

CEPAL

Review

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UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA

SANTIAGO, CHILE / DECEMBER 1983

CEPAL

Review

Number 21

Santiago, Chile

December 1983

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A historical perspective of Latin American education

*Gregorio Weinberg**

The first part of this study aims to justify on the one hand the validity and interest of the historical dimension and, on the other, the use of categories of analysis such as development 'models' or 'styles'.

The period of time covered —two centuries— reveals that both the prevailing conditions and the educational ideas in Latin America display very different features and characteristics depending on the countries and circumstances in question, and many of them still persist to this very day, converted into traditions or continuing to carry weight through institutional or legal inertia.

Indeed, the proper understanding of these processes only seems possible if they are referred to the implicitly accepted development 'models' or 'styles' and the ideologies behind them. Certain significant characteristics —some of them lasting— could be inferred from their analysis. Thus, it may be noted that many proposals could not be carried out at the time because of the absence of agents which espoused them, that is to say, because of the lack of social forces willing to support them until they overcame the obstacles standing in the way of their realization. Prestigious transplanted 'models' —sometimes of proven efficiency in other regions— failed because they had not been adequately rethought nor faced up to the new realities and because the asynchronous aspects involved had not been noted in time, all of which helped on many occasions to hinder or prevent the proposed processes of change.

Thus, everything seems to indicate that overcoming many of the present maladjustments, contradictions or shortcomings of the educational system or of the relations between this system and society calls for the undertaking of studies in order to prepare models which are satisfactory from the technical point of view and viable in practice.

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Introduction

One of the varied facets of the concept of 'dependence', and perhaps one of the least studied, is that concerning the persistence of past ideas; in this respect, it does not seem overbold to assert that many of the present educational systems —although it is quite true that they have been modernized many times— still retain rigidities in line with the timeworn ideas with which they are imbued. Thus, and without for the moment going more deeply into the matter, it may be said that this 'dependence' can be seen in the maintenance of ideas such as those which confuse primary or elementary population with popular education, which continue to view the secondary school as a state leading more or less preponderantly to the university, and which continue to see the latter as virtually the only expression of the tertiary level. The extent to which these preconceptions (which many would call prejudices) are maintained represents a problem of enormous importance which calls, among many other things, for an analysis of the original formation of these ideas and the achievements inspired by them, which are now in a process of veritable crystallization. Here, however, rather than seeking to deal with these shortcomings, it is important to bring out the significance of the historical perspective, since this, among other contributions, highlights the validity of many problems: that is to say, its interest goes beyond the academic field in promoting understanding of one of the mainstreams of contemporary reality.

In recent years, the concept of education itself has been notably enriched by the addition of new dimensions to its study. Leaving aside the strictly quantitative aspects, it seems most interesting here to examine the outstanding role that must be assigned to several different concepts: development, planning, and, more recently, the concept of development 'models' or 'styles'. On the one hand, this enables us to rethink both the significance and the scope of the educational process, while on the other it makes it possible to establish new relations, determine projections, and analyse immediate and longer-term consequences. This broadening of its ambit provides us with new conceptual instruments for the deeper study of all the implications involved, while at the same time it encourages the possible renovation of teaching and training

activities, which have also been somewhat neglected.¹

The concepts of the development 'model' or 'style' which will be used as a framework for seeking greater understanding of some significant moments in the Latin American process have already given rise to a copious literature,² enriched more recently by a study by Marshall Wolfe (printed in this issue of *CEPAL Review*), which speaks of 'models' when planners use these to order their proposals, and 'myths' when the latter are widely disseminated in order to create an active consensus in favour of particular directions of change and particular sacrifices. This pair of concepts — 'models' and 'myths' — undoubtedly greatly enriches the understanding of this historical process of education.

Although the ideas of the development 'model' or 'style' referred to do favour, as we have already said, the understanding of the processes and also, of course, that of the contradictions inherent in them, this in no way justifies overlooking the particular features of their application. Thus, in dealing with a universe as broad as that of education, it is impossible to leave aside the asynchronism or dephasing between the different levels of ideas, legislation and actual educational conditions which constitutes a factor of distortions usually left out of the reckoning. Thus, when rethought in the light of certain 'models', we see more clearly the contradictions existing on *one and the same level*, and these are further aggravated when the analysis moves to the study of the relation *between* the different levels. Maintaining that the ideas do not fit in with the institutions, with the needs or

with the aspirations seems to have become a commonplace which does not call for further comment. But no less significant, perhaps, is the case of educational ideas placed at the service of 'models' which, for various reasons, did not achieve complete success or were failures in practice; the fact is that the ideas involved nearly always, but not invariably, anticipate the requirements raised by actual conditions, which put forward objectives that are difficult to achieve and sometimes prove impossible to realize because of the lack of 'agents' for making them a reality. As logic would seem to indicate, however, and as history confirms, in other circumstances ideas often lag behind the requirements that may be raised by a 'development model', above all when the adoption of the latter leads to faster change. It is also by no means infrequent that the debates in Latin America are really nothing but a transposition of those carried out in the developed countries, whose assumptions are taken for granted, so that questions which are perhaps of profounder importance are skimmed over or completely ignored. Examples of such questions are the problems raised by the existence of a substantial non-integrated indigenous population or the persistence of indigenous languages side by side with Spanish (or, to a much lesser degree, Portuguese), or, in other parts of the region, problems of land ownership or political rights in areas of immigration.

There are, of course, particular concepts of education, especially those underlying the formulation of medium or long-term proposals or policies (and frequently shared or even taken over by public opinion, or at least by a significant sector of it). As aspirations, they thus anticipate reality (as in the case of the idea of universal primary education), and sometimes this consensus, at least apparently, has succeeded in inspiring legislation which almost always remains unfulfilled up to the present in many Latin American countries; what happened was that both the ideas and the legislation generated a climate which was capable of promoting a sort of *confidence* (it seems preferable to use this word here rather than others which have perhaps more equivocal connotations such as 'faith' or 'mystique', although it may be agreed that all of them can serve as nourishment for the idea of the

¹Some of the ideas set forth here are developed in much greater detail in our study *Modelos educativos en el desarrollo histórico de América Latina*, prepared as part of the UNESCO/ECLA/UNDP Project on Development and Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (DEALC/5/Rev.1), Buenos Aires, February 1981.

