Ideas and Proposals for the Spanish Education System in a Post-Capitalist Era

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Abstract

The process of teaching and learning is not merely a question of transmitting a received cultural legacy but also of its transformation. Education is inseparable from life and from any socio-political model we wish to build and defend. This implies the impossibility of separating education from politics. Hence we must attempt to provide future generations with the skills and knowledge they need to enhance both their ability to question what they have inherited and also to enable them to actively take on their responsibility for the world as active as committed individuals. In this way, they will be empowered to reconfigure the world by constructing new, worthier and equitable ways of thinking. Focusing on the experience in Spain, this paper considers how critical education can function as a pedagogy of resistance against neo-liberal doctrines. In addition this article will put forward alternatives that would enable a rethinking of the Spanish public school system in the mold of critical education. Key to our proposal is the concept of education as a right that must be guaranteed for all. In our vision, education would be genuinely comprehensive and committed to equality and social justice; it would strive towards the ideal of a public school system that is democratic, inclusive, and non-religious. In this way, pupils would obtain an education designed to prepare them to be citizens of an intercultural world committed to feminism, and anti-neo-liberal and post-capitalist views.

Keywords*: Critical Education, Resistance Pedagogy, Anti-Neo-Liberal and Post-Capitalist Education, Inclusive Education.*

Introduction

The days of critical theory, of emancipation pedagogies and liberation philosophies are in the past. Modern capitalism in the 21st century has brought us into a time dominated by neo-liberalism, founded on the teaching of egotism and the ideology of personal merit which stir up competitive individualism and blame victims for their own unfortunate circumstances (Gee, & Lankshear, 1995; McLaren, & Farahmandpur, 1999).

The far-right regime of President Jair Bolsonaro is suppressing Pablo Freire's liberation pedagogy (Freire, 2005) in Brazil, the very country where it arose. In Spain, the teaching theories of Freinet, Makarenko, Dewey, Decroly, or Kilpatrick are forgotten or ignored, while educational reforms are discussed with multinational technology and communication companies, like Microsoft, I.B.M., Google, Facebook, or Spain's Telefónica (Sellar, & Cole, 2017). Collective movements for educational renewal languish while there is a proliferation of "star teachers" offering "TED" talks that go viral on social media. The latest fashions in education are hailed as if they were the last word on schooling. In Spain, these revolutionary trends tend to go by their allegedly "cool" and therefore more "saleable" English names, for example, "gamification", the "flipped classroom" and "mindfulness".

The integral organizations of the neo-liberal economic system such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, or the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, set the tone for educational systems all round the world. They classify countries using rating systems based on standardized assessments designed by their experts, for instance, the

Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) or the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS). The main banks and investment groups, including so called vulture funds (private equity), have brought out educational programs across Europe aimed at training teachers and pupils in entrepreneurship and financial investment. In Spain, its armed forces have signed agreements with Education Ministries of various autonomous communities to provide training in "patriotism" and military values in schools while the Roman Catholic Church tenaciously insists that classes in religious dogma be taught both in schools and in teacher-training institutes (Díez Gutiérrez, 2019; 2020). The advance of neo-liberal ideology as well as the return to neo-conservatism are making their mark on Spanish educational policy.

Neoliberalism then, is an ideology that imposes itself on the world as if it were a self-evident truth. In fact, we are facing what is often termed a "battle for the narrative" and as such it is a fight for power on a new front: our minds.

The neo-liberal narrative is not just about its ideology and economic theory, which provide the foundations and scaffolding for our current free-market capitalist system. It is also about generating a social imagination, a "truth regime" or "common sense" arising from a shared world vision.
All we need to do is to listen in to any conversation on the average high street, watch any Netflix series or Hollywood film, or read a best-selling book to confirm that the majority of the population believes that market forces are the most efficient (perhaps the only) mechanism for organizing the economy. People believe in the law of supply and demand, and the sacred status of private property. They think that the state is a sluggish bureaucratic apparatus that should be cut back as far as possible and should not intervene in the economy, except when banks or other major financial institutions would otherwise face

bankruptcy. As Susan George has remarked, nowadays, taking a stance against the unfettered free market is as bad as taking a stance against mom and apple pie (George, 2001, 229).

