

INSTITUTO LATINOAMERICANO
DE PLANIFICACION
ECONOMICA Y SOCIAL



LIMITED
INST/69
30 August 1972
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Paper submitted to the Regional Meeting of Resident Representatives
in Latin America (Santiago, Chile 3-12 September 1972).



EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT ^{1/}

1. The diversity of Latin America and the space available make it necessary to restrict this paper to the enumeration of some common problems which are considered fundamental to this discussion.
2. The nature of the meeting determines the object of this document, which is to serve as a basis for the discussion of criteria for the evaluation of educational projects. To evaluate means, of course, to determine the value of something. Evaluation can only take place in accordance with a system of patterns or values, and this system depends on the country concerned and the developmental ideology adopted. The far-reaching social transformations in Latin America imply a need for profound changes in Latin American educational systems. Evaluation will be quite different when existing tendencies are taken as patterns rather than focusing attention on the changes desired. It would appear that the fundamental objective is to seek new instrumental educational policies which correspond to the image of society to be constructed and which are compatible with the scarcity of resources and the limited investment capacity of the countries in Latin America. This document accepts that objective and analyses its principal implications.
3. Present educational policies cannot satisfy the expectations placed in them, for reasons connected with the existing structure of society and its inequalities, because they are incapable of contributing to a better distribution of income, because of their incompatibility with available resources, and because they tend to reproduce models from other countries without analysing the implications of these models under very different social, economic and cultural conditions nor their suitability for different schemes of development.

Social and political changes require profound changes within education and outside it, but above all they demand the rejection of an imitative posture.
4. These points of view are generally accepted and indeed are easy to accept, but often some of their necessary consequences are overlooked or even denied. One of these is the need for the United Nations to strongly support a coherent and pragmatic research programme on education, employing "pragmatic" in the sense of a system of research capable of producing long-term guidelines for a rational construction

^{1/} Paragraphs 1 to 4 inclusive constitute a synthesis of the basic lines of this document, which are developed subsequently.

of the future and not only dealing with the consequences of recent trends or the making of evaluations based on criteria merely concerned with immediate results. In fact relatively little is known about the relation of current educational systems to the objectives proposed and about the real significance of the investments made in them and obviously still less about the way in which they should be oriented, assuming that the need for fundamental changes is accepted. Thus, contrary to what many people think, there is nothing more "practical" and realistic than a scientific investigation of these problems.

5. For a number of reasons, it is impossible to transfer to Latin America arguments based on the historical experience of the developed countries. Latin America has its own stages of development. Primary education in Latin America covers a smaller proportion of the population than that achieved long ago by the developed countries, but in contrast, secondary and higher education cover a relatively higher proportion of the population and are growing at rates unheard-of in the developed countries, the "educational pyramid" therefore is quite distinct. In addition to these internal structural differences, there are differences connected with the social and political context and the historical moment. International society has changed as much as technology and means of communications.
6. Latin American educational systems are nevertheless heteronomous. Both with respect to their objectives and their means, instruments and content, they tend to transplant the experience which appears to be most "up to date" in developed countries. In practice, the perception of the model may be and often is erroneous, and even when it is correct the transplantation itself is impossible given that structural conditions are quite different. The imitative intention fatally results in a caricature of the original.
7. The objectives of all educational policies are related, in the first place, to concepts of both Human Rights and development. The former appears to include essentially such aspects as universal enrollment, selection on merit and the increased capacity for participation as an aspect of civic or political socialization. From the other point of view, consideration is given to the effect of education on development, social mobility and income distribution. In the second place there are the instrumental objectives: the capacities and abilities which education proposes to cultivate in students. No country in the world has been able to achieve these objectives completely, and it is quite possible that there are insuperable contradictions between some of them. The scarcity of available resources makes it all the more

/necessary in

necessary in Latin America to adopt realistic educational policies. By 1980, it is expected that some of the more advanced countries of the OECD will be spending 10 per cent of their national product on education, yet even so they will be far from fulfilling all these principles. In Latin America such a proportion is unthinkable.

