activity (individually, in pairs or groups), and states the expected outcome. Last but not least, they all incorporate an epigraph entitled "Evaluation", as a reminder of the need to apply what was learned, to one's own practice.

Coordinators' guides. Offer detailed guidelines on how to organize courses and working sessions, based on special classroom needs material. It also includes a set of study cases describing various projects carried out in different countries.

Support video. It contains examples of the various recommended approaches utilized during the courses, as well as examples of school experiences that have adopted an open approach to diversity.

A project under way

To date, over thirty training workshops based on the Special Classroom Needs Project, have been organized across the world. Their assessment reveals that the project is a useful and relevant initiative, devised to change the prevailing attitude of the teaching staff regarding special needs. On the other hand, the design and content of materials used have proven suitable for the targeted objectives, and –in all cases– the principles underpinning the project and the new strategies it proposes in order to advance towards quality schools for all, have been validated.

In the specific case of Latin America and the Caribbean, validation of the material and its formative proposal took place in Santiago, Chile. This initiative was followed by three trial workshops in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru, whose purpose was to verify the project's relevance, in different cultural contexts.

A number of recommendations emerged from these experiences, among them, the advisability of elaborating an action plan devoted to the dissemination of the Special Classroom Needs Project within the region. Said plan is geared towards the gradual creation of a network of replicating agents who take on - with UNESCO's technical support - the mission of disseminating the project in their respective countries. Several national, subregional, and regional formative activities have been carried out to further this end. These activities have left in their wake numerous teams trained to disseminate the project in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

Probably the most remarkable and innovating element of these initiatives, has been the instructional strategy used in the training of national coordinators (replicating agents), which has been conceived on the basis of the self-same principles underlying the Special Classroom Needs Project. This strategy consists of a ten-day programme, organized in two separate phases: a demonstration workshop followed by a supervised practice workshop.

The demonstration phase has a twofold purpose; it allows potential coordinators to experience the workshop as students, and to observe the conduction of working sessions in terms of method applications, use of materials, classroom organization, time distribution, etc.

The demonstration workshop concludes with the planning of the practical phase. During this phase participants assume in pairs the role of "facilitators", taking full responsibility for carrying out all activities, with the support and under the supervision of experienced coordinators. The programme includes daily evaluations where participants get feedback from both the group and coordinators, with a view to improving their performance.

The programme closes with the formulation of an action plan designed to disseminate and multiply the project in the respective countries or workplaces.

It should be noted, that the success of the Special Classroom Needs Project –as is the case with every innovation– will hinge, to a large extent, on the existence of an on-going and rigorous follow-up and support strategy; otherwise, it may risk –as have many others– never leaving the "good intentions" stage. In this respect, it is vital that emerging coordinators have the backing of the local authorities, and that support and collaboration networks are set up among project participants, without delay.

Lastly, while many countries are still at odds as to how to invest available resources (regardless of how much or how little may be involved) in the area of special education, the project offers reasons and examples that argue against repeating the scheme of a special education based on a ranking of students, on their assignation to special centres, and on the specialization of the staff entrusted with their teaching. By contrast, it propounds improving the quality of education imparted at regular schools as well as the training received by their staff, to bring about the creation of a school wherein all students may find an answer customized to their needs.

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Information systems and electronic mail

As part of networks' interconnection (REPLAD, REDALF, PICPEMCE, SIRI) they may be connected at OREALC, Santiago, Chile through two electronic mail boxes. The first is connected to the BITNET network, with headquarters in UNESCO/Paris. The address is:
uhstg@frunes21

A gateway may also be used, that is a connection between two networks, in this case INTERNET and BITNET. Their address is:
uhstg%frunes21@cunym.cuny.edu

The second electronic mail box connects through the INTERNET network, with headquarters in Universidad Católica de Chile. The address is:
unesco@lascar.puc.cl

Through these mail boxes communications as well as documents in diskettes may be forwarded. Up to this date the following are interconnected: the CFI in Argentina; The University of Campinas, Sao Paulo and the University of Brasilia, Brazil; CIDE and REDUC in Chile and the University of Monterrey, in Mexico.

OREALC Activities

REDALF

Regional network for training of personnel and specific support in literacy and adult education programmes

REDALF's anniversary in Paraguay

In commemoration of REDALF's first anniversary, a workshop covering the year's experience and programme projections for 1995, was held in San Bernardino, Paraguay.

The meeting was attended by two Ministers of State, Education and Women's Secretariat, three Vice-Ministers and Directors of the 22 network institutions, and an OREALC Youth and Adult Education Regional Specialist, all of whom participated enthusiastically.

Extensively covered by national press, the workshop highlighted the institutionality of Paraguay's youth and adult education through a national education plan; the creation of the current literacy and adult education department, and REDALF's institutional organization/strategy in the country.

OREALC's regional specialist pledged the support of UNESCO on institutional strategy and preparation/training activities aimed at producing written literacy and youth and adult education material, as well as OREALC's own assistance in organizing a REDALF National Seminar scheduled for July, and in furthering national research on functional illiteracy.