²See Aníbal Pinto, "Styles of development in Latin America", pp. 99-130; Marshall Wolfe, "Approaches to development: who is approaching what?", pp. 131-172, and Jorge Graciarena, "Power and development styles. Some heterodox positions", pp. 173-194, in *CEPAL Review*, No. 1, first half of 1976. For a historian's point of view, see Fernand Braudel, *Ecrits sur l'histoire*, Paris, Flammarion, 1969, especially, pp. 64-72.

'myth': a concept which implies a considerable rationalization of the foregoing) in the importance of education as an effective factor of socialization, mobility, integration of the country and training for the occupations which the development model adopted called upon the various social groups to carry out. We must acknowledge, however, that all this generated a favourable attitude and inspired initiatives, while at the same time giving rise to a receptive if not positively creative disposition with regard to educational innovations. There are other circumstances, where the terms of this situation may have been reversed, especially when educational policies capable of formulating proposals instead go onto the defensive; when this happens, traditional positions are strengthened to the detriment of innovative attitudes, and bureaucratic criteria are consolidated at the expense of new ideas and of receptivity to new developments. In short, when ideas enter a blind alley—for it is no accident that the crisis of educational systems coincides with the crisis of the 'development models'—then instead of being propagated, ideas begin to shrink, and it seems appropriate in some cases to say that they lag behind the existing legislation and, of course, the obstinate realities. It is the 'style'—we must insist—which prevents us from committing anachronisms such as attributing to the spirit of certain past educational systems such purposes as increasing social mobility or reducing wage inequalities (criteria which only began to take shape a very few decades ago, and which even then stemmed from the so-called central countries), although it is true that they may have had underlying them a hypothetical equalitarian purpose which is perceptible above all in some places where slavery had previously been abolished, even if only formally.

In short, even at the risk of coming perilously close to a tautological assertion, it may be said that it is the 'model' which gives significance to the educational process, and it is as a function of it that the results should be appraised: in other words—but still taking a very similar approach—in order to understand the significance and objectives of a particular process it is necessary to have a proper understanding of the 'model' which serves as a starting point and the limitations which it imposes. Otherwise,

there is a danger of warping its significance, as in the case of measuring the achievements of an élitist university system simply by the increase in enrolments.

Without pretending in any way that there is any automatic correspondence between the 'style' or 'model' adopted and the educational system in force in each case, a summary historical review of the Latin American process offers some interesting conclusions which give grounds for reflecting on many of its dimensions and conditioning factors. Sometimes, too, it is even possible to draw inferences which can in one way or another legitimate criteria or proposals today.

Studies on education and development in Latin America—although they were not given this name, of course—go back considerably further in time than might at first sight be supposed, and in quite a few cases they even go back earlier than those carried out in some central countries. This apparent paradox is easily explained if we note that they almost always represent responses to the queries which thinkers in the New World were obliged to make regarding the requisites which should be fulfilled in order to attain the prestigious 'models' reputed, proposed or accepted by them as satisfactory goals or objectives.

Many elements therefore permit us to re-examine recent experiences or historical processes whose achievements or failures are all the more eloquent if referred to the context given by the concepts of the 'model' or 'style'. This means, then, that they have a high degree of doctrinal and instrumental interest because as well as giving a more precise idea of what each era understands by education, what values it assigns to it and what results it expects from the theoretical postulations and human and economic investments made, they also make it possible to prepare descriptions and diagnoses of new planes of the phenomenon of education, or at least factors which had previously gone unnoticed. Thus, for example, if they are set forth properly this will also help towards a better knowledge of the 'resistance to change' or 'force of inertia' observed both in the system and in the mentality of educators, or even more so, on the part of society in general. In short, these and other reasons which could be adduced fully justify, at least in our opinion, the use of these

analytical categories in order better to understand the questions which we are dealing with here.

It should also be recalled that here in Latin America the political factor undoubtedly had more significant weight than in other regions, because here the consolidation of the State was an essential prerequisite, whereas it was of relatively little importance in those countries which were at that time exercising a strong ideological influence, such as England, France and the United States, where this question had already been settled some time before, although not without conflicts. Exploring the role of education in Latin American history is not only important but also very revealing in many senses, and its importance therefore greatly exceeds that of the history of its specific institutions or achievements, since it must be seen in the light of a number of dimensions. These include the significance which it had as a generator of society and also the role which it played in structuring the forms of democracy which led —often with many ups and downs— from the nation to the State. It is only after the beginning of the decolonization process, generally speaking after the Second World War, that these problems reappear in the African and Asian countries which were then in the process of emancipation,

although in these cases the moment of independence is so close to that of economic development as to become completely merged with it, or at least with the attempts to assert their cultural identity and the efforts on behalf of the 'economic take-off'. It may be recalled, in contrast, that in Latin America the moment of emancipation was almost always separated by a number of decades from the time of accelerated development, with everything that that implies.

Also of interest, however, are the restrictions or limitations which are to be observed in the area of education, together with such features as its predominantly urban or masculine pattern, its asymmetrical or asynchronous growth, its lag, etc., since all these are data whose significance goes beyond that of mere theoretical considerations, because more often than not they help us to go to the root of questions which are still valid or to appraise trends as eloquent as those observed by Germán W. Rama, who identifies a contrapuntal relationship between policies of exclusion and participation. And it should be noted that this latter pair of concepts can acquire such wholeness as to make it capable of becoming an axis around which a large part of the educational process can be made to revolve.

I

The Enlightenment

Without going back too far in time, and limiting ourselves only to a few moments in the process of the historical development of Latin America (especially those moments which still maintain their validity) and to some of the background details of this development, let us see what significance the Enlightenment had as a prior phase to independence.