It is naïve to ask who taught people this worldview. In truth, it has not been *taught* in the full sense, that is by teachers in the context of a formal, institutionalized teaching program. Nevertheless, it has been learned and internalized by the majority of people simply by the daily processes of socialization: at work, at school, due to a person's social status, and through the media. What was once an ideology has become a doctrine. As such, the neo-liberal project is able to implant its ideas ever more forcefully. By appearing rational, encapsulated in a set of systematic reasoned arguments, principals and mantras that can be repeated incessantly, neoliberalism has established itself as the only plausible reality on offer. Of course, there will always be pockets of resistance and confrontation, spaces where autonomy and alternative thought still exist (Holloway, 2010), unfortunately, the influence of such oases seems to be largely absent from the educational policies and practices current in Spain today.

The Hegemony of Neo-Liberal Ideology

Neo-liberal ideology has thus become modern capitalism's "tool of reason". People barely realize that they live submerged within the capitalist model, that we have been thoroughly socialized to it and our ways of thinking and understanding the world so shaped to accommodate its reality.

The available media outlets all stress the same news items while remaining silent on others effectively working in concert with the repetitive discourses of politics and advertising that reinforce the standards and habits into which people are socialized. This process pushes the population to accept a specific model of

consumption, with its concordant expectations, desires and hopes. Furthermore, formal education, from kindergarten to university, teaches people to compete, to be entrepreneurial, and to accept the market as the model for all human relationships. Meanwhile, the film and videogame industry, especially that of the Hollywood mold, depict society simplistically in terms of heroes and villains; good and evil; "our boys" and the enemy. Thus, our whole social and educational environment contributes to creating, maintaining, justifying, and sustaining a narrow, neo-liberal line of thought. Dissidents in this system, the "divergent", are no more than peripheral minorities, considered to be fanatical, anti-system radicals, tolerated as a counterpoint to the dominant line of thought so long as they have no impact on the model's central core.

Michel Foucault (1975) pointed out that current western societies have given up a disciplinarian model of social control. Rather, they have perfected subtler tools for social control requiring the "victims" themselves to accept, and even actively collaborate in their own control:

> The line is that if dominant groups are to exercise control they must convince many people that the maps of reality put forward by those holding the greatest economic, political and cultural power are clearly better than any alternatives. Dominant groups achieve this by linking such maps with people's capacities for good judgement and altering the very sense of the concepts and structures of feelings that accompany them. These provide the centres around which hopes, fears and dreams relating to society gravitate (Apple, 2002, 237).

Education and socialization are therefore the battlefield for a strategic struggle, and it is here that the forces of critical education should be mustered.

The question is then how do we offer the new generation some kind of alternative? That is, what other forms of thought exist that are not colonized by the blinkered vision of neo-liberal capitalism?

Education as Moral and Political Practice

As suggested by Giroux (2002) and McLaren (2015), critical education considers every educational process to be a form of political intervention in the world and something that has the potential either to transform society or maintain the status quo. Education should not be understood as merely a technical practice, rather, it should be considered as a moral and political practice. This is because learning is not exclusively concerned with the processing of received knowledge, but also its transformation as a part of a broader struggle for social rights, solidarity, and a fairer, better world. In the analysis and transformation of the prevailing economic and political model the education of the younger generation should not be allowed to fall by the wayside (Díez-Gutiérrez & Rodríguez, 2021). This would only serve to imbue them with the belief that there are no alternatives to this world, that it is not possible to achieve true social democracy, i.e., democracy that is both fully socially responsible and genuinely participatory.

Hence, one of the core challenges for today's teachers and the educational community as a whole is to provide pupils with both suitable conditions the essential skills and knowledge to combat neo-liberal indoctrination. Young people need to learn to recognize anti-democratic power structures, and the repressive way in which ideological vested interests have invaded not just schools, but also the popular culture in the form of mass media (such as television, radio, videogames, social networks, or music). In addition, they must learn to inquire into injustice's deeper causes and to fight against systematic inequalities of wealth, class, ethnicity, or gender, so connecting their school

work with matters concerning the real social and political fabric of their own environment and indeed our whole society.

Critical educators now need to move from critical theory to critical practice. They must "get their hands dirty", get involved, compassionately, with the sufferings of those around them. They must bring to bear a more open and committed pedagogy that connects classrooms to the challenges faced by the social movements on the streets with the aim of rethinking the current social order of which they undeniably form part (Fischman & McLaren, 2002-2003). This rethinking must take place on many levels and follows from many previous social movements: the feminist challenge to patriarchy; multiculturalism's confrontation of racism; the fight for recognition of sexual diversity; the decolonization of international and social relationships; and not forgetting the more specific and material battles for social justice such as those connected to the right to a home (protesting evictions) or the defense of the commons (for example, education, health, or pension provision).