On the occasion, two publications "Education Notebook N° 1 and N° 2" produced by Paraguay's Ministry of Education and Cult,

were presented to the audience.

Self-learning guides for youths and adults

In 1994, within the province of REDALF and under the technical assistance of the Uruguayan communicator Mario Kaplún, OREALC launched a Project for the Production of Self-Learning Guides for Youth and Adult Educators.

Kaplún elaborated a master guide to be published shortly, while prototype guides on youth and parental education, the teaching of mathematics, consumer education, and education and work, are in the production stages. In the following months, other prototype guides on youth education will be disseminated through the social communication, civic education and women media.

Regional research on functional illiteracy

Under the sponsorship of Paraguay's REDALF and the Ministry of Education, the seven countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Paraguay, and Venezuela) participating in the Regional Research on Functional Illiteracy programme, Stage Two, will convene in Asunción between 10-12 May, 1995. Isabel Infante, consultant, will be responsible for coordi-

nating the technical aspects of this research.

To date, elaboration of reading-writing and mathematics instruments initiated in August 1994 has been completed, while participating countries have committed financial and institutional resources to this project.

The validation of instruments in each of the participating countries and their application on selected samples, will constitute a next step in the programme.

Events to Come

Regional and sub-regional workshops within REDALF's province: Review of youth and adult self-learning guides (Santiago, Chile, August 1995); Consumer Education workshop coordinated jointly by UNESCO and IOCU (Asunción, Paraguay, August, 1995); Teaching mathematics to youths and adults (October, 1995); Parental education (November, 1995); Curricular strategies keyed to basic learning needs, joint effort by UNESCO and CEAAL (December, 1995).

Within the framework of Spain's Project, and with the participation of southern cone countries, REDALF will be sponsoring a meeting intended to examine in-service training programmes for youth and adult educators. (Chile, July, 1995).

The VI World Conference on Adult Education will take place in Hamburg, Germany, July, 1997. OREALC will sponsor a preparatory regional meeting in 1996.

Youth and adult education in the region

Project for the completion of distance primary level education for adults in Argentina.

Distance education in Argentina is in full swing. It has already been implemented at the various levels of education (primary, middle and higher), and in professional training programmes.

In the field of adult education, mention should be made of the experience being conducted since 1987 in the province of Misiones. Through the Province Tele-Education and Development System (SIPTED), adults may complete secondary schooling and receive full accreditation from the province's General Council of Education.

Distance education has solved the problem posed by the existence of isolated populations or groups scattered deep in the territory. Likewise, it has solved the dilemma confronting the huge numbers of individuals drawn full time into the production machine, as well as those who, for a variety of reasons, cannot attend regular classes. Besides, it does constitute a democratizing proposal.

The stated objectives of the project "Completion of distance primary level education for adults", within the framework of the Educational Social Plan sponsored by Argentina's Presidency, is to offer adult citizens a chance to access a comprehensive education that will facilitate a smoother integration into daily activities and, specifically, into the working world.

The Project is geared towards those older than 18 that for a number of reasons have been unable to complete their education in the prescribed time. Its elaboration has been inspired on the conclusions drawn from the "Rioja Encounter" held in November, 1989, attended by representatives of every jurisdiction, labour union, university, and various organizations associated with adult education activities.

The educational strategy consists of a social, pedagogical and operational dimension. The Project has been conceived as a first stage of a wider programme that facilitates participating adults the completion of general basic education requirements as set forth in the Federal Law of Education. Stage two will be on stand by, pending decisions of the Federal Council of Education regarding this educational level.

Programme contents include language, mathematics, social sciences, science and technology and work training.

The contents of each area are developed as a dynamic and coordinated set of modules which contain a number of interrelated elements. Contents are developed and presented in an initial module or syllabus, two books per curricular area, and a final or closing module.

"Reading in Bahamas"

The project "Reading in Bahamas", launched in February 1994 under the auspices of the nation's Minister of Education and Training, seeks to reduce illiteracy rates in schools and the wider adult community. This initiative is supported by the UNESCO Jamaica office.

Although the World Almanac claims that the literacy rate for Ba-

hamas is in the order of 95%, the marked deterioration in the quality of education which, in turn, has resulted in a regression of the country's literacy levels, has been brought to the attention of the Prime Minister as well as private and public sector agents.

The project "Reading in Bahamas", is intended to bring about a change in attitude and enrich life through a "Literate Culture". Seminars, workshops, ecumenical services and other promotional activities, have been organized to further this end.

Likewise, special committees have been created to see that the Project is carried out successfully. Other initiatives include the donation of books for a mobile library, the publication of a magazine, and numerous book fairs and literary contests.

In keeping with the Project's objectives, a first national school survey was launched, designed to examine the strengths and weaknesses of reading and writing instruction. A movement to recruit retired teachers and volunteers to help students with learning difficulties, is also under way.

Within the framework of the Adult Literacy Movement (BALM), recruiting efforts in New Providence and Family Islands have enlisted the cooperation of 200 volunteers, while 90 tutors have volunteered to receive training to teach reading and writing skills through the Laubach Method. The programme will run for four years.