A characteristic feature of the 'model' of the Enlightenment is its modernizing spirit: secularization of life in general, with its natural consequences for society and administration; diversification of production, and cultural and educational updating, even though the concern

was limited above all to the purpose of training a ruling class. The Spanish, French and Italian influences took root in the New World after some delay, and this has apparently been a lasting feature, as it is to be observed in practically all the processes of ideological influence right up to the present day. This asynchronism is a constant element in the relation between the peripheral countries and the central or developed countries, and it manifests itself on such dissimilar levels as the receipt of patterns, values, fashions, technologies, aesthetic and intellectual flows, etc. Overcoming this lag is a practical and theoretical problem of enormous importance,

and it cannot be solved by adjusting ourselves to the pace of the developed countries, but rather by finding our own rhythm.

Throughout the colonial period, Spain imposed an educational policy which was functionally correct for the metropolis, as befitted the model of an imperial power, but was of adverse characteristics if viewed in the light of future American needs.

The prevailing authoritarian traditionalism explains some of the principles then in force ("no learning without tears", "children are tainted with original sin", etc.) which modern thinking and, later on, the Enlightenment, were to have so much trouble in uprooting. Generally speaking, it can be said that the educational and cultural guidelines were given from the Peninsula: it may be noted in this connection that the Laws of the Indies do not make any mention of elementary education, paying attention only to the other levels. Moreover, the varieties resulting from the different criteria with which these laws were applied do not seem very significant.

In Spain, the spirit of renewal always saw education as an instrument considered to be appropriate for effectively overcoming the shortcomings observed both in the field of economic activity and in that of social relations. The Enlightenment—a current of thinking in which education was a key factor—helped to undermine the rigid traditionalism and the deep-rooted principle of authority and, ultimately, to incorporate new concepts and activities in place of the previous ones. It may be noted that manual labour continued to be legally viewed as degrading and servile in Spain and its colonies up to 1783. In short, the followers of the Enlightenment were convinced of the need and the possibility for progress, understood as an impulse which would lead to the dissemination and permanent establishment of such ideals as happiness and freedom, without of course ignoring that of usefulness. And it was here that education played an outstanding role.

As modern ideas spread, the dysfunctionality of those which the metropolis sought to impose became more obvious, and this situation confirmed the backwardness of the system of education and its faulty adjustment to the needs

being posed by new times and more recent requirements. The critical spirit acted as a dissolving factor, and the new generations of creole settlers gradually took it over. To all this must also be added the serious consequences accompanying the expulsion of the Company of Jesus. On the one hand, this event was the result of the very dynamics of the process of secularisation of the State and the natural tendency towards the homogenization of its political, administrative and judicial structures, in which this religious group exercised particular influence. On the other hand, however, the disappearance of the Jesuits also meant the disappearance of a group which had been a champion of the established order and had had a great effect on extensive and very important sectors of the ruling class. The Jesuits occupied a predominant place in the educational system, and when they were expelled their substitution led to a considerable decline in the levels of quality reached and the methods applied, while the objectives pursued also became vaguer. Furthermore, the forced exile of hundreds of priests—many of whom were members of creole families with deep roots in their native land—helped to increase the number of critics and even of enemies of the colonial régime. From another point of view, it could be said that the expulsion of this religious order constitutes an early example of the 'brain drain' for political reasons, which we have seen repeated unfortunately in successive centuries. Furthermore, as was soon to be seen, the Crown did not have the professional staff needed to take over the work of an order which had such long-standing experience and whose primary purposes included precisely the formation of a ruling class among whose set of values faithfulness to the régime played a decisive role.

Many examples could be given to show the unsatisfactory conditions in which primary education operated. Eloquent testimony of this is to be found in the writings of the Archbishop of Guatemala, Pedro Cortés y Larraz, or the statements made by Simón Rodríguez and published over several decades.

The universities languished during the eighteenth century because of the fact that traditional ideas predominated in them, so that education was gradually losing its significance

and becoming alienated from the conceptual instruments which would permit it to understand reality. For this reason, the new needs raised by the 'model' which was in the process of adoption had partly to be satisfied by the development of other ideas and techniques, but now outside the cloisters of religious groups, thus bringing forward by many decades the profound changes in the universities. The new scientific, economic and cultural ideas were to find a more favourable climate in less rigid institutions, that is to say, institutions more open to innovation and to new concerns, where there was less weight of routine and inertia. In the last few decades of this period it was also possible to observe in the region a phenomenon with generally similar characteristics: namely, the growing role of societies which in some way sought to fill the vacuum left in certain circumstances by the establishments of higher education when these fell out of phase with their times, or, in other words, when, because of excessive routine or professionalization, they came to neglect 'novelties' or failed to offer responses to the problems and needs arising from progress.

In America, it was the *Sociedades Económicas de Amigos del País* and the Consulates which were the centres from which these ideas were disseminated, or rather from which the 'models', which were rather theoretical to begin with, gradually came closer and closer to reality, so that in many cases they ceased to be more or less rational constructions full of good intentions and humanitarian spirit and became instead medium and long-term proposals. These initiatives, and also their achievements, took place between the years 1790-1810. Although all comparisons are risky and there are notable differences, quite apart from the two centuries which separate them, we have often felt that it would be both useful and illustrative to consider the similarities which may exist between the intellectual climate and proposals generated by those local-scale institutions and those of present regional-type organizations such as ECLA.

Thus, Ildefonso Leal, the historian of Venezuelan education, says that "from the *Real Consulado* instructions were given on how to construct roads, harbours and canals, and prizes were offered for those who prepared the best technical papers on the cultivation of tobacco,

cotton, indigo, sugar cane and cocoa in which clear details and instructions were given in a full and circumstantial manner on the factors and combinations involved in the cultivation, processing, manufacture, consumption and trade of these valuable products, together with everything needed to organize an hacienda.³ Thousands of leagues away, in Buenos Aires, Manuel Belgrano, Secretary of the Consulate, was at the same time putting forward a series of initiatives aimed at "improving the situation of the country and increasing the wealth and happiness of its inhabitants". Hence his all-embracing interest in such matters as roads, ports, lighthouses, agronomic studies, trade schools, agriculture, navigation, the dissemination of booklets translated into Spanish with instructions on new and better methods of working the land, fertilizers, fences, forestry, crop rotation, etc. He also called for "free schools where the poor labourers can send their children without having to pay anything at all for their education".