In fact, the study of social, ecological and life problems as part of the curriculum as objects of study has a long history in critical education. Education is a project that helps people become citizens. It is a project for democracy and citizenship, which implies the impossibility of separating education and politics. Although the conservative, neo-liberal right wing would, of course, identify any policy not their own as indoctrination. Indeed, a society's opportunities for conceiving, realizing and directing alternative models for development are to a large extent linked to the form and content of the education available to the population of that society. It is not just a case of transmitting cultural heritage to the new generations, but rather of giving them the chance to construct other worthier and fairer ways of thinking, thus, allowing them to rebuild the world. Hence, educators should strive to provide pupils with the skills and knowledge

needed to both to question the habits and customs they inherit, and, when the time comes, to shoulder their responsibility to intervene in the world as active and committed agents.

As Freire commented:

> education can function as a tool used to facilitate the integration new generations into the logic of the current system and their conformity with it. Alternatively, it can become an exercise in freedom, a means by which men and women can relate critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in transforming the world (Freire, 1985, 15).

For some teachers, this may look like a violation of academic neutrality, a politicization of the educational process. However, while educators may be said to act fairly, they can never be neutral or impartial. Their actions are always markedly political and interventionist in view of the effects they produce in terms of knowledge acquisition, the experiments that they organize in classes, the priorities they set, the choices they make, even the future they anticipate. Education is a practice rooted in an ethical and political view that attempts to take pupils beyond what they already know (Giroux, 2008).

Thus, it is not a case of investigating whether education has become contaminated by politics. Rather, it should be noted that education is willy-nilly a space of politics and power structures, whether we like it or not. Further, it should not be forgotten or ignored that education is a social practice operating within a society characterized by unequal power relations. The crucial ideological function of what was originally termed positivism in social sciences, and which would now be recognized as neo-liberal, was the "depoliticizing" social science and education, and their presentation as the neutral, objective domain of professionals, experts, and technicians. Nowadays it is clear that this

biased myth of neutrality has been used to maintain and consolidate a specific ideological view of reality that supports and reproduces established power structures. As stated by Torres (2017), depoliticizing education means preventing teachers, families, and pupils themselves from questioning their responsibilities concerning the degree to which the school system contributes to shaping society. It prevents them imagining a society that is more egalitarian, fairer, more participatory, and compassionate, in other words, a democratic society. Hence, teachers must embrace the responsibility for ensuring that every citizen is politically aware, critical thinker committed to social justice.

Critical Education: a Pedagogy of Resistance and a Path to the Alternatives

Critical education has sometimes focused more on teaching resistance to neo-liberal doctrine than on the imagining of alternatives or enabling pupils to structure their thoughts around different parameters. However, it is only by attempting this very thing that we can hope to provide an educational experience committed to equality and inclusivity, which holds education as a right for all, guaranteed by society through the state. Such an education would help ensure the realization of a democratic, inclusive, non-religious public school system capable of shaping intercultural world citizens committed to alternatives: replacing the patriarchy with feminism, challenging neo-liberalism and capitalism (Drucker, 2012; Hudis, 2019). There is at present a serious choice to be made. Currently, two ideological, social, and political projects are making advances on the world stage. These two projects represent two radically different ways of understanding human beings, socio-economic relationships, and education.

The first has its roots in a capitalist economic and social model and is based on the neo-liberal ideological concept of competitive egotism (Greaves, Hill, & Maisuria, 2007). In this ideology, educational policy need take no account of

collective interests and the common good. It advocates a world of harsh competition, where the market decides who will prevail in the incessant struggle for survival and where there are no mechanisms for protecting the common well-being. In the neo-liberal world, we start from the axiom that people are individually responsible for their potential success or failure and whatever each one of us achieves in life depends exclusively on our own merit and personal effort. Only the fittest will survive, since the weak and the poor either do not know how to put in the effort to triumph, or do not want to do so. Poverty and inequality are inevitable, but can be alleviated somewhat through pity, in the form of charitable works funded by benevolent foundations or non-governmental organizations. This system backs a standardized educational program, that is elitist, and governed by prevailing social norms; which serves the interests of the predominant power and produces a student body tightly bound to the social and cultural mores associated with the powers that be (Giroux, 2008).