Pedagogy '95

Pedagogy 95, the "Encounter for the Unity of Latin American Educators", took place at La Havana's Palacio de las Convenciones, on 6-10 February, 1995. The congress was sponsored by Cuba's Ministry

of Education and co-sponsored by UNESCO, UNICEF, AELAC, (Association of Latin American and Caribbean Educators), and the country's Ministry of Higher Education.

Participants included 3712 teachers from forty countries and 500 Cuban delegates, for a total of 4212 attendees. Of the 1359 papers presented, most of them had to do with teachers at local level. Ibero-american Educational Television contributed to the effort by broadcasting three tele-conferences - 3.5 hours of direct transmission and another 3.5 hours of delayed transmission - live via HISPASAT.

The 22 working commissions distributed in the 28 rooms of the Palacio de las Convenciones, were organized in workshops where the papers presented were discussed. The topics selected were the following:

- Pedagogical Science
- Development of intelligence and creativity
- Society, family, and school
- Martí and education
- Labour education
- Pedagogical psychology
- Education and training of the teaching staff
- Teaching history and civics
- Teaching exact sciences
- Teaching natural sciences
- Teaching language and art
- Pre-school education

- Primary education
- Middle education
- Technical and Professional Education
- Adult Education
- Special Education
- Physical Education
- School Health
- Higher Education Pedagogy
- Educational Planning and School Supervision
- Educational technology

UNESCO's co-sponsorship, associated with the 50th anniversary of our institution is commemorating, was warmly welcomed by the Cuban authorities and participants to the Conference. UNESCO successfully disseminated the main ideas of the current debate OREALC has advanced in the region, through the massive distribution among thousands of Latin American school teachers and principals included in the separata could be considered at one of the main results in PROMEDLAC V (Santiago, Chile, 1993) and through a special conference attended by adult education specialists at the main tele-conference organized by the Ibero-american Association of Educational Television.

The tenets of educational privatization and the acritical assimilation of concepts alien to national cultures and educational systems, were conspicuously challenged at plenary debates and working

groups. From the didactic perspective, various alternatives for curricular design, methodologies, and institutional as well as learning evaluation, were presented. A creative work atmosphere at educational centres, and furthering teacher training activities in schools, was the underlying theme of the Congress, while numerous recommendations intended to encourage these initiatives were entertained.

The stance and proposals advanced by Cuban professionals were particularly poignant with reference to universalizing access to education, and maintaining its quality levels amidst a severe crisis affecting the development of intelligence and creativity, the detection of talent as a complex and manifold phenomenon, special education, and the teaching of exact and natural sciences.

REDALF Publications

Portocarrero Maisch, Gonzalo: "Vamos creciendo juntas. Alfabetización de la mujer campesina indígena en Perú". UNESCO/OREALC Santiago, Chile, 1995.

Just received: Jaramillo Alzate, Javier. "Sistematización de Experiencias de Educación Popular y de Adultos", Unidad de Autoformación Participativa, Medellín, April 1994.

REPLAD

Regional network for the training, innovation and research in the fields of planning and administration of basic education and literacy programmes

FLACSO seminar on decentralization

FLACSO-Argentina organized the international seminar "Construction of local educational policy -

Adventures and Misadventures of educational decentralization" held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, April 10-11, 1995. OREALC sponsored and participated through its regional planning and educational manage-

ment specialists. Specialists from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, France and Spain, also attended this seminar.

The seminar addressed theoretical issues such as the concept of

public domain; global and local education; policies and actors, using schools as examples. Additionally, the chief decentralization issues were presented, and in particular the experiences undergone by the educational sectors of Chile, Brazil, and Colombia.

These presentations will be published by FLACSO in a near future.

II regional conference of IE

The second Latin American conference held in Santiago, Chile, January 6 to 10, 1995, laid the groundwork for the first World Conference of La Internacional de la Educación (IE), to take place in Zimbabwe in June, 1995.

On the occasion, Latin American educational policies and the modernization of teachers' trade unions were the key issues discussed. OREALC inaugurated the conference by making a presentation on educational policies in the region.

Latin American laboratory for the evaluation of educational quality

The signing of a Letter of Agreement between the Ministers of Education and UNESCO/OREALC to participate in laboratory activities, has been the most important milestone to follow the installation of the Latin American Laboratory for the Evaluation of Educational Quality in Mexico (November 1994). The thirteen member countries are: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, the Dominican Republic, Uruguay and Venezuela. The Laboratory, which is located within OREALC, with the political backing of the member countries, has commenced joint coordination activities.

A first task consisted of compiling basic information on educational systems, as a basis for decisions related to the elaboration and design of a comparative performance study involving all these countries. This information is part of a data base available to all Laboratory member countries.

The second task, focused on the design of Laboratory instruments, particularly language and mathematics tests. In both cases there will be two tests administered; one to measure minimum teaching contents up to Grade 3, and a second test experimental in nature. The experimental mathematics test includes items designed to measure mathematical skill and abilities, while the experimental language test measures text comprehension skills (reading) and text production abilities (writing).