The few changes registered in institutions of higher education and the incorporation of new courses of study (especially law and medicine), which increased at the expense of theology and other outmoded subjects—thus, recreative physics grew at the expense of philosophical physics—, as well as the unanswered appeals for the construction of new educational establishments, indicate that the renovation took place along other lines.

On many other planes it was possible to observe the changes in attitudes and actions resulting from the new 'style' adopted, which infused and coloured numerous activities or initiatives such as the creation of educational establishments inspired by another spirit—above all of a practical nature—and which were also enriched by a different social extraction. A new ideology now prevailed which had at its disposal a number of developing instruments, one of which was exceptionally important: the dissemination of books, whose

³*Documentos para la historia de la educación en Venezuela*, preliminary study and compilation by Ildefonso Leal, Caracas, Library of the National Historical Academy, 1968, p. XXXII.

equivalent is to be found today perhaps in the mass media (above all television and radio), which pose a tremendous challenge to the present educational system. Just as, at that time, it was necessary to redefine the situation in the light of this outstanding new factor—the book—which was already within the reach of a public extending far beyond that of the 'intellectuals', similarly, the mass media are now occupying the

field of information which was until recently the monopoly of formal education.

The next phase in history was to be that of the predominance of this ideology of the Enlightenment already referred to, now seeking actors with sufficient force and capacity to lead the approaching process of change; these new actors were to be the inspirers and leaders of independence.

II

Emancipation

During the process of emancipation and the years which followed it, most of the countries suffered profound population upheavals caused by the migration of large numbers of persons as a result of the war, a marked impoverishment due to the reduction in productive activities and the waste of resources involved in the conflict, and instability and uncertainty deriving from the vicissitudes of this struggle. Although the Bourbon tradition, which gave growing importance to the State in educational matters, continued, there was nevertheless undoubtedly an aggravation of the precarious state of the finances, together with administrative disorganization.

In the new ruling class which was being formed, the predominance of the ideas of the Enlightenment continued, and this model was enriched with some very significant innovations, especially the addition of a new political attitude expressed above all by the replacement of the ideal of the 'loyal subject' with that of the 'active citizen'. Although the attitude of this new ruling class may at times seem ingenious to us, it was nevertheless in keeping with the new principles incorporated. Thus, the participation of the people as a whole in educational activities was stimulated; editions were brought out of works such as Mariano Moreno's version of Rousseau's *Social Contract* or pamphlets on the rights and duties of citizens, which, although open to question from the educational point of view, nevertheless displayed and advanced political

spirit, all this being done with the idea of training the new generations; efforts were made to banish corporal punishment from the schools; concern with the education of women or Indians was encouraged, etc. In all this, there was a new style now based on the ideas of equality, freedom and justice as understood by the various groups, which covered a broad spectrum from the so-called Jacobins to the Moderates; the subject of education and culture was the order of the day. This marked the beginning of the forging of a 'myth' (in the sense given to this term by Marshall Wolfe) which, with brief eclipses, lasted for almost two centuries and whose exhaustion is a significant feature of recent years, when not only the importance of schools but even the usefulness of literacy are being brought into question.

The incorporation of political dimensions, with their mobilizing effects, converted the new 'model' into a qualitatively different fact because of the breadth of its proposals and the profound effects it sought.

With regard to the prohibition of the use in schools of corporal punishment, which had previously been so widespread and generally accepted as a disciplinary method, it is interesting to note that this fits in with a number of measures inspired by similar purposes and is in keeping with the 'style' which was then being adopted in such matters as the abolition of the Inquisition and of personal service by the Indians, all of which were along the same lines.

The shortage of human and economic resources was one of the biggest obstacles encountered by the new ruling groups in promoting their project; the details to hand on the level of qualifications of the teachers and the resources of the schools are quite depressing. To some extent, this explains the enthusiastic reception given by the authorities or influential sectors of society of various countries from one end of the continent to the other to the so-called monitorial system of mutual education or, more frequently, the Lancastrian school, whose rapid and intensive spread in both the Old and New

Worlds confirms that it met a deeply felt need. Nor can it be considered mere chance that such leaders as Artigas, Rivadavia, O'Higgins, San Martín and Bolívar, all of whom were concerned to overcome these shortcomings, showed a markedly favourable attitude to this.

Thus, the initial democratic model was to be confronted with a stern challenge, anarchy, and this called forth a reaction favouring the construction and consolidation of the State, which was to resort, among other factors, to the monopoly of force.

III

Liberals and conservatives

From one end of Latin America to the other, the decades following the independence movements were marked by the vicissitudes of the armed struggles to consolidate emancipation or, in other cases, by the ravages of civil war.

The period between the Independence era and the linking of the Latin American economy to world markets is characterized by the priority given to the creation of the State, among whose minimum conditions, as already noted, was the monopoly of force (through the establishment of national armies, that is to say, by taking the armed forces away from the influence of local leaders) and an administrative structure, even if only of an elementary type: a process which was to be accompanied by the exclusion of the masses of the people from political decisions—phenomena which explain to some extent the low priority given to education.

Soon, however, signs of a redefinition of forces began to be observed. Thus, the traditional conservative-minded groups (previously linked to the State, its administration and its bureaucracy, but above all connected with an economy and society based on the hacienda and plantation) tried to recover their positions. Opposing them were the liberals with their programmes of renovation. It would be risky to generalize about the out-and-out predominance

of some of these groups over the others, whose features were sometimes quite similar. Furthermore, for various reasons the liberal and conservative currents in the New World had a content and characteristics different from those which they possessed in Europe.