8. It is fundamental to know what can reasonably be expected from educational systems. It frequently happens that when nobody knows how to solve a problem it is said to be a matter of education, and responsibility for its solution is transferred to that field. It is often thought, for example, that social inequalities can be overcome by making education accessible to all. However, if the social inequalities outside the school system are very large, the equalization of opportunity through equal access to education remains a myth, even for those who do have such access.
9. The same is true of the objectives related to development. From the standpoint of economic growth it is significant that the rates of return on educational investment seem high in Latin America. It must not be forgotten, however, that there is no definitive proof that the magnitude of these rates of return is not attributable simply to the fact that those few who have been educated earn incomes greatly in excess of their real productivity because they belong to groups which are well placed in the power structure. It is most probably a fallacy to assume that there is necessarily a relationship between education, productivity and income. Moreover, if the imitation of the models of the more developed societies and the pressure of certain social groups lead to the production of high qualifications which cannot be utilized in the economy, and which result in a brain drain or the under-utilization of those qualified, the social productivity of education declines.
10. With respect to the effect of education on social mobility and income distribution, it is useful to recall that the distribution of education in those Latin American countries for which data are available is even more unequal than income distribution (Gini coefficient for income concentration in Colombia in 1964 is .57, while the distribution of education is .84).^{2/} It has been demonstrated that the great expansion of education in Mexico over the past 20 years has had no appreciable effect on income distribution. The basic reason is that as the number of persons with primary and secondary education increases,

^{2/} This coefficient ranges from 0.0 to 1.0. The first value represents perfect equality; the second, total concentration or perfect inequality.

the requirements in terms of educational qualifications for activities paying higher incomes become more exacting. Education "devaluates" in the sense that the same diploma and the same number of years of schooling have increasingly less significance: in other words, many more years of schooling are required to occupy the same positions. Therefore there is no reason why social mobility should increase because education expands: indeed, a highly unequal distribution of education may help to increase or maintain existing social inequalities. This is one of the fields where empirical research is needed in order to determine the real implications of educational policies.

11. The considerations raised in the foregoing three paragraphs show that the effects of the expansion of educational systems, which are so often taken for granted, cannot be expected to materialize unless there are far-reaching changes in the social structure and unless educational policy is linked to employment policy. Without far-reaching changes in the social structure, the lower strata will continue to be excluded from the school system or will merely reach levels which will do nothing to increase their real opportunities. Failing an adequate and rational employment policy, more educated people will take the place of less educated people in jobs at increasingly lower levels; there will be under-utilization of skills, and the best paid jobs will be kept for the higher strata.
12. The coherence of a country's social policy and, within it, its educational policy, is therefore more important than the existence of educational plans which usually only show what would happen if there was no plan, since they are limited to the extrapolation of past trends. It is necessary to have a proper understanding of the social situation and to relate it to the accepted ideologies before formulating the plan. All this entails research, but only when all these requirements have been met can a proper answer be given to the question which must always be asked: education for what?
13. The answer to this question depends on each country's structural conditions and the image it has of the kind of society it wishes to build, i.e., its ideology. Here, ideological and instrumental requirements are linked, and the idea of imitation must be discarded if the problem is to be adequately solved. Although the solution depends on each individual country, it should be remembered that everywhere the demand for real participation is becoming stronger, and extending to more groups. Education must be an education for change, not only in the sense of preparing people to adapt themselves to changes, but rather to be agents of those changes. This means that

/the first

the first priority is massive basic education. Its duration will depend on conditions in the countries concerned, and it must obviously not be confused with conventional primary education, but must be a cycle with clear-cut minimum objectives and almost exclusive concentration on them. Human Rights and development requirements coincide in this respect.