The other set of instruments comprises questionnaires to gather information on performance determining factors. These are factors associated with the child, his/her parents, teachers, the school's dean and the school itself. These instruments place special emphasis on measuring the processes that may affect children's performance, both in terms of classroom (teaching practices) and school management processes (dean's practices).

A technical and coordination meeting have been slated for August and September, respectively.

Management and learning workshops

As of April, and with the participation of teachers and deans of Santiago's marginal-urban community schools, OREALC has been sponsoring weekly workshops. These workshops are part of the action-research initiative subscribed with

PIIE (Interdisciplinary Programme of Educational Research). The work is based on the GESEDUCA educational management model, and on language theories.

The purpose of the workshops is the development of intervention methodologies in schools so as to improve their management capacity.

Case study programme

Under the coordination of OREALC, several of REPLAD's member institutions are undertaking case studies on educational management processes. A case study, is a research and learning methodology based on a pedagogical model that emphasizes the importance of in-depth knowledge of a subject matter, as opposed to that which is shallow and disassociated. In this respect, case studies offer a learning opportunity to the initiator of the conflict, power, and alliance processes which unfold within the educational system. Case studies focus on detailed research which may involve a law, a school project, or an innovation.

Eight REPLAD institutions are currently conducting case studies: the Universidad Nacional de Entre Ríos (Argentina), the Federal Investment Council (Argentina), the Ministry of Education (Bolivia), the Universidad de Campinas (Brazil), the Universidad de Concepción (Chile), the Universidad Estatal a Distancia (Costa Rica), the Ministry of Education and Science (Spain), and the Instituto Centroamericano de Administración y Supervisión de la Educación (Panama).

Communications within REPLAD

REPLAD's 1994-1996 action plan,

envisages activities intended to enhance communications among network members, and perhaps increase the volume of information and materials being exchanged. Currently, a number of network institutions are being equipped with

hardware, software and receiving training on computer science. This activity, financed by the IDB, is conducted by REDUC within the framework of the "Strengthening of the educational sector" project. Furthermore, the initiative will

grant these institutions an opportunity to participate in the REPLAD-L listing which exchanges information through an electronic mail system coordinated by DASE-UNICAMP.

SIRI **Regional Information System**

Regional Information System on Professional Training (SIRFO)

In Latin America and the Caribbean, SIRFO provides documentary information on professional training at the national, regional, and international levels. It is coordinated by CINTERFOR, ILO's specialized centre, through the Information and Documentation Service (SID). SIRFO seeks to tighten the bonds among those interested in professional training—individuals, organizations or institutions—as a means of easing their insertion into the productive labour market. It promotes the dissemination of ILO's international work regulations, and encourages greater interaction between professional training institutions and entrepreneurs and workers associations.

All the bibliographical material contained in its data base, is available in automatized listings and/or diskettes.

SIRFO is linked to the data banks of several institutions, among them, to ILO's International Labour Information System (ILIS); ILO's International Training Centre (Turin, Italy); and to the European Community's Professional Training Development Centre (CEDEFOP).

UNESCO/PGI-IABN Instructional package on information management standardization

The package's nine modules may be used in library science schools at the pre and post-graduate levels and in training programmes imparted at documentation centres. Quite useful for professionals working in the information area in Latin America and the Caribbean. The modules are also available in Spanish. For further details, please contact: UNESCO/PGI, 7 Place de Fontenoy, 75700, Paris, France.

REDUN - National Educational Network (Venezuela)

Venezuela's National Educational Network, consists of a group of public and private information centres devoted to the handling, compilation, distribution, referential treatment, and dissemination of educational information, in its widest sense. REDUN facilitates access to all information originating in Venezuela, as well as that generated in Latin America and the rest of the world. It is a cooperative, non-profit organization made up of public or private information services.

If you wish to have access to REDUN, please contact: Mónica

Rothgaenger de Rivera. UNESCO/CRESALC. Information and Documentation Service (SID). Apartado Postal 69394, Caracas 1062-A, Venezuela. FAX N° 283 1411.

TAIS - Distant Support to Social Research. Venezuela

TAIS is a newly created directory, devoted to satisfy information requirements for social researchers. It contains information on archeology, anthropology, sociology, social work, public and government policy, urban and municipal development, community, non-government organizations, democracy, communications, humanities, defense and military affairs, science and technology, poverty, population, nutrition and public health, economy and business, education, history and geography, ecology and environmental sanitation.

Additionally, it includes an important number of world-wide references on academic research networks and social sciences Data Processing, as well as SPSS information.

TAIS' particulars: URL:gopher://kanojo.ivic.ve/1/tais

REDUC Encounter

Chile will be host to the VIII Regional Encounter of the Latin American Network for Educational

Information and Documentation (REDUC). Serving on the Organizing Committee are; CIDE's Director Patricio Cariola, Arnoldo Escobar, Guatemala's Universidad Rafael Landivar, Alfredo Rojas General Coordinator for REDUC and OREALC's director. The encounter will revolve about the theme "Securing information towards the formulation of educational policies, programmes, and projects in Latin America". The initiative is part of REDUC's educational reinforcement Project and made possible by the financial assistance of the IDB. The event will be held in Santiago, Chile, November 6-9, 1995.