This neo-liberal model, despite the growing inequality it has triggered around the world, continues to be defended by its devotees. Where education was once thought of as a guaranteed right, neo-liberalism has converted it into a business opportunity for big corporations and special interest groups (in Spain, these are primarily linked to the Roman Catholic Church). It imposes, with ever more vehemence, a school management model that treats schools as if they were businesses run for profitability and cash dividends. This model consigns to oblivion one of the basic foundations of education, which is, that it should aim to achieve progress for all, not just the lucky few. In contrast, the alternative model has democratic objectives, is inclusive and sensitive to social context and the concept of equality.

The alternative is founded on the belief that the purpose of education is to encourage the personal intellectual, moral, socio-affective, and psychomotor development of every pupil. It aims to shape pupils into free thinking individuals, who love and enjoy learning, have independence of judgement, are creative, and take joint responsibility for the lives of others and the sustainability of the planet. It strives to mold citizens who are active and critical, show solidarity, are driven by democratic principles and are committed to improving the society in which they live (Moreno, 2016; Torres, 2017). It seeks to improve *all* public schools and make them acceptable to all families, rather than instigating selectivity and competition. This approach would not only be less expensive but would also preserve the social purpose of education of this model. This alternative system views education as a common good, with families as participants not customers, as co-creators in the social construction of schools to the benefit of both their own children and those of others.

The view of education as a right compels states and international organizations to guarantee that all the inhabitants of the planet have the opportunity to receive a basic education. As established at World Forum on Education in Dakar in 2000, this implies that every government is obliged to ensure the provision of a basic public education system that is free at the point of delivery such that that no child is denied access to education because they are unable to pay for it.

This is the first step, the essential common platform from which to launch our post-capitalist critical education project. The community's duty is then to guarantee the right of every individual to the best education on the basis of our shared humanity, regardless of any other consideration. The only way to achieve this is with a single, public network of schools, and with the undertaking that no tax-derived public resources are diverted into funding private options. This would ensure the availability of sufficient publicly funded

school places at every level and in every form of education from birth onwards. In addition, it would provide an education that respects and benefits youngsters offering equality not simply of access but of opportunity throughout the educational process, from start to finish.

This type of publicly funded school system is particularly important for those who lack the means to obtain an education any other way (Fernández, 2008; Hedges et al., 2019; Hursh, 2005; Luengo & Saura, 2012). Moreover, it is unique in its ability to ensure equality and promote social cohesion, because it respects everyone's right to attain the highest level of training, and educates people in the mutually beneficial project of citizenship. Furthermore, it is the only type of schooling committed to the common good and public service, immune to the demands of vested interests linked to particular ideologies or commercial interests.

Thus, it is an urgent necessity to rebuild a concept of education as a public right and a common good, both in day-to-day "common sense" speech and in political programs. To avoid education being seen more and more as a commodity, we must push back against the encroachment of private vested interests and the ideology of business management that are currently attempting to colonize education with their neo-liberal discourse (Amigot & Martínez, 2010; Laval, 2003; Torres, 2017).

Education in a Context of Social Justice

Having outlined the first step towards a post-capitalist critical education system, it is apparent that although this step is essential it is not sufficient because such a model for publicly funded schooling cannot be developed in a context of social inequality. While it is possible to dream of an ideal school in an unequal society, in reality, it is not feasible. This is confirmed by the fact that it is

societies with the greatest cohesion and integration that have the best and most equitable educational systems (Martínez-Usarralde et al., 2017).

The Finnish model of education, for instance, which ranks so highly in the PISA reports, has been made possible partly because Finland has always invested far more in education than Spain has done, thus there are far fewer pupils per class in the Finish system, but above all because Finland has a more redistributive tax system which spreads wealth more equally and there is a better settlement between capital and labor. There is a direct relationship between social hierarchy and school results, between social justice and educational success (Melgarejo, 2005; Cuenca, 2012).

As Melgarejo (2005) notes, concerning the Finnish education system, state social welfare payments given to families enable a balance between work and family life, and in addition, allow parents to focus more on their children's educations. The author highlights as particularly important the child allowances given to mothers for each of their offspring, combined with social protection ensured by the provision of pre-school education, and special hospitals for children under the age of seven. Further, the infrastructure that supports education is equally invaluable, for example, Finnish libraries have extensive resources and are open at times when families can take their children to them. Hence, in Finland, unlike Spain, it was found that children spend more time reading newspapers than watching television or playing videogames and three out of every four Finnish fifteen-year-olds stated that they read every day for the mere pleasure of reading. Indeed, the Finnish youngsters reported that television and videogames were not among their daily habits, instead, a great deal of their free time was spent with friends discussing schoolwork – something that seemed fascinating to them.