14. There is no room here to discuss the instruments; stress need only be laid on the obvious, they are only instruments. New technologies, for example, are not miraculous panacea. Their use raises a series of problems, and they can do more harm than good if they are not used in relation to priority objectives. We know very little, for instance, about the cost/benefit ratio of many modern technologies. Nor do we know the extent to which they may tend to produce a massification of education, in the worst sense of the term, which would vitiate still further the dialogue on which education must be based.
15. The scarcity of resources and the need for systematic checking of the relationship between means and objectives gives evaluation a priority role, yet for various reasons the importance of evaluation is consistently overlooked in Latin America. UNDP should help to emphasize that importance and should, perhaps, refuse to finance projects for which evaluation machinery has not been defined in advance. The responsible utilization of scarce resources makes it essential that the rational suitability of projects for meeting the objectives of educational policy should be kept under constant review, and this presupposes adequate scientific research.
16. Confirmation of the criticism that the true objective of current educational systems seems to be to consolidate social differences rather than to reduce them is provided by the fact that rural education and technical instruction are always poor relatives in such systems. In this connection, stress is frequently laid on a more general need: that of linking education with work. It appears to be very difficult to find a solution to this problem, but any solution will depend strictly on the objectives in view. If the aims are those declared, then the demands of both development and human rights require that students be given a flexible education to enable them to continue their studies and/or undertake a variety of jobs at their educational level; but there should be no question of the definitive pigeonholing of human beings. It is also necessary to devise mechanisms that will ease the transition from education to employment, from employment back to education, and so on. It is essential to do away with rigidities that restrict the range of options open to the individual. From the

/point of

point of view of development; it is all to the good when education is of such a nature as to produce human resources who are not tied to specific aims but are adaptable to a broad range of alternative aims. Moreover, if human beings are to be effective agents of change, then that change must signify the least possible psychological cost to them. The chances of this happening will depend on the existence of the type of training mentioned above.

17. There are a multitude of educational agencies in a society, and they must all be co-ordinated if a genuine educational policy is to be achieved. Unfortunately, in Latin America, education is equated solely with the conventional formal systems. It is urgently necessary to give non-formal education the importance that it deserves and to incorporate it in educational policies and plans.
18. It is impossible to dissimulate the magnitude of the difficulties which must be overcome in order to approach an educational policy like that outlined here. Many of these problems have already been mentioned, but there are others which should not be overlooked. Education is connected with employment policy not only because it prepares students for employment but also because it is in itself an important source of employment. In nearly all the Latin American countries, education is the largest single employer. This turns educators into important pressure groups, with a marked tendency to create effectively autonomous areas and private preserves at all levels of the educational system. Any educational activity entails a series of technical problems, and educators are the experts best fitted to deal with them. But the ends, the objectives and a good part of the instruments imply political options. Restricting these options to certain groups does not signify that they are not taken, rather that they are exercised denying others (entrepreneurs, labour unions, etc.) the possibility of participating in decisions which affect the entire society.
19. These considerations show the importance of analysing specific projects in the light of an overall policy. The combination of heteronomy and blind faith in the magical effects of education leads to the implementation of projects which appear to be unexceptionable in themselves, but which bear no relation to the real needs of the country and the priorities that should be established in the light of those needs. Thus, there are countries that invest public funds in pre-primary education that is enjoyed only by those who do not need it, while a very high proportion of children remain completely outside the educational system, and there are other countries which organize projects for

/school libraries

school libraries and the training of librarians, even though they have no books or funds with which to buy them, and so forth. It would appear that there is no sector where this kind of analysis is more necessary than in education, because in no other sector is it easier to demonstrate the apparent intrinsic value of isolated projects. The problem of blind imitation should be overcome by looking at education in a new light; the lack of original thinking is an intellectual obstacle to the changes that are required. In addition, structural changes are needed in connection with the problem of social inequality and the structure of power. It is inconceivable that good intentions alone will suffice to bring about the required changes: the main item lacking is not good will, but the scientific research essential for the rational application of a policy fully suited to the needs of the countries of Latin America.