Available research subjects

Researchers from every country may have access to information obtained by massive sampling and to a number of subjects available for research, using INTERNET through the World Wide Web (<http://www.nas.edu/>). This service is coordinated by the United States' "Board on International Comparative Studies in Education" (BICSE) in collaboration with the "National Center for Education Statistics" and the "National Science Foundation". Brochures, which are limited, may also be obtained through Janet Hansen (2101 Constitution Avenue 178, Washington D.C., 20418, USA.; Telephone (1-202) 334 3010; FAX (1-202) 334 3584).

Latin America Data Base

"Latin America Data Base" (LADB) gathers Latin American curricular information for grades 6 to 12, in a data base called "Resources for Teaching about the Americas Network" (RETAnet). Soon to be available to INTERNET users free of charge. LADB, a service provided by New Mexico Uni-

versity's Latin American Institute, has been operational in the field of electronic publications and data base production, for the last nine years. It produces three electronic publications: "Chronicle of Latin American Economic Affairs"/"NotiSur - Latin American Political Affairs" and "SourceMex-Economic News and Analysis on Mexico". These publications as well as the RETAnet data base, are available via INTERNET. For further information, please contact Lisa Falk or Andy Nelson via E-Mail at retanet@ladb.unm-edu.

Regional workshop on educational indicators for human development in Latin America (January 23-27, 1995)

Quito, Ecuador, hosted the Regional workshop on educational indicators for human development in Latin America (January 23-27, 1995), aimed at implementing UNESCO's work plan for improving educational indicators for human development.

The workshop, organized by UNESCO's Statistics Division, Paris, was inaugurated by Ecuador's Minister of Education, Fausto Segovia, and was attended by UNESCO representatives from the Quito office, OREALC, and specialists from seventeen Latin American and Caribbean countries, as well as observers from the World Bank and the Interamerican Development Bank.

At this workshop, conceptual, methodological and operational aspects of a core of basic human development indicators were discussed, in terms of access and participation in the educational system, educational flows, retention indicators, literacy rates, instruction levels, and educational expenses.

The countries agreed to measure a set of basic indicators and examine the difficulties this entailed; in some cases, and despite the short supply of reliable and timely information and the prevailing institutional limitations, their implementation was given the green light. These basic indicators were:

- access to the system (gross enrollment rate; enrollment rate by age groups);
- participation in the educational system: (global schooling rate, including pre-primary enrollment as a percentage of global enrollment within the 5 to 24 age group; schooling rate by age group; by teaching level; net and gross schooling rates);
- educational flows and internal efficiency of the educational system: (repetition rate; passing rates; drop-out rates; graduation rates; level transition rates; survival per study level; average study period for graduates; product input);
- expense indicators (percentage of educational expenditure in relation to GDP);
- literacy and instructional level indicators. Follow-up strategies were to be implemented via OREALC/SIRI networks, in coordination with UNESCO's Statistical Division.

Brazilians statistics specialists of the Ministry of Education visit Santiago

OREALC coordinated the visit of three statistics specialists from Brazil's Ministry of Education (April 19-21) to different Units and Sections of Chile's Ministry of Education, with a view to analyzing the statistical system, educational indicators, and the Quality of Education Measuring System (SIMCE). The visit was extended to include

the VI Region and the Department of Municipal Education of the Metropolitan Region. OREALC hosted debates on the experience of the SIRI network, the link between statistics and quality, as well as the policies and strategies for improved decision-making.

Pre-service teacher training research SIRI/PICPEMCE

In an effort to cooperate with international research on pre-service teacher training for basic and secondary education teachers sponsored by UNESCO, the SIRI and PICPEMCE networks have started compiling data from Latin American and Caribbean countries, with a view to updating the statistical data associated with this topic, kept in SIRI's permanent information bank.

Furthermore, this information will contribute to materialize other research studies on national sys-

tems and pre-service teacher training for the region's basic education, and to analyze the changes and trends in pre-service teacher training for basic and middle education.

Federal Network of Educational Information (Argentina)

The General Office of the Federal Network of Educational Information, has formulated a joint work programme to analyze other experiences with information service designs, and to receive SIRI's suggestions in this area, which include the design of indicators for access, coverage, internal efficiency, educational system outcomes; indicators of school status (academic organization of the educational supply, operational aspects, size of organizational units, availability of service use, progress in the implementation of the new structure,

strengthening of school management, and community participation).

The World of Learning

England's World of Learning, 1996, is a comprehensive world-wide guide containing the particulars of educational, scientific, and educational organizations, along with an extensive directory of international organizations. Its 45th edition, published in 1995, includes descriptive information on OREALC provided by the SIRI network.

Global Neural Computer Network

Since the Group of Seven Conference held in Brussels, Belgium, there has been a Global Computer Network intended for peace games. This technology, which allows the joint resolution of variables from various points in real time, is ready to be transferred for use.

PICPEMCE

Programme for innovation and change in teacher training to improve the quality of education

Project for pre-service training of basic education teachers (FIDEB)

Pedagogical reflection seminars on pre-service training of basic education teachers (OREALC, Santiago, Chile, January 24-26, 1995).