It has been shown that the complexity of socio-educational intervention only appears to decrease in social contexts where there is a high level of social equality and equity (Cuenca, 2012). In fact, Melgarejo's Finnish study shows there is no way of separating education from democracy, from society, or from equality. The principles of Finnish education are clear: equality of educational opportunities for all without distinction; active, conscious and systematic co-education; provision completely free of charge; no separation by levels of attainment at any stage in the educational process; local government taking a major role in managing education; strong co-operation between the various tiers of education and other social agents; individualized educational and social support for pupils with learning difficulties; assessment envisaged in terms of personal development, which neither classifies students nor imposes selective tests; teachers with considerable independence (but also considerable responsibility) and undertaking life-long professional development; and a socio-constructivist approach to the task of teaching. There are scarcely any differences in level of achievement between educational establishments in Finland and private schools are few and far between. If a school lies in a district with social problems, it automatically receives a larger budget than others, as it is felt that support should go where most needed, rather than be allocated as a function of results (Rissanen, 2004).

Two elements key to the Finnish success story appear to be, attention to diversity and confidence in the comprehensive education system (the same curriculum for all pupils for as long as possible). Nevertheless, in recent years, Finland and the other Nordic countries have suffered the neo-liberal onslaught (Hill & Maisuria, 2017). This has put the whole system in question due to the adoption of ever more market-oriented concepts and strategies such as, efficiency, competition, decentralization, governing by detailed objectives,

control, privatization, and profile schools (Dovemark et al., 2018; Imsen et al., 2017; Nikkola, 2020; Wiborg, 2013).

An education system that does not incorporate the principle of equality cannot call itself high quality. Similarly, an educational policy that does not view quality and fairness as two sides of the same coin is unacceptable. However, when speaking of fairness, we must not simply focus on the equality of opportunity to access education. We must also consider the necessary purpose of seeking equality of outcome, by focusing on inclusivity and the provision of adequate support and resources to address the needs of all pupils so that every individual can reach their maximum possible potential (Kettunen & Prokkola, 2021).

Thus, it must not be forgotten that if we really want a better educational system, we must take a much broader approach to how education policies function, including, a consideration of state policies concerning social services. The experience of countries that manage to sustainably maintain high quality education systems demonstrates the need for high levels of progressive investment over decades. Furthermore, their policies around caring for children ensure that families are provided with many basic public services at no cost. To sum up, these countries stand out as realistic models for ways of building fairer and more cohesive societies; societies that invest in human and social priorities rather than in profitability and business dividends.

Towards an Anti-Capitalist and Post-Neo-Liberal Educational Landscape
Bartolomé (2008) once commented that for a pedagogic framework to be both democratic and critical it must incorporate a movement for transformation that strives to combat the very social order that gives rise to communities that are impoverished and bereft of rights. Considering the present context and previous

discussion, this thesis seems entirely apposite. In this way, the starting point for any global educational project must be a global political plan. As Wrigley states (2007), it is clear that any effort to improve schools without a drastic reduction in child poverty is like trying to climb up the down escalator. Moreover, it is well known that pupil failure at school is tightly linked to the poor socio-economic conditions in which they live. This implies that the less poverty there is, the fewer pupils will fail at school (Trujillo, 2018). The professional struggle of teachers to raise achievement levels necessarily requires a political struggle for a more equal society.

An education system fit for a society with a post-capitalist, post-colonial (or post-imperialist), and post-patriarchal agenda demands a model of education consistent with such a society. It must not be forgotten that the three crucial factors at the root of social, political, and cultural domination are capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy. Hence, there must be simultaneous advances against these three factors, i.e., towards models of society that are at once, anti- or post-capitalist, post-colonial, and post-patriarchal. In this way society will in overcome and definitively abandon these structures of oppression and domination (Bauman, 2013) so enabling the central goal of education to be framed in terms of developing human beings and indeed, communities, that are similarly anti-capitalist, anti-colonial and anti-patriarchal.