Both sides—liberals and conservatives—claimed to have the capacity and the secret needed to restore order, which is what this was all about fundamentally. It should be noted that in some cases the opposition between them was much less frontal than appearances might indicate. Their antagonism is obvious, of course, when it is a question of their opposition as regards the Church or secularization, but it is not so obvious when dealing with other problems, such as those of the still-predominant rural population or the indigenous masses subject to an intensive process of deculturation. The differences in their attitudes *vis-à-vis* the State, however, were important. The liberals constituted the negative element in the development of the process of consolidation of the State, since they almost always rejected the role traditionally attributed to it, and in some cases some radicalized groups disapproved of it altogether.

This attitude is difficult to explain when we recall that there were no groups which were in a position to carry out those activities which the

liberals considered were not the responsibility of the State, such as participating in economic development; these theoretical limits imposed on the function of the State brought with them serious consequences in various fields: thus, there were serious problems over the recognition in the educational field of the compulsory nature of education, which was sometimes felt by them to contradict the much-proclaimed principle of freedom of education. Furthermore, they made their criticism of the State from a European point of view which was inadequate to take in the Latin American political and institutional reality at a very different stage of its process of consolidation, while they also considered it as something left over from colonial times. Of course there was no bourgeoisie like that associated with advanced capitalism, as in Europe. For their part, the conservatives called for order and favoured its consolidation, which to some extent explains why in some cases they came to be protectionist or considered it essential to keep up regular established armies; because of the role assigned to the Church in educational matters, however, they denied the State any function in this field or else reduced its function to the minimum.

It should also be added, however, that although the Latin American population was predominantly rural, none of these groups did very much for education in rural areas, which after all seems logical enough if we take into account the predominantly urban nature of the liberals on the one hand and the manifest lack of interest of the conservatives in raising the cultural level of the peasantry, which consisted for the most part of peons and great indigenous masses not always integrated into the monetary economy. It was this vacuum in the educational policy of both currents which favoured the delay in incorporating these rural sectors into a more modern economy and society and, of course, in achieving their political participation, and this exclusion, as is well known, still persists in large sections of Latin America.

Without pretending to characterize them by using a simplistic formula, it could be said that, as far as this particular moment was concerned, the liberals—because of the interests they expressed and their ideological affiliation—aimed to be both renovators and secularizers,

that is to say, they adopted a position which brought them into confrontation with the political and economic power still retained by the Church, whose influence in the educational field they sought to reduce. The conservatives, in contrast, held that the Church was an important factor for maintaining or restoring order. Rather than formulating generic profiles, however, it seems more appropriate to see how these currents fitted into actual conditions and sought to modify them as a function of their project or model. The complexity of the process and the diversity of the features acquired by it in each country make it difficult to characterize in global terms, as the solutions proposed for the purpose of training the ruling élites for the new society were very diverse. Thus, in Mexico the liberals rejected the possibility of training these élites in the university, which was considered by them to be an institution with colonial overtones, whereas in Buenos Aires they managed to work out a proposal which, although short-lived, was nonetheless significant.

Andrés Bello occupies an exceptional place in this process. Located as he was astride the different periods into which this study has been divided—since he can be placed with very few reservations among the men behind the political emancipation and without any reservation at all among the fathers of intellectual emancipation—his active teaching corresponds to the stage referred to here as that of 'liberals and conservatives' and he is in the final analysis the precursor of popular education. The modernizing conservative spirit of Bello—who could by no means be legitimately assimilated to an immobile or traditionalist concept—undoubtedly owes a great deal to the impression made on him by the English experience in contrast with the events on the continent. During his prolonged stay in Great Britain he witnessed a gigantic effort of institutional reorganization to meet the decisive transformations of the economy and society deriving from the agricultural and industrial revolutions: a process which also underlined the importance of science and technology in building the future; at the same time, his interest was aroused by the role played by Great Britain in the new and still unstable balance of international relations, since this situation was by

no means foreign to the development of events in the New World.

Always concerned about the fate of America, which was torn apart and impoverished by the prolonged civil wars which threatened its very existence, he saw in that singular style a possible formula for enabling the new States to channel the overflowing energy available by placing it at the service of their own interests. For this reason, Bello considered that

rather than toppling the shaken order, it should be restored as soon as possible, using education, legislation and trade as suitable instruments for achieving this.

The educational ideas of Bello are spread over numerous works (the most fundamental of which is the speech given in 1843 on the occasion of the establishment of the University of Chile), and above all through a vast range of activities which it is impossible even to summarize here.

IV

Toward popular education

In the whole of Latin America, and above all as from the years following the eras of the 'Reform' in Mexico and the 'Organization' in Argentina, efforts to incorporate a growing number of persons into what was then generously termed 'civilization' were intensified. Except in a few cases such as Chile, which achieved early institutional stability, none of the previous attempts had gained the hoped-for results, due *inter alia* to the precarious nature of their economies and the weak degree of integration into the central economies as a result of civil wars, administrative disorganization and shortage of financial resources, and also to the difficulties deriving from a geography which was frequently difficult, and a predominantly rural population (including areas where there was an overwhelming indigenous majority). In order to integrate the countries, it seemed that a prior requisite was to overcome isolation, poverty, linguistic fragmentation: in short, to provide them with modern and stable institutions and legislation. All this, in the view of some of the most outstanding men of that generation, called for long-term educational policies involving significant investments in order to train teachers, build schools, equip lecture theatres, etc. It appeared that the consolidation of the national States could not be achieved without first of all at least putting under way the efforts to achieve these objectives.

In addition to the experience accumulated by the previous generation, marked by successive failures in the materialization of the educational policy, the growing needs thus identified were also accompanied by lucid diagnoses on part of the new leaders who were emerging: in this respect, there were several whose ideas are still surprisingly topical. Thus, a special place must be given among the precursors to the Mexican Benito Juárez, who showed as far back as 1884 that he had a penetrating insight into the educational situation of that country; an insight which he continued to enrich with the years and the course of his political activities.

Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, the champion of popular education, for his part, carried out his work at the other end of the continent and also displayed features which are worthy of note, albeit briefly.