The significance of the teaching profession, in a continent that has much to advance in matters of educational and social equity, was the leitmotif behind the decision to organize these pedagogical Reflec-

tion Seminars. Debate centered on teacher training, particularly the pre-service training imparted to basic education teachers.

Within this framework, the specific purpose of the seminar was the discussion of the regional Project for pre-service training of basic education teachers (FIDEB), an initiative originally elaborated by OREALC. This encounter, marked the launching of the Project and the reactivation of the regional PICPEMCE network as a space for knowledge exchange.

With these objectives in mind, a

wide spectrum of professionals –which included pre-service teacher training specialists as well as in-service teacher training programme experts at the basic, middle, and adult education and professional training levels– was invited to participate. The improvement and elucidation of the current social and professional position held by basic education teachers, constituted the long term objectives of the seminar.

Workshop debates evidenced the existing consensus regarding the protagonist role played by the

teacher in the construction of interactive teaching/learning models, solid enough to serve as foundation for educational reforms aimed at fostering social and educational equity, solidarity, creativity.

Along these lines, opinions relating to the specificity of the teaching profession coincided, as they did in terms of the central role that falls to educators in the process of cognitive mediation. The need to coordinate pre-service and continuous teacher training activities as part of a permanent educational process, as well as the search for integrated and participative training models, were also unconditionally approved by the group. The integration into a single institution or network of all pre-service and in-service teacher training functions, and of every effort to stir teacher trade unions into creating training programmes, was another issue that elicited interest.

Theoretical principles such as: vindication of teachers' pedagogical knowledge generated in the very professional practice; promotion by teachers of "practice-inspired writing", and opening of dialogue spaces between pedagogical knowledge –generated in the practice– and pedagogy as a discipline; the central role of networks in terms of their contribution to exchange and diversity in the teacher training area; integration between pedagogy and psychology.

For its part, the development of reflection seminars on practices within the career of pedagogy in basic education; the start-up of pre-service training curricula for basic education teachers that explore tighter links between theoretical knowledge, educational research, and daily living; the design and validation of continuous models for professional practice, and the definition of discipline contents, from a perspective of professional practice development, were the main

innovating initiatives for pre-service training of basic education teachers, outlined at the encounter.

Recommendations

The main recommendations emanating from the Seminar were the following:

- promotion of a long term public policy on training of basic education teachers that integrates pre-service teacher training and continuous training activities into a single permanent education process.
- creation of more favourable social, labour, and salary conditions for basic education teachers, as a pre-requisite for successful training actions.
- concentrating efforts on pre-service teacher training with a view to producing a new breed of educators, and facilitating the participation in this task, of teacher trainers from training centres as well as practicing teachers.
- promoting teachers' skills (practicing and new generations) so they may further their education and thus contribute to the output of knowledge; this growth, demands the transformation of schools into intelligent organizations willing to learn, changes in school management designed to bring about greater autonomy, and the creation of more favourable conditions for teachers, both in term of salaries and professional advancement.
- vindication of pre-service training for basic education as a preferential competence area of national states.
- coordination of policies and strategies on pre-service training for basic education teachers, with educational reforms, and political and cultural projects being currently developed by teachers' unions.
- conducting research on pre-serv-

ice training for basic education teachers, with the purpose of accumulating enough empirical evidence to support decision making initiatives; in depth studies of training centres' teaching/learning styles are required, since it follows that teachers teach the way they learned.

In connection with the regional Project for pre-service training of basic education teachers (UNESCO/OREALC/PICPEMCE)

This project, object of the consultation, was fully endorsed by the group, and approved with small observations. The FIDEB project, has envisioned a long term programme to establish a new generation of basic teachers, relying on the promotion of innovative pre-service training experiences generated within in-service teacher training workshops organized for educators of teacher training centres. These workshops, carried out in the innovation spaces, combine research and experimental tasks. The operational framework for the project is the regional PICPEMCE network.

Participants

Diversity was the salient feature of the public attending the seminar: representatives of central institutions, national PICPEMCE network universities, teachers' unions, Ministry of Education specialists, and special guests from university communities. Participants included forty-five representatives of seven countries (Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Uruguay) and twenty-seven officers of educational institutions (made up largely of training centre professionals).

The favourable predisposition shown by the specialists to attend the encounter at their own expense,

is worth noting. The number of participants breaks down as follows: forty-five specialists out of which thirteen resided outside the host country, eleven came from the provinces, and twenty-one were local residents. Eight OREALC specialists also joined the group for a total of fifty-three participants.

Follow-up programme

The seminar produced new international cooperation strategies in the area of teacher training. Specifically, a document exchange process involving the PICPEMCE network is under way, in addition to a state of the art review at the regional level, an annotated bibliography on the subject, and studies on national systems of pre-service training for basic education teachers, based largely on secondary information. The results of the national, and state of the art studies will be presented at a regional seminar on pre-service training for basic education teachers (OREALC, Venezuela, October, 1995).