Such a post-capitalist, post-colonial and post-patriarchal education system must be formed around at least four basic principles (Moreno et al., 2012). The first is universality, or the right of all citizens to be educated without any discrimination on grounds of age, sex, financial status, ethnic group, or legal status. The second is humanity, that is, the full development of an individual's personality to the fullest extent in every sense, setting aside dogmatism and traditional prohibitions. The third is civil polity, since only an education based

on human rights and fundamental freedoms can teach its students to live together in a society that respects and guarantees these rights and freedoms. Finally, there is independence, as demanded by Giner de los Ríos (1889), so that, throughout life, all people can continue learning and making active choices about the direction of their own lives for themselves, such that they are also capable of improving the world in which they live. Furthermore, the education system advocated here would also need to assimilate Giroux's radical pedagogy (Giroux, 2001). This framework implies listening to the poor and other subordinated groups habitually considered to be "without a voice" and working with them to give them a voice and the agency to narrate their own stories and so subvert the oppressive power relationships in place. Achievement of this goal would require elements of the revolutionary critical pedagogy of McLaren (2016) which explicitly links education with a transformational counter capitalist political project (McLaren & Monzo, 2019).

The discourse of criticism needs to give way to that of possibilities. This means we must be able to imagine a future that is better than the present. Education is one area where neo-liberal practices and ideas are present, but it is also one of the tools at our disposal to effect social transformation. If our education systems do not address the issues arising from poverty, such as classism, environmental degradation, and the resurgence of racism, it will not be possible to maintain the tolerant society in which we now live let alone guarantee its continuation for future generations. This can happen, as Tarabini (2020, 153) has said, via policies of redistribution, recognition, and care between and within centres of education and which, while they do not depend on individual schools or particular teachers, these are needed as invaluable allies.

The Alternative: a Critical Post-Capitalist Education

The principles discussed would take the form of a public education system democratically planned by the elected representatives of the citizenry. Furthermore, it would be directed at the common good (Díez Gutiérrez, 2019), rather than the interests of those who control the "free market" with an eye to their own vested interests (whether financial or ideological). This system would provide free education from pre-school to university so guaranteeing the essential right to an education for everybody in society.

This education system would have as its chief aims, firstly, teaching the younger generations to live in a spirit of sharing, care and respect for others, and secondly, to help youngsters become responsible citizens committed to building a fairer and better world. It would re-assert the absolute priority of human beings over financial profit, and would fight the logic of the marketplace. It would have the objective of developing freedom of thought, creativity, individual emancipation, self-fulfillment, and both individual and collective happiness. It would be a non-religious education respecting freedom of conscience and of belief. It would defend shared moral values that unite humankind (human rights), and would educate without dogma, indeed, without any form of indoctrination (Delgado, 2006); there would be no religious acts and no religious symbols would have a place in public educational establishments.

This would be inclusive education (Mittler, 2012), promoting maximum equality, while recognizing the diversity of the entire population, thus ruling out any attempt to segregate pupils with difficulties. Seeing differences as opportunities, this system would envisage measures to provide the educational community and individual teachers with the requisite skills to approach diversity in a positive way.

This education system would be pre-emptive, encouraging early-years schooling, even from birth. It would be totally free and focused solely on educational need, not on forcing attendance. It would have the triple function of socializing, compensating for inequalities, and the achievement of the best possible learning outcomes at every consecutive stage of education (González-Betancor & López-Puig, 2015).

This democratic education system (Collins et al., 2019; Tiainen et al., 2019) would guarantee the direct and effective participation of communities in comanaging schools thereby building authentic "schools for democracy". In such schools, gatherings for reflection, dialogue-based deliberations and consensual agreements would be a standard strategy, making pupils co-responsible for the educational dynamics of their institution and bringing into being a genuine educational community. In this way, educational interventions would be formulated and agreed upon with the explicit participation of both families and pupils themselves.

In this system, the understanding of headship would not be based on business management strategies, but rather on collegiality between groups of education professionals. These professionals would be the democratically elected from among the educational community, and would facilitate the creation of distributed leadership structures within that community (Bolivar, 2015).

This vision of education is about changing and improving the world, starting with its own environs (Lear & Abbott, 2019) and it would be open to interaction and collaboration with the media and social agents in its surroundings in recognition of the fact that education is increasingly dependent on what goes on outside classrooms, as well as inside. Educational communities in this system would promote teaching projects aimed at genuinely improving the living

conditions in their districts, cities, or towns, transforming their surroundings making everything a potential element to facilitate learning.