The educational ideas put forward by Domingo Faustino Sarmiento in his efforts to gain their acceptance in his country were indissolubly linked with a conception which integrated them into a policy of immigration and colonization promoting the transition from an Argentina based mainly on stock-raising to another based on agriculture in a broader sense, involving not only changes in the production structure, but also changes in the system of ownership with a view to the formation of an agricultural middle class. One of the essential

elements in the implementation of this project, as just noted, was education, which was considered at that time, and at the primary level, as being capable of training men who could be producers and at the same time participants in this process of change. Education thus had just as much a political function as an economic and social function. It is quite obvious that that proposal ran ahead of the existing situation and was aimed at the creation of a new society with fundamentally different components and involving the presence of a plurality of participating social groups. His dominant concern with the primary level was correct at that time, since elementary (or basic or primary) education and popular education could be considered as more or less equivalent in those days. Of course, the actual progress in the promotion of literacy was slower than foreseen, because when the workers on the land did not achieve ownership of that land and they were also prevented from enjoying their political rights and effectively exercising suffrage, the educational factor did not manage to play within this plan the role of a change-promoting variable which was foreseen for it in Sarmiento's initial model, but became instead a modernizing variable. At all events, however, these educational ideas began to play a fundamental role with the adoption of Law No. 1420, which was inspired by them and which was to have intensive nationalizing effects on immigration and to help to integrate the country.

This policy permitted the early coverage of a very substantial part of the school-age population: that is to say, the purpose of universalizing primary education was largely fulfilled. Thus, the centre of gravity of the system was kept in elementary education, while on the other hand secondary education was viewed only as a stepping-stone to the university, with the latter, in turn, being viewed as the means of training the ruling class and professionals required by development.

The work of the Uruguayan José Pedro Varela, probably marked the culmination of this current of thought and action whose main concern was popular education, considered as an instrument for transforming Latin American society. The ideology of José Pedro Varela, who was a disciple of Sarmiento in many respects and, like him, was an admirer of what has been called

the United States 'model' of development, was imbued with a spiritualistic rationalism which gradually changed into out-and-out positivism, the influence of which was henceforth to be decisive for the whole cultural and educational life of the country.

In order not to continue too long with all the references that could be made to the works of Varela, it is perhaps sufficient to mention some of his educational ideas connected with other dimensions of national activity: "Education is the only service entrusted to the public administration which does not use up the capital invested in it but incorporates it in a new form, turning it into new capital represented by the individuals to whom education is given". In an exercise in rigorously logical reasoning he holds that "a double effort is needed, then, to do away with the fundamental causes of our political crisis; on the one hand, we must do away with the ignorance of the landed gentry and the lower strata of society; on the other, we must seek to do away with the error which is fostered in the University and which draws after it the enlightened classes who intervene directly in public life".⁴ Translated into modern terms, Varela's position constitutes a denunciation of the alliance of the rural leaders with the educated classes of the cities in the common objective of excluding the people and barring all possibilities of change; in short, he was convinced that the Republic could only be built up through democracy.

The date of José Pedro Varela's death seems like a symbol, since it coincides with the end of one era and the beginning of another; the new era was to be characterized by the urge for progress and all the contradictions that involved, and it was to be tinged ideologically by positivism, which was soon to undermine the liberal principles with which he was linked. The phrase which was repeated with slight variations from one end of the continent to the other—"education is the locomotive of progress"—links

⁴José Pedro Varela, *La educación del pueblo*, Montevideo, 1874, and *La legislación escolar*, Montevideo, 1876; both republished under the generic title of *Obras pedagógicas*, Montevideo, Biblioteca Artigas, 1964 (Colección Clásicos Uruguayos). The quotations are from *La legislación escolar*, pp. 90, 111 and 114.

together three concepts very dear to the leaders of the last two decades of the century: education, locomotive (i.e., railways), and progress.

In short, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento and José Pedro Varela advocated a type of social order which would make it possible to overcome the economic and cultural backwardness (especially of the rural population, which continued to be the overwhelming and underprivileged majority) and political instability; to this end, they were supporters of an order based on education and participation, which meant something very different from the kind of order that the supporters of positivism would later seek to impose. As these visionaries lacked the social forces which were essential in order to back up their programme of change, their ideas remained to some extent floating in a vacuum, but at all events their plans were to gain significance and begin to be realized when they were espoused by the new urban groups, and especially when the middle classes arose.

Just as liberalism ceased to believe in the universities of colonial origin because they were considered to be institutions identified with traditional values and hence likely to perpetuate the prevailing patterns, likewise, at the time under discussion, when great educational reforms were projected, these were not 'elitist' and were anti-university. This is understandable if we recall that the university, which was to continue being of a minority nature, if not frankly oligarchical (because of the social background of the students, the courses studied in it and the professional and cultural function assigned to its graduates), could hardly understand and much less express the interests and aspirations of the new groups, whose development 'model' was by no means based on higher education but called rather for broad mass culture with both a political and a utilitarian function.

V

The positivist stage

Because of the industrial revolution, which was producing manufactures in growing amounts and needed abundant raw materials and food, the habits of life and consumption in the Old World were changing. All this was to bring with it unsuspected consequences for the Latin American countries, which were to continue incorporating themselves to the extent of their export capacity in the international market as both producers and consumers, but would not therefore necessarily become industrialized, as was so lightly taken for granted, since international relations were to take a different course and were to consolidate inequality and backwardness.

The initial surge in the exports of the developing countries meant the accumulation of surpluses which were not always invested in line with economic or productive criteria (indeed, at that time there were neither the social classes nor

the stimuli needed to do this) but were very often frittered away on luxury consumption. At least to some extent and for some sectors, progress seemed to be synonymous with a high level of comfort and higher consumption of increasingly sophisticated goods. From another angle, progress was also to mean a profound change in the spatial distribution of production and employment—new activities were to be set up in areas which the new means of transport now made accessible, or existing activities were to be expanded—and this alteration of the laboriously achieved existing balance also simultaneously modified the relative weight of the different branches of production. Furthermore, the organized State was to favour links with foreign capital and give easier access to the market to such investors. These situations were to create new forms of relations between developed and non-developed countries. In order to meet the

needs which the times made essential, America, it was claimed, needed political order and economic freedom, which, once achieved, would give progress as if by magic. Positivism believed that it had the key to all this. Peace was a necessity; consequently, the solution was clear: it was necessary to do away with the chronic confrontations between conservatives and liberals and to finish with revolutions. All these elements, it was claimed, made it desirable to accept a philosophy of order capable of leading our countries to progress along the path of tranquility. Positivism seemed in many respects the heaven-sent answer to these desires and requirements, and its ideas spread and achieved decisive influence in all parts, although rarely with such completeness and overwhelming effect as in Mexico, where the group of its followers, who called themselves 'the scientists', were to occupy some of the key posts in the government.