Innovations in the teaching of basic education natural science

Five countries are engaged in projects coordinated by UNESCO/OREALC and funded by Spain's Ministry of Education and Science, involving Innovations in the Teaching of Basic Education Natural Science. Representatives of these countries Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Panama, and Uruguay, participated in a Workshop-Seminar held in Montevideo (Uruguay), October 25-28, 1995.

Various experiences were presented and discussed, while a seminar was devoted to theoretical reflection on the teaching of natural science at the basic education level. Specialists from Argentina, Brazil, and Spain, collaborated with presentations.

The seminar gave an account of

the projects designed to yield significant learning by students in the compulsory portion of education being developed in the various countries. Although the educational contexts and realities where the aforementioned programmes take place are quite different, all of them share some common elements, namely:

- the need to improve the training given to science teachers;
 - the advisability of doing away with the atomized treatment in the area of Natural Sciences;
 - the diminished presence of Natural Science in primary schools and teacher training programmes.
- Thus, the need to develop in-service training strategies, becomes evident.

Participants valued the contributions of constructivism, its incidence on science didactics, and its repercussions on training.

The following aspects of the definition of training strategies were set aside for further consideration:

- integrating the contributions of constructivism into the training methodologies, so that they may be experienced by the teacher and not merely analyzed from a theoretical perspective dissociated from the learning practice;
- bring training closer to the teacher's acting environment, and guarantee continued action by working on the institution's collective staff;
- integrating discipline formation and didactics into training, drawing the teacher closer to the sources of didactic research;
- introducing reflection and exchange spaces that may break the academic isolation of the teacher.

To accomplish the above, it would be advisable to:

- diversify and combine training modalities so that the diversity of every context may be pre-

served, and the various requirements of the teacher's professional development may be met.

- further teacher trainer's education by promoting their interaction with and participation in didactic research groups, so that teacher trainers become a link between researchers and classroom teachers.
- foster coherence in training methods, so that teacher trainers may formulate practical proposals that are consistent with their underlying theoretical assumptions.

Recommendations

In order to materialize the actions derived from the needs discussed earlier, competent national and international organisms both public and private, must commit themselves to carry out efforts along the following lines:

- improve the training given to Natural Science teachers;
 - acknowledge the important role played by teacher trainers;
 - create the institutional channels that will allow exchange to take place between teacher trainers and researchers.
 - strengthen science didactics research groups and facilitate their interaction;
 - create the necessary conditions so that teacher trainers become the link between classroom teachers and didactics researchers;
 - foster the dissemination of the findings of science didactics research;
 - redress teachers associations making them part of the academic and professional domain.
- It is suggested that an exchange encounter between science didactics researchers and science teacher trainers, be scheduled for 1995.

In the final analysis, the purpose of all these initiatives is to improve the scientific education of citizens so they are capable of understand-

ing, acting and making a commitment with their reality.

Tele-seminar on Environmental Education

Pilot project UNESCO-Iberoamerican Association of Educational Television

The Tele-seminar on Environmental Education is a co-production of 7 different institutions in 5 different Iberoamerican countries (Chile, Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, Spain) coordinated by the UNESCO Regional Office for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean and transmitted by the Iberoamerican Association of Educational Television. The material (video programs complemented with written material) presents a variety of experiences in the field of environmental education: methodologies, innovations, etc. embedded in the specific sociocultural context of an institution or country. The Tele-seminar is targeted at post-graduate students in education, teachers and professionals interested in the topic.

The main objective of the Tele-seminar is to initiate an exchange of ideas and experiences in the field of environmental education throughout Iberoamerica. 18 universities from 10 different countries with an average of 20 participants (and as such an active audience of approx. 360 participants) are connected into interest groups where they discuss freely the programs and learn from each other's experience.

In order for all the participants to interact with each other, the transmission of the programs via the Spanish satellite HISPASAT is complemented by the use of e-mail which allows for an international discussion of the programs. The aim is to create a habit of discussing topics which are important to

the universities, members of the Iberoamerican Association of Educational Television (ATEI), using modern means of communication such as satellite and e-mail to overcome large distances at low costs.

The programs of this first pilot project have been transmitted from the 28th of March onwards, once a week, during the 7 weeks that lasts the Tele-seminar. By the time of writing we are in the 4th week of transmission. Each institution participating in the project has been responsible for the convocation of an interest group and for the organization of the reception within the institution. For this purpose, a special classroom had to be prepared where the program, transmitted via satellite, can be viewed and an e-mail connection is installed.

The Tele-seminar has two interactive dimensions. First, one program per week is viewed and discussed by the local interest group. Each participant has read the written material, which gives an in-depth analysis of the methodology or problem presented, before viewing the video in a group. The discussion of the programs is guided by a local specialist in the topic. The objective here is to compare the presented methodology or problem with the local context and critically revise one's own way of approaching environmental education.

Second, an international discussion takes place, for which there are two phases. In the first phase, each institution synthesizes all the questions concerning the program and sends this synthesis via E-mail or FAX to the university that produced the video. This should help to clarify doubts and provide the opportunity for obtaining more details. In the second phase, each institution forms part of a subgroup of around five universities from different countries. Within this subgroup, each participant has the pos-

sibility to share experiences, innovations, and questions, with participants from other countries. The result of this interchange is expected to exemplify a wide variety of experiences in environmental education.