This multinational education system would promote the pedagogic autonomy of schools, and also of local and regional bodies. It would recognize diversity, so as to match the process of teaching and learning to the context and the characteristics of a school's surroundings. Simultaneously, it would re-enforce systems for collaboration and encourage institutional co-operation on shared projects that would further foster unity.

In this education system, assessment would be seen as a tool for improvement, involving all participants and about all participants with input from all, whether they be teachers, pupils, families or the administration (Hopkins, 2019). It would be used to gain a knowledge of how educational processes were evolving and developing, what was being achieved and the difficulties encountered. It would avoid examinations and resits, which merely encourage rote learning. Further it would also reject external standardized tests that lead to a monotonous homogeneity of teaching approaches, as well as supporting the selectivity that makes equality of opportunity well-nigh impossible. In effect, this would be a democratic form of assessment, aimed at analysis, reflection and decision-making intended to improve the whole process, and involving all those concerned in any improvements deemed necessary.

This list of principles and practices for a post-capitalist education system needs to be translated into a compatible curriculum, methodology, and initial training program for future teachers.

Considering the curriculum first, it would take a critical perspective and its contents would be relevant and meaningful to pupils. This is because, it would

link the knowledge pupils acquire in school with their own real-life problems; teachers would be able to set intriguing challenges to motivate pupils and involve them in searching for creative and innovatory answers to difficulties they themselves might face (Apple & Beane, 2002). Instead of concentrating exclusively on content needed to pass a constant stream of exams and resits, the curriculum would be structured in such as was as to encourage research and the implementation of projects aimed at improving community life through helping others.

The curriculum would be democratic. It would not be subject to the whims of publishers or the desires of an administration aiming to homogenize and distil everything into a set of easily measurable skills and standards. Instead pupils would be involved in negotiating and agreeing with teachers what content should be covered. Through a process of critically questioning the existing curriculum and researching the realities of their own surroundings pupils could ultimately create an alternative, complementary curriculum. Such a democratic curriculum (Torres, 2011) invites pupils to cast off their passive role as consumers of knowledge and to take on an active part as "manufacturers of meaning". With the assistance of their teachers, they could even learn to analyze the "hidden curriculum" that is constructed each day in their classrooms, schools, and social contexts, thus unveiling the financial, social, political, and ideological mechanisms of power.

This would be a global rather than a utilitarian curriculum. It would be flexible in its use of spaces, such as classrooms; time, organizing learning and teaching in an global, interdisciplinary way; and the delineation of subject areas, avoiding the compartmentalization of subjects, instead highlighting the links between them. Furthermore, this global curriculum would not be solely based on utilitarian, specialist, or applied learning to the detriment of creative subjects

and the development of critical thinking. Instead, it would respond to a social agenda aimed at addressing the new challenges confronting humankind: globalization, environmental degradation, financial and economic problems, or how to enhance democracy.

This curriculum would have an unbiased gender perspective. This would require significant control of teaching materials, language used and the avoidance of stereotypes so as prevent the appearance of sexist attitudes or gendered relations of dominance. This will require mindful, systematic, and active co-education. The curriculum would also value sexual diversity, promoting forms of sex-education that challenge heterosexual stereotypes and LGBTQ+ phobic attitudes (Sleeter, 2018).

It would be a curriculum aimed at educating for peace, ecological co-existence, and human rights that would prepare pupils to live in harmony with their fellow citizens and with nature. It would take an ecological approach advocating degrowth (Díez Gutiérrez, 2010; Singh, 2019), so as to build a new, fairer world, characterized by peaceful relationships and freedom from war, which would be genuinely respectful of human rights and committed to enhancing democracy.

Turning to the issue of methodology, what is required here is an active, experience-based, participatory teaching methodology, practiced by thoughtful, self-reflective professionals. Such a methodology would ensure not only the right to learn successfully, but also the educational success of all pupils. In turn, it would drive further methodological and organizational changes, which, focusing on inclusivity would respond ever more effectively to pupil diversity, with special attention given to those with the greatest difficulties.

This methodology would value mistakes as inherent to learning, a way of enabling pupils to reconstruct the learning process and find alternatives when they encounter difficulties and obstacles. It would also stimulate freedom, curiosity, critical thinking, feelings, and fun.

Co-operative learning is another decisive feature of the proposed teaching methodology, not only as a specific strategy for enhancing academic achievement, but also as part of a conceptualization of social interrelationships (Torrego, & Negro, 2014).