The educational proposals of positivism may be summed up by mentioning its attempts to rationalize society through the introduction of scientific methods, and its efforts to create a consensus in favour of the proposed 'model', that is to say, a model based on the view that economic growth would lead to collective happiness.

Gabino Barreda, one of the leading exponents of change in education during the first stage of positivism, who was concerned because he felt that freedom was turning into anarchy, wrote: "Liberty is commonly represented as the freedom to do or desire anything without being subject to any governing law or force; if such a kind of liberty could exist, however, it would be as immoral as it would be absurd, because it would make impossible all discipline and consequently all order. Far from being incompatible with order, liberty in all phenomena, both organic and inorganic,

consists of full submission to the laws which determine those phenomena".⁵

The modern concept of property which the régime of Porfirio Díaz sought to impose naturally led it to a policy which helped to accelerate the dissolution of the indigenous communities, since under the pretext of enabling to become owners of their land they were actually stripped of such land as still remained in their hands. Furthermore, that régime was marked by a disqualification of the people, in some cases because of their language and in others because of their social status, which was expressed in its lack of interest in incorporating them in society, while at the same time it was concerned with forming élites by following denationalizing patterns such as the encouragement of foreign languages, especially English. This problem of the teaching of languages, viewed as a political factor, assumes exceptional importance in the case of the Porfirio Díaz 'model', where, as we can see, it fitted in very well with the other dimensions of the process. Elementary education continued to be overwhelmingly urban, while rural education was neglected if not practically abandoned; as a result, an illiteracy rate of 54% was registered in 1900, declining to 50% ten years later.

The Mexican Revolution of 1910 was to open up other prospects, both in tackling the problem of land ownership and that of rural schooling or the teaching of languages; these and many other political, social, economic and cultural problems were to acquire a different sense in the light of a new 'model'. The limits set for this article do not allow us to go more deeply into this matter, however.

⁵Quoted in Abelardo Villegas, *La filosofía en la historia política de México*, Mexico City, Ed. Portmaca, 1966, pp. 127 et seq.

VI

The rise of the middle classes

As from the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the present century, structural changes were observed in Argentina which were linked with the export of agricultural commodities, the development of city-ports, and the formation of a middle class resulting from this process of social differentiation. This was the reason for the marked predominance of the urban phenomenon and the pressure of the first middle classes, which demanded participation and espoused the 'discourse' of the reformers of the previous generation, who had proposed popular education as a partial aspect of such participation. The picture just described acquired deeper significance in the countries which were first to link themselves to the external markets.

Almost all modern students of Argentine history are agreed that there was a series of stages in its evolution which must be differentiated in order not to make its fuller understanding more difficult. Thus, Gino Germani,⁶ for example, defines two phases within what he calls the "representative democracy with limited participation": the first of these phases was the "national organization (1853-1880)", while "conservative-liberal governments (the oligarchy: 1880-1916)" was the other. Dividing up the country's history into these periods helps to clarify the different attitudes of two generations separated from each other by many distinctive notes, since the so-called generation of 1880 took to extremes many of the inconsistencies and limitations of the previous phase. In order to illustrate these differences, take for example the role given to the State by the first group in the development of the country, in contrast with the manner in which the others favoured private enterprise. The decisive consolidation of the model of outward-oriented growth corresponds to the last two decades of the past century.

⁶Gino Germani, *Política y sociedad en una época de transición*, Buenos Aires, Ed. Paidós, 1962.

The fundamental idea put forward by Juan Carlos Tedesco,⁷ "is that the ruling groups gave education a political function and not an economic function, and as the economic changes which took place in this period did not involve the need to resort to the local training of human resources, the structure of the educational system changed only in those aspects which could be of political interest, and as a function of that same political interest. The particular feature of the Argentine case is that the forces which acted in the political confrontation took the same view—when each of them was in power—that education should be kept apart from productive orientations". For this reason, continues Tedesco, the educational process was at that time an effort to achieve better adjustment to this 'model', whose main features could be described briefly by saying that it sought dissemination and patterns for achieving consensus, while also being aimed at training a ruling and administrative class.

In short, the ruling classes worked out a development 'model' which the educational system was made to serve: this is why the model was so coherent once it was consolidated and why successful results were obtained. It is a fact that with the passage of time the system fundamentally favoured the middle classes which were not linked with primary or secondary production but which benefitted from the growing development of the tertiary sectors (bureaucracy, services, professionals, etc.). The middle classes were in any case not in a position to propose an alternative 'model', and they implicitly shared that based on outward-directed growth, which gave them a feeling of security and, perhaps even more important, of progress, this latter word being, as we have already seen, of enormous prestige and gradually becoming a mobilizing and masking myth. All these factors go some way

⁷Juan Carlos Tedesco, *Educación y sociedad en la Argentina (1880-1900)*, Buenos Aires, Ed. Panedille, 1970.