It will be important to evaluate the Tele-conferences impact given its innovative character. In order to ensure the widest participation possible in the evaluation process, each participant can express his/her opinion about each session in a questionnaire. Moreover, there will be one person in each university in charge of evaluating the experiment. This decentralized evaluation process is important because geographical distance makes it impossible for one single person to evaluate the experience. Moreover, decentralization has been an important element throughout the Tele-seminar because it implies that each institution organizes its participation in the Tele-seminar according to the needs and possibilities of its participants.

The evaluation will show whether it is advisable to organize more seminars in the future via satellite and e-mail. Apart from the evaluation, we will share with all our participants and the wider audience the unexpected results of the Tele-seminar (such as a thunderstorm in Mexico that disconnected the University of Monterrey from satellite and E-mail until 5 minutes before the transmission, or the invitation to all participants for a Congress on Environment and the Community in Cuba). Exactly, because the interaction between individuals is important for any common project, the main evaluative criteria will not be the economic aspect, but the quality of the discussion, the degree of interactivity, etc. The results will indicate in what way communication technology can enhance the quantity and quality of academic exchange.

1995 - INTERNATIONAL TOLERANCE YEAR

OREALC contributions

Tolerance is a basic component of the respect for human rights and the attainment of peace.

The modern political and social values that gave rise to current international guidelines on human rights, were first expressed as an exhortation to tolerance, the linchpin of social order. This acknowledgment of tolerance as a key component of peace among nations, determined the historical climate that nurtured the first tepid expressions of the rights of man which culminated, centuries later, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, where the basic demands each individual must assert before society are proclaimed.

UNESCO contributes to tolerance through various educational, scientific, and cultural activities. In this respect, and within the province of responsibilities that fall to OREALC, numerous initiatives have been developed, among them:

Furtherance of the commitment made by educational policy makers in terms of incorporating into the curricula, the themes of Peace, Human Rights, and Democracy.

Along these lines, on occasion of the Second Latin American Encounter on Human Rights Learning Strategy Experiences –held in Aguascalientes (Mexico), August, 1994– OREALC presented a summary of past and present activities in the area of Democracy and Human Rights in education. With like purposes, it participated in the technical meeting on Educating Towards Tolerance which took place during the celebration of the 44th International Conference on Education held at Geneva, in April, 1994. Several proposals for developing educational projects in connection with the International Tolerance Year, emanated from this encounter.

Additionally, OREALC has organized campaigns and public events intended to underscore the importance of the Tolerance theme.

Thus, in January 1994, it participated in a conference on Human Rights Education sponsored by the National Chilean Corporation for Reparation and Reconciliation; in the First (May, 1994) and Second (January, 1995) Humanist Encounter; and, in the First Citizen's Forum for Tolerance and Non-Discrimination organized jointly with the Democracy, Education, and Social Action Institute (IDEAS).

Other initiatives have enlisted the cooperation of the mass media, in an effort to inform and mobilize public opinion with respect to the dangers of intolerance and complacency, and warn about the specter of stereotyping, lurking in the media.

One of the instruments used in this area is the

Critical Approach Method (MAC), a methodology that shows how to work critically with the media. Currently, it is being implemented in various schools on an experimental basis. In line with this objective, a workshop for NU school teachers, sponsored jointly by OREALC and the Roberto Noble Foundation, was conducted in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in February, 1995. Its purpose, to present MAC to the mass media.

The Roberto Noble Foundation is the mayor stockholder of one of Argentina's largest newspapers (Clarín) with a daily publication of 1.5 issues. There are plans to include subjects associated with Peace and Tolerance in the paper's supplements. In September 1995, OREALC will present MAC at the Fifth International Encounter on Newspapers in Schools sponsored by the Interamerican Press Association (SIP).

The government of Chile and OREALC signed a Letter of Agreement in April 1995, dealing with the incorporation of MAC into fifteen public schools across the country. Two-hundred teachers will receive training on ways to apply the method which includes topics such as Peace, Tolerance, and Human Rights.

At the same time, a series of ten radio shows on Tolerance Year and Peace Culture currently under production by OREALC, will be broadcasted on several Chilean radio stations, as of June, 1995.

Other initiatives connected with this theme include:

- Provision of resources for educational researchers and educators specializing on Tolerance Year subjects.
- Elaboration of a list of Latin American institutions active in educating towards peace, tolerance, and human rights so as to facilitate inter-communication.
- Compilation of bibliographies of didactic, methodological, and theoretical publications on human rights education. Available to institutions and interested public.
- publication of the Unit on Human Rights for the Dignity of the Individual. The book was co-sponsored by the National Corporation for Reparation and Reconciliation, and contains award winning texts presented at the First National Competition Human Rights for Didactic Units.
- publication of the work "Values in Education". N° 6 Monothematic analytical summaries by Marta Zeballos and María Elena Poblete González, (editors). This book was co-sponsored by REDUC and OREALC.

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