This approach implies encouraging a pedagogy based on interactive groups, on whole-school project work aimed at interacting with the wider community, and classroom and institutional management styles that are democratic and co-operative (Winn, 2015). However, it also requires organizing teachers' time such that they can plan and work together, observe one another and learn from each other by opening up their classes and sharing experiences and good teaching practices. This necessarily entails continuous, ongoing professional training.

Finally, considering initial teacher training, this should provide teachers with a critical view of dominant ideologies, contact with, and the ability to build effective anti-hegemonic discourse to combat and change oppressive practices (Lazarus, 2019). A core part of the teacher training provided in Faculties of Education must be the development of an active, experiential, inclusive, participatory methodology that respects diversity, fosters a co-operative pedagogy, and encourages teachers to reflect on their own practices. Further, practicing teachers with recognized expertise should take a hand in the process of training future professionals. Likewise, representatives from the current body of in-service teachers should collaborate in the process of reviewing university programs of study for the training of both primary and secondary school

teachers (Terrón, 2013). This training would ensure future teachers had high expectations of pupils and their families and this, in turn, would enable teachers to more easily accept each and all in their individuality.

In this way, the education system proposed here, would go beyond the classroom and the school to involve its surrounding context as well (Ocampo, 2019). It is not just the education system that educates people. The media, cities, families, the social environment, all have a powerful socializing impact. Thus, it is crucial to involve all social agents in educating the young. The approach to education should extend beyond the thresholds of schools and universities to permeate the whole of society contributing to the creation of motivating and inclusive cities and educational and cultural environments that function as schools for democracy, co-existence, dialogue and good citizenship. In this vision, municipal education boards would facilitate educational networks to promote participation and collaboration among the social and educational organizations in their locality. This process would, in turn, encourage and enable the educational community to participate in the managing of specific local problems (Figueras, 2005; Tonucci, 2009).

However, it is not just a question of thinking about the overall structure of the education system. There must also be some consideration of the direction in which we want to go. Nichols and Berliner (2007, 36) claim that the fundamental aim of education:

> should be to ensure the highest possible percentage of eighteen-year-olds who are politically and socially committed. [They state that] rather than the marks they might get in maths or science, it is much more important that the rising generation should be involved in upholding real democracy and building a fairer society for those most in need of it: the young, the sick, the elderly, the unemployed, the impoverished, illiterates, the hungry and the helpless. Schools that cannot produce citizens who are

politically active and socially useful should be identified and their failure rates made public in newspapers.

Thus, it is now, more than ever, necessary to structure a broad area of agreement in defense of an anti-neo-liberal and post-capitalist model of education aimed at serving the common good (Varvarousis and Kallis, 2017). In this endeavor, we need to build a solidly grounded discourse to counter and fight against the neo-Orwellian language used in neo-liberal discourse (Holligan, 2020). Its rhetorical ambiguities which talk about free choice of school, governance, financial independence, competitiveness, entrepreneurship, or talents, simply hide market-oriented neo-liberal vested interests. In this way, what should be a right is converted into a money-making opportunity, and the neo-conservative social model that segregates and excludes is perpetuated, reinforcing ever more, the most authoritarian (Neary, 2017), competitive, academic, and religious aspects of education.

To sum up, our model for public schools must be linked to a political program of transformation that corresponds to the model of society we want to construct. In other words, it should be fairer, more equitable, and happier. Here in Spain, this means that Spanish educators and society at large should pool their efforts and share initiatives directed against the educational policies of neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism (Ford, 2016). These policies, it must be said, constitute the most serious attack on the public education since Spain emerged from Franco's dictatorship and are pushing it back into a nineteenth-century mold. Further, using the excuse that there has been a financial crisis, neo-liberal elements are attempting to turn public education into a subsidiary network, providing primarily only for the most deprived groups and those with the greatest learning difficulties, and that merely requires attendance regardless of what may or may not be learnt. We must combat the rise of fascism in our

classrooms, deconstruct and critically attack the neo-liberal message that normalizes the ideology of capitalism and move towards an educational model that resists and transforms the effects of capitalism. We need an educational model that genuinely contributes to success at school, in life, and in society and which does so for all pupils; which shapes people who are more equal, freer, more critical, and more creative. We need an educational system that promotes teaching and learning with a critical revolutionary conscience and consolidates a socially just, eco-feminist society (Álvarez, 2021; Puleo, 2017) opening up the possibility that future generations may inherit a better planet than that handed down to their parents.

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