towards explaining what seems to us today to be the ingenuous optimism of that time. As the traditional ruling groups had to face up to the crisis, however, their attitude became increasingly rigid and they began to see the middle class as potential rivals. The middle class, for its part, was becoming increasingly aware of its position and possibilities and at the same time becoming more consciously democratic. As education was considered as a channel for rising and gaining prestige, however, the middle class, too, tried to take advantage of and increase all the possibilities which the system provided to it for reaching the university, which was the stronghold of the traditional groups. This process, whose intimate correspondence with the rising popular movements must be taken into account in order to understand it better, reached its full expression at the level of tertiary education with the university reform of Córdoba (1918), and this event spread, to different extents and at different rates, through almost the whole of Latin America. The principal proposals of this reform called for autonomy of the universities, the participation of professors and students in the running of these institutions, faculty freedom, periodic competitions to appoint the teaching staff (as well as a system known as 'free instruction' which permitted the functioning of parallel courses), the expansion of income, updating of teaching methods, university extension, etc. All this involved a profound redefinition of the role of the university, since it assigned it a function which went beyond that of training professionals and promoting scientific research, maintaining instead that it must also contribute to the effective democratization of society.⁸ This marks the entry onto the scene of the new sectors which demanded the democratization of political life through suffrage and called for greater participation in education and cultural activities,

⁸The fundamental work in the extensive literature on this subject continues to be *La reforma universitaria (1918-1940)*, compiled and annotated by Gabriel del Mazo, La Plata (Argentina), Edición del Centro de Estudiantes de Ingeniería, 1941, 3 vols. There are many republished versions of parts of the valuable documentation assembled in this work, as well as many recom compilations and anthologies.

but, it must be stressed, still continued to support the model of outward-directed growth.

From the ideological point of view, the influence of positivism in Argentina was very profound; it is well known through an extensive bibliography⁹ which does full justice in most cases to the heterogeneity and the interlinking of its different schools and tendencies. After the positivism of the precursors Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, Juan Bautista Alberdi and others (or protopositivism as it is sometimes called), this current of thinking, as Francisco Romero¹⁰ reminds us, "subsequently bogged down in a self-indulgent and opportunistic pragmatism from which some of the worst features of our collective life originated". It was this which led to a conformist attitude in the face of the successes of the modernization being carried out under the slogan of "Peace and Administration", overlooking the serious contradictions which could be seen to be growing up. Another current of thought, which formed what was called the "Paraná School", however, had an enormous and beneficial influence, especially on the development of teachers' training schools, which were soon converted into centres of renewal. Among the leading figures in this were such men as Pedro Scalabrini, the first advocate of Comte in Argentina; J. Alfredo Ferreira, perhaps the best-known and most illustrious representative of Comtian positivism, and a number of other figures who expressed greater concern for education proper than for the way it fitted in with the 'model' in general. A third line of thought was Spencerism, which left lasting traces in extensive university circles.

In reality, the greatest interest that the study of Argentine positivism could offer would be the detailed and sensitive tracing of its various lines of influence until they merged with new currents which, while sometimes enriching it, in other cases led it into blind alley, and also the study of its imprint on the development of different disciplines (history, psychology,

⁹Including Ricaurte Soler, *El positivismo argentino*, Panama City, Imprenta Nacional, 1959.

¹⁰Francisco Romero, "Indicaciones sobre la marcha del pensamiento filosófico en la Argentina", in *Sobre la filosofía en América*, Buenos Aires, Ed. Raigal, 1952, p. 24.

philosophy, educational science, etc.) or on the spirit of highly significant institutions such as the University of La Plata.

Emphasis has been placed on this chapter on the development of Argentine positivism and, in particular, on the reform of the university, because of their projection through time and also because of the validity which their postulations continue to have; it is for this reason, and because of the limitations of space which must necessarily be respected, that we have left out the consideration of other eras of great significance, such as the frequently bold changes rightly linked in Mexico with the name of José Vasconcelos, who inspired the process with renewed concepts of a markedly anti-positivist type from the ideological point of view (it may be recalled that positivism was the official philosophy of the 'model' adopted by the Porfirio Díaz régime) and with a great opening in its educational and cultural policy, as for example in the case of his work

on behalf of rural sectors, especially indigenous inhabitants, campaigns against illiteracy, and activities in the field of non-systematic education. Somewhat later, in Peru —although this thinker's contribution was limited to the field of ideas— we may recall the fertile work of José Carlos Mariátegui, who formulated a notably original proposal for 'national education', challenging the pragmatic currents of opinion (of United States affiliation) and the European-style 'humanist' currents to propose —and continue to perfect and update— a recovery of the pre-hispanic tradition which, in his opinion, continued to be an essential element of any alternative 'model' suitable to the requirements of his country at that time. Nor, of course, must we overlook the contribution made by the Bolivian Franz Tamayo in his *Pedagogía nacional*. However, as we said, a detailed critical analysis of all these currents is beyond the scope of this article.

VII

Some final considerations

Throughout the nineteenth century and the beginning of the present century, both educational ideas and the actual situation in Latin America offer features and characteristics which differ greatly according to the countries and circumstances under consideration; many of them still persist in our own day, converted into traditions or dragging on as institutional or legal inertia: this is why it is of interest to study them.

Now, the proper understanding of these processes only seems to acquire significance if they are referred to the implicitly accepted 'models' or 'styles' of development and to the ideologies which permeated them. From their analysis, we could infer certain significant characteristics, some of them lasting. Thus, many proposals could not be carried out at the time because of the lack of agents which supported them, that is to say, because they lacked the social forces that would support them

until they overcame the obstacles standing in the way of their realization. Prestigious transplanted 'models' —possibly of proven effectiveness in other regions— failed because they were not suitably rethought nor confronted with the new conditions or because the asynchronous factors present were not seen in time, all of which often helped to hinder or retard the planned processes of change.

On repeated occasions, when dealing with a predominantly rural population, the most generous proposals negated themselves when in practice they converted the urban sectors into effective recipients of the improvements planned, so that education helped to make the contradictions more marked instead of reducing them or overcoming them, thus putting off still longer the homogenization of the social structure.

The rigidities of the systems meant that at

various times the innovations were introduced or propagated almost exclusively outside those systems, and in the face of the limitations or doctrinal difficulties or re-thinking them within a different 'model', they were simply negated.

Thus, everything seems to indicate that overcoming many of the present maladjustments, contradictions and shortcomings of the

educational system or of the relations between that system and society calls for the undertaking of studies to permit the formulation of models which are both satisfactory in theory and viable in practice: the challenge which was already vigorously stated by Simón Rodríguez a good deal more than a century ago when he wrote: "either we invent or we merely drift